

# MOANA COSMOPOLITAN IMAGINARIES



## TOWARD AN EMERGING THEORY OF MOANA ART

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# Abstract

This thesis uses a theoretical approach to examine the way a *digital native* generation of Moana artists with connections to Aotearoa, and part of global worlds today, *imagine* their subjectivities, their cultures and their places in the world through contemporary art. Using the methodology of *su'ifefiloi*, which allows for the combination of many parts, this research works toward the emerging theory of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* to consider today's global condition of overwhelming interconnectivity as experienced by Moana people. *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* offers an analytical framework to understand how these lived realities have impacted art made between 2012 and 2020 by a generation of Moana artists, between the last significant exhibition of contemporary Moana art in Aotearoa—*Home AKL* (Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2012)—and the Covid-19 Pandemic, which has shifted today's global condition in ways we are yet to fully understand.

In this thesis, I argue that a *digital native* generation of Moana artists have positioned themselves away from the narratives of displacement and non-belonging featured in the Moana art of previous generations, imagining their subjectivity in globally *routed*, yet locally *rooted*, ways. Diasporic subjectivities are those which require constant reproduction and rearticulation. Most recently diasporic subjectivities can be understood through the acceptance of the cosmopolitan character of Moana life today, or *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, which empowers a complex sense of place. Thus, these artists engage in another kind of work, which employs *radical imagination* to imagine

other ways of being and making concerned with the *decolonial*, *deep time*, *Vā Moana*, *mau* and *su'ifefiloi* as part of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*.

By closely analysing this period of art making, common concerns and artistic strategies are revealed. Pairing these commonalities with a cosmopolitan character of Moana life allows this research to work toward an emerging theory of Moana art, which centres the work and experiences of Moana artists.

*Key words:* contemporary Moana art, Moana diaspora, cosmopolitanism, imaginary, global worlds, vā

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For Arpi and Laki, this is for you, always.

Tulou, tulou, tulou lava.

# 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.

Lana Lopesi

March 2020



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# Table of Exhibitions and Artworks

*The below are the key artworks and exhibitions featured in this thesis, listed in order of appearance.*

Brownson, R., Māhina-Tuai, K., Tonga, N., & Tavola, E. (2012). *Home AKL* [Exhibition]. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/whats-on/exhibition/home-akl?q=%2Fwhats-on%2Fexhibition%2Fhome-akl>

Leatinu'u, J. L., (2012). *This must be the place* [Exhibition]. ST PAUL St Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://stpaulst.ac.nz/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/2012/this-must-be-the-place>

Rands, A. (2018). *Lift off* [Installation]. Institute of Modern Art Brisbane, Brisbane, Australia. <https://ima.org.au/exhibitions/the-commute/>

Parr, E. (2019–2020). *Moana calling me home* [Moving image]. ST PAUL St Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://stpaulst.ac.nz/exhibitions>

Carmichael, F., Biscarra Dilley, S., Eshrāghi, L., Hogue, T., & Lopesi, L. (2018). *The commute* [Exhibition]. Institute of Modern Art Brisbane, Brisbane, Australia. <https://ima.org.au/exhibitions/the-commute/>

Lopesi, L., Carmichael, F., Biscarra Dilley, S., Eshrāghi, L., & Hogue, T. (2019). *Layover* [Exhibition]. Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://artspace-aotearoa.nz/exhibitions/layover>

Hogue, T., Carmichael, F., Biscarra Dilley, S., Eshrāghi, L., & Lopesi, L. (2019–2020). *Transits and returns* [Exhibition]. Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada. <https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/exhibitions/transits-and-returns>

Afoa, L. (2015). *Orion* [Wallpaper]. Papakura Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand.

Afoa, L. (2017). *Orion* [Wallpaper]. Corban Estate Arts Centre, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://ceac.org.nz/exhibitions/ill-see-you-at-orion>

Afoa, L. (2019). *Untitled* [Wallpaper]. Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://artspace-aotearoa.nz/exhibitions/layover>

Afoa, L. (2019). *Untitled* [Wallpaper]. Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada. <https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/exhibitions/transits-and-returns>

# Fa'amauga

Wednesday, 30 December 2020

*The year 2020 had a very particular social and political climate, the majority of which was, of course, due to Covid-19,<sup>1</sup> which since March has resulted in 1.82 million deaths worldwide. Covid-19 closed national borders, prompted lockdowns and school closures, and, for many, it resulted in loss of income. During this time, we were asked to shift online in dramatic ways—school, university, work became virtual almost overnight. People were using new technologies, and organisations, schools and government agencies were helping to supply people with hardware. The digitisation of our daily activities, something which for a long time has been too difficult (and something which members of disability communities have been asking for for a long time to access conferences and the like), happened in an instant. Being online constantly made the world feel smaller. Crossing multiple borders—of space and time—was a 2020 fact of life.*

*Talks of 'new normals' and lockdowns were cause for moments of reflection. The world working as we knew and expected of it stopped. Systems and structures that we (the royal we) took to be fact, revealed their imaginary quality. Meaning that the dominant ways of being and living were at some time created by someone and then implemented into society. It's just that the moment of creation and implementation is erased or forgotten and instead systems and structures become fact, a given. In 2020, though, this façade crumbled; I couldn't help but see everything as imaginary. In particular, I felt the dominance of the colonial imaginary for the first time and everything around me was symptomatic of that imaginary. Time in a linear sense, with its deadlines, felt imaginary, as arbitrary markers in another*

*system. Seeing the imaginary quality in life was quite emancipatory. Because to understand a dominant mode of being as an imaginary gives permission for you to imagine otherwise, or elsewhere. It also allows you to recalibrate yourself to find what it is that matters to you because you think that way, not because of how you are made to feel.*

*I wish I knew this when I was in art school. I remember on the first day in my second year, we were going around the circle introducing ourselves to our tutor and the other students who would make up our studio group for the rest of that academic year. I think we were asked something like, say your name and your artistic interests. I had loved abstract painting the year before, and so I said something along the lines of, "Hi I'm Lana, and I'm interested in painting." The response from my tutor was a version of, "You're coming through at a good time, Pacific art is quite fashionable at the moment." I didn't comprehend the inference, I just smiled and replied, "Yeah." But that comment influenced the brief I wrote for myself that semester, which was about painting and the expectations put on Moana artists. We didn't know at the time we wrote that brief, but it was part of a semester-long project called Share and Share Alike, in which all our names got put into a hat and we were paired off, swapping our briefs with a classmate. The brief I got was around taste, which led me down a path of velvet painting (which I actually quite enjoyed tbh).*

*However, I think my brief stumped my classmate. Until he showed us a moving-image work he had made. It was set in someone's backyard. The artist and his friends sat on a faux-tapa cloth eating a bucket of KFC. When they had finished eating they wiped their faces*

<sup>1</sup>. Covid-19 is a new strain of coronavirus, formerly referred to as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV. 'Co' stands for corona, 'vi' for virus, and 'd' for disease.

and hands on the cloth, eventually tearing the whole thing into shreds. I remember smiling nervously while I watched it. My only comment was, “Well, we do eat KFC,” as I tried to stop the tears that welled in my eyes. I had no reference points to interrogate what I had just watched, just a physiological reaction of distress. Our tutor, the one who implied my time in art school was well timed for success, did not intervene. I hadn’t been given the language I needed to articulate my feelings; language art school would not give me but I had to find on my own later.

I remembered this semester just a few months ago when reminiscing with a friend about art school. In all honesty, I hadn’t thought much about it until then. Looking back today, all I see is the dominance of the colonial imaginary and a bunch of people who had no language or knowledge to do or say anything else. I didn’t have the tools to talk about the colonial imaginary over the Moana and the enduring legacy of savage tropes, or the colonial displacement of food sources, or class issues for Moana people in Aotearoa. All of which could have been applied to that work. I didn’t realise until that recent conversation with my friend how influential that work was on me, either. From the outset, I was being influenced and shaped by what institutions expected of Moana art and artists, and both leant into it and pushed it away at various moments. I was politicised without actually realising it. What I know now, however, is that this kind of internal push and pull I was having as an 18- and 19-year-old in art school was not something that everyone experienced.

As contemporary Moana artists, critics or curators we can find ourselves placed only in relation to the colonial imaginary, if we’re not careful. This is a binary position that I would not wish on anyone. In Frank Wilderson’s work on social death (2020), he writes that you can live a lifetime as a mirror for Whiteness. Escaping that, finding a sense of sovereignty then, feels like the goal. In 2020 I was reminded that things are changing very slowly (if at all), that the grip of the colonial imaginary is very strong. But, surely, we have to hold on to the hope that we can all get out from it, if we shift where the power lies.

On reflection, while at one stage I would have given too much of myself to this binary conversation, today I have very little energy to give to the moments when the colonial imaginary rears its head in the art world. One such moment, just when we thought 2020

would quietly end, was the People of Colour exhibition at Mercy Pictures, in Auckland. The exhibition comprised the iconography of 400+ flags printed on little canvases that hung floor to ceiling in the gallery space. The exhibition essay, written by controversial philosopher Nina Power, wrote that the show “engages in a semiotic provocation both at the level of scale and at the level of meaning.” Basically, suggesting that seeing flags en masse reduces the meanings of each flag to colour planes or mere graphic design, with the last sentence of the essay reading, “Identity is over: a flag is a flag is a flag.” But what if the flags include that of Nazi Germany alongside Black Lives Matter alongside Ku Klux Klan alongside Tino Rangatiratanga alongside QAnon and so on and so on? Is it really just a flag is a flag is a flag?

An open letter was penned by Auckland artists Quishille Charan, Jasmin Singh and Anevili calling for apologies and commitments to anti-racism; social media commentary and statements against the show were made by art schools, galleries and the like; and people disassociated themselves from those who supported it. Community sessions to talk through what was happening were planned. One of these was held by artists’ collective Town Hall in December and focused on the question “How did we get here?” The answer to that question feels simple to me: the enduring legacy of the colonial imaginary.

What was revealed through the Mercy Pictures exhibition is something that has always been there and always will be there. I was talking with friend Ioana Gordon-Smith about it and she made the astute connection between the show and Donald Trump winning the presidency, meaning that it’s in these particular moments that the undercurrents that have always existed rear their ugly heads. So while everyone is blaming each other for this happening—the galleries and the art schools all came under fire—why not just snuff the fire out completely and refocus the power somewhere else?

We could banish ourselves to be subsumed within the colonial imaginary, or we could emancipate ourselves from it completely and imagine something otherwise for ourselves.



# Chapter 1.

## Fa'atonuga<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1 Becoming Moana Cosmopolitan

From April to June 2016, I was in Taipei living in a third-floor studio apartment at Taipei Arts Village, where I undertook my first international residency since finishing art school a couple of years prior. Before arriving in Taipei, I had spent the month of February in China on a funded curatorial research trip which eventually resulted in the exhibition *lei-pā* at ST PAUL St Gallery, Auckland. These two experiences were my first brushes with a global art world that I knew little about. What I did know was that I was on the cusp of an internationalism that was the pinnacle of art-world desires.

I was beginning to learn about connections, through food, trade and cultural practices within the Moana, and between the Moana and the rest of the world. Taipei and China laid bare these connections—Taipei with its Austronesian genealogical connections to Sāmoa, and China through its history of indentured labour in Sāmoa and subsequent impact on its staple diet. It was clear that expansive ancestral worlds stretched across oceans, prior to the boundaries established by colonial impositions and then the nation-states that determine the region today. My realisation that a Moana world was so much more expansive than I had ever thought completely shifted my worldview. And at the same time, in a city of seven million people, I also felt sheer isolation. I had

no family, friends or cultural context in Taipei. While my thinking and understanding of the world were expanding, I was still bound by the ways in which the formation of settler colonial nations (such as Taiwan and Aotearoa) separated the Indigenous kinship networks that made up these expansive Moana worlds. Today we are having to relearn these expansive Moana worlds. In Taiwan, the question How do we get to know each other again? began, and would continue to drive my work for years to come (Lopesi, 2018c).

It was in that context that I saw how realms like social media offered a way of connecting across these separations or false divides (Lopesi, 2018c). Despite having been on Twitter for five years, it was only in Taipei that it became a place of refuge, a place that connected me with a community of like-minded Moana people otherwise separated by an ocean. In online conversations of 140 characters or fewer these people were grappling with the same ideas that I was reading about in published papers, seeing in exhibitions and trying to write about myself as an art critic (in training). It was only when I left my local environment that I realised I had always been part of an expansive Moana world—albeit of a different, digital iteration.

Thinking of waves—in relation to the ocean, radio waves, and the waves made by the splash of something new—I began to imagine Twitter as an ocean in and of itself, an ocean space of connection. If colonisation had divided the Moana, how did the online environment

<sup>2</sup> Fa'atonuga can be roughly translated to introduction.



(alongside air travel and remittances) collapse or re-join space for a digital native (Barlow, 1996; Prensky, 2001)<sup>3</sup> Moana generation? The collectivity that came with this connectivity allowed for re-articulations of identity that were simultaneously local and global. Moana Twitter users, artists included, were connecting and aligning with global Indigenous communities and global communities of colour. They introduced ideas of race, gender, Indigeneity, intersectionality, colourism and the decolonial to the art and vernacular language of a digital native Moana generation. It also seemed that online a whole new way of imagining Moana subjectivities was also occurring. Freshly back from Taipei and considering starting an MPhil degree, I talked about this particular Moana subjectivity to Leali'ifano Albert Refiti in our first meeting. I was yet to fully explore its specific characteristics, but it struck me that this Moana subjectivity was at odds with the established and familiar deficit rhetoric concerning Moana diaspora in Aotearoa. Moreover, this subjectivity impacted significantly on contemporary art being made by emerging Moana artists. Therefore, this thesis is an exploration into this subjectivity as it relates to the contemporary Moana art of these artists. It is hoped that this research will uncover the global and cosmopolitan quality of their worlds, and the ways in which that contributes to new imaginings and new imaginaries.

## 1.2 Research Questions

Moana people circling the globe, and finding their places in universities, art galleries and in literary communities, have caused significant shifts in academia, contemporary art and literature. From the 1970s onwards, a new generation of Moana scholars in diaspora worked to (re)imagine the *Moana* on their own terms and from their own ways of being (Wendt, 1976;

Thaman, 1988; Hau'ofa, 1994, 1998; Teaiwa, 1995a; Māhina, 1999a, 1999b). Their imagining of landmark concepts, exhibitions and frameworks intervened in the *colonial imaginary* of the Moana and created a scholarly and artistic genealogy that the artists I am concerned with here have inherited and built on.

This research focuses on a subsequent generation's cosmopolitan imaginary and the particularities of their Moana subjectivities, as these appear in the artworks and exhibitions they made between 2012 and 2020.

The two research questions guiding this study are:

1. How is the *imaginary* configured in *Moana Cosmopolitan* thought?
2. How do *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* impact the presentation of transnational Moana subjectivities in exhibitions and artworks, contributing toward an emerging theory of Moana art?

While these questions could be applied to *Moana Cosmopolitan* artists more broadly, I focus specifically on *digital native* Moana artists in or from Aotearoa during the period between 2012 and 2020. In 2012, the last group exhibition on the significance of contemporary Moana art in Aotearoa took place (*Home AKL*), and 2020 marks a significant shift in the international contemporary art circuit, brought about by Covid-19. While this research does not cover Covid-19 and the impact it will surely have on the global art scene, 2020 acts as a bookend to an era of contemporary Moana art that relied heavily on international air travel to access global art circuits. It is still unclear when participation can resume in this international art market, and the way in which this time of border closures and grounded flights will impact contemporary Moana art in the future is still to be realised.

These research questions seek to find the

<sup>3</sup>. There is disagreement about the effectiveness of the term *digital native* (Sorrentino, 2018). While I acknowledge this, I still assert that digital native is a useful term in this research. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, section 2.2.2 Digital Native.

underlying qualities of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, and by extension contemporary art. Furthermore, this research asks what art can tell us more broadly about today's expressions of Moana subjectivity for a *digital native* generation—all the while placing *Moana Cosmopolitanism* as a phenomenon within a much longer history. Ultimately, these research questions lead to the development of two contributions: *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* and *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, which, as argued throughout this thesis, add to an emerging theory of Moana art (and life).

### 1.3 Rationale and Significance

Today Moana people live in a world with particular characteristics of globality due to a combination of air travel, the global economy and digital technology, which makes border crossing an ordinary and everyday part of life—whether physical, figurative or digital (Agier, 2016). This cosmopolitan character of Moana life is important in thinking through today's lived realities. *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, then, as a descriptor of this kind of globality experienced by Moana people, relies on the intersection of *roots* and *routes* (Clifford, 1997, 2013; Teaiwa, 1998; Diaz & Kauanui, 2001), which enables Moana people to understand mobility and place as connected. *Roots* and *routes* in combination allow for a regional expansiveness without sacrificing specificity. This makes room for understanding multiple ways of being in the Moana diaspora through which people can hold on to identities simultaneously explicitly *rooted* and expansively *routed*. Participating in these globally circulating worlds can put people into closer relation

with other transnational, trans-Indigenous<sup>4</sup> and global communities of colour.

However, such *context collapse* (Ugavule, 2020) requires a relational ethic by which to hold the tensions of difference. While I use *Moana Cosmopolitanism* here to conceptualise a particular kind of globality and relational ethic exacerbated by the internet and other globalising technologies, *cosmopolitanism* is not new to the Moana. Moana people have always participated in global worlds, from pre-contact navigation of seas and oceans engaging in regional trading networks, to the colonial-era introduction of nationalism and labour migration, to today's uniquely digitally flavoured form of *cosmopolitanism*.

Since scholar Mauaia Albert Wendt (1996) introduced the concept of *vā* as the “space between,” which relates and “holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All,” (para. 15),<sup>5</sup> *vā* has been developed as a Moana diasporic concept of space. Not physically connected to ancestral land, but instead imagined through material production and shared performances, *vā* helps to imagine locally and globally connected *detrterritorial neighbourhoods* (Appadurai, 1996) in the Moana diaspora. Since the 1990s, Moana cosmopolitan artists and curators in contemporary art have used *vā* as a conceptual framework in relation to both space and identity. Lily Laita, John Pule, The Pacific Sisters, Rosanna Raymond and Ioane Ioane typify a form of imagining of *vā* within contemporary art.<sup>6</sup> These Moana artists have imagined *vā* from urban centres as closely tied to homeland tropes and symbols. Wendt's scholarly conceptualisation of *vā* has been used and applied in education, health, policy and, of course, contemporary art.

4. The use and spelling of the term trans-Indigenous is borrowed from Chadwick Allen's conceptualisation of trans-Indigeneity discussed in *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for global native literary studies* (2012).

5. In a recent interview with Leai'ifano Albert Refiti, Wendt acknowledged that 'Unity-that-is-All' is a translation of the Sāmoan phrase 'o le vā atoa.'

6. The 1990s marked a significant era for contemporary Moana art in Aotearoa through the establishment of a local Moana arts movements, building resilient creative communities here in Aotearoa. Because of this history, the artists I focus on in this

thesis already have a Moana arts legacy they have inherited. A part of this legacy has also been increased visibility, advocacy and, subsequently, opportunities. This, coupled with the online environment, has meant that international exhibiting and residency opportunities have been readily available from early on in their careers. This is not to say that everybody has had these kinds of opportunities, but that there have been significantly more than there were in the 1990s. This places artists in global worlds, which has impact on how they construct their subjectivity.

Nearly 30 years later, there is now another shift in the imagining of *vā* due to the online production of textual, visual and audio “cultural objects” on various platforms (Poster, 2007, p. 365). This imagining of *vā* extends communities beyond territory and strengthens relationships within and across the Moana diaspora, as well as with global Indigenous communities and global communities of colour. The online imagining of Moana subjectivities has changed, alongside the shifting presentation of Moana subjectivities in contemporary art. Increasingly, the participation in global art markets through large-scale exhibitions in national public galleries, international artist residencies and international film festival debuts, as well as the formation of international artist collectives, is becoming commonplace for contemporary Moana artists. This addition to the daily online exchanges between artists and arts communities, international panels on Zoom, and new community formations online and across social media contributes to both Moana participation in global art markets and new imaginings of Moana subjectivities.

Given the international interest in contemporary Moana art, the need for rigorous scholarship from Moana worldviews is pressing. In international art criticism and art historical contexts, contemporary Moana art is often discussed from Western perspectives, separate from Moana epistemologies and ontologies. Separating Moana art from Moana worldviews in this way impacts significantly on the art-historical archive, which fails to contextualise contemporary Moana art culturally. Following the twentieth-century return to recognisably Moana thinking about space (and space-time), and the emergence of distinctive identities in the diaspora, the importance of theorising contemporary Moana art alongside Moana ways of thinking is evident.

To build the discussion of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* within this thesis, I borrow from Cornelius Castoriadis’ concept the social imaginary (2005).

According to Castoriadis, every society is founded on imaginative capacity, which he names *radical imagination*, and what it subsequently imagined is an *actual imaginary* (Castoriadis, 2005). The *social imaginary*, then, is what has been *actually* imagined by a society (Strauss, 2006, p. 324), which highlights the role of imagination in systems of power, from religion to politics, which become institutionalised in what Castoriadis named the *imaginary institution of society*. Demonstrating the imaginative processes in building society, Castoriadis argues that human history is a “creation *ex nihilo*” or out of nothing (2005, p. 3).

A key point of Castoriadis’ notion, as discussed further in Chapter 3, is what he calls *central imaginaries*. *Central imaginaries*, *imaginaries* that dominate a given society, do not acknowledge their point of creation and rather operate through given truths. One such *central imaginary* of significance in this research is the *colonial imaginary*.

Contemporary Moana artists who participate in the Western art world still have to contend with the *colonial imaginary* as an *apparatus of power* (Bhabha, 1994) in their practices. In this research, I acknowledge the legacy of the *colonial imaginary*, and the context it provides to how we understand *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, which make themselves in relation to the *colonial imaginary*—contending with its impositions while also building something otherwise. Escaping the *colonial imaginary*, Moana Cosmopolitan artists make art that is emancipatory in nature, drawing on concepts of the *decolonial*, *deep time*, *mau*, *Vā Moana* and *su’ifefiloi*.<sup>7</sup>

This thesis aims to capture a brief period of art making from 2012 to 2020, as an example of something much bigger. By closely analysing this period of art making, common concerns and artistic strategies are revealed. Pairing these commonalities with a cosmopolitan character of Moana life allows this research to work toward an emerging theory of Moana art, in a way that centres the work and experiences of

<sup>7</sup> This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Moana artists.

This thesis ties together a variety of different theories and concepts, which sit on two tiers. On the top tier are the main theoretical strains that this research draws from: *decolonial theory*, *cosmopolitanism*, *imaginary* and *vā*—the latter three each with their own dedicated chapter, with decolonial theory offering a key analytical lens woven throughout. These major theoretical strains are reviewed and reworked to provide the foundations to develop *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* and *Moana Cosmopolitanism*.

Within the imaginings are what I consider a second tier of theory, for lack of a better term, which relate specifically to the artworks discussed in each imagining. This theory is discussed through mini-literature reviews in each imagining and helps to examine the artworks. Together this second-tier theory helps to understand how the *imaginary* configures in *Moana Cosmopolitan* thought, and how a Moana subjectivity is produced in artwork to subsequently address and identify the characteristics of a *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary* specific to these artists. The secondary concepts and theories discussed in this thesis include *Indigenous futurism*, *speculative fiction*, *intergenerational trauma*, *deep time*, *great ocean*, *roots and routes*, *relational ethics*, *social cartography*, *joy*, *mau*, *creative sovereignty* and *refusals*.

This research contributes to the local and global discussions around art, identity, Indigeneity, Moana diaspora, cosmopolitanism and transnationalism. Moving away from deficiency narratives around diaspora, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* offer a new and emancipatory way of understanding contemporary Moana art as intimately connected to—rather than dislocated from—the rest of the world.

Driven by concepts, and interwoven with art history, this thesis uses a conceptually oriented history

writing style. This style of writing offers a unique way of theorising and historicising art. Under modernity, writing is a powerful tool “in the production of ‘imagined communities,’ and in ‘writing’ the nation into being,” to be used in “efforts to cast off the legacies of empire and dispossession” (Ballantyne & Peterson, 2020, p. 3). In that vein, this thesis, too, is a way of enhancing the mana of the artworks, and the artists’ thinking and practices—writing them into the canon such that their voices, their cultural and generational experiences and their art are present together, and with their approval.

## 1.4 Notes on Terminology

Centring a decolonial position within this thesis has also offered a methodological approach to language.

I use *Moana* (Māhina, 1999a, 1999b; Mallon et al., 2012; Eshārghi, 2015; Ka’ili, 2017; Lopesi, 2018a; Hernandez, 2019) to refer to the Pacific region, Pacific people and Pacific ways, rather than the terms *Pacific/Oceania/Pasifika*, in alignment with other Moana scholars who acknowledge that Pacific is a colonially imposed term placed on the region. By virtue of its origins, Pacific is part of the very *colonial imaginary* that I discuss throughout the thesis. According to scholar Tēvita O Ka’ili, the term *Moana* “helps Moanans retain their memories of the past and awareness of its presence” (2018, p. 24). However, there are also problems with the term *Moana*, as there would be problems with any term used to describe such a vast group of people. Specifically, *Moana* has been critiqued for its linguistic exclusion of the Melanesian and Micronesian language groups.<sup>8</sup> However, despite these problems, it seems even worse to continue use of the term Pacific today and to perpetuate the violence of the

<sup>8</sup>. At a conference session at the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania 2019, chaired by Tēvita O Ka’ili, called Decolonizing our Sea of Islands, it became clear that Moana and non-Moana researchers working in areas such as Guāhan, Solomon Islands and Micronesia did not feel an affinity to the term, and even felt excluded by those who use it. Similarly,

participants in a talanoa hosted by Vā Moana – Pacific Spaces in June 2019, titled Salty Blood and Tears: Ocean Stories, could not find a common ground and a connection to the term Moana. The panel included Vicente Diaz, Julia Mage’au Gray, Tēvita O Ka’ili, Rosanna Raymond, Ty Kāwika Tengan and myself. The idea was to host “an open discussion to find

*colonial imaginary*.

Similarly, not wanting to perpetuate a Western knowledge hierarchy, I have opted not to italicise words that are other to the English language as, in the context of this thesis, Sāmoan and other Moana languages are central to this work. Non-English terms are translated in a glossary at the end of the document. I have capitalised the ‘I’ for Indigenous, ‘B’ for Black and ‘B’ for Brown to give everything that same status. Throughout the thesis, I use the Sāmoan term Pālagi to refer to peoples and cultures of European descent. I have also remained conscious of gender pronouns, preferring to use the neutral ‘they’ or their name unless a specific pronoun has been indicated as a preference by the person.

I use the terms ‘global Indigenous communities’ and ‘global communities of colour’ to identify global groups who have comparable Indigenous and or racialised experiences. ‘Communities of colour’ comes from the phrase ‘people of colour’ (POC) and its various iterations—one being BIPOC which stands for Black, Indigenous and people of colour. These phrases are useful for talking about non-Pālagi and particular racialised experiences of the world; however, where possible, I use more specific descriptors to avoid homogenising racialised experiences.

In this thesis, *Moana Cosmopolitanism* describes the conceptual phenomenon and lived reality. *Moana Cosmopolitan* describes a person or people of that reality. *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* are the culmination of actually imagined outputs made by *Moana Cosmopolitans*, which is to say a combination of imaginings. While this will be made clear throughout the thesis, perhaps it is helpful to clarify the distinctions between these terms at this early stage.

a relationship or *vā* that we might want to engage within the next few years, what are the common bonds and definitive differences that we can discuss.” While Mage’au Gray, of Papua New Guinean, descent felt as though it simply did not reflect her or her language groups, Diaz thought that there was an

## 1.5 Thesis Structure

The writing of this thesis is split into three distinct forms—fa’amaumauga, chapters and imaginings—alternating between the three. For example, so far we have already been introduced to a fa’amaumauga, which opened the thesis, and moved into a more traditional thesis chapter (here), which will be followed by an imagining next. The thesis structure continues in this way, alternating between these distinct sections, all written in a different style and with a unique purpose, as follows:

1) Fa’amaumauga: Throughout this thesis, fa’amaumauga are journal entries based on personal reflections of my own lived experiences through critical autoethnography.

2) Chapters: This thesis includes seven chapters, which combine the traditional elements of literature reviews and discussions to build the concept of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and work toward the theory of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*.

3) Imaginings: The imaginings within this thesis are individual and group artistic contributions to wider collective *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. These simultaneously demonstrate how the *imaginary* configures in *Moana Cosmopolitan* thought. Specifically, they combine close readings of artworks and exhibitions, excerpts from *talanoa* and literature reviews.

The fa’amaumauga, chapters and imaginings are stitched and strung together through the methodology of *su’ifefiloi*, which allows for the combination of many different parts to create something new. Over the course of the thesis these three distinct components or parts—each distinguished by design, writing style

issue “when Ocean as Moana conflates one part of the Pacific for the entirety, and loses specificity of seas,” or because “much of the Pacific does not deal with the Ocean as do peoples from Polynesia and Micronesia” (Diaz, 2019, p. 35).

and function—are wrapped together in ways that hold the autonomy of each part while adding to each other to create a new offering. For this research, I have interpreted and arranged these elements to work toward the emerging theory *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, as discussed in Chapter 6.

Every chapter starts with a fa'amaumauga, or journal entry, which offers a moment of pause and critical reflection on elements of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and contemporary Moana art. Written in the first person, they demonstrate my own processing of and positioning within the research. In addition, amongst the reading of artworks, reviewing of literature and theorising, they act as moments of wayfinding, where both the researcher and the reader are able to take an interlude and reorientate themselves before moving into the proceeding chapter.<sup>9</sup>

Chapter 1, Fa'atonuga, introduces the research and its guiding questions. I anecdotally share with readers the initial impetus for starting this research journey and what it was that drove me down this academic route. Chapter 1 then moves on to discuss the rationale and significance of the research while making notes on terminology and finishing by outlining the structure for the rest of the thesis.

Imagining One, Two Shows, One Imaginary: A New Generation and their Imaginary focuses on two concurrent exhibitions in 2012, *Home AKL* at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and *This must be the place*, an exhibition by tertiary students at ST PAUL St Gallery, Auckland. *Home AKL*, as a launching point of the thesis, offers a kind of prehistory of contemporary Moana art and *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* in Aotearoa before 2012, drawing a clear demarcation between established art history and the focus of this research. The significance of the exhibition, as well as the surrounding critique, is both a handy bookend for

this research and demonstrates the contemporary Moana art landscape at the time that *digital native* Moana artists were developing their own practice, as typified by those in the exhibition *This must be the place*. Thinking through the two exhibitions together establishes the presence of the artists this thesis focuses on within longstanding *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*.

Chapter 2, Tūlaga ma Faiga o Su'isu'iga, positions the research and researcher within Indigenous art theory, utilising a decolonial and Moana research approach. Chapter 2 then outlines the methodological approach of *su'ifefiloi* as well as my own interpretation and adaptation of the methodology through the ula lole metaphor. Subsequently, this chapter then discusses the methods employed within *su'ifefiloi*: looking at art, *talanoa*, *critical autoethnography* and *reparative reading*.

Imagining Two, Radical Imagining and Moana Futurism: Ahilapalapa Rands' *Lift Off* (2018), offers a close reading of Ahilapalapa Rands' moving-image work *Lift Off*, commissioned for the exhibition *The Commute* at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane. The work is discussed in relation to a number of key concepts—*solidarity*, *futurism*, *speculative science fiction* and *intergenerational trauma* and *healing*. What we begin to see by closely reading *Lift Off* is a consciousness of the *colonial imaginary*. In Rands' specific context, this *colonial imaginary* was seen through the 250-year commemorations of Captain Cook's Pacific voyages in London, where she was living at the time. After actively participating in creating alternative narratives to the memorialisation of Cook, *Lift Off* was made.

Chapter 3, Imaginaries, introduces the concept of the *imaginary* as used within this thesis. Chapter 3 reviews the literature surrounding the *imaginary* in three sections. The first provides an overview of Castoriadis' *social imaginary*, examining the key

<sup>9</sup>. This process of writing fa'amaumauga speaks to Linda Tuhiwai Smith's notion of rewriting and righthing, discussed in the seminal text *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1992). Smith writes, "It is not simply about giving an oral account...but a

very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying" (1992, p. 30).



conceptual components: the *social imaginary*, *radical imagination*, *central* and *peripheral imaginaries*.

The second section reviews literature on the *colonial imaginary* (Anderson, 2006; Steinmetz, 2007) and then examines the *colonial imaginary* over the Moana. The final section looks at *decolonial imaginaries* made in relation to the *colonial imaginary* yet seeking to build new worlds (Bhabha, 1994; Appadurai, 1996; Pérez, 1999; Kelley, 2002; Dillon, 2012; Mar-Abe, 2015). This literature is reviewed in four parts: *decolonial imaginaries*, *future imaginaries*, *diasporic imaginaries* and *cosmopolitan imaginaries*.

Imagining Three, *More Roots than Trees*: Emily Parr's *Moana Calling Me Home* (2019–2020) provides a close reading of Parr's six-part moving-image work, which is the most recent work discussed in this thesis. This work traces Parr's own family history of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* to Pirongia, Ihumātao, Ōtūmoetai, Āpia, Nuku'alofa, Neiafu and Tauranga Moana, which ties into the notion of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* as developed in Chapter 4. I discuss Parr's work in relation to the *colonial archive*, *decolonial imaginary*, *cosmopolitanism*, *roots* and *routes*, and *vā*.

Chapter 4, *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, introduces the concept of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and starts by providing an overview of Enlightenment *cosmopolitanism* (Kant, 1963, 2006; Marx, 1994; Nussbaum, 1997) and its utopian notions of universality. It then centres Philosopher and semiotician Walter D. Mignolo's *decolonial option* (2011), which fractures cosmopolitan universality and advocates a pluriversal and local approach instead, thereby offering a theoretical break, rescaling Enlightenment *cosmopolitanism* as one local iteration of the concept amongst others. The chapter then reviews *local cosmopolitanism* literature, focusing on racialised and subaltern articulations, of which *Moana Cosmopolitanism* is the local iteration at issue here.

Imagining Four, *Great Ocean Curating: The Commute, Layover, and Transits and Returns* (2018–2020), discusses three exhibitions: *The Commute* at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2018); *Layover* at

Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland (2019); and *Transits and Returns* at Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver (2019–2020). Enlarging the previous chapter, which locates Moana experience within global worlds, this imagining focuses on the category of the *Global Indigenous* within contemporary art as an *imaginary* that requires alternative modes of world building. In these particular exhibition projects, the curators drew on James Clifford's work on *commuting cultures* to incorporate notions of mobility—specifically visits, commutes and layovers—as a curatorial methodology based on a relational ethic specific to kinship and place. What this emphasis on mobility required was a framework outside of colonially mediated kinship.

Chapter 5, *Vā Moana*, discusses the social world of the *Moana Cosmopolitan* as being relational, *rooted* and *routed*, physical and digital all at once. *Vā Moana* describes the web of relations that makes up the social world of *Moana Cosmopolitans* and their *imaginaries*, which I argue is a more appropriate way to understand the geography of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*. The social world of the *Moana Cosmopolitan* as argued in this chapter is formed through *vā relations*, which extend as far as one's global network on and offline. *Vā Moana* describes this web of relations for the *Moana Cosmopolitan*, which is predicated on the relational ethics implicit in notions of *vā*.

The final imagining in this thesis, *Imagining Five, IYKYK and the Joy of Making: Louisa Afoa's Wallpapers* (2015–2019), is a close reading of Louisa Afoa's four wallpaper works made between 2015 and 2019. In this imagining, I focus on the wallpaper medium as a mode of making that brings Afoa joy. This element of Afoa's practice is a conscious shift to make art that does not reproduce trauma for the artist. This shift, I argue, is an example of *creative sovereignty* or *mau*. I chose to end on this imagining because it has guided my own research journey, as Afoa's wallpapers offered the realisation of something I had been struggling with throughout the research—naming the particular politics in *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*.

Chapter 6, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*,

ties together all of the preceding sections to work toward an emerging theory of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. In this chapter I discuss the characteristics of the *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary* of the artists focused on in this research as: 1) being *decolonial*; 2) being concerned with *deep time*; 3) existing within a relational geography or *Vā Moana*; 4) grounded in positions of *mau*; and 5) ultimately having remix quality or *su'ifefiloi*. These characteristics were developed through *talanoa* with the artists featured in this thesis, through the close analysis of their art and exhibitions, and through my *su'ifefiloi* or remixing of different theories and traditions to make something new—an articulation of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, the main contribution of this research project.

In Chapter 7, *I'u o Manatu*, I offer a reflective conclusion that returns to the key contribution of this research: *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. In this final chapter I reflect on the research, discuss further research pathways, or *ala*, and conclude by revisiting *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* as discussed in this thesis.

Imagining can generate shared imagery and ideas, offering new possibilities of identification and relationality. In the context of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, thinking through an *imaginary* empowers a simultaneously local and global sense of place. A *diasporic imaginary* closely entangled with narratives of displacement and non-belonging is reimagined through *Moana Cosmopolitanism*. It offers a chance, I would argue, to move beyond the inhibiting results of deficit thinking inherent in the *colonial imaginary*, which restricts the Moana social world to the *hole in the doughnut* (Hau'ofa, 1998, p. 393), to something more emancipatory and expansive, placing Moana people back into global webs, remembering the cosmopolitan character of Moana life in which they have *creative sovereignty* or *mau* within their complex and multifaceted lives. Moreover, this requires placing the imaginative capacity of *radical imagination* back in the hands of Moana people to imagine otherwise. Because, after all, the Moana has always been

cosmopolitan, and so too are *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*.



# Imagining 1.

## Two Shows, One Imaginary

### A New Generation and their Imaginary



**Figure 1.** Hastings-McFall, N. (2012). *Home by the sea* [Installation]. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/whats-on/exhibition/home-akl?q=%2Fwhats-on%2Fexhibition%2Fhome-akl>

#### Introduction

I remember vividly the conversation around *Home AKL* (2012) as it was happening. I was working as a gallery guide at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki at the time, and was privy to inhouse conversations, gallery guide briefings and the specific fast pacing of gallery curators and directors as they clink and clunk across hardwood floors. The exhibition examined concepts of home and belonging in the work of contemporary

Moana art, and was set to be exciting, a celebration of Moana cultures, arts and artists who call Auckland home. Anticipation was building, in part because the comings and goings of Moana artists through the doors of the Auckland Art Gallery were increasing. It felt as if artists I knew and others I had only admired from a distance were in a constant rotation of meetings with curators, registrars and designers. *Home AKL* was dubbed as being long overdue and the first significant exhibition of contemporary Moana art in 18 years.

The year 2012 was also my third year in the Bachelor Fine Art (Honours) programme at Elam School of Fine Arts, The University of Auckland, so I

was beginning to become part of what is often called the ‘Pacific art community’ myself.<sup>10</sup> The Pacific—or Moana—art community, as it will be referred to from this point on, at Elam was small. The other Moana students in this cohort were Natasha Matila-Smith, Salome Tanuvasa, Cordelle Feau, Caleb Satele, Lucy Aukafolau and Sione Faletau, who comprised one of the larger Moana cohorts compared to previous years (not that we saw ourselves as a Moana cohort of course).

There were artist-run spaces that I would eventually learn to feel comfortable in; in 2012 places like Snake Pit, Gloria Knight and of course the long-standing RM Gallery were around—eventually my peers would set up spaces to replace these ones, with spaces like Fuzzyvibes and GLOVEBOX, only to be replaced again after a year or two. But these spaces and their relationship to contemporary Moana art seemed tenuous.<sup>11</sup> It always felt like us island kids never had the means to set up our own spaces, and while we were always welcomed by our peers, they modelled, in essence, a mode of exhibition-making that they already knew.

For many Moana art students, the contemporary art world widened through the organisation Tautai<sup>12</sup> and their tertiary programmes, which became key in lieu of Moana artist-run spaces. At the time, Tautai’s tertiary programmes included road trips with students from the five art schools in Auckland,<sup>13</sup> pastoral support through a tertiary liaison and the crème de la crème of the programme, an annual tertiary exhibition held at ST PAUL St Gallery.

In 2012 Tautai’s annual tertiary exhibition coincided with *Home AKL*, the two opening one night apart from each other. That year’s exhibition was

curated by Jeremy Leatinu’u and called *This must be the place*, a title borrowed from a photographic series in the exhibition by Talia Smith. It felt like a real time to be coming through as Moana art students. In what could be called a height of contemporary Moana art in the city, we felt seen. But similarly, as art students, we were all very conscious of the work happening down the hill at the Auckland Art Gallery and the conversations that were bubbling away because of *Home AKL*. We were becoming aware of a Moana art legacy that we were a part of, whether we chose it that way or not. And this felt like a specific burden that our non-Moana friends at art school did not share.

Thinking through these two related exhibitions, which coincided with each other in 2012, *Home AKL* and *This must be the place* offer a useful starting point to begin the discussion of contemporary Moana art within this thesis. *Home AKL* is significant as a momentous exhibition for contemporary Moana and New Zealand art history more broadly and, to date—almost a decade later—it is still the last significant Moana group exhibition of this kind in Aotearoa. To talk about *Home AKL* is to talk about and acknowledge the history of Moana art that led up to that moment in 2012. *Home AKL* in the context of this thesis additionally demonstrates the *imaginary* that a generation of *digital native* artists were looking into as they were developing their own mode of practice. Artists who, at the time, were just trying to work things out in their art school environments. *This must be the place* is not comparable to the historical significance that *Home AKL* has for contemporary Moana art, but thinking through the two exhibitions together helps to demonstrate the social world of contemporary

**10.** I put Pacific art community in inverted commas here to denote the way in which the term is used to falsely claim a community of artists who are ethnically connected. While in some cases, especially in the early era of contemporary Moana art circa 1970s–90s, there was a need for the establishment of culturally specific community within a national contemporary art scene more broadly, more recently the scale of Moana people working in the arts has created multiple sub-communities within what we might have once called the ‘Pacific art community.’

**11.** Artist-run spaces always provide a good snapshot of time and, in a way, they offer a kind of timeline of their own within a local art scene, where people can associate certain art

moments or periods with what artist-run spaces were running at the time. What is significant to note, though, is that because of class inequities felt heavily by Moana people in Aotearoa, and the capital required to operate artist-run spaces, they are very rarely run by Moana artists.

**12.** Tautai, or Tautai Contemporary Pacific Arts Trust, is a charitable trust that was formed in the 1980s and is dedicated to championing Pacific arts and artists.

**13.** The art schools were from The University of Auckland, Auckland University of Technology, Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design, Unitec and Manukau Institute of Technology. The latter programme no longer exists.

Moana artists too young to be included in an exhibition of that magnitude at that time. It highlights where contemporary Moana art was in Aotearoa when the artists discussed in this thesis were coming to find their own creative footing, and who today are firmly establishing themselves and their work within a longer history of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. *Home AKL* as a starting point for this thesis offers a kind of prehistory to these artists.

*Moana imaginaries* demonstrated in landmark exhibitions have provided key contemporary art and art historical interventions in the *colonial imaginary* of the Moana. And, as I would argue, exhibitions like *Home AKL* provide a new *imaginary* for a new generation of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, like those from *This must be the place*. In this *imagining*, by focusing on the moment of these two exhibitions, we are able to delineate where the thesis picks up from an art history already written, and where it attempts to fill in some of what is yet to be written, establishing its own ground. How is the *imaginary* configured in *Moana Cosmopolitan* thought for this generation, and how was that shaped by looking at the pre-existing *imaginary* of contemporary Moana art as seen in exhibitions like *Home AKL*?

### The Legacy of Contemporary Moana Art

From the 1950s onwards, a new generation of Moana scholars in diaspora worked to (re)imagine the Moana on their own terms and from their own ways of being. These scholars liberated understandings of themselves in the rapidly changing world of decolonisation, becoming part of the new professional, administrative and academic elites (Vaai, 1999, p. 24). Moana scholars were making their way through universities, creating what would be significant long-lasting impacts in fields such as education, developing methodologies and making decolonial interventions into the academy.

Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa (1932–2014) was

famously the first Sāmoan to complete her doctorate at the University of London in 1960, after being awarded the MacKintosh Travelling Scholarship. With the third Moana Oxford Rhodes Scholar KDee Ma'ia'i (and coincidentally Le Tagaloa's great-niece) announced only last year, the early date of Le Tagaloa's story still seems remarkable. Yet it is a familiar story for a generation of scholars to follow Le Tagaloa, many of whom would go on to make significant impacts to *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. When tracing a history of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, one of the significant impacts was the increased global travel for education, a journey that for many was enabled by scholarship opportunities.

A network of scholars, poets and artists imagined seminal and enduring *Moana Cosmopolitan* concepts from within the university through published papers and conference presentations, as well as literature, namely fiction and poetry. Many of these scholars were born in their Moana homelands and were the 'first' of their kind, in their families, at their universities or within their discipline areas. They faced an extreme amount of work writing themselves and their experiences into the preeminent imaginaries of the times, and created *Moana Cosmopolitan* networks within and enabled by the university system.

While we know the narratives of active labour recruitment of the Moana to Aotearoa—with much of the Moana community, myself included descending from that history—formal and informal schemes relating to education were also the reason for large migration to New Zealand in the twentieth century (Māhina-Tuai, 2012b, p. 161). In the New Zealand context, these relationships were formed with island groups that New Zealand either administered or had special relationships with, namely the Cook Islands, Tokelau, Sāmoa, Niue, Tonga and Fiji. This era was perhaps cemented largely in a *Moana imaginary* through visions of a 'land of milk and honey,' an *imaginary* largely responsible for the Moana diaspora in Aotearoa as we know it today.

Because of the inefficiency of colonial education,

students from the wider Moana began attending schools in New Zealand, at first as privately paying students then through scholarships offered by the New Zealand Government of the day (Māhina-Tuai, 2012b, p. 163). This started as early as 1919, but it remained somewhat sporadic and casual until 1945, after a visit to the Pacific Islands by Peter Fraser, the 24th Prime Minister of New Zealand and signatory of the United Nations (UN) founding charter, who played a key role in the UN's decolonising vision (Māhina-Tuai, 2012b, p. 164). Appalled at the non-efforts of New Zealand in colonial education, he put renewed focus on education programmes in the Moana with active policy development and increased funding. By the early 1950s, New Zealand had a key role in schools in Niue and the Cook Islands, and was opening high schools in Sāmoa and Rarotonga (Māhina-Tuai, 2012b, pp. 164–165). By the 1960s New Zealand was spending 10 to 20 times more on Moana education than in 1945 (Māhina-Tuai, 2012b, p. 165). Similar education pathways from the Moana to Aotearoa in fact still exist today. Thus, the congregation of Moana scholars in universities has been disproportionately important in *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*.

In 1952 Maualaivao Albert Wendt was awarded one of nine government scholarships to attend New Plymouth Boys' High School in New Zealand. He went on to study at Ardmore Teachers' Training College, and then Victoria University of Wellington, where he graduated with a master's degree in History. In 1972 he wrote two plays, *Comes the Revolution* and *The Contract*, followed by his debut novel *Sons for the Return Home* in 1973, which he wrote while serving as principal of Sāmoa College. The following year he went to the University of the South Pacific, Fiji, returning in 1977. In 1976 he wrote his seminal essay, 'Towards a New Oceania,' published in the first edition of *Mana*. Epeli Hau'ofa, being a son of missionaries, was already part of a kind of cosmopolitanism. After schooling in Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Fiji, Hau'ofa's tertiary studies was equally cosmopolitan attending university in New South Wales,

Montreal, and Canberra, where he gained a PhD in social anthropology in 1981. He published his poetry collection *Tales of the Tikongs* in 1983.

That same year, Grace Molisa published her first poetry collection, *Black Stone* (1983). Molisa was the first woman from Vanuatu to gain a university degree, a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of the South Pacific in 1977. She spoke five languages. Momoe Malietoa Von Reiche published the first poetry collection written in English by a Sāmoan poet, *Solaua, a Secret Embryo*, in 1979. Von Reiche, too, attended school in New Zealand, going to Nelson Girls' College, followed by Wellington Teachers' College, then the polytechnic school of design (specialising in art at both), and then on to Victoria University (Marsh, 2004). *You, the choice of my parents* (1974), the debut poetry collection by Konai Helu Thaman, was written between Wendt's *Sons for the Return Home* and Von Reiche's *Solaua, a Secret Embryo*. Thaman, too, came to New Zealand for school, namely Epsom Girls' Grammar School, followed by a Bachelor of Arts in geography from The University of Auckland and a teaching diploma from Auckland Secondary Teachers' College. Thaman subsequently travelled in 1972 to the United States to complete her postgraduate education with a master's degree in international education from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and later a PhD in education from the University of the South Pacific.

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, these scholars not only built *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* in their scholarly work, building methodologies and concepts that remain in use today, but they were also imagining worlds in their poetry and fiction. As curator and art historian Fulimalo Pereira writes, "These writers and academics became some of New Zealand's leading exponents of their chosen art form, individuals who would later come together to spearhead the political activism of the 1970s and 1980s" (2012, p. 308). Their imaginary interrogated the shift from homeland cultures to these new diasporic homes, charting the complex lives of a migrant generation.<sup>14</sup>

In this context, a burgeoning Moana visual art

*imaginary* was developing simultaneously, rising to prominence from the 1980s onwards—a time of change for Moana people in Aotearoa starting to establish firm roots in the country. Artistic, scholarly and literary contributions, as well as Moana contributions to the wider sociopolitical fabric of Aotearoa, established *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* of the time.

This way of seeing and asserting homeland ways of doing things in new diasporic homes was inherently decolonial in its reclamation of Indigenous Moana knowledge, and refusal of assimilation.<sup>15</sup> Notably, this occurred in the context of what has been called a Māori political and cultural renaissance, beginning in the 1970s (Thomas, 1996), which saw Māori demand recognition of rangatiratanga.

There were two early contemporary Moana art outliers<sup>16</sup> worth mentioning, who both featured in *Home AKL*: painters Teuane Tibbo and Paul Tangata. Tibbo (1895–1984) came to New Zealand from Sāmoa after World War 2 and started painting in 1963, at the age of 70. Tangata, on the other hand, migrated to New Zealand from the Cook Islands in the late 1950s to become the first Moana graduate of Elam School of Fine Arts in 1965. As Fulimalo Pereira notes, they have both become important “reference points of note and promise, their paintings early voices in the Pacific diaspora evoking a tropical home from a temperate and dislocating distance” (2012, p. 312).

Moana *imaginings* flourished at a larger scale in the 1980s. Rising to prominence at this time was Fatu Feu'u (b. 1946). Feu'u—who was notably excluded from *Home AKL*—migrated to Aotearoa from Sāmoa in his 20s and started exhibiting in the 1980s. His early painting and sculpture are well recognised through their iconic use of Sāmoan motifs and colour, making clear references to both his homeland of Sāmoa and

histories of navigation. Another artist who rose to prominence at a similar time, Filipe Tohi, migrated to Aotearoa from Tonga in 1978, and similarly draws references and forms from traditions of navigation as well as *lalava* (lashing). While Tohi and Feu'u were making art, John Pule was focusing on his poetry as a regular at the poetry nights held at The Globe tavern (Pule, 2020). Born in Niue and migrating to Aotearoa as a child, his homeland and its visual references would play a key role in his painting practice emerging in the late 1980s. Other artists of this time—while not an exhaustive list—include Johnny Penisula, Iosefa Leo and Pauline Hoeft Cocker.

Artists such as Leafa Wilson, Jim Vivieaere, Sale Jessop, Lily Laita, Lyle Penisula, Michel Tuffery, Ioane Ioane and Niki Hastings-McFall pinpoint a shift occurring at the end of the decade, moving into the 1990s. As Caroline Vercoe notes, “Artistic representation changes as the emerging voices of new generations attempt to reconcile their parents’ and grandparents’ stories with their urban lifestyles” (2002, p. 207). In the 1990s, first, second and in some instances, third generation New Zealand-born Moana people, or “children of the migration,” were coming of age in urban Aotearoa. Not being migrants themselves and many being of mixed ancestry, the artists of the 1990s were less likely to be “products of elsewhere” (Pereira, 2012, p. 305). Not only were they of Aotearoa, but this diasporic generation was also becoming part of the ‘Pacific art community,’ a unifying identity created partly out of community building and partly out of survival. This “polifusion,” as identified by Mallon and Pereira (2012, p. 9), created, for perhaps the first time in contemporary Moana art, a ‘Pacific voice.’

In the mid-1990s more art-school trained contemporary Moana artists began to practice,

outside the scope of this research. This section provides a very selective overview of what is a complex and multilayered history, for the purposes of theorising artworks made between 2012 and 2020.

**16.** Another significant outlier who contributed to a Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary more broadly is Alistair Te Ariki Campbell, who was born in 1926 and published his first poetry collection, *Mine Eyes Dazzle*, in 1950, going on to have a significant impact on Moana literature.

**14.** The work of these elder scholars has continued to be developed and reconceptualised by subsequent generations, who had equally cosmopolitan university journeys. I think of scholars like Damon Salesa, the first Sāmoan Rhodes Scholar, who completed his PhD at Oxford, and Vicente Diaz and Teresia Teaiwa who completed their PhDs, at different times, in the history of consciousness at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

**15.** A comprehensive history of contemporary Moana art falls





**Figure 2.** Vivieaere, J. (1994). *Bottled ocean* [Exhibition]. City Gallery Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand. <https://citygallery.org.nz/exhibitions/bottled-ocean/>

including Dagmar Dyck, Ani O'Neill, Lonnie Hutchinson, Andy Leleisi'uao and Graham Fletcher. Other avenues, such as fashion, provided artists such as Rosanna Raymond, Greg Semu and Yuki Kihara with inroads. The Moana influence was everywhere, on the streets, in magazines and in music. New Zealand's own hip hop scene flourished with a unique mash of Moana and American influences. Moana theatre was taking shape too, with groups like Pacific Underground, Pacific Theatre and, in the late 1990s, the formation of the Naked Sāmoans. Feu'u with a group of friends formed an early iteration of Tautai, the first Pasifika Festival was held in Auckland in 1993, and then the Tu Fa'atasi Festival in 1994. Moana people were making their own place in Aotearoa, one which was young, urban and fresh. As the decade went on, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* flavoured with an urban particularity of Aotearoa were burgeoning. Issues of identity came to the fore with both homeland and diasporic culture interrogated as a way to make place. Who Moana people were, collectively and individually, seemed a key driver in this, an *imaginary* defined by liminality (Mallon & Pereria, 2002, p. 8).

The Pacific question rose to the attention of the wider art world in 1990, when the first exhibition focused on Moana art was staged in a New Zealand art gallery. The exhibition was called *Te Moemoea no Iotefa*, and was curated by art historian Rangihira Panoho for the Sarjeant Gallery in Whanganui and later

toured to City Gallery Wellington and then Auckland in 1991. *Bottled Ocean: Contemporary Polynesian Artists*, curated by Jim Vivieaere, opened at City Gallery Wellington in 1994. *Bottled Ocean*, arguably one of the most famous influences on the *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary* of the decade, would go on to have long-lasting impact on the way Moana artists framed themselves within contemporary art.

The burden of 'Pacific art' seemed to be closing in on artists, and *Bottled Ocean* offered an institutional critique on what that term even meant. On the term 'Pacific art,' Vivieaere (1994) wrote, "With exhibitions of this sort one wonders how Pacific cultural origins and traditions can be made a source of creative possibilities rather than constraints" (n.p.). Later Vivieaere (1997) called these cultural constraints a three-legged race for Moana artists in which one leg is tied to their community, one to their audience and the other to the art world, with only a narrow opening left for the artist and their work to be admitted into a gallery space. As Refiti reported on a talanoa he had with Vivieaere, "It's now clear to me that we were dealing with a shared feeling of uprootedness. This sense of dislocation and estrangement became the setting for the 1994 *Bottled Ocean: Contemporary Polynesian Artists exhibition*" (Refiti, 2012, p. 11).

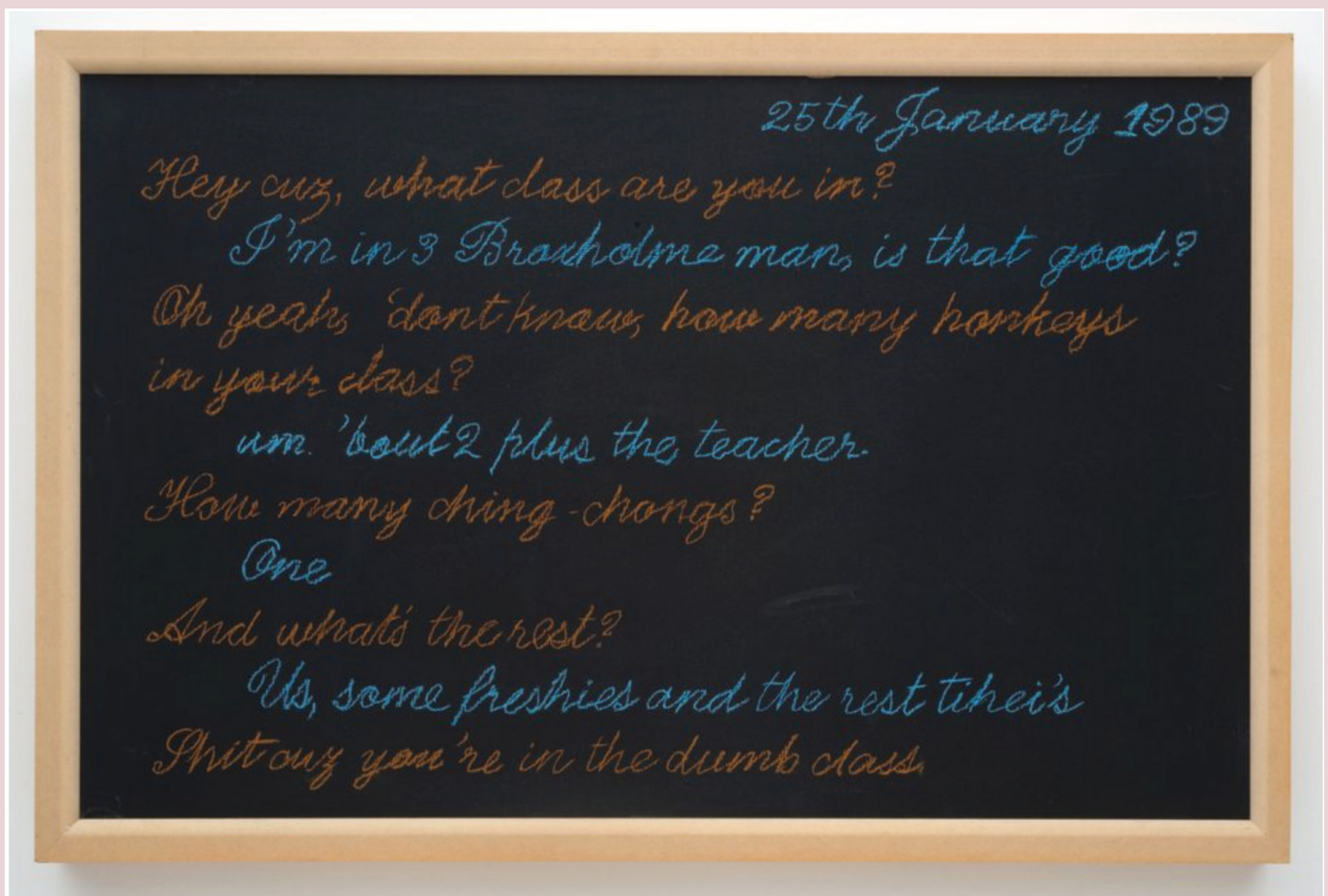
Between *Bottled Ocean* and *Home AKL*, a whole other generation of artists came to rise. By this time, most Contemporary Moana artists of prominence had

been through art school. Artists such as Janet Lilo, Edith Amituanai, Jeremy Leatinu'u, Ema Tavola, Siliga David Setoga, Tuāfale Tanoa'i aka Linda T. and Tanu Gago widened the category of contemporary Moana art even more. These artists again introduced different perspectives into the lexicon of *Moana imaginaries*. There was a growing increase in Moana curators finding permanent jobs in both museum and art gallery contexts. New spaces to exhibit emerged. Fresh Gallery Ōtara was established in 2006,<sup>17</sup> and a South Auckland flavour of Moana art was nurtured. Edith Amituanai became the first Moana nominee for of the Walters Prize in 2008. By now, another crop of art students was emerging; people like John Vea, Luke Willis Thompson, Ahilapalapa Rands, Paula Schaafhausen, Ane Tonga and Kalisolaite 'Uhila—who by 2012 were coming to change the face of contemporary Moana art once again.

The internet and social media introduced new

topics of interrogation, highlighting the emergence of artists comfortable in moving across both digital and physical worlds (Tonga, 2012, p. 80). Artists like Janet Lilo, Angela Tiatia, D.A.N.C.E Art Club, and Vaimaila Urale explored the societal shifts brought about by the internet (Tonga, 2012, p. 76). Artists working with this *augmented reality* (Jurgenson, 2011) simultaneously online and offline, between physical homes and home pages, were testing the geographic implications in the category 'Pacific art' (Tonga, 2012, p. 80)

At this point in time, and for the first time, Moana art had successive generations practising and exhibiting simultaneously in Aotearoa. Any bounded *imaginary* had been fractured, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* were aesthetically, conceptually and politically diverse. And the fractures that continued as specificities within the *polifusion* were reclaimed (Mallon & Pereira, 2012, p. 9).



**Figure 3.** Setoga, S. (2010). *Black boards* [blackboard and chalk]. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://eyecontactmagazine.com/2012/07/aucklands-pacifika-survey>

**17.** In 'The Alchemy of Fresh' on *Pantograph Punch*, Ema Tavola (2020) has provided a great account on the establishment of Fresh Gallery Ōtara as part of a Manukau City Council initiative.

## *Home AKL*, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2012

*Home AKL* was on show at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki from 7 July until 22 October 2012 and was curated by Senior Curator Ron Brownson and Associate Curators Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai, Nina Tonga and Ema Tavola.<sup>18</sup> AKL is the aviation abbreviation for the city of Auckland. Teamed with the word ‘home,’ it conceptually points clearly to the idea of Auckland becoming home for those who are from elsewhere. Many Moana migrants to Aotearoa come from the wider Moana to Auckland on that AKL flight path (or boat path in some earlier cases). In addition to most of the artists living in Auckland, the exhibition text states that, in the show, three generations of Moana artists use their personal experiences “to examine concepts of ‘home’ and belonging” (Auckland Art Gallery, n.d., para. 5). These notions of belonging or non-belonging (due to racist attitudes), a retelling of migrant narratives and the development of a uniquely local Moana articulation have perhaps largely typified contemporary Moana art and dominated the narratives surrounding it. Thus, *Home AKL* seemingly continues this long-standing trajectory of Moana people making place here in Aotearoa.

Brownson was quick to assert that *Home AKL* was not a “survey or a historical overview representing the ‘key’ figures of Pacific art” but rather that it demonstrated the way Moana art and artists have shaped “Auckland’s visual culture for decades” (2012, p. 99). *Home AKL* was the first major group exhibition of contemporary Moana art both developed by the Auckland Art Gallery and held in the city of Auckland. The exhibition’s framing asserted both that Moana art is vital to Auckland and that Auckland (and by extension

Auckland Art Gallery) is vital to Moana art (Auckland Art Gallery, n.d.; Saines, 2012, p. 9). A demonstration of this was the commissioning of 13 new projects for the exhibition to expand the gallery’s Moana art collection.

While the simplistic understandings of conceptual home, despite being contentious, are easy to grasp, perhaps the most interesting interpretations were the insights offered by Leali’ifano Albert Refiti in his essay in the exhibition’s catalogue. He raised questions about the value of concepts for contemporary Moana artists in diaspora. He comments that traditions are no longer able to be practised as in the homelands but rather that we “‘coil’ them into concepts, carry them in a ‘tool box’ of theory, then unpack, operate and perform them when required” (2012, p. 12). Thus, home becomes something experienced and imagined conceptually. Concepts, then, can offer Moana artists a sense of home. However, according to Refiti, this sense of home has less to do with place and the city of Auckland and more to do with one’s entanglement within a community (2012, p. 13). In that vein, then, the artists are entangled with each other, and the community at large, whether or not that is their chosen home (Refiti, 2012, p. 13). Refiti’s notion plays out interestingly in the exhibition itself, highlighting that home is not so much about place, but about relationality or entanglement, in his words.

## Su’ifefiloi as Curatorial Methodology

Within *Home AKL*, Associate Curators Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai, Ema Tavola and Nina Tonga each presented apparent and distinct curatorial concerns. The inclusion of diverse approaches mirrors the methodology of *su’ifefiloi*,<sup>19</sup> which allows for the combination of many parts to enable Moana concepts

<sup>18</sup>. The exhibition patrons were Leali’ifano Albert Refiti and Caroline Vercoe. The exhibition included the work of Edith Amituanai, Graham Fletcher, Tanu Gago, Foufili Halagigie, Niki Hastings-McFall, Louisa Humphry, Lonnie Hutchinson, Ioane Ioane, Leilani Kake, Lakiloko Keakea, Shigeyuki Kihara, Kolokesa Kulikefu, Jeremy Leatinu’u, Andy Leleisi’uao, Janet Lilo, Joana Monolagi, Ani O’Neill, Sēmisi Fetokai Potauaine, John Pule,

Greg Semu, Siliga David Setoga, Paul Tangata, Angela Tiatia, Sopolemalama Filipe Tohi, Teuane Tibbo, Hūlita Tupou, Jim Vivieaere and Kaetaeta Watson.

<sup>19</sup>. *Su’ifefiloi* is the methodology used for this thesis, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 2, Tūlaga ma Faiga o Su’isu’iga.



“to be resharpened and reused in new situations, allowing lived traditions to produce new ideas and concepts” (Refiti, 2014, p. 28). While the curators of *Home AKL* do not acknowledge the exhibition in this way, *su’ifefiloi* (as a curatorial methodology combining different points of view, entangled through people’s Moana ancestry, to create something new) offers one way to analyse the exhibition.

Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai, in a series of publications and projects, has continued over time to push against Eurocentric frameworks being applied to contemporary Moana art and people. Māhina-Tuai calls for a decolonial approach to the hierarchies implicit in the English language and art’s own Western systems of categorisation (Mallon et al., 2012; Māhina-Tuai, 2012; Chitham et al., 2019). This enduring push is also evident in her work in *Home AKL* and her curatorial essay. Lakiloko Keakea, Joana Monolagi and Kautaha Koka’anga are all artists in the exhibition who are often labelled as *heritage*, *traditional* and *customary*—in contrast with the notion of being contemporary. Māhina-Tuai states: “they all practise here and now, in Aotearoa New Zealand. They are, therefore, all contemporary artists of Pacific heritage. Or are they?” (2012, p. 32). The label contemporary, Māhina-Tuai argues, holds “an elevated position in art historical discourse compared with those termed ‘heritage’” (2012a, p. 32). She questions the value of the Western definition of arts for Moana art, offering a Tongan classification instead, which does not compartmentalise Moana art into a traditional–contemporary binary. Looking holistically at art also helps to define work traditionally made by women as fine art rather than seeing women’s work on a lower level of the hierarchy, as craft.

Similarly, Nina Tonga challenges classifications, in this instance through the inclusion of the digital space. Tonga pushed the concept of *home* in the exhibition to explore the way, due to social media, home has been “released from its geographical mooring and is now located within a global networked public” (Tonga, 2012, p. 75). This network includes the circulation of digital

content, which “has transformed Pacific diaspora communities into multiple nodes in a dynamic creative network” (2012, p. 75). Advocating for a sophisticated understanding of social media and digital technologies in the work of Moana artists, Tonga asserted the value in serious consideration of issues arising from the internet and its impacts on Moana artists.

Ema Tavola, on the other hand, reasserted the role of Fresh Gallery Ōtara and South Auckland within the exhibition, a gallery that Tavola managed for its first six years. Tavola’s presence and writing in the catalogue firmly planted Fresh Gallery Ōtara and the gallery’s South Auckland audiences into the centre of the development of contemporary Moana art in Auckland. Tavola’s advocacy reminded audiences that, in the many years that Auckland Art Gallery had not mounted Moana art exhibitions, local spaces had been filling that gap.

The combination of these three curatorial voices highlighted the heterogeneous concerns across the team regarding the question of what contemporary Moana art is and should be. It gave the exhibition an implicit quality of *su’ifefiloi* and, in this instance, something new emerged in the form of a snapshot of contemporary Moana art in 2012. The overlapping and contrasting curatorial concerns of the Associate Curators demonstrated the heterogeneity inherent in contemporary Moana art.

## Critical Reception

The scale of *Home AKL* meant that it garnered a significant amount of national media attention. While the ambition and importance of the project were universally acknowledged, the critical response was itself mixed. Art critic Anthony Byrt’s cynical sentiment that it was “a better-late-than-never acknowledgement” of the gallery’s oversight was one commonly held (2012, p. 42).

Writer Daniel Satele’s sharp critique interrogated the curatorial theme of home and the association

between home and Pacificness. It was, specifically, the “feel-good affirmation of Pacific peoples ‘at-home-ness’” or their belonging that Satele felt hung over the exhibition as a whole (2012b, para. 10). Satele’s interrogation of the theme is fascinating: he sees it as a “rhetorical gesture” often made in New Zealand. He argues that the theme asserts “that non-white ethnic groups feel ‘at home’ here in a way that serves, ultimately, to affirm the white settler community’s sense of belonging on this land” (2012b, para. 10). The implicit message is that those of the dominant—and in this case, Pākehā—culture, whose belonging is not in question, celebrate a racialised ethnic group’s optional inclusion (2012b).

For this reason, Satele suggests that an ethnically non-specific art show would never choose the theme of being at home in this country as something to celebrate (2012b), because the question of inclusion has never been optional and rather, for many Pākehā, a sense of home in New Zealand is assumed. The problem is not a celebratory exhibition as such, but rather that the gesture does not dismantle the racial inequalities that exist within art institutions and New Zealand society more broadly. The contrast between this celebration and the sociopolitical position of Moana people was acknowledged in Mauaiaivao Albert Wendt’s opening address, which congratulated the gallery’s ambition while questioning how the Moana community, which produces such great art, can also be “over-represented in negative social statistics” (Byrt, 2012, p. 42).

Attempts to locate the Moana in Aotearoa are perhaps best typified through Auckland’s catchphrase, ‘the largest Pacific (or Polynesian) city in the world.’<sup>20</sup> However, not only is this fact statistically questionable, it has been criticised as giving Auckland an air of Pacificness without having to care about Moana people (Salesa, 2017). Issues arising from this dichotomy were seen in the lead up to *Home AKL* with the Advance Pasifika: March for Our Future

protest held in Auckland on Saturday 16 June 2012, one month before the exhibition opened. The protest wanted acknowledgement for the Moana contribution to both Auckland and New Zealand, “demanding equality, affordable housing, better education, quality healthcare, fairness in the justice system, jobs, and a better future for Pasifika communities” (Te Papa, n.d.).

This political context raised conversations within the gallery concerning the accessibility of the Auckland Art Gallery to Moana communities, given their low Moana visitor rates. Acknowledging this, the Chartwell Trust, a key funder of the gallery, provided a free bus service from Mangere to the gallery every Saturday during the month of August 2012. A press release put out by Creative New Zealand (n.d.) stated:

The Chartwell Trust has created an excellent opportunity for people in South Auckland to experience one of their city’s greatest attractions and to visit Home AKL....

Because of the racial implications of belonging in the notion of home, Satele comments that it is “typical of the way New Zealanders tend to imagine Pacific people having nothing important or serious to say. This line of thought gives rise to the fantasy that Pacific people have worthwhile things to say only about themselves and each other” (2012b, para. 12). Instead, Satele suggests that Moana artists need to be understood within broader philosophical frameworks engaging with issues of our time (2012b). Byrt too acknowledged that there were works in *Home AKL* that would be at home in Berlin, London or New York, adding that there are moments when the “local politics become cloying” (2012, p. 43). Both Satele and Byrt claim a place for contemporary Moana art in a borderless art world, which would provide the opportunity to move beyond limiting, local perimeters of cultural difference, racialisation and belonging.

**20.** I have written in more detail about the idea of Auckland as the largest Pacific or Polynesian city in the world and its instrumentalisation. For more detail see Lana Lopesi, ‘So,

You Want to be the “Largest Polynesian City in the World”?’, *Pantograph Punch*, 2018, [https:// www.pantograph-punch.com/post/largest-polynesian-city](https://www.pantograph-punch.com/post/largest-polynesian-city)



**Figure 4.** Leatinu'u, J. (2012). *This must be the place* [Exhibition]. ST PAUL St Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://stpaulst.aut.ac.nz/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/2012/this-must-be-the-place>



**Figure 5.** Leatinu'u, J. (2012). *This must be the place* [Exhibition]. ST PAUL St Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://stpaulst.aut.ac.nz/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/2012/this-must-be-the-place>

### *This must be the place*, ST PAUL St Gallery, 2012

The local conversations around *Home AKL* were intense and I'd agree with Byrt's comment that they were "cloying" (2012). For a generation of emerging Moana artists making their way through art school, they were especially prescient. Daniel Satele hoped that *Home AKL's* catalogue would become a document that reveals in time the "limited and limiting expectations placed on Pacific people and Pacific art in New Zealand today" (2012b, para. 1). Satele wrote, "In years to come artists and thinkers of the future will be able to analyze this volume in ways precluded by our present culture's limits" (para. 1).

Looking at the catalogue and revisiting the exhibition almost 10 years later, his hope, I would posit, has come true. *Home AKL* was an important

and significant exhibition on its own terms for contemporary Moana art, and it was also influential for the next generation of contemporary Moana artists, though perhaps not in the ways that it was expected to be. The conceptual framing of the exhibition through the notion of home, the heterogeneous curatorial concerns and the institutional politics of the exhibition had more impact on this emerging generation of Moana artists than did the celebratory intentions of the exhibition itself.

*Home AKL* came to be an *imagining* in which emerging Moana artists saw themselves, for better or worse. For artists coming through art school at the time, the surrounding critical conversations discussed above seemed big and unwieldy, dominated by local politics and personalities. Artists were damned if they did, and damned if they didn't. From the outside, it seemed that the artists and curators involved

understood the value of the opportunity but were critical of it from every vantage point. To borrow from Jim Vivieaere, it was an instance of the tuna eating its own tail (2004), and that was terrifying for a young artist to witness.

Up the hill from *Home AKL*, a group of Moana art students was preparing another exhibition, at Auckland University of Technology's ST PAUL St Gallery. *This must be the place* was the 2012 Tautai annual tertiary exhibition. Curated by artist Jeremy Leatinu'u, the exhibition included work by Louisa Afoa, Cordelle Feau, Anita Jacobsen, Pilimi Manu, Chris Ryan, Talia Smith, Salome Tanuvasa, Aaron Unasa, Cora-Allan Wickliffe and myself. According to the exhibition text, the artists "confidently journey the challenging physical and conceptual landscapes of postcolonial New Zealand" (Tautai, 2012, para. 1). The exhibition, like most Moana tertiary exhibitions, focused on ideas of subjectivity and what it meant to be a Moana person in New Zealand, i.e., home, in lieu of any real connections between the artists, and the exhibition drew on the convenient conceptual framework of belonging and home to contemporary Moana art.

### The Weight of the Tail

*This must be the place* did not initially figure as an exhibition of significance when this research commenced. However, a talanoa with Talia Smith showed that the exhibition was more of a defining moment than I had given it credit for. Smith commented:

I think, for any of the generations, as soon as they leave the islands it then changes everything and the experiences that we have. And so, ultimately, we're all going to be

struggling with this idea of identity, no matter what and especially when we're mixed race. But it has taken me a really, really long time to get to that point. You know when we were first in the Tautai show a million years ago? I really struggled a lot with that and always felt like a fraud, or felt like because I had brown skin, people expected certain things from me, and I just couldn't deliver on them. I always felt a bit ashamed of claiming to be a Pacific Islander.

So moving to Auckland from New Plymouth, it was terrifying in a way because there were 'real Pacific Islanders' there. I was like, whoa, I'm totally a fraud. It took me a really long time to shake this idea of being a fraud and being like, there isn't one experience of being a Pacific Islander and it's so multifaceted.

What is clear in Smith's comments is the pressure she felt to display her Indigeneity in particular ways (or whether it should be displayed at all). The significance placed on the exhibition *Home AKL* and the pressure young artists felt who were emerging at that time is intriguing as a pressure point for defining a subsequent generation's *Moana imaginary*.<sup>21</sup>

The pressure of ethnic-based exhibition-making to have a coherent organising principle outside of just ethnicity or affirmative action initiatives (which Tautai arguably was) is apparent in reading the exhibition text for *This must be the place*. The text reads:

*This must be the place* suggests a consistent search for a place to belong, not realising the location of this place has been in front of us all along. This generation of emerging contemporary artists have confidently put forth their own conclusions and findings in

**21.** Personally, I do not recall feelings of fraudulence but more of anticipation. Although, having said that, the original work I made for *This must be the place* (posters playing on Auckland Art Gallery marketing with cynical phrases like "A BROWN SHOW") was not exhibited because of concerns that it might be regarded as too critical of Home AKL, and subsequently damage institutional relationships between Auckland Art Gallery and ST PAUL St Gallery. The posters

being pulled coincided with me being reprimanded for Tweeting too critically about Auckland Art Gallery while being employed as a gallery guide. I did not know it at the time, but this was the start of switching from being an artist to an art critic. At that time Louisa Afoa and I also decided to start the website #500words—a space for young critical voices and conversations.



relation to the past histories before them, affirming and cementing their own position within an uncertain and sometimes strenuous landscape. They provide refreshing and challenging perspectives that exist and deserve to be acknowledged. Affirmed and cemented, finally, we have found this place. (Tautai, 2012, para. 2)

The exhibition premise is a bold one, asserting that as art school students the young artists had already come to know their place both culturally and artistically. While that kind of confidence is something expected and encouraged in art school, in hindsight it was perhaps too significant a curatorial premise to be placed on students. Although at the time, I'm sure as young artists we were up for the task.

For Smith, her feelings of being a fraud led her to an art-making trajectory which refused aesthetics and tropes commonly associated with contemporary Moana art and amply present in *Home AKL*. Smith wanted to stay far away from frangipanis and coconut oil. She remembers a collective desire amongst her art school peers wanting to be different and make differently from what we typically think of as 'Pacific art.' This desire to do other things, however, did not come from a disregard of earlier contemporary Moana art but from the pressure that a legacy like *Home AKL* exerts on emerging artists. Smith comments, "it is kind of a big legacy to follow and so you just are like, well, I'm going to do the complete opposite." The opposite means trying to get away from what can feel like the burden of being a Moana artist in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Smith acknowledges the role that institutions, both art schools and the gallery systems, played for emerging artists at the time. Pressures and confines of both environments can shape young artists and magnify fears of being pigeon-holed and stereotyped. The pressure can lead to refusals to engage with Moana-looking and -feeling art—whatever that is.

Amongst these artists, there was a strong motivation to frame one's practice within an international art canon, and international art movements, over local concerns.<sup>22</sup> However, this shift was not an active denial of one's Moana Indigeneity; after all, these young artists were participating in initiatives accessed solely through one's ethnicity. Rather, the unresolvable conversations about *Home AKL* showed this emerging group the limits of 'Pacific art' as a category. If that kind of exhibition, and its suffocating local politics, was what these young artists were supposed to be striving for, perhaps the artists realised they wanted something more: they wanted to opt out of Vivieaere's three-legged-race and practice *creative sovereignty* (Garneau, 2018) or *mau*.<sup>23</sup>

It seems that, over time, maturity has enabled artists coming through post-*Home AKL* to be comfortable in their own artistic practices. The student artists whose work was shown in *This must be the place* have today reached a point of finding their *mau*. A place to stand in their own *creative sovereignty* based on their own practice, rather than being swept up into perceived aesthetics and convenient concepts. Demonstrated throughout each of the *imaginings* in this thesis, *mau* is a characteristic of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, alongside *deep time*, *Vā Moana*, *su'ifefiloi* and *decolonial* thought. This results in a way of making that disentangles artists from the *colonial imaginary* and enables them to imagine their own worlds. I will return to this in Chapter 6, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*.

## Conclusion

Art critic John Hurrell, comparing the two shows, unfairly called *This must be the place* "more sociological and academic; more historical, about social relations and economic frustration—a bit dry" (2012, para. 3). In comparison to *Home AKL*, he called it derivative, as student shows tend to be. There is little

**22.** In my own work, I was concerned with social practice, relational aesthetics and the situationists.

**23.** *Creative Sovereignty* (Garneau, 2018) and *mau* are discussed in more detail in *Imagining Four* and *Imagining Five*.

use in placing these two exhibitions in comparison with each other. Rather, the usefulness of thinking about these exhibitions together is to consider what that moment of time created, what it meant and how it has impacted contemporary Moana art being made by those too young to be included in *Home AKL*.

I remember the weight of history being suffocating when I was at art school. We wanted to be artists, in the art world despite our ethnicity not because of it, so we all made various decisions about how to be labelled because of what was happening. I think *Home AKL* and its surrounding conversations provided a generation of artists with an *imaginary* to see themselves, framed by institutions and their potentially problematic politics. I think the situation at the time produced so much pressure to answer all of the questions that we looked at models of refusal and otherwise ways of being and making.

Practising artists today do not just imagine their own subjectivities out of nowhere but rather in relation to previous generations of Moana artists here in Aotearoa and in the wider Moana, as well as to Indigenous artists and artists of colour in other parts of the globe. This comes through understanding the deep time (Diaz, 2011) of contemporary Moana art in expanded relational networks. This thesis does not attempt to provide a comprehensive Moana art history of Aotearoa but rather locates selected contemporary Moana artists within a wider timeline. How are today's artists building on the worlds made by Moana artists, poets and scholars since the 1970s to inform their own imaginaries? Furthermore, understanding this legacy helps to articulate how the *imaginary* is configured in *Moana Cosmopolitan* thought.

# Fa'amaumauga

Monday, 27 July 2020

*Our borders are still locked, and it doesn't seem like they'll open up again soon. If they do I can't imagine myself travelling. Scrolling through Instagram and thinking about friends overseas in America, England, Canada and Aussie, I think about 2018 and the art projects I was working on globally, flying a stupid amount of times to participate in a trans-Indigenous art scene within the global art market. That year, 2018, was spread across Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Meanjin Brisbane and London. Two settler colonies and the heart of the empire. All the travel was exclusively for art purposes and paid for by various galleries, funders and arts organisations. My collaborators were all trans-Indigenous artists, curators and Pālagi directors.*

\*

*Brisbane, March.*

*My first trip of the year was Brisbane in March. It was the second trip (the first being at the end of 2017) for an Indigenous art curatorium made up of Sarah Biscarra Dilley, Freja Carmichael. Léuli Eshrāghi, Tarah Hogue and myself. The curatorium was put together by the Institute of Modern Art (IMA) directors Aileen Burns and Johan Lundh with Léuli Eshrāghi. Léuli and I first met in Aotearoa when they were the Tautai International Artist in Residence. I was working for Tautai at the time, fresh out of art school. They were based in Naarm Melbourne then and was the mutual relation that brought together that 2017 IMA curatorium. The curatorium was working toward an exhibition at the IMA later in 2018, to sit as a response to the Asia Pacific Triennial (APT) also held in Brisbane at the same time. This particular trip doubled as a reconnaissance mission for the show as well as to*

*introduce ourselves to the art community there through an event called Meet the Commute.*

*I'm still not too sure at which point islanders like myself and Léuli—being in and of the diaspora—became a part of this global Indigenous art thing, which traditionally has been a stronghold shared between Māori, Australian Aboriginal and Canadian First Nations artists and art workers (and rightfully so). It throws into relief some bigger questions around the relationship between the diaspora and Indigenous communities, especially those within settler colonies. But I guess also in that global space the concept and containment of Pasifika as we use it here in New Zealand doesn't mean that much. As curators, we used the conceptual framework of the Great Ocean to help us shape the show, but I guess in a way it also helped me to justify why I was there in the first place.*

*The Moana art community in Brisbane was different, in some instances obviously so. Being in a different geographic location, Australia's Moana had much more representation from places like Papua New Guinea, Bougainville and the Solomon Islands than we have here in Aotearoa. In other ways, it was less obvious. I spent time with Chantal Fraser, a Sāmoan artist in the exhibition turned good friend. She wanted to make a wind turbine for the show, making a comparison between the fashion of renewable energy and the fashion of Moana art in an exhibition at the IMA. The comparison is that both things are overlooked until they become on-trend in the eyes of the dominant colonial mindset at any given time. We were still working through the ideas behind the work at this stage, but it was ultimately a big middle finger to the way the local arts scene in Brisbane overlooked Brisbane-born and -bred Moana artists in favour of Moana artists from everywhere else, namely Aotearoa. I still had lots to learn.*

*Auckland, April.*

*Back in Auckland, I was finishing False Divides—a summation of thoughts about Moana people on the internet. This book was inspired by my experience of the year 2016, which again was spread globally, this time across Aotearoa, China, Taiwan and Sāmoa. Similarly, most of the travel was for art, except for Sāmoa. No galleries or funding bodies ever seem that interested in sending me there—that trip was with family. I felt as though I was chasing older forms of movement and in a way remembering ancient Moana mobilities of Austronesia—though my malaga were on a plane, with comfort and speed. Still, I was retraversing the ala or paths that my ancestors took to settle Sāmoa in the first instance, or so I had romanticised it in my mind anyway. My malaga just so happens to be enabled by Creative New Zealand (most of the time) and doesn't require any navigational prowess whatsoever (unless we count the skill of finding cheap flights on Skyscanner). I launched the book in September, on a Sunday, in conversation with Damon Salesa. It was a relatively full room on Level 1 of the Ellen Melville Centre. I was wired up with a microphone, which didn't help the audience hear me but was used to record the conversation for Radio New Zealand.*

*Brisbane, September.*

*That Monday I was on the plane back to Brisbane for three weeks, this time to install the exhibition and open it to the public. I booked an Airbnb and was joined by Léuli, who was flying in from Melbourne, and later by Ahilapalapa Rands, flying in from London, who was another artist in the show, and the friend I had travelled with to China in 2016. Actually, to be fair though, it was that China trip that made us friends, a curatorial research trip for an exhibition we later called lei-pā and showed at ST PAUL St Gallery in 2017.*

*Brisbane was a pretty massive whirlwind of exchange and gifting. But what I remember most was spending time with Chantal. Between that trip in March and this one, she had lost her father. We finished making her work together. It hadn't been that long since I had hung up my art-making boots for curatorial and writing work but I definitely felt rusty. But there we were, gluing thousands of rhinestones onto a working wind turbine at her house out in the suburbs, and again later in the gallery. The rhinestones were an act of embellishment to allure audience members into the work, a reference to the way Moana artists are*

*exoticised in art galleries, embellishing programmes with cultural capital. We drank red wine, ate Vietnamese and offloaded onto each other. Our time together was nice, but heavy, and I learned of the many global movements within her own family. The moves that took people to Sāmoa in the first place and then how the children of those people later moved to New Zealand and then Australia. I learned how our global worlds brushed upon each other with the various art projects we had both been a part of in different places. I learned how big and small the Sāmoan world is all in a single breath.*

*I flew out the morning after the opening.*

*London, September.*

*I spent two nights with my babies in Auckland after Brisbane before rejoining Ahilapalapa in London. She let me sleep on her floor in Hackney but that's not why I was there. I was in London to co-chair a panel on the Royal Academy of Arts' exhibition Oceania. The panel was hosted at the New Zealand Embassy. Pauline Autet, Director and Editor of Contemporary Hum (who organised the whole event), Matariki Williams, Curator Mātaurang Māori at Te Papa, Oxford Scholar James Belilch and I all sat in that sweltering room, sweating together, trying to unpack the exhibition with an audience of about 200. The talk was a failure. I still can't put my finger on why it failed exactly—other than that there was a sense of an us and them binary, our final panellist had cancelled that morning, and the fact that unpacking it all in the heart of the empire had me feeling some type of way.*

*Ahilapalapa was part of the then recently formed In\*ter\*is\*land Collective, who had taken up residency in Raven Row in their headquarters named MOKU Pacific HQ. The group was somewhat amorphous but the other core collective members were all from New Zealand at some stage in their personal and family history. It was my first time in London, and I was thankful for this Moana space to land on if I needed to. Walking into it felt like home, but also like being homesick.*

*I held a London book launch of False Divides in that space, which was amazing, and strange. Having written the book so specifically, from my vantage point of the Moana (in Rānui, Auckland) I wasn't sure how the ideas would land in one of the homes of the colonial imaginary. Members of FAFSWAG were in London at that time too. They were making their way back from a project at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. It felt like a moment of critical mass of Moana art in the*



city. A good time, not a long time. The irony, of course, was that the funding and the projects which made this critical mass possible largely stemmed from the commemorations of Captain Cook's colonising voyages.

*Brisbane, November.*

*I was back in Brisbane in November. This time it was to party, if I'm being honest. The party was both for the opening of the Asia Pacific Triennial and also the annual party held at IMA. Because our exhibition was on at the time, we got to programme the event. Hannah Brontë, an amazing DJ and club night hostess, and also one of the artists in the exhibition, was the DJ. Digi Youth Arts, a First Nations youth arts organisation, also performed a work called A call to commute, directed by Alethea Beetson, with musical composition by Jindhu Lawrie. It was pretty special. The APT overflow of international artists, curators and directors came to the party, of course. I knew I should have done the art schmoozing thing, but I just couldn't be bothered. I mostly hung out with Chantal, her husband, mum and cousins.*

*The wind turbine, unbeknownst to most gallery visitors, was a working machine. As in, it could work if it received energy. But it mostly stood limp in the space, moving only slightly according to the air conditioning. It's a statement about the one-way energy transfer that happens between Pacific artists and the White gallery audience. About how so much is expected of the artist to contextualise the work, explain its social-political context, and then translate that into contemporary art terms—an unequal burden felt by artists from different worldviews. The wind turbine stands there saying, If you don't work for me, I'm not working for you.*

\*

*It's funny trying to recount that year abroad, when all of the relationships I made with this global Moana art community were face to face. It's funny to think about mobility, once your physical mobility has been cut. It doesn't mean I'm not mobile in other ways—I can always Zono or Zui with these folk, but there's nothing like losing the thing you take for granted for you to actually consider it as a privilege in the first place.*

# Chapter 2.

## Tūlaga ma Faiga o Su'isu'iga<sup>24</sup>

### 2.1 Introduction

It took two years to find the art in this research. People would always ask where it was or why it was taking me so long to find it. I did not know the answer then; what was clear, however, was that you cannot separate someone from the art they make. While art guided this research, the question of what it is about someone's particular lived Moana experience that makes them *them*, was a consuming task. This particularity had a lot to do with working through my own lived position in the world—a similar position to the artists focused on in this research. Coming out on the other side, it is clear how understanding one's own position is imperative to good research. This chapter positions me and my research at an intersection of different epistemological positions and discipline areas. In addition, it provides an overview of the methodological approach and the methods employed.

This thesis works toward an emerging theory of Moana art, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, while additionally conceptualising Moana lived experience through the concept of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*. Building theory is a way for Moana people to reclaim knowledge making. Narrativising my own lived experience, as well as incorporating *talanoa* with *Moana Cosmopolitan* artists, enabled emerging articulations of theory through a *Moana Cosmopolitan*

lens. As a researcher I sit at the intersection of multiple positionalities—an art critic, *digital native*, *Moana Cosmopolitan* and a woman—offering several ways into this work, all of which impact the ways in which I have come to and conducted this research. Similarly, this research itself sits at the intersection of many diverse methods—looking at art, *talanoa*, *critical autoethnography* and *reparative reading*, combined in the methodology of *sui'fe'floi*. Thus, to work toward an emerging theory of Moana art, this thesis has required the stitching or su'isu'iga of many distinct elements.

### 2.2 Tūlaga o Sa'ili'iliga<sup>25</sup>

#### 2.2.1 Art Critic

I partly fell into art by accident. My sister and I were given no other option but to go to university when it was time. However, by the time I got to the end of high school I had not really found my thing. At school, I took humanities, social sciences and languages. I had done only enough maths and science to get my university entrance, and I failed third form art because of an assignment where we had to draw taxidermy ducks. However, I was always making. My nana largely encouraged this by letting us draw in her Bockingford pads with her watercolour pencils as kids. She taught me to sew in primary school and would let us pick from scrap fabric in her sewing room, which we would use

<sup>24</sup> Tūlaga translates to position and faiga o su'isu'iga translates to the method of stitching.

<sup>25</sup> Tūlaga o Sa'ili'iliga translates to positioning of the researcher.

for any number of things, and in my early teens I saved for a Bernina sewing machine of my own. My aunty Toni had gone to Elam and her paintings were everywhere when I was growing up. In high school, when my mum bought me an easel from Homestead Framers for Christmas, I started to design tattoos and make paintings, selling to family and friends of my parents. When the time came around to apply for university my nana's friend, an art tutor, worked with me to put together a portfolio for Elam, and thanks to their Undergraduate Targeted Admission Scheme (UTAS) I got in.

I have always felt like an underdog—having never done art properly in school and then not really getting into art school on my own merit. The hangover of affirmative action was emphasised when the teaching staff would make comments about the rise of the Pacific art movement that was happening and how convenient my timing was. However, after graduating from art school, I did pretty well for myself as an artist with a consistent flow of shows.

It was not until 2016 that I stopped practising art and decided to prioritise art criticism exclusively (and occasionally independent curating). I remember that moment. I was an international artist in Taipei, when I realised that I did not have that fire in my belly to make art. Rather, I noticed, the fire came from thinking and from the particular satisfaction of being able to pin those thoughts down in words—a marked difference from most of my artist peers. In retrospect, my art practice till that point seemed like a type of pseudo publishing. It was a happy switch, which made me feel like I had finally found my medium and allowed me to service the gap of Moana art writers.

So I position myself as an art critic who also belongs to the peer group of artists I am researching. It is interesting writing about the art made by my own peer group. In many ways, from a traditional art historical perspective, I am perhaps too close to a lot of the work featured in this thesis, both temporally and relationally. I know certain backstories that I would not write into a public sphere; I've shared tears with the

people; seen careers build over a series of personal life events; I appear in and out of these artists' stories in various roles and ways. Some were my closest friends in art school; I recently MC'd another's wedding, and almost all of them have played a role in my own professional maturing. But I would argue that proximity is also the strength of this research and its *critical autoethnographic* approach. My intimate connection to these artists gives me a head start in knowing the conditions of their art practices, having followed them closely as a friend and colleague privy to studio and behind-the-scenes conversations. Our *talanoa* have been possible because of pre-existing relationships built on trust. This contributes to knowledge through a unique inside perspective of both a Moana art community and a particular experience of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, to which I also belong. To date, this generation of contemporary Moana artists has not been the focus of significant scholarly attention.

### 2.2.2 Digital Native

A combination of social media sites, video conferencing and messaging applications make up a significant part of my social world. My relationship to social media has shifted significantly over the course of this research, although I would argue that that change is at the usual pace of a natural life cycle in which social media sites (and one's use and need for various platforms) start and end. In social media terms, I am too young for Myspace, but too old for Tik Tok. I was a teenager during Bebo and came of age in the era of Facebook, then shifted to Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat for a brief period of time. I remember getting our first computer and that very particular sound of a modem at the time of dial-up internet—I matured as technology did. These experiences place me in the *digital native* generation (Barlow, 1996; Prensky, 2001), for whom the internet is a native language. *Digital natives* are usually also called *millennials*, a generation born between the years of 1981 and 1996.

Since Barlow's and Prensky's conceptualisation and application of the term *digital native*, there

has been focused attention on whether the divide it creates between generations is productive (Sorrentino, 2018). Despite this clumsiness, which is perhaps a shared fate of many generational categories, these terms can still be useful. I employ digital native in this thesis to highlight the way shifting technological environments impact the worldviews of these artists. Using *digital native* as a distinguishing factor within a wider identity of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* highlights the unique phenomenon of crossing global borders digitally while placing these artists in closer proximity to global Indigenous and global communities of colour, which introduces new concepts and theory, language and relations to Moana artists. This digital factor in today's *Moana Cosmopolitanism* is a recurring theme throughout this research, thus, *digital native* is a more appropriate generational distinction than *millennial*, *emerging* or the like.

Being online showed me early on a Moana social world in which one could imagine oneself and one's culture in different ways. Since starting this research project in 2017 I have written on Moana social media use (Lopesi, 2018a, 2020; Thomsen et al., in press)—the good and the strange. And the more research I conduct, the more organic the integration appears between online and *away from keyboard*, or *AFK*, life (Jurgenson, 2011). This is discussed in relation to cosmopolitanism in Chapter 4, *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, and to *Moana social worlds* in Chapter 5, *Vā Moana*.

### 2.2.3 Moana Cosmopolitan

The reality of being on and offline simultaneously adds another dimension to my own lived experience in which many worlds already come together. I was born in West Auckland in the 1990s to a Pālagi mother and a Sāmoan father—both of whom came from different worlds that became mine. My family's journey to Aotearoa is typical of that of many first- or second-

generation New Zealand-born people. My Pālagi mother is first-generation New Zealand born, with parents who migrated from London and Vancouver. My father, similarly, is first-generation New Zealand born with parents who migrated from Satapuala (Sā Va'ili) and Siumu (Sā Li'o), Sāmoa, in the year 1970. My parents met as teenagers, had my sister, and then me two years later in 1992. Growing up in Aotearoa, I was very proud of having multiple worlds and cultures woven together at home. Afakasi<sup>26</sup>—a transliteration of half-caste—was a badge of honour, as far I was concerned, I was not half and half, I was times two. I was Sāmoan and Pākehā, all at the same time. Because of these multiple identities, I became comfortable in the mixture that makes up myself as a person.

I used to identify myself at the intersection of these worlds as a daughter of the diaspora (Lopesi, 2018a). While I still feel an affinity to that term, I have tested throughout this research the notion of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* as another way of articulating the particular kind of Moana life I was encountering online and in art amongst the *digital native* generation. Cosmopolitanism, according to anthropologist Marilyn Strathern, holds together a double complexity (2004, p. 20). Strathern describes this as a “self-conscious creolization of disciplinary skills or scholarly habitats” in one's research; this reveals “the complexities of the past, a mode that finds sufficiency not in reference to just one past figure but in the interweaving of references to many” (2004, p. 20). Therefore, cosmopolitans work hard to keep their complexity active and claim it as a “source of personal and professional identity” (p. 20).

The shift from the *diaspora* to *cosmopolitanism* was driven by two key factors: one, that the deficit rhetoric in Moana diasporic notions of self no longer seemed to match the self-perception of a *digital native* generation of Moana people in Aotearoa. Two: this generation of Moana people are not bound in the

<sup>26</sup>. The term afakasi, or half-caste, has been heavily criticised for the way in which it draws on language of blood quantum. I

choose to use afakasi here, however, as it was commonplace in my own childhood.

home-and-host binary of diaspora, but rather are active participants of global worlds, who are not lost or displaced, but comfortable in their complexities. The use of *cosmopolitanism* then results in novel contributions to knowledge through a new identity marker, *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, while also offering a new concept to think through lived Moana experience and art.

#### 2.2.4 Woman

The artists focused on throughout this thesis are primarily women or femme-identifying (Russell, 2020). In addition, the development of the methods and methodologies of *su'ifefiloi*, *reparative reading* and *wayfinding as critical autoethnography* are also attributed to women, namely Sia Figiel (2016), Eve Sedgwick (2003) and Fetaui Iosefo (2018; Iosefo et. al., 2020) (in that order). While I do not address gender specifically within this research, I acknowledge a clear gender-bend in what I have been drawn to—initially unconscious bias has led me to the work of other women.

In this research I hold, as a *Moana Cosmopolitan*, the tensions of a multilayered subjectivity; remixing and rewrapping a sense of self as my positions shift and change over time and over space. The cosmopolitan approach of keeping complexity active mirrors the skills necessary for multidisciplinary research. In many ways, this approach is my own personal *modus operandi*, enforced by this multilayered position, which refuses simplification and maintains complexity.

### 2.3 Research Approach

#### 2.3.1 Decolonial

Decolonial scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, defines decolonisation “as a process that engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform

research practices” (2012, p. 58). Normative research paradigms exclude or marginalise non-Western knowledge forms so that “non-Western/indigenous voices and epistemologies are silenced” (Swadener & Mutua, 2008, p. 5). If Indigenous people do not theorise their own existence and realities, they may become complicit with colonialism (Smith, 2012, p. 72). Decolonisation, then, becomes about a concern with understanding the impacts of imperialism within our thinking to recover ourselves as researchers (p. 63).

This research is oriented by Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ phrase “ecologies of knowledge,” which highlights the multiplicity of different ways of knowing (2018, p. 77). Santos’ ideal of knowledge is not “completeness or universality but rather to strive for a higher consciousness of incompleteness and pluriversality” or to “think of multiple forms of being contemporaneous” (2018, p. 275). Understanding the value of multiple ways of knowing contributes to a more diverse and profound understanding of the world, which then enables researchers to “cope with diversity and conflict in the absence of a general theory” (Santos, 2014, p. 213). The idea of decolonising art history requires recognition that the prevailing art canon is Eurocentric, requiring the assertion of non-Western art theories (Grant & Price, 2020).

Another point of distinction within decolonisation is the move away from *damage-centred research* (Tuck, 2009), which is a “re-visioning” of Indigenous research, “not only to recognize the need to document the effects of oppression on our communities but also to consider the long-term repercussions of thinking of ourselves as broken” (Tuck, 2009, p. 409). This stems from a caution towards Western scholars who may interpret Indigenous subjectivities within non-Indigenous theoretical frameworks that disempower Indigenous communities (Tuck, 2013, p. 371), and come to distorted conclusions that are not based on data but on prejudice and misunderstanding (Smith, 1992, p. 290). Decolonisation, in turn, is then about foregrounding Indigenous voices and epistemologies. Understanding multiple ways of knowing, without asserting false

equivocations, is imperative for this research. I use the Sāmoan value of fa'aaloalo (respect) when approaching knowledge, which favours a “non-extractive” (Santos, 2016, p. 27) analytical approach as an attempt to “extend knowledge” (Smith, 1992, p. 290).

Decolonisation in this sense rejects the colonial narratives that one might have accepted as their own. It is about “resurrecting your own stories, cherishing and valuing them for the power they can offer you” (Bevacqua, 2010, p. 84). However, one must be careful to not freeze oneself in the past, thinking that decolonisation of the colonised world can be found exclusively in a past version of oneself; as “the things of the ancient past do not feed the stomachs of those who live today” (Bevacqua, 2010, p. 87). Rather, as political philosopher Frantz Fanon argues, there is a need to dismantle and reshape the contemporary world (1965). For Chamorro scholar Michael Lujan Bevacqua, decolonisation “is about the present, and all that leads you away from this point is deceiving you” (2010, p. 87). Decolonisation, then, is about uncovering the conditions of the day and building new possibilities for the future.

### 2.3.2 Theoretical

Métis art critic David Garneau writes that, unlike the identities we inherit through birth, Indigeneity is an additional identity marker that is a political choice (2018). Similarly, Ballantyne and Peterson write that, while Indigeneity is “anchored in genealogical affiliation and territorial belonging,” it is also underpinned by a chosen differentiation from the dominant social groups formed through colonialism (2020, p. 3). In the context of contemporary art, opting into contemporary Indigenous art signals a decolonial commitment to building worlds outside of colonial and “misguided” ideas—such as the notion that art, criticism and identities are universal truths (Garneau, 2018). Contemporary Indigenous art is an approach to art that contends with the *colonial imaginary* through “new knowledge, new feelings, new sensations, thoughts and intuitions and new identities” (Garneau, 2018). Garneau writes about a commitment I share in this research

in explicit ways. In examining Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries, this research extends existing Indigenous art theory by focusing specifically on contemporary Moana artists, using decolonial methods.

Using lived experience to build theory works against the ways in which Indigenous people have been “oppressed by theory” (Smith, 2012, p.39) and brings to the centre issues of one’s own choosing, to be discussed amongst one’s community. For Smith, theory helps, at the very least, to make sense of one’s reality, to make assumptions and predictions about the world we live in while also enabling Indigenous people to deal with contradictions and uncertainties, and provide space to plan our own resistances (2012, pp. 87–88). When thinking about Moana art theory, Teresia Teaiwa’s comments come to mind, that there “simply weren’t/ aren’t enough artists and critics to keep our movements honest” (quoted in Brunt, 2010, p. 90). Commenting specifically in relation to Wendt’s and Hau’ofa’s conceptualisations of Oceania, Teaiwa points out that “the primary consumers of Pacific arts continue to be outside of our natal or ethnic communities” (quoted in Brunt, 2010, p. 90). Thus, there was little competition for audiences’ imaginaries and the result is a lack of criticality (Brunt, 2010, p. 90). The theoretical approach of this thesis, then, is an attempt to keep our movements honest, as well as leaving space for others to do the same.

The place of the ‘Pacific’ within the Indigenous category was recognised by Moana scholars in the early 2000s for the ways in which Native studies could help to articulate notions of *roots* and *routes*, mobility, diaspora, labour, and issues of essentialism (Diaz & Kauanui, 2001; Teaiwa, 2005; Aikau et al., 2020). Recently, however, the Moana and Indigenous categories have further converged due to similar approaches to knowledge (Aikau et al., 2020, p. 71) and, I would posit, also due to increased connectivity under *Moana Cosmopolitanism*. I attempt to make meaning toward a theory of Moana art here through the stories of artists, and myself. As Kwakwaka’wakw scholar Sarah Hunt explains, storytelling is a culturally nuanced way of



making meaning (2014, p. 27). Furthermore, placing Moana art theory within the contemporary Indigenous art category further accords with Sāmoan art historian Peter Brunt's assertion that contemporary Moana art is part of a pluralistic, multi-centred contemporary art world, rather than just part of a local scene or micro-history (Brunt et al., 2012, p. 414).

### 2.3.3 A Moana Worldview

A *Moana* worldview as used in this research is an adaptation and continuation of the conceptualisation of *Oceania* (Wendt, 1976; Hau'ofa, 1994, 1998). Albert Wendt encouraged shifting away from colonial conceptualisations of the Moana encapsulated in ideas of smallness and profiled the possibilities of the vast ocean (1976). Epeli Hau'ofa similarly advocated for an expansive Oceania, revisiting Indigenous ways that the economic and social world of Moana people relied on the entire ocean (1994, 1998). Importantly, he wrote that a collective understanding of Oceania would help to free Moana people of "externally generated definitions of our past, present and future" (1998, p. 392). Oceanian identity, "grounded in something as vast as the sea should exercise our minds and rekindle in us the spirit that sent our ancestors to explore the oceanic unknown and make it their home, our home" (1998, p. 393). Both Wendt and Hau'ofa acknowledged that returning to a "Golden Age or utopian womb" is impossible, stating that "we are too corrupted for such a re-entry!" (Wendt, 1976, p. 51). This furthers Bevacqua's assertion that decolonisation belongs in the present. Thus, while centred on Indigenous Moana ways of knowing, Moana worldviews draw from deeper Indigenous pasts, from the standpoint of one's place in the present, based on the Sāmoan concept of *teu le vā* (Anae, 2010; Airini et al., 2010), to maintain the space between. A *Moana* worldview maintains ancestral ways of knowing with an eye to the future, from Moana ontological and epistemological positions.

A *Moana* worldview builds on the literature around Pacific worldviews. Sanga writes that the Pacific social world is experienced in a particular time and

space, with local iterations that change depending on people and place (2004). Therefore, in this research, I talk about 'a' *Moana* worldview not 'the' *Moana* worldview, to emphasise that I write from a specific vantage point that is a simultaneously local and global, physical and virtual *Moana Cosmopolitan* worldview.

Like most Pacific research approaches, a Moana worldview is, as sociologist Sereana Naepi argues "a response to an education and research system that undermined(s) and actively sought (and in many ways continues to seek) to destroy Pacific ways of knowing and being" (2019, p. 3). It provides a "shift away from research practices whose foundations were built upon the ideological assumption that Pacific knowledge either did not exist or was inferior" and "move[s] toward ensuring that the world understands the Pacific from a Pacific lens" (Naepi, 2019, p. 3).

## 2.4 Faiga o Su'isu'iga

### 2.4.1 Su'ifefiloi

*Su'ifefiloi* (Ellis, 1998; Figiel, 2016; Refiti, 2014; Tielu, 2016; Fuluifaga, 2017) is a research methodology that combines diverse elements to create something new. Sāmoan novelist Sia Figiel elaborates: "su'i means to sew, fefiloi means mixture, so it is a mixture of different flowers that we sew together. And then at the end, you hook them up, and they become an ula, a necklace of flowers" (quoted in Ellis, 1998, p. 74). Therefore, *su'ifefiloi*, enables researchers to discover, analyse and synthesise assorted data and methods so that each element of the research "can stand independently on its own and yet at the same time is connected to the others" (Ellis, 1998, p. 74). This allows Moana and Western thought—or pua and daffodils, to borrow Sia Figiel's metaphor (2016)—to come together in ways that are flexible yet autonomous. *Su'ifefiloi* then leads to the production of new concepts through the refinement of Indigenous thought in the present (Refiti, 2014, p. 28).

*Su'ifefiloi* also describes the "stringing of one



song to another, like flowers to leaves, to form a long song” (Figiel, 2016, p. 6). While in some settings this plays out in choirs, with groups of people stringing one song to another, more recently it speaks to the tradition of ‘FOB<sup>27</sup> mixes,’ which were mixed CDs with Photoshop covers, sold in places like the Avondale Market until CDs were phased out in the 2010s. Today’s equivalent would be DJ mixes available on sites like Soundcloud, which require the DJ’s skill and sensibility to bring together a wide array of music and additional sound layers, to create something new—a mix built around a kind of vibe, event or genre of music. Thus, *su’ifefiloi* could also be described as a process of remixing.

Curator and writer Legacy Russell writes about *remixing* as a way of “Affirming our role in building new worlds,” which requires both imagination and innovation (2020, p. 143). *Remixing* in this sense speaks to the need to “rearrange and repurpose by any means necessary” (p. 143). For Russell, the *colonial imaginary* is material to be *remixed*, offering new material to be “reclaimed, rearranged, repurposed, and rebirthed toward an emancipatory enterprise” (p. 131). The notion of remixing the material of dominant Eurocentric culture to create something new is an enduring methodology for Queer people, people of colour, and femme-identifying people (p. 131). Remixing, then, becomes a mode of survival and an act of self-determination (p. 131), not unlike micha cárdenas’ concept of the *stitch* (2016), where separate elements are productively joined to build worlds. According to cárdenas, this offers a “basis for a theory of feminist making, which values the forms of knowledge practised daily by oppressed people as they make their lives in the face of violence.” Cree Scholar Karyn Recollet offers the remix as an intervention into settler colonialism’s disappearances and erasures (2016, p. 91). Recollet suggests that “remixing creates a future imaginary attentive to the past as it critiques the present, and ventures forward into the beyond” (p. 91). For Recollet,

the practice of sampling and mash-up is useful in a project that imagines future worlds.

*Su’ifefiloi* is the methodological approach that has enabled me to bring together in this thesis, literature from many discipline areas—spanning Indigenous and decolonial thought as well as Western philosophy—and methods like *critical autoethnography* and *talanoa* to enable new thinking about *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. Rather than smoothing over disparate elements, theories and thoughts, the place in which they join together becomes a very important element. Tui Atua describes this as a *cultural blend*, which supports unapologetic selves and gives equal time and respect to different cultural references, allowing each element to sit alongside others “without apology” (Efi, 2018, p. 9).

#### 2.4.2 Ula Lole

During one supervision Layne Waerea asked, “What would your thesis look like if it was a drawing?” This prompt—meant to be a discussion point for the session—elicited deeper thinking about *su’ifefiloi*, in which reference to the flower ula had previously been sometimes a struggle since it involved a practice of ula making to which I have proximity to but do not personally engage. However, I do make ula lole (lolly lei) for various occasions like my children’s performances, graduations or celebrations of most kinds. Acknowledging a tendency in Pacific research methodologies to romanticise aspects of Pacific culture (Tualaulelei & McFall-McCaffery, 2019), as well as the cosmopolitan nature of this research (and myself), I base this research specifically on the metaphor of *ula lole* rather than the ula fugala’au (flower lei).

There are three key elements of the ula lole: 1) the plastic wrap; 2) the lole themselves; and 3) the ribbon ties. The plastic wrap is the outer layer that holds everything in. In this thesis, the plastic wrap forming the outer layer represents the overarching

<sup>27</sup>. FOB stands for Fresh off the Boat, and was used as an insult toward new Moana migrants. From the 1990s it was reclaimed

by Moana musicians and artists, making its way into a local Moana vernacular.

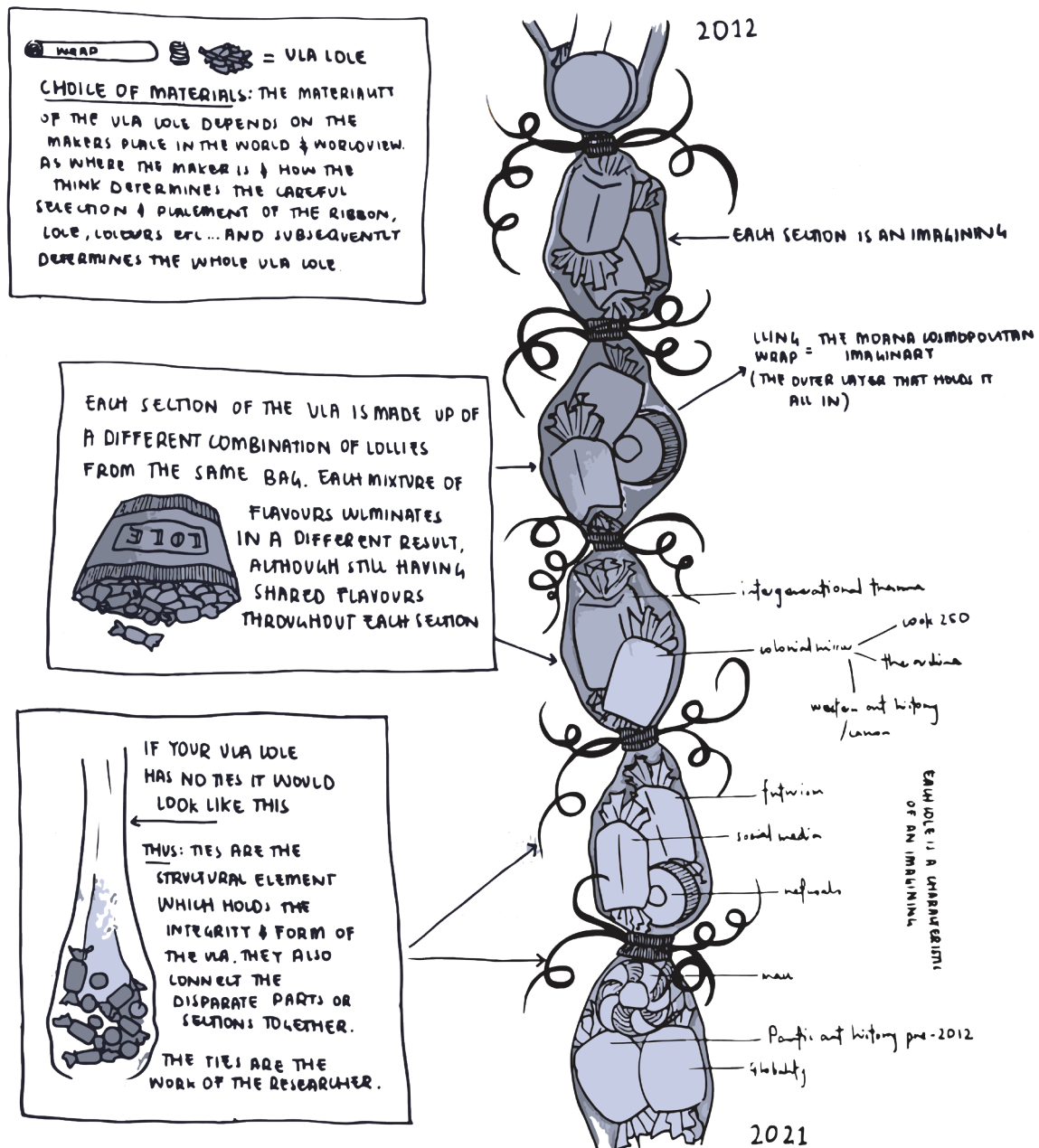


Figure 6. Lopesi, L. (2020). Design of study—su'ifefiloi ula lolo adaptation.

theory being built—*Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. The different lolo represent all of the disparate parts, methods, perspectives and knowledge enfolded by the theoretical envelope. They maintain their form and remain whole, but combine in particular ways within each section inside the plastic wrap. In each section of the ula lolo, the mix of the lolo is different. The ribbon ties give the ula lolo structure, otherwise, all the lolo would just fall through the plastic-wrap casing. In the case of this thesis, these ties were made by me, the researcher, in the structuring and organisation of the thesis.

In another supervision session, Leali'ifano Albert Refiti recounted how people, when they left from Aotearoa for their Moana homes, wore ula lolo, and when they came back, they were wearing ula fugala'au. In this anecdote, the materiality of the ula lolo speaks to the place of both the maker and the wearer of the ula. As the kind of ula one wears signals where they are leaving from and the materials of that environment. So leaving Aotearoa one wears an ula made from supermarket materials, and leaving Sāmoa the ula is made from fresh flowers.

In my research, I think of this ula lolo as held

together by Glad Wrap, full of Starburst lollies and bound with bright shiny 2-dollar shop plastic ribbons. I envision my dining table where I would make it. These plastic and cheaply manufactured materials are unsustainable and the lollies are high in sugar, in contrast to the natural, tropical flowers of the homelands you might imagine when someone describes *su'ifefiloi*. However, the *ula lole* is connected to both an ancestral practice of making and gifting, and the materiality endemic to my place in the world.

## 2.5 Methods

### 2.5.1 Looking at Art

Looking widely at contemporary Moana art determined the artworks and exhibitions to be focused on in this research, while also being a method of interpretation itself. Looking at artworks and exhibitions, we can consider seriously what they can tell us about how artists imagine their subjectivities. Imagining, as I am using the term here, is the visible, tangible output of conceptions of the world, ideologies and beliefs, which can include—but is not limited to—art and exhibitions. In this study, I focus on key artworks and exhibitions made by *Moana Cosmopolitan* artists between 2012 and 2020, and the sections in which I discuss them are called *imaginings*. The *imaginings* in the thesis, as well as my close readings of the artworks and exhibitions, are data in a sense, and open for analysis. Each *imagining* introduces further ideas and concepts related to the specific artworks being discussed, and *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* more broadly. Together, the *imaginings* help to demonstrate the characteristics of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* of this generation of contemporary Moana artists.

The five imaginings focus on the following artworks and exhibitions in this order:

- 1) *Home AKL* (2012) and *This must be the place* (2012);
- 2) Ahilapalapa Rands' *Lift Off* (2018);

- 3) Emily Parr's *Moana Calling Me Home* (2020);
- 4) *The Commute* (2018), *Layover* (2019), *Transits and Returns* (2019–2020);
- 5) Louisa Afoa's wallpapers (2015–2020).

### 2.5.2 Talanoa

While the *imaginings* alone could have been sufficient for analysis, I felt compelled to also include the voices and perspectives of the artists involved. I did not want to replicate the way in which Western research writes over people's experiences to empower the researcher and disempower the communities the research focuses on—I felt this sat at odds with a decolonial approach to building theory. Therefore *talanoa*, as a culturally relevant method, was also a necessary component of the research. *Talanoa* (Vaiotele, 2006, 2013; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014; Thomsen, 2019) is an inclusive and participatory dialogue where the researcher builds empathy with informants by participating equally. For Queer studies scholar Patrick Thomsen, *talanoa* legitimises “researchers’ exchanging personal stories that explicitly express feelings with informants” (2019). Drawing on the Sāmoan relational understanding of *vā* as the space between and *teu le vā* (Anae, 2010, 2016, 2019; Thomsen, 2019) as the caring for that space, this research is centred on a reciprocal kind of exchange. The practice of *teu le vā* encourages mutual respect between the participant and researcher while also allowing for different and autonomous opinions in *talanoa* (Vaiotele, 2006; Thomsen, 2019). Thus, *talanoa* is a collaborative and relational way of occupying academia, questioning pseudo-objective approaches to knowing (Tuinamua & Yoo, 2020).

*Talanoa* as a discursive method allowed the research to be collaborative between myself and the artists, resulting in numerous shifts throughout the research process. In this research project, the participants’ principal role is to share information about their lived experiences as Moana artists and arts workers, and about what drives the art they make. I initially selected five *Moana Cosmopolitan* artists and

arts workers and later expanded the group to nine. As a way of entering the *talanoa* myself, I shared some early findings with the participants and they often built on this offering, by questioning or reframing it during our *talanoa*. These contributions provided vital shifts to the research, which informed the final form of the thesis. This co-construction of knowledge relied on my relationships with these artists and art workers, and on trust they have in me to weave their knowledge together with the other elements of this research. The research outcome is designed to benefit the participants, and Moana artists and art workers more generally. It extends the literature in the under-researched area of contemporary Moana art and helps establish Moana art and the participants within the art historical canon. The aim of benefiting community groups through this research encouraged participants, and myself as a researcher, to act honourably, reciprocally and with good faith toward each other. As the Moana arts community is small and based on relationality, the participants' integrity is a key concern. Participants have full autonomy over their participation; throughout the research, the option to exclude particular topics and redact details has always been available to them. Every quote used here has been reproduced with the attributed participant's approval.

The process used for these *talanoa* was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 16 April 2020 under the AUTC reference number 20/83.

### 2.5.3 Critical Autoethnography

According to performance studies scholar Stacy Holman Jones, the 'critical' in *critical autoethnography* is a reminder that theory is not a static body of knowledge, but has a "reciprocal, inter-animating relationship" with story (Holman Jones, 2016, p. 229). Stories are the way in to understanding and

theorising (2016, p. 230). *Critical autoethnography*, then, is a "liberatory project" (Iosefo et al., 2020, p. 2) that critically questions power dynamics, enabling researchers to become "active agents of emancipatory transformation" (Iosefo, 2018a, p. 70). For Indigenous researchers, Paul Whitinui argues that *autoethnography* allows Indigenous people a cultural process within research (2014, p. 461).

In a recent publication, Iosefo et. al. connect *critical autoethnography* with Moana wayfinding to bridge Indigenous and Western knowledge and to address hegemonic knowledge structures within academia. They describe *wayfinding* in *critical autoethnography* as a practice that requires researchers to be immersed in "journeys of discovery and transformation that value our cultural knowledge and acknowledge our blind spots" (2020, p. 23).

Comparatively, anthropologist Tim Ingold describes *wayfaring* as the drawing out of the learner into the world itself (2015, p. 135). Using the metaphor of walking, Ingold continues that through exposure to the world, "walking continually pulls us away from any standpoint—from any position we might adopt" (p. 135). In this sense one does not gain understanding from fixed points, but perception is gained along paths of observation, which reveal new things to "help or hinder the observer in keeping going, or in carrying on along a certain line of activity" (p. 136). Gaining perception through observation describes the function of *critical autoethnography* within this research.

I have located myself throughout this thesis, and often written in the first person. In the *imaginings*, I identify my personal connections to artists and artworks, writing myself into these moments. However, it is in the fa'amaumauga that *critical autoethnography* is most present. Every chapter opens with a fa'amaumauga, which is simply a journal entry. The term etymologically draws on the word 'mau,' meaning to grip or hold tight, and so the role of written

**28.** The term, method and understandings of fa'amaumauga were gifted to this research by Leali'ifano Albert Refiti who, throughout this research process, has helped me to find an

Indigenous Sāmoan way of thinking through what otherwise might be called journal entries. These conversations have been influential in my research.

notes can also be a way of steadying oneself within the field of oratory. On the one hand, it is looked at with sympathy as the orator requires the help of written notes, not yet having the full proficiency of the oratory craft. It can also reference how one might reminisce in love songs, casting one's mind back to moments of the past. In this sense, it also references a kind of archive.<sup>28</sup>

In the context of this thesis, the fa'amaumauga offers a place for me as a researcher to reflect on my own experiences with *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and contemporary Moana art. The fa'amaumauga are also like moorings and moments to breathe, like navigational markers in the sky or ocean, a reprieve in and amongst the theory discussed in the thesis. Working toward theory can feel like being lost out at sea; therefore, thinking with Iosefo et. al.'s (2020) notion of *wayfinding as critical autoethnography*, the fa'amaumauga throughout the thesis offer moments of readjustment and recalibration for the journey ahead, through reflecting on my own lived experiences to help reorient myself within the research journey.

#### 2.5.4 Reparative Reading

Queer theorist Eve Sedgwick writes that the reparative impulse is “additive and accretive,” a theoretical approach that enables “extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture— even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them” (2003, p. 150). As a Queer theory, we can interpret this comment from Sedgwick as a mode of looking at literature and paradigms that “are not directed toward the nourishment of Queer lives but which may nonetheless be wielded reparatively” (Hawthorne, 2018, p. 159), used as material for *remixing* as Russell (2020) might describe it. It offers a mode of hopefulness and optimism in the way theory and literature can be repurposed. *Reparative reading*, according to gender studies scholar Robyn Wiegman, displaces critical approaches of correction and rejection with gratitude and affection (2014, p. 7). Thus, it is a mode of experimentation and pleasure that allows research to lead to the work of love (Love, 2010,

p. 236).

*Paranoid reading*, then, is the dominant paradigm of academic knowledge production based on ideas like maintaining critical distance, one-upmanship, maintaining power structures and hypervigilant ownership over truth (Sedgwick, 2003; Hawthorne, 2018). It is based on “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Sedgwick, 2003; Hawthorne, 2018) opposed to surprise and so produces a sense of paranoia in which the person appears “both aggressive and wounded, knowing better but feeling worse, lashing out from a position of weakness” (Love, 2010). Sedgwick does not suggest that everyone should engage in *reparative reading*, rather she acknowledges that *paranoid reading* seems to be the dominant mode of practice in academia and suggests it should be rescaled to be just one kind of theoretical practice among many (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 126).

*Paranoid* and *reparative reading* are also described as *strong* and *weak theory* (Love, 2010). *Strong theory* is based on identifying phenomena through reductions and hypervigilance (Sedgwick, 2003; Love, 2010, p. 238), while *weak theory* “prefers acts of noticing, being affected, taking joy, and making whole” (Love, 2010, p. 238). However, as Wiegman notes, both *paranoid* and *reparative* or *strong* and *weak* positions respond to the “same environmental conditions of ambivalence, risk, and dependence” (2014, p. 17).

*Reparative reading*, although based in Queer studies, speaks to the notion of world building found within the *decolonial imaginary* (Perez, 1998). *Reparative reading* offers this research an analytic method to read and review literature for the purposes of remixing it for the benefit of Moana scholarship. Thus, rather than getting stifled by the colonial undertones of Western philosophy, for example, *reparative reading* enables researchers to approach the literature with empathy and repurpose the parts useful for building something new.



## 2.6 Conclusion

This chapter began by positioning myself as a researcher at the intersections of being an art critic, *digital native*, *Moana Cosmopolitan* and a woman—all influential on the research approach within this thesis. I then explained how this research positions an Indigenous, decolonial art theory centred on a *Moana worldview*. *Su'ifefiloi* is the underlying methodological approach, which I have adapted through the *ula lole* metaphor—a type of ula made through the process of *su'ifefiloi* using cosmopolitan materials. Looking at art, *talanoa*, *critical autoethnography* and *reparative reading* are the methods employed within *su'ifefiloi*. They allow me to engage in a wide array of knowledge and knowledge types, to remix or *su'i* an articulation of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. The remainder of the thesis is made up of three alternating elements: *imaginings*, *fa'amaumauga* and chapters in which I read literature *reparatively*. All parts are thematically organised around *imaginaries*, *cosmopolitanism*, *Vā Moana*, and finally *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*.

## Imagining 2.

# Radical Imagining and Moana Futurism Ahilapalapa Rands' *Lift Off* (2018)



**Figure 7.** Rands, A. (2018). *Lift Off* [Installation]. Institute of Modern Art Brisbane, Brisbane, Australia. Photo credit: Markus Ravik. <https://ima.org.au/exhibitions/the-commute/>

### Introduction

My friendship with Ahilapalapa Rands started in the way all good friendships start—sharing a couch together in her friend's apartment in Shanghai. In an

afternoon of spontaneously working in the Tautai office in 2015 on various projects, we went from exchanging pleasantries to co-writing a proposal for the Creative New Zealand Asia Art Exchange programme. The grant application was successful and enabled us to go on a curatorial research trip to China. We did not really know what we were doing, stumbling through curatorial meetings and studio visits, but the time together led

to an ongoing collaborative relationship. We received a second grant, which allowed us to produce the exhibition *lei-pā* for ST PAUL St Gallery, Auckland, in 2017.

As we worked on the show we were shoulder-tapped to think about applying for the Invisible Dust residency together in Hull, England. When we were asked, Rands was on a residency at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Canada, with Léuli Eshrāghi and Sarah Biscarra Dilley. We dreamed up a residency application before I realised it would not work as I had a newborn baby and a toddler. Rands applied as a solo artist and got the residency, leaving soon after we opened *lei-pā*—the exhibition that led me to swear I would never curate again. That was until late 2017, when I received an email from Eshrāghi inviting me to be a part of an Indigenous curatorium that also included Sarah Biscarra Dilley, developing an exhibition for the Institute of Modern Art (IMA) in Brisbane.<sup>29</sup> Coming off our two-year project, Rands and I had done a lot of thinking together, and after the first curatorial meeting I invited her to be an artist in the exhibition.

As she was living in London (in a year in which she had travelled to Honolulu, Banff, Auckland and Hull) in a time when England was preparing for the commemorations of the 250-year anniversary of Captain Cook's Pacific voyages, we had lots of discussion about what Rands would make for the exhibition. For Rands there was a sense that she wanted to be in a mode of practice that was not extractive (extracting from herself for the sake of art) but rather fulfilling for herself and her communities. In this context *Lift Off* was created.

*Lift Off* is an installation including a three-channel animation in which, simply put, telescopes hula off the sacred Hawaiian mountain Mauna Kea, to reveal the Mauna restored to its pre-telescopic self. One channel shows a Kumu Hula sitting on the ground, playing an ipu beat (made by Kumu Hula, Auli'i Mitchell and remastered by Nikolai Mahina). As the beat plays, the telescopes in the two satellite images from the summit of Mauna Kea, which make up the other two channels of the projection, start to dance to the hula beat. They are uplifted and dance until they sit back down, and unexpectedly explode into confetti on the screen. Kānaka Maoli have a long history of protest over the telescopes on Mauna Kea. In many ways they are such an enduring character of the landscape that the prospect of Mauna Kea being rid of the telescopes is largely unimaginable.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the disappearing of the telescopes in *Lift Off* could be interpreted as an act of the *speculative imagination* (Nixon, 2020) or *radical imagination* (Kelley, 2002).

The other element of the installation is a 10-metre, five-layer tinsel wall. The tinsel moves with the energy from the room, either from air-conditioning units, from people's movement in the space, or by reflecting the light coming off the projections. The tinsel acts as a reference to kīkī, the glistening light on the top of the ocean of Moananuiakea or the Pacific Ocean, which Rands was distant from when making the work in London. The lo-fi replacement of something so profound as the ocean shares a humour found in the dancing telescopes. Following in the footsteps of a suite of Black and Indigenous futurist artists, *Lift Off* imagines alternative futures as a mode of healing,

**29.** This exhibition is discussed in more detail in *Imagining Four, Great Ocean Curating: The Commute, Layover, and Transits and Returns* (2018–2019).

**30.** In the 1960s, the University of Hawai'i Institute for Astronomy provided the scientific impetus for the development of Mauna Kea into the world's premier site for ground-based astronomical observatories. Today, the summit of Mauna Kea in Hawai'i currently hosts the world's largest astronomical observatory, with telescopes operated by astronomers from 11 countries. Mauna Kea is also the intended home of the Thirty Meter Telescope, or TMT as it is known for short. A collaboration between Canada, the US, Japan, China and India, the TMT is set to be the world's largest, most powerful telescope. In 2014 the construction of the TMT was halted after

it gained media attention as worldwide protests rose. However, on 30 October 2018, the court approved the resumption of construction. Aloha 'Āina Protectors—those in protest against the construction of TMT—are guarding Mauna Kea because it's sacred to Kānaka Maoli and is home to pristine natural resources. While protests surrounding the TMT are the most recent and perhaps the highest-profile protests against the construction of telescopes on Mauna Kea, Kānaka Maoli have been actively speaking out against the telescopes since the 1960s. The ongoing and longstanding protection of Mauna Kea is just one example of the Kānaka Maoli battle for sovereignty more generally against the illegal occupation of Hawai'i by the US Government.

which can also be understood as a pule or a prayer released for another future, one in which Indigenous knowledge like that of hula is used to create futures.

Rands is an independent curator and artist currently living in Tāmaki Makaurau, who is well known for a collective and collaborative mode of practice. Rands is a member of the longstanding art collective D.A.N.C.E. Art Club, an acronym for Distinguished All Night Community Entertainers, which was founded with Tuāfale Tanoa'i aka Linda T, Vaimaila Urale and Chris Fitzgerald during their studies at Auckland University of Technology. More recently, Rands co-founded the In\*ter\*is\*land Collective—a group of Moana artists and cultural workers in London. Since moving back from London to Tāmaki Makaurau, Rands started another collaborative venture, Moana Fresh, with Vaimaila Urale, a store and arts advocacy agency based in Avondale, which sells Māori and Moana art, crafts and other accessories.

## Colonial Imaginary and Cook 250

*Lift Off* was made in London, England, where Rands was living for the second time. The year 2018, however, marked a different London experience for Rands and other Moana artists in England more broadly, as it was also the first of a three-year commemoration (2018–2020) of the 250-year anniversary of Captain Cook's voyages to the Moana. The commemoration started in 2018 in England, as the place where the *Endeavour* set off for the Pacific voyages. With the commemorations came an unprecedented number of landmark exhibitions across England in its museums, galleries and libraries, celebrating Cook as a contemporary (and historical) hero. These exhibitions included the British Library's *James Cook: The Voyages*, *Oceania* at the Royal Academy of Art and *Reimagining Captain Cook: Pacific*

*Perspectives* at The British Museum.

With museums in England holding a significant number of ancestors and ancestral belongings<sup>31</sup> collected during the expeditions, this time proved a significant opportunity for many of these to be wielded out on display. Items of cultural and historical significance like Tupaia's original drawings, mo'ai from Rapanui and Kū from Hawai'i were exhibited. For people Indigenous to the Moana—who are still confronting the ongoing effects of colonisation—ideas around commemorating these voyages with such grandeur is very different to that of people in England where the literal riches of the empire are displayed with pride. This is especially so for those across the Moana whose relationships to colonisation are still very much alive.<sup>32</sup>

It was within this context that the In\*ter\*is\*land Collective was founded by Rands, Jo Walsh, Lyall Hakaraia and Jessica Palalagi in 2018. Together the In\*ter\*is\*land Collective runs MOKU Pacific HQ, based at London art gallery Raven Row, which provides Moana artists a place to land in London (In\*ter\*is\*land Collective, n.d.). In 2018, because of landmark exhibitions like *Oceania*, many Moana artists and artworkers from Aotearoa and Australia were in London for the opening and other related events. In\*ter\*is\*land Collective found themselves in a hosting role as this mass of Moana artists converged on the city.

The Eurocentric celebration of this colonial history of the Moana became the dominant *social imaginary* for Moana artists based in London at that time, whether they chose it or not. The backdrop of this commemoration reminded them of the legacy of the *colonial imaginary*, giving rise to conversations around repatriation of ancestors and ancestral belongings, the continued exoticisation of the Moana, Indigenous compliance in these narratives as participating contemporary artists, and ultimately the unashamed English pride that comes of England's colonial history

**31.** I use the phrase 'ancestors and ancestral belongings' to refer to what are typically called objects because of the significance many of these belongings have to Moana cultures.

**32.** The Moana has a particular living relationship to colonisation. Beyond the settler-colonial states such as New

Zealand, Australia and Hawai'i there are still six islands which are non-self-governing territories. These six are American Sāmoa, French Polynesia, Guāhan, New Caledonia, Pitcairn and Tokelau.

and subsequent Indigenous dispossession. While many artists decided to work with the grain of the commemorations, offering their own contested narratives within these exhibition projects, other actions included protests such as the *Stolen Goods Tour* at the British Museum, diplomatic talks of repatriation for Hoa Hakananai'a<sup>33</sup> and the In\*ter\*is\*land Collective's own programme of Moana art events and gatherings conceptually disconnected from Cook. To borrow from Castoriadis (2005), Cook 250 became the *central imaginary*, the talk of the town from which *peripheral* or other Moana *imaginaries* were created.

This year of Cook helped Rands to birth *Lift Off*. After doing projects in England that responded to this moment, including *The Oceanic Reading Room* for the Cook 250 Whitby Festival, and feeling drained by the strength of the hegemonic narratives surrounding Cook, she wanted to find a sustainable art practice that was also personally nourishing. Rands attributes an educative role to work like *The Oceanic Reading Room* as confronting the *colonial imaginary* and offering Moana perspectives within this event. However, in a place where the *colonial imaginary* is perhaps its most enduring, *The Oceanic Reading Room*<sup>34</sup> also felt extractive, and was produced at great personal cost. Feeling overwhelmed by the *colonial imaginings* of the Moana, Rands found clarity concerning “who we’ve descended from”—including other Moana artists from previous generations. Rands asked how she could contribute meaningfully to that creative genealogy herself.

Meanwhile, the Cook 250 commemorations occurred simultaneously with the re-escalation of land protection at Mauna Kea, due to attempts to continue construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope. *Lift Off* offered a significant focus for Rands to clarify the kind

of art she wanted to make—an act of solidarity from afar. In our talanoa, she commented, “just to put that out as a prayer or a poem or intention, created visually as this animation, to just see what it looks like—that’s got an energy to it.” Moving away from an extractive model of art practice, *Lift Off* “healed me,” she shares.

I ask Rands about her experience within BIPOC<sup>35</sup> spaces while in London, and she tells me that a lot of her gaining literacy in race politics has occurred in online BIPOC communities. The first space that set her on a “course of radicalisation” was a Facebook page called Radical Black and Brown Hotties (RBBH), a group that had over 2000 members at its peak (Kwakye & Ogunbiyi, 2019). She tells me, “being in Europe and feeling really alone, I didn’t have language to hold my feelings at that point” but being in the group was “liberating and exciting and I just got lost in it. I felt seen, I was learning all the time just reading the comments of people responding to content that people were sharing and then people educating each other.” For Rands, RBBH, which was exclusively for Black and Brown women and non-binary folk, provided a “language of how to articulate my experience and how to understand other people’s experience.” Rands was exposed to ideas like code-switching, and how to shift oneself from the White gaze, tools that, Rands tells me, “filtered down into my practice and my personhood.” Being able to caucus in spaces with only BIPOC was new to Rands, who learned how to think through the ways in which ideas centred on racialised experiences, and this highlighted how other spaces, which still have to contend with Western thought as being dominant, are not as safe.

These online BIPOC spaces were key for Rands to connect into wider BIPOC struggles, helping her to see the interconnectedness between her own and

**33.** Hoa Hakananai'a is a mo'ai taken from Rapanui in 1868 by the crew of a British survey ship, *HMS Topaze* and gifted to Queen Victoria.

**34.** This project was staged in a reading room at Whitby Library, to introduce local audiences to ways in which knowledge and learning is gathered and shared by some of the Indigenous peoples from the Moana. Included was an hour-long documentary interviewing over 20 different Moana people on their perspectives of James Cook, a curated collection of

Moana books and publishing ranging from children's books to decolonial theory, fiction and poetry. The books that were bought for this project have been gifted to the Whitby Library as a permanent Oceanic Reading Room collection, operating as a call and response to their existing James Cook collection.

**35.** BIPOC stands for Black Indigenous People of Colour. I keep this term in here as it is the term Rands uses to describe these non-Pālagi spaces she has been a part of online and in London.





**Figure 8.** Rands, A. (2018). *Lift Off* [Installation]. Institute of Modern Art Brisbane, Brisbane, Australia. Photo credit: Markus Ravik. <https://ima.org.au/exhibitions/the-commute/>

other comparable experiences. However, Rands also discovered here how Moana people are distinct and have specific needs. While global communities play a significant role, it was also important for Rands to simultaneously find her specificity as a Moana person. Having now left Facebook, Rands admits that “there was something missing for me, I feel like there’s just something about being in the flesh with people which you just can’t completely recreate.” Thus, these large, global spaces highlight for Rands—despite the transformative potentials of digital media—the significance of simultaneously holding the local and global together.

### Solidarity by Distance

*Lift Off* is a work predicated on the artist’s physical distance to Mauna Kea. She tells me that in *Lift Off*, “I’m not there, and I can’t be there [on Mauna Kea]. But I have relationships with my Kumu Hula, and I can ask for a hula beat, I know the relationship of that sound and movement.” Rands explores what solidarity can look like for an artist working at a distance. In the first instance, the work raises the profile of the call to protect Mauna Kea, introducing it to new and perhaps unaware communities. Drawing audiences in, through its enticing soundscape and animations, *Lift Off* is protest disguised as art, intelligently operating on

multiple levels. Because of this, *Lift Off* also ensures the documentation of the Aloha ‘Āina Protectors within art history. This, in turn, future proofs conversations within another kind of media landscape—the art historical canon (which might not be interested otherwise). While the Aloha ‘Āina Protectors on the ground are doing the hard work, Rands looks at how her artistic training can be of use to this struggle. Yet, perhaps most pertinently, within a settler colonialism as pervasive as in Hawai‘i, the image of Mauna Kea free of satellites at the end of *Lift Off* is an act of *radical imagination*.

Ahilapalapa Rands’ work functions on many layers, but most of all it is a powerful act of solidarity. Through humour, imagination and hula, *Lift Off* confronts us with the realities of Mauna Kea and the ongoing protection struggles, while transporting us to a new place where we are able to imagine a new—old version of Mauna Kea. Within the context of *The Commute*, an exhibition full of artists reclaiming and revitalising cultural spaces and practices, including struggles such as that the Aloha ‘Āina Protectors were facing, was pertinent. Moreover, we are reminded of artists’ unique ability to make real the unimaginable through images, which within movements of intense struggle can provide a light at the end of the tunnel, a vision, a prediction. *Lift Off* is an important work that through *radical imagination* makes clear the political potential of art (Lopesi, 2019a).

## Futurism, Speculation and Imagining

Early artistic reference points for Rands include her introduction to Monty Python animations by her Pākehā father. The stop-motion videos offered Rands a way to become familiar with ridiculousness and low-fi sensibilities from an early age, growing a type of relationship to this particular aesthetic and humour. Another early influence for the artist was science fiction through the trilogy *Lilith's Brood* by Octavia E. Butler. In particular, the scale of imagination in Butler's books opened new possibilities for Rands, expanding the limits of what was possible. Like some of the concepts that Butler proposes in her work, bouncing telescopes off Mauna Kea seems like an "immense proposition" or "completely unachievable." One might suggest that the telescopes on Mauna Kea are, for Kānaka Maoli, a dystopian reality. Moreover, speculating on a future with no telescopes on Mauna Kea becomes a way for Rands to "positively transform contemporary colonial realities" (Nixon, 2020, p. 333).

You could locate *Lift Off* within a growing canon of *Indigenous futurism* (Dillon, 2012; Nixon, 2020) through its use of *radical imagination* (Kelley, 2002) and science-fiction tropes. An *Indigenous futurist* approach to art-making projects Indigenous life into the *future imaginary* (Nixon, 2020, p. 332). According to John Reider, early science-fiction writing draws heavily on the history and discourses of colonialism, and ideas such as first encounter, invasion and exoticisation of the other are key tropes (2008). Thus, science fiction is not completely fictional but, if read in a certain way, can offer a parody of imperialism. Therefore, *Indigenous futurism* contends, the dystopian future of science fiction has already occurred for Indigenous peoples, who have suffered land confiscation, cultural loss and the end of their world as they knew it. The futures of science fiction, then, are a *future imaginary* of the past that today's Indigenous artists are already living in.

*Indigenous futurism*, drawing on the tropes

of science fiction, offers Indigenous artists a way to "reenlist the science of indigeneity in a discourse that invites discerning readers to realize that Indigenous science is not just complementary to a perceived western enlightenment but is indeed integral to a refined twenty-first-century sensibility" (Dillon, 2012). As Cree-Métis-Saulteaux curator Lindsay Nixon (2020) argues, this science includes projections of love and kinship as Indigenous medicine for new futures. In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer writes that weaving a braid between Indigenous ways of knowing, scientific knowledge and her own story as an Anishinabek scientist offers "healing stories that allow us to imagine a different relationship, in which people and land are good medicine for each other" (2020, p. x). Rands not only *radically imagines* a Mauna with no telescopes but does so through hula. Hula, in this sense, is science. Thinking with Nixon and Kimmerer, and highlighting Indigenous science's importance in working toward or to speculating futures of Indigenous healing, Rands prioritises Hawaiian epistemologies as the solution. One interpretation of the work could conclude that, while Western science and settler colonialism has created today's problems, it will not solve them. The prospect of a telescope being able to dance its way off a mountain is funny, it feels light-hearted, but perhaps it is also healing. Rather than focusing on the reality of Mauna Kea and the ongoing protections, Rands uses her skills, resources and platform as an artist to offer a telescope-free Mauna as a kind of prayer. She tells me, "I think we now have access and agency and a responsibility to be using the tools that we have to build and imagine something."

The *colonial imaginary* is fixated on Indigenous death as a continued depiction (Nixon, 2020, p. 332). By contrast, in addition to the use of Indigenous science, *Indigenous futurism* creates an important break from the *colonial imaginary*, resulting in liberatory effects, both in a conceptual and a formal sense. Formally, it encourages a liberation from genre expectations and from what serious artists are supposed to make, so that makers have room to play

and stretch boundaries (Dillion, 2012). Conceptually, it enables the projection of Indigenous life into the future, contesting the Indigenous death of the *colonial imaginary* (Nixon, 2020, p. 332).

This, in essence, creates an intellectual tradition, as Black studies scholar Tiffany Lethabo King notes: “Speculative readings also offer a mapping of the limits of the imagination and the epistemological systems that the conquistador-settler relied on to create spatial representations of empire” (2019, p. 124). For King, speculative work that depicts what is possible enables an examination of the limits of the *colonial imaginary* and the possibilities available through one’s own *imaginary*.

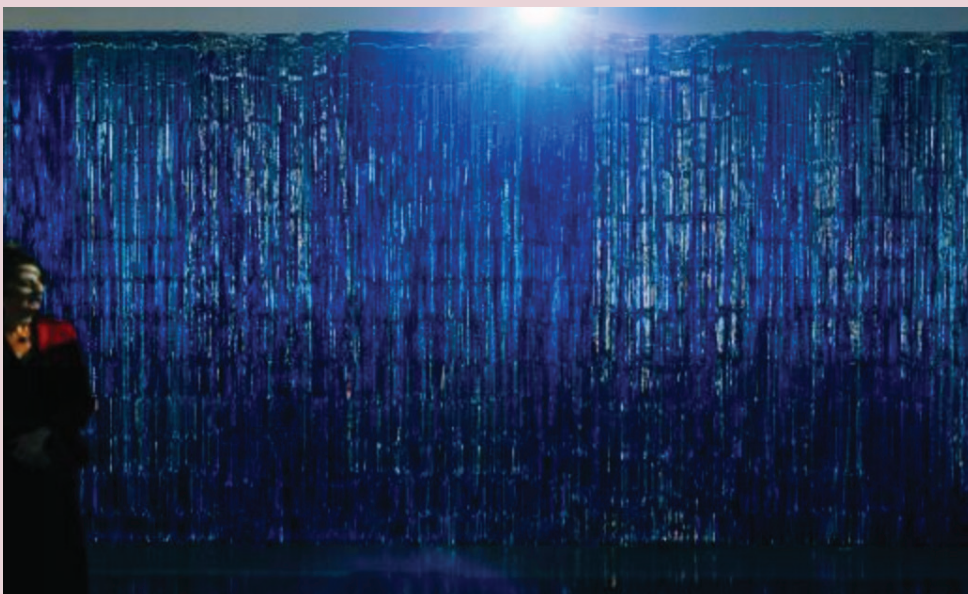
Through Nixon’s, King’s and Dillon’s articulation of *Indigenous futurism* and its speculative nature, the role of the *imaginary* becomes clear. In particular, historian Robin D. G. Kelley’s articulation of the *radical imaginary* is useful in this context to understand the political impetus inherent in this type of speculative, futurist thinking (2002). Kelley writes about the *radical imagination* in *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (2002) as the concept of imagining a new future, an impetus for political mobilisation, specifically for Black political movements. For Kelley, the *radical imagination* combines one’s creative capacities with one’s political desires for social change (2002, p. 191). The *radical imagination*, then, is the creation of new worlds that replace those that are oppressive (Mar-Abe,

2015). *Radical imagination* here hinges on *creative sovereignty* (Garneau, 2018) or *mau* as discussed in *Imagining Four, Great Ocean Curating: The Commute, Layover, and Transits and Returns* (2018–2019). This sense of *mau* enables one to author and determine futures. To imagine futures is a legitimate response to one’s social realities.

## Intergenerational Trauma and Healing

*Indigenous futurism* and its variations are intimately tied to notions of *intergenerational trauma* and *healing*. The restoration of the beings, bodies, genders, sexualities, and reproductive lives of Indigenous people, as Nixon writes, is “necessary to heal our communities into the Indigenous future” (2020, p. 335). In this context, healing occurs first at an individual level, extending to one’s own communities, then to other communities. For Nixon, art offers a medicine for this kind of healing in which Indigenous futures are imagined (p. 339). To operate in this mode requires a deep understanding of time, in an expansive sense that sees future and past as being integrally linked.

*Indigenous futurism* and *intergenerational trauma*, perhaps, both sit within the notion of *deep time* (Diaz, 2011; Hanlon, 2017). *Deep time* is an Indigenous temporality rooted in Indigenous historiographical traditions, which allow for an



**Figure 9.** Rands, A. (2018). *Lift Off* [Installation]. Institute of Modern Art Brisbane, Brisbane, Australia. Photo credit: Markus Ravik. <https://ima.org.au/exhibitions/the-commute/>

understanding of “deeper Oceanic pasts,” distinct from Pacific history (Hanlon, 2017, p. 294). In this sense, deep time is an “indigenously-ordered” temporal understanding (Diaz, 2011, p. 21). It is often acknowledged that Indigenous notions of time are circular rather than linear, placing the past in the future and the future in the past. In the case of *futurism* and *intergenerational trauma*, there is a need to reckon with the traumas of the past in order to move forward. In addition, *Indigenous futurism* requires a need to examine deeper pasts to find methods for decolonial futures. Thus, an Indigenously ordered notion of time requires deep pasts and *future imaginaries* to be intimately bound.

*Intergenerational trauma*, as it is commonly known, comes from the concept of *historical trauma* (Kirmayer et al., 2014), a growing field of social epigenetics that looks at *historical trauma* as a form of adversity defined as being destructive, collective, cumulative and able to be transmitted generationally (Dubois & Guaspere, 2020). *Historical trauma* is emotional and psychological collective, cumulative wounding deriving from massive collective traumatic events endured across generations. The resulting unresolved grief has both personal and intergenerational impacts (Pihama et al., 2014; Brave Heart, 1998, 1999, 2000; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).

Initially, *historical trauma* was the concept used when looking at major events, such as the holocaust and its generational impacts, described as complex and intergenerational forms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Building on this work, Indigenous scholars saw the colonisation of the Americas as a major genocidal event, also resulting in instances of *intergenerational trauma*, like a kind of PTSD inflicted by European conquest and colonisation, and combining historical oppression and psychological trauma (Duran & Duran, 1995; Duran, et. al., 2008; Brave Heart, 1998, 1999, 2000; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Early Indigenous work on historical trauma was used to contextualise Indigenous health problems as ongoing “forms of postcolonial suffering,” to destigmatise

people whose recovery was stifled by feelings of “self-blame and to legitimise Indigenous cultural practices as therapeutic interventions in their own right” (Kirmayer et al., 2014, para. 2). Subsequently, increasing recognition of histories of colonialism for Indigenous peoples led to historical trauma being understood as “an explanation for continuing inequities in health and wellbeing and a focus for social, cultural, and psychological interventions” (Kirmayer et. al., 2014).

Psychologist and healer Eduardo Duran named *historic trauma* as a kind of *historic soul wound*. The result of which, if not “dealt with, each person, as well as her or his descendants, is doomed to experience and perpetuate various forms of psychic and spiritual suffering in the future” (Duran, et. al., 2008, p. 288). Therefore, the element of healing becomes a way of liberating oneself from the impacts of historical trauma, demonstrating the intimate connection between deep Indigenous pasts and Indigenous futurity. Deconstructing one’s own cultural history can have liberatory effects regarding the traumatic and oppressive conditions of one’s present situation (Duran et al., 2008, p. 289). Like Nixon, Duran et al. believe that this kind of transformation requires a genuine act of love. Healing in a Native American worldview is connected with helping individuals learn how they fit into an overall cosmology. Emily Parr, in *talanoa* for this research, likened this to understanding her place in a system of *vā relations*. When she realised that there was a system of relations in which she already had a place, she found that a lot of her concerns with her own cultural history were alleviated. This discussion is continued in *Imagining Three, More Roots than Trees: Emily Parr’s Moana Calling Me Home* (2019–2020).

In a New Zealand context, Pihama et al. discuss the significance within Māori research of *historical trauma* theory, which engages the impact of colonisation on Māori, (2014, p. 249). This perspective highlights the intergenerational traumatic experience of “collective loss of land, language, culture and identity” through “integration, assimilation and segregation



policies” (2014, p. 259), and situates Māori research within a collective historical context cognisant of specific Māori issues.

Aside from Sāmoan academic Fetaui Iosefo, who writes about confronting instances of *intergenerational trauma* within her own research (2018b), there is little scholarship by Moana scholars in Aotearoa dealing with theories of *intergenerational trauma* in comparable ways. Yet the language of *intergenerational trauma* and *healing* has a very firm place in the vernacular language of *digital native* Moana people, as demonstrated in the *talanoa* I had with artists for this project.<sup>36</sup> We could look at this growing acknowledgment of *historical* or *intergenerational trauma* through the work of Michel Dubois and Catherine Guaspere, who discuss the way *intergenerational trauma* made its way into the public sphere through four main actors: “activists, self-proclaimed spokespersons for victims or vulnerable populations, health professionals, and public authorities” (2020). While the field of social epigenetics remains controversial within academia, you could argue that the public’s willingness to see it as socially and politically relevant has had significant impacts on its absorption into Moana vernacular language and subsequently into contemporary Moana art.

### Contemporary Moana References to Intergenerational Trauma

I am so much more than my hurt  
my wellbeing breaks intergenerational trauma  
knowing it is a taonga to be passed down to my  
children’s children  
as part of my gafa, whakapapa  
my wellbeing maintains my whakapapa  
is worthy  
is seen  
is loved

— Grace Taylor, *Mental Health Awareness Week*, 2020

The young here  
are treated  
for depression  
with  
*Mycobacterium vaccae*.  
The serotonin release  
found from  
getting your hands dirty  
touching the earth  
itself.

— Karlo Mila, *Intergenerational Healing: Lessons from Hawai’i*, 2020

We’re all living in the same family, and we’re  
screaming silently and suffocating in our shame.

— Lilo Ema Siope, *Loimata: The Sweetest Tears*, 2020

While it is difficult to find references to *intergenerational trauma* in texts by Moana scholars in Aotearoa, it is clearly a current subject of interrogation and reference for *Moana Cosmopolitan* artists, writers and makers more broadly. Most of the artists featured in this research shared in our *talanoa* their concerns with specific instances of *intergenerational trauma* through varied artistic approaches, and it is worthwhile to place their accounts in the context of other Moana artworks that discuss trauma.

Not formally a contemporary artwork but a documentary film, *Loimata: The Sweetest Tears* (2020), directed by Anna Marbrook, stands out as a key example of *intergenerational trauma* and healing from a diasporic Moana perspective. The documentary traces waka builder and captain Lilo Ema Siope’s final years before passing away and the collective journey she undertook with her family to heal from *intergenerational trauma* stemming from sexual abuse. In the film, the Siope family returns to Sāmoa, this is the first time back for Ema’s father since leaving in 1959. The result is a poignant yet tender story of a family’s unconditional love for each other, and a commitment to

**36.** This was a specific topic of conversation with Ahilapalapa Rands, Emily Parr, Talia Smith, Léuli Eshraghi and Louisa Afoa.



healing (Lopesi, 2020a).

Sāmoan, Persian and Cantonese artist, curator and academic Léuli Eshrāghi discusses *intergenerational trauma* in their PhD research, through the concept of sovereign display territories. Strongly influenced by Indigenous literature and scholarship from Australia, Hawai'i, America, Canada and Aotearoa, Eshrāghi's *sovereign display territories* is a mode of artistic practice in which "healing can come to pass through Indigenous control of sight (exhibitions and discursive programming for instance), site (institutional budgets and cultural protocols), and citation (genealogical time, Indigenous knowledges and ceremonies)" (2018, p. 34). The significance of personal and collective forms of mourning and healing for Eshrāghi arise through the "colonial enterprise" of the global art market, which continues to inflict trauma onto Indigenous and racialised bodies, and which their work attempts to counter (2018, p. 26).

A recent project, titled *re(cul)naissance* (2020) and commissioned for the Biennale of Sydney, further developed this PhD research. The work "proposes a future state of unmitigated wellbeing and unashamed pleasure for fa'afafine, fa'atama, queer, trans, non-binary and further peoples who have been violently removed from our erstwhile key roles in intellectual and ceremonial life in multiple Indigenous kinship systems" (Biennale of Sydney, 2020, para. 1). For Eshrāghi,

remembering precolonial kinship systems offers a way to heal from the colonial impositions of gender and sexuality placed onto Sāmoan culture and to envision new futures.

Quite a different approach to trauma can be seen in the work of Luke Willis Thompson. Unlike the other artworks mentioned, Thompson does not look for methods of healing from trauma. Rather the trauma is often the medium for the artworks themselves, as Emma Ng writes, Thompson is interested in objects that "emerge from conditions of trauma" (2017, para. 4), specifically Black trauma.

*Cemetery of Uniforms and Liveries* (2016), commissioned by the Chisenhale Gallery, London, is a 16mm silent film made up of two single takes of two young men descended from women killed by London's Metropolitan Police. The shooting of Brandon's grandmother, Cherry Groce, in 1985 triggered the Brixton riots. She later died in 2011 of complications from her injuries. Graeme's mother, Joy Gardner, was killed in her home in 1993, as police tried to detain her for deportation. Thompson's interest in "black subjects whose lives have been shaped by police violence" (Balsom, 2018b, para. 4) continued into his highest-profile work to date, *Autoportrait* (2017). The subject of *Autoportrait* is another person whose life has been shaped by police violence, Diamond Reynolds. Reynolds became a household name in



**Figure 10.** Eshrāghi, L. (2020). *re(cul)naissance* [Installation]. 22nd Biennale of Sydney, Cockatoo Island, Australia. Photo credit: Jessica Maurer. <https://www.biennaleofsydney.art/artists/l%C3%A9uli-eshr%C4%81ghi/>

2016, when she livestreamed the police shooting of her boyfriend Philando Castile, during a routine traffic stop in Minnesota, USA, on Facebook. The footage went viral on Facebook and other media around the world. According to Eli Saslow, writing in the Washington Post (2016, para. 9), “The governor of Minnesota had called her actions ‘heroic’ and blamed the deadly shooting on racism.” In *The Guardian* (Associated Press, 2017, para. 3), Reynolds is quoted as saying, “Because I know that the people are not protected against the police...I wanted to make sure if I died in front of my daughter that people would know the truth.” Reynolds’ livestream joined a growing number of recent witness videos, which together have demonstrated the police brutality faced in the US by the Black community.<sup>37</sup> Political editor Ezekiel Kweku (2016) called this growing phenomenon an American Horror Story. Similarly, Jude Dry (2016) argues that the makers of these videos are filmmakers who “give us a chance to bear witness to the danger of having a black body” (para. 11).

Thompson’s response to this genre of videos is *Autoportrait*, a 33mm silent film, which Thompson calls a “sister image” to the original Facebook livestream. The viral nature of the livestream resulted in a loss of control of Reynolds’ image, with the trauma of the event relived for the public in media interviews and talk shows. In contrast, Thompson’s film is intended as an act of care that restores Reynolds’ agency (Ng, 2017). Using analogue film processes, rather than the digital film Reynolds (and by extension other protest footage) is most known for, the hope is that this image replaces the former.<sup>38</sup>

The use of trauma as a medium in Thompson’s work has often resulted in ethical questions of whether he has the right to make art using the collective

trauma of groups he does not himself belong to.

Within the global art environment, Thompson seems to be testing, “the claim of authorship upon work that explores the experiences of others, the privilege of the artist to enter and exit particular terrain at their own will, and their opportunity to capitalise on others’ trauma” (Ng, 2017, para. 6). Thompson’s work has been defended as generating “productive, if uncomfortable, conversations” (Byrt, 2016, para. 4). Thompson’s dealing with intergenerational trauma is different to the aforementioned artists who focus on ideas of healing. However, interestingly, in a Zoom talk organised by artists’ collective Town Hall in December 2020, Thompson expressed feeling regretful for these works and his approach to trauma.<sup>39</sup>

The re-presentation of collective and personal, Indigenous and racial wounds in the gallery space, over and over again, bothers Rands, especially given that the majority of gallery visitors are Pākehā. In Rands’ experience, “people are much more interested in hearing you build a practice on your distance from your language than they are to be like she’s off learning her language.” She continues:

And so I feel like it’s not completely cynical from an artist’s perspective but it’s geared to keep us in that space of just re-presenting it. And that just makes me feel a bit yuck at this point like we’ve done a lot of that work now. Not that it was ever even ours to do but if we were to process in that way, sweet, but to stay there feels a bit like we’re self-fetishising.

Aware of the art market’s seeming interest in trauma, Rands asks audiences and institutions wanting more trauma for their insatiable appetites why resourcing language programmes is not a valuable

**37.** This phenomenon, if it can be called that, has been seen most recently with the police shooting of George Floyd.

**38.** *Cemetery of Uniforms and Liveries* and *Autoportrait* have much in common. They not only focus on Black subjects whose lives have been shaped by police violence, they also evoke Andy Warhol’s *Screen Tests*. *Screen Tests* is a series of short, silent, black-and-white film portraits, mostly of celebrities, made between 1964 and 1966. Of the originally 500 produced, only 472 remain, with only five featuring Black subjects. Thompson references Warhol through his use of the same film technology,

Kodak Tri-X 16mm film. As Alex Quicho writes, “[w]ith their similarly clear referencing of the Screen Tests, both works complicate the notion of portraiture itself, questioning the grim nature of contemporary celebrity” (2018, para. 5). Quicho adds that Thompson “critiques the artifice of Warhol’s neutrality” (para. 5).

**39.** This expression was very much at odds with the way the artist has discussed this work in the past. I felt a lot of empathy for Thompson’s expression and feel as though it is important to acknowledge within this context.

way to imagine a radical alternative to Indigenous lived realities. Driven by a political impetus to be in collective solidarity and heal personally, Rands feels that “there’s so much urgent work that’s needed. And if you are in the arts, you have a responsibility to be thinking about that stuff and then trying to gear your practice toward that in some way.” She tells me:

We were raised on the [idea that] trauma is what we make work about, and that’s what people have an appetite for. And then having that realisation that it doesn’t have to stay there and we can actually heal it, gives us an amazing agency.

When I talk to Rands I get a sense that her particular experiences with *historical* or *intergenerational trauma*<sup>40</sup> can end with her and her generation. She tells me, “we can have an intention for it to end with us, and that’s amazing. That’s so exciting...sometimes I think maybe this is just the healing and then after that you create.” For Rands, this intention to heal is generational:

In the last couple years that I’ve realised the importance of healing and am having a lot of conversations about our generation and the moment in time that a lot of us have access to within our families...of being able to do something that maybe my mum’s generation couldn’t do because they were still in the throes of going through what they were going through.

## Conclusion

In *Lift Off*, we see how *futurism* and science fiction can offer a mode of practice that offers a sense of positive futurity. Rather than reproducing her wounds or trauma for gallery audiences, Rands finds a way of making that is replenishing and healing for herself as an artist, and by extension for the communities she belongs too. Concerned with deeper pasts and Indigenous futurities, Rands works in *deep time*. This act of *creative sovereignty*, or standing in her *mau*, enables Rands to hold the power within her own practice, making work that contributes to the *radical imagining* of a *future imaginary*—a *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary*.

<sup>40</sup>. In our talanoa Rands revealed the particularities of her own intergenerational trauma, which I have not disclosed within this thesis.

# Fa'amaumauga

Monday, 2 June 2020

*During lockdown, I made a special guest appearance on Layne Waerea's Walking About in Fog (2020) project. Before this project, I hadn't thought all that much about fog, but I started to see it as an analogy to thinking. As an idea, you don't know when fog will spring up but it does require a series of events for it to occur, some of which you only recognise in retrospect. Then, when you're in the midst of the fog, it's hard to make sense of what's happening or what's in front of you. You just have to sit in it and wait. Only when it settles do you gain clarity. For the project, I wrote a series of responses, called 'Foggy Thoughts.' In the final one, I thought through Black Lives Matter as a race crisis amidst two other crises, Covid-19 and climate crisis.*

*In Anti-Crisis (2013), Janet Roitman tells us that 'Normalcy, Never Again' was the original title for Martin Luther King Jr.'s now landmark speech delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on 28 August 1963. However, at some stage it changed and 'Normalcy, Never Again' became 'I Have a Dream.' What strikes me with these two titles for the same speech is how possibilities for new futures are inherently entangled with the realities of the day, and how political the very basic desire to want something more can be. For Roitman, crises are moments "when normativity is laid bare, such as when the contingent or partial quality of knowledge claims—principles, suppositions, premises, criteria, and logical or causal relations—are disputed, critiqued, challenged, or disclosed" (p. 3-4).*

*There's something both devastating and hopeful in the thought that a crisis offers a turning point. The devastation is that we as humans have to wait until things get so bad that we can (hope) to see systemic change of any kind. But the element of hopefulness in a crisis is that we see change at all. I wonder if part of the PhD fog settling in such a strange and wild year is*

*understanding the thesis as offering new possibilities for futurity, in amidst a year of crisis.*

*On 25 May, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, George Floyd died at the hands (or more specifically at the knee) of a White police officer, Derek Chauvin. Floyd was reported for using a fake \$20 bill by a teenage staff member at Cup Foods. On the call to 911 the staff member said that Floyd appeared "drunk" and "not in control of himself" (BBC, 2020b, para. 13) and within seven minutes two police officers were there. Floyd was sitting with two other people in a car parked around the corner when they arrived. One of the officers, Thomas Lane, approached Floyd with his gun and ordered him to show his hands. When trying to put Floyd in the car, Floyd "stiffened up, fell to the ground, and told the officers he was claustrophobic" (BBC, 2020b, para. 21).*

*With Floyd on the ground and still in handcuffs, witnesses started recording Officer Derek Chauvin as he pushed his knee between Floyd's neck and head, where it remained for eight minutes and 46 seconds, until Floyd died. During these eight minutes, Floyd said, "I can't breathe," pleading for his mother and begging "please, please, please" (BBC, 2020b, para. 28). The whole event, from the 911 call until Floyd's last breath, lasted just 30 minutes. The "ambulance was the hearse" the Floyd family attorney declared (Pereira, 2020, para. 4).*

*This death followed that of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old emergency room technician, shot dead in her own home in Louisville by police, with bullets striking her at least eight times. In Taylor's case, police were investigating two men whom they believed to be selling drugs out of a house not far from Taylor's (Oppel, 2020). Yet a judge had also signed a warrant allowing police to search her home, because they believed that one of the men was receiving packages*

there. The judge's order was a so-called "no-knock" warrant, which allowed the police to enter without warning or without identifying themselves as law enforcement. Taylor's death followed that of Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old jogger, who was shot dead by Gregory McMichael and his son Travis for no reason, on 23 February in Georgia (BBC, 2020a). Also captured on camera. These three Black murders—two at the hands of police, all at the hands of White men—are just the latest high-profile killings in a long line of White on Black brutality, captured on camera and shared on social media.

Covid-19 revealed and exacerbated existing racial disparities. The murder of George Floyd seems to have been the straw that broke the camel's back, resulting in protests starting in Minneapolis a few days later, spreading like wildfire across the states and the world. Within that week, a tanker truck drove into a crowd of protestors on a Minneapolis bridge. Two NYPD cars were also filmed driving into protestors. And two cops were arrested and fired in Atlanta for stopping a Black couple in traffic, slashing their tyres, smashing their windows and tasing them. Caught on video, the car in front had a young White woman waving and smiling out the window before being allowed to drive off. The fates of the two cars couldn't have been any more different.

*Not all bodies move equally.*

After lockdown my friends Anisha Sankar, Daniel Hernandez and I started a small reading group; just us. It started one night as a conversation between Anisha and I at our mutual friend Ahilapalapa Rands' birthday. We both felt like we ran reading groups in other contexts and wanted the chance to challenge ourselves in what we were reading and thinking, especially after the Black Lives Matter marches here in Aotearoa. For the first session we read Frank Wilderson's *Afropessimism* (2020) alongside Jodi Byrd's *The Transit of Empire* (2011). The concept of *Afropessimism* asserts the idea that for the human category to exist (in which certain people are considered human), there needs to be a category of the non-human. That category of the non-human is Blackness and is relegated to social death. In between, what people would umbrella as NBPOC or non-Black people of colour are senior partners and those who are not White heterosexual males are junior partners. But the point is that they all are human, they just experience their humanity in different ways, relying on forms of anti-Blackness to maintain their humanity.

In the early stages of the pandemic, when Italy and New York went into lockdown and schools closed, it felt like it was happening here. The constant images and information pouring into our screens and homes made the outbreaks feel close, despite New Zealand only having a couple of cases at the time. The virus connected everyone far beyond national boundaries. In the same way, the flow of images of racialised bodies being brutalised by systems of power felt closer than ever before. This pandemic has brought a series of pre-existing crises to the forefront and exacerbated them. Class and race struggles have national specificity, but they are not nationally confined; rather they are felt globally. Global alliances that are bonded on shared experiences of racism, sexism, classism, ableism and so on can feel more significant than one's own national identity, especially now. What we are seeing this year is the breaking point of various conditions that have been lingering for a while now. 2020 has smashed the myth that universal politics and one-size-fits-all approaches work—because nothing ever really works across the board. If there was ever a need for new ways of being and seeing, new imaginaries, then surely that time is now.



# Chapter 3.

## Imaginaries

### 3.1 Introduction

Diasporic identities, those that do not assimilate into dominant culture, but rather maintain their distinction, require constant reproduction (Hall, 1994, p. 253). Diasporic identities in this way enable people to continually “re-create culture, to re-create oneself through and with diasporic communities,” always “re-creating the unimagined” (Perez, 1999, p. 79). The production of collective and individual identities can be understood through the concept of the *imaginary*, which explains a mode of world making, where diasporic people can generate shared imagery and ideas, to identify themselves and relate to each other as diasporic communities (Appadurai, 1996). One such reproduction or *imagining* of Moana diasporic experience is *Moana Cosmopolitanism*—an identity rooted ancestrally in the Moana and routed globally, the specifics of which are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

One of the research questions of this thesis is: How is the imaginary configured in *Moana*

*Cosmopolitan* thought? While the question is more explicitly answered in Chapter 6, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, this chapter reviews relevant literature on imaginaries to foreground the emerging theory of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*.

The notion of the *imaginary* has a long legacy within a variety of academic disciplines. Specifically, the term is traced back to the work of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and his conceptualisation of the *mirror stage* (1966). Here, the *imaginary* was one register, alongside the *symbolic*, and the *real*, to create Lacan’s *symbolic order* (Lacan, 1966). The *mirror stage* describes the self-identification process that creates a sense of self (Johnston, 2018), concerned specifically with the formation of an individual’s identity (Varvarousis, 2019, p. 6).<sup>41</sup> While acknowledging the Lacanian roots of the term *imaginary*, the *imaginary* as used in this thesis is markedly different and follows from Greek–French philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis’ *social imaginary* (Castoriadis, 2005). In contrast to Lacan, Castoriadis’ *social imaginary* emphasises the social and societal elements rather than the individual (Varvarousis, 2019, p. 2).<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup>. Lacan argues in the *mirror stage* that very young children, between the ages of six and 18 months, quickly acquire the ability to recognise their reflection in the mirror (Lacan, 1966; Johnston, 2018). According to Lacan, this period in an infant’s life is typified by a sense of helplessness that can lead to distress and anxiety. In the mirror, the infant sees themselves whole for the first time, with a complete body reflected back, and gains a sense of calm. This moment of self-recognition, according to Lacan, is the creative point of the *imaginary*, which through a series of self-objectifications creates a sense of *self* or the *ego*. Sociologist George Steinmetz describes this as the moment when “the fragmented consciousness identifies with its own reflected image, alienated but satisfyingly totalizing” (2007, p. 59). These identifications are located

within the “realm of the imaginary, the realm of plenitude and wholeness” (p. 59).

<sup>42</sup>. Scholars such as Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha and Hortense Spillers took liberties with Lacan’s *mirror stage*, adding a fourth register that described the “‘reality’ that breaks in on the person,” establishing the reality (the dominant political position) of the symbolic as it pertains to the psychic being of the colonised person (Spillers, 1996, p. 82). In Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*, within a colonial society, a Black man’s mirror denies his difference and the reflections are psychologically and socially alienating. Subsequently, “[t]he black man wants to be white” (Fanon, 2008, p. 3).

Similar to Fanon, Bhabha argues that finding oneself through colonial images is problematic, because they



In the work of Castoriadis, imaginative capacity is called *radical imagination* and what has been imagined is an *actual imaginary* (Castoriadis, 2005). Therefore, the *social imaginary* is what has been *actually* imagined by a society (Strauss, 2006, p. 324). This highlights the role of imagination in systems of power, from religion to politics, which become institutionalised in what Castoriadis calls the *imaginary institution of society*.

The *social imaginary* demonstrates the imaginative and productive processes involved in building societies and provides at least an implicit critique of grand narratives and universality, arguing that human history is a “creation ex nihilo” (2005, p. 3).<sup>43</sup> In particular, this is explored through *heteronomous* and *autonomous* societies, each with their own imagined *social imaginaries*. The difference is that *autonomous* societies are conscious of their creation, whereas *heteronomous* ones are not and rely on given truths (rather than understanding and excepting their creation) to make the *institutions* of their *imaginary* respectable (Castoriadis, 2005; Varvarousis, 2006, p. 7). According to Castoriadis, these societies create either *central* or *peripheral imaginaries*.

Following Castoriadis’ logic, *imagination* in this thesis describes the production process of virtually anything, whether it be an idea, a concept or an artwork, while *imaginaries* are what has been imagined through said process. *Imaginaries* thus include political ideologies, religious beliefs and our societal norms. Artists, then, belong to and contribute to *imaginaries* while engaging in the process of *radical imagination* to create *imaginings*. In this thesis, *imaginary* refers to the collective and individual framework, and *imaginings* are acts individuals and groups are involved in.

contain, “in both senses of the word, an ‘other’ knowledge—a knowledge that is arrested and fetishistic and circulates through colonial discourse as that limited form of otherness that I have called the stereotype” (1994, p. 111). Bhabha’s concept of stereotype is “a form of multiple and contradictory belief, gives knowledge of difference and simultaneously

Through this conceptualisation of the *imaginary*, I assert the *colonial imaginary* (Steinmetz, 2007; Anderson, 2006) as a *central imaginary*, which from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries was institutionalised through mechanisms like the census, cartography and museums (Anderson, 2006). The Moana as an idyllic region of disparate and dislocated islands occupied by noble savages and dusky maidens is a prime example of a *colonial imaginary*. This was solidified by the artists and writers who fictionalised and archived this “imperial feel” (Geyer & Bright, 1995, p. 1035) of the Moana in artworks and literature. This *colonial imaginary* of the Moana is an *imaginary* that contemporary Moana artists still have to contend with today.

*Decolonial imaginaries* as *peripheral imaginaries*, then, have a two-pronged mission. They posit themselves as a critique of colonialism, as the *colonial imaginary* becomes something to which the *decolonial imaginary* both ties itself to, and simultaneously rejects. It also engages in the project of building new worlds, new possibilities and new ways of doing things (Perez, 1999). Within diasporic communities, *imaginaries* play a key role of producing both identity and community (Hall, 1994; Bhabha, 1994; Appadurai, 1996), which, as I argue later, includes the imagined identity of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*.

This chapter starts by providing an overview of Castoriadis’ *imaginary*, focusing on the elements: the *social imaginary*, *radical imagination*, *central* and *peripheral imaginaries*. The following section argues that the *colonial imaginary* is a *central imaginary* that *decolonial imaginaries* are imagined in relation to. Acknowledging the imagined element of the *colonial imaginary* demonstrates the way an *imaginary* is constructed with specific logics within a given context, revealing the way dominant ideologies—which

disavows or masks it” (p. 111). Thus, when ‘others’ imagine themselves within the apparatus of colonial power, there is a risk of enacting a colonial identity based on essentialist and problematic stereotypes.

**43.** Meaning ‘from out of nothing’ in Latin.

get misconstrued as given facts—are at some stage imagined. Understanding this constructed element of the *colonial imaginary* allows us to rescale (Mignolo, 2011) its prominence, to be one imaginary in amongst many others, as part of a decolonial turn. The final section of this chapter reviews the literature on *decolonial*, *future* and *diasporic imaginaries*, of which *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* are part. The *imaginary*, and its productive element of *radical imagination*, becomes a framework for describing artworks, bodies of literature and identities; therefore offering an exciting way to think through *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and contemporary Moana art.

### 3.2 Social Imaginaries

#### 3.2.1 The Social Imaginary

Cornelius Castoriadis argues all *signifiers*, whatever they may be—including mathematical symbols—were imagined before being used (2005). It is this *imagined* form of *signifiers* with their symbolic meaning that constitutes the *social imaginary*. Castoriadis gives the example that “real acts, whether individual or collective ones—work, consumption, war, love, child-bearing—the innumerable material products without which no society could live even an instant, are not (not always, not directly) symbols” but that they “would be impossible outside of a symbolic network” (2005, p.117). Economic, legal, religious and power systems exist, too, as *symbolic* systems understood through *signifiers* (2005, p. 117).

Anthropologist Maurice Godelier uses *imaginary* similarly to Castoriadis, stating that *imaginaries* materialise as systems and structures of power through symbols so much so that the *imaginary* almost disappears, “not only because it has become a material and social reality, but above all because it appears as the presence of an aspect of the real—an invisible presence” (Godelier, 2020, p. 238). That societies were, at one stage or another, created is often made invisible. Society, as one comes to live in it, can be mistakenly taken as a social and historical fact.

Castoriadis reminds us that *imaginaries* create the societies that we find ourselves in every day, and in turn societies themselves are *imagined*. As Godelier writes, the “worlds that spring from the imaginary are, first of all, the founding myths of religions, or those that have legitimised political systems or other power regimes that have emerged throughout history” (2020, p. 19). Therefore, societies and their histories are indeterminate creations (Rundell, 2016, p. 29). If societies are created by the *social imaginary*, and if a *social imaginary* is also then created by societies—then we see how imaginaries and societies are co-constitutive. *Imaginaries* and their signifiers, then, are not neutral, which one can understand firsthand through encounters with established language, systems and symbols. As Castoriadis writes, if one “endows a given word or expression with a ‘private’ and special meaning, [one] cannot do so with unlimited freedom but must instead make use of what is ‘already there’” (2005, p. 120).

#### 3.2.2 Radical Imagination

The creation of the *social imaginary* occurs through the process of *radical imagination*, which describes the generative function of the *imagination* in its capacity to produce reality (Castoriadis, 2005, p. 245). Castoriadis’ *radical imagination* importantly functions in relation to the project of *autonomy*, and the observation that individuals within the *social imaginary* are products of socialisation. This sense of *autonomy* enables one to author and determine alternative futures and is pertinent to *decolonial imaginaries*, discussed at the end of this chapter. Thus, there is a dual function for the *imaginary*: it is, on the one hand, a way to understand society as socially constructed and, on the other, to identify further potentials for world building. The power of the *imaginary* makes it possible “when circumstances require or the context allows, to think and/or do otherwise” (Godelier, 2020, p. 97).

Understanding societies as *imagined*, and individuals and collectives as being able to engage in *radical imagination*, offers an exciting emancipatory potential. Greek scholar Alexandros Kioupiolis likens

*radical imagination* to freedom that can allow for “self- and context-transcending capacities” (2009, p. 484). For Kioupkiolis, the ability to move beyond “mechanisms of power which reproduce the dominant order” comes through imaginative freedom, where new beginnings and self-invention are possible (p. 484). Kioupkiolis uses the example of women’s and gender freedom, as social norms that required radical imagination to create new and emancipatory futures (p. 484), from the *central imaginaries* of the time.

Historian Robin D. G. Kelley has a different but comparable concept of *radical imagination* as discussed in *Imagining Two*. Conceptualised in the context of Black struggle, Kelley’s *radical imagination* is the impetus for political mobilisation, imagining a new future, unleashing “the mind’s most creative capacities, catalyzed by participation in struggles for change” (Kelley, 2002, p. 191). Kelley asks, “What are today’s young activists dreaming about? We know what they are fighting against, but what are they fighting for?” (p. 7). In both Kelley’s and Kioupkiolis’ examples, dominant societal norms within Western societies that oppress certain groups require critical and *imaginative* intervention; *radical imagination* helps to explain that oppressive norms are not fixed, and that there are more just ways of being. What is clear then is that *radical imagination* is a way to understand the creative and political process that underpins building new worlds and new ways of being. Perhaps it is a process of creative sovereignty.

### 3.2.3 Central and Peripheral Imaginaries

Castoriadis describes the dominant *imaginary* of a society as a *central imaginary* that exists in relation to a *peripheral imaginary*. *Central imaginaries* belong to *heteronomous* societies, which fail to acknowledge the created component of their *social imaginary*, and so rely on *social institutions* that maintain universal truths, covering the contradictions of their creation within the *central imaginary* (Castoriadis, 2005, p. 390).

*Peripheral imaginaries*, on the other hand, belong

to *autonomous* societies and require another *imaginary* development of their own (Castoriadis, 2005, p. 131). Conscious of the self-creation of their imaginary, they have a “critical relation with their own institutions” and therefore “recognizing, challenging and modifying their own social imaginary” (Varvarousis, 2019, p. 7). Thus, while both types of societies create their own *imaginaries*, only one recognises its autonomy and the potential of *radical imagination*. The apparent distinction here is a move from given universals to a welcoming of multiple imaginaries from which there is tension, conflict and dissonance (Rundell, 2016, p. 36).

This understanding of *central* and *peripheral imaginaries* offers a helpful way to develop the concept of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, as peripheral in relation to the *colonial imaginary* as central, which continues to have pervasive impacts on Moana people. Through Castoriadis’ concept we can understand how both *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* and the *colonial imaginary* are similarly *imagined*. Yet, while *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* are aware of their creation, the *colonial imaginary* as discussed further in the following section erases the role of *radical imagination* in its creation, hiding behind Western notions of universality and given truths.

## 3.3 The Colonial Imaginary

### 3.3.1 Colonial Imaginary and its Institutions

In a settler colony like New Zealand, the *colonial imaginary* (Anderson, 2006; Steinmetz, 2007) is a founding element of the social world *Moana Cosmopolitans* find themselves in. Problematically dominated by Western, patriarchal and heterosexual norms, in settler colonial nations such as New Zealand the *colonial imaginary* acts as the nation’s *central imaginary* for Indigenous, Moana and racialised people. The *colonial imaginary* asserts that the world is moving toward a homogenous (or Western) end, toward a global modernity, resulting in a naturalised “imperial feel” for the world (Geyer & Bright, 1995, p. 1035). As a *central imaginary*, the *colonial imaginary* poses as

history, as Godelier argues, where the memory of its creation is hidden and the imaginary becomes assumed as real (2020, p. 238). However, non-Western scholars continue to remember and articulate moments of creation for *colonial imaginaries* (Fanon, 1967; Said, 1978).

Worth noting here is that, while I am using Castoriadis' (2005) notion of the *imaginary* to think through the *colonial imaginary*, the *colonial imaginary* as an established concept draws more specifically from the works of Benedict Anderson and George Steinmetz, who, rather than theorising *imaginaries* at large, examined the way the *imaginary* functioned in colonial thought and in colonial processes, including nationalism.

Political scientist Benedict Anderson conceived of the census, the map and the museum as the *colonial imaginary's* three *institutions* of power, which shaped the way in which the colonial state *imagined* its dominion (2006). These three *institutions* captured "the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry" (2006, p. 163). According to Anderson, as the colonial period wore on, the census categories used in the colonies became more visibly and exclusively racial (p. 164). The desire for a census to be complete and unambiguous created an intolerance of multiple or changing identifications and an urge to place people into restrictive boxes. For Anderson, this resulted in the subcategory of 'Other': he writes, the "fiction of the census is that everyone is in it, and that everyone has one—and only one—extremely clear place. No fractions" (p. 166). Quantification through census was part of "a colonial imaginary in which countable abstractions, of people and resources at every imaginable level and for every conceivable purpose, created the sense of a controllable indigenous reality" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 117).

European maps, like censuses, "worked on

the basis of a totalizing classification, and led their bureaucratic producers and consumers towards policies with revolutionary consequences" (Anderson 2006, p. 173). Through maps as an object of Western cartography, a type of political biographical narrative of the realm came into being, which was often adopted and adapted by the various colonial nations. Colouring one's colonies on a map became a significant practice. Each colonial power had their own colour and when a map was dyed in this way "each colony appeared like a detachable piece of a jigsaw puzzle. As this jigsaw effect became normal, each 'piece' could be wholly detached from its geographic context" (2006, p. 175). As time passed, the *colonial imaginary* became less focused on outright conquest than on the creation of alternative legitimacies for these new colonies: new histories. These new histories included detaching places from their interconnected (or intimate) global histories (Lowe, 2015) and instead emphasising the relationship between colony and coloniser. Places were named, for instance as 'new' versions of 'old' places in the colonisers' lands of origin, a practice that was shared between imperial masters, as in the case of Nieuw Zeeland.

In this vein, another institution of the *colonial imaginary* is sociologist George Steinmetz' *ethnography* or *ethnographic discourse* (2007). Steinmetz defines these as "any representation, textual or visual, that claims to depict the character and culture of a given sociocultural collective, regardless of whether that collective is described as a race, a culture, a society, an ethnic group, a community, or something else" (2007, p. 27). These representations, Steinmetz contends, were partly responsible for Indigenous ethnocide<sup>44</sup> (p. xiv). Within the notion of *ethnographic discourse* Steinmetz makes use of the *symbolic* and *imaginary* to make sense of colonial officials' practices. These colonial projects were "both symbolic projects and narcissistic, imaginary ones" (p. 57), which further

**44.** Ethnocide is defined as the intentional destruction of an ethnic group.

subjugated colonised people in the *colonial imaginary* as “props in colonizers’ fantasy scenarios” (p. 61).<sup>45</sup>

Steinmetz argues that *ethnographic representations* enter imperial archives as representations of “almost everything that was done to colonized peoples in the modern era” (p. xiv). The maintenance of the *colonial imaginary* occurs in part through the control of imperial archives. Twentieth century poststructuralists actively questioned hegemonic structures and systems of hegemony and knowledge production, specifically the links “between elitist knowledge production and the interlocking of imperialism/colonialism and capitalism” (Franklin, 2004). Working from the assumption that written statements are the residual traces of history, philosopher Michel Foucault, for example, interrogated the functions of language, grammar, sentences and statements to reveal the rules underlying any discourse (2002, p. 67). While statements may seem to operate in easily understandable modes, there often lies a secondary meaning beneath them, which controls, disturbs and imposes (p. 123). Foucault describes these controlling forces as the “system of statement” (p. 37). Thus, statements are “objects that men produce, manipulate, use, transform, exchange, combine, decompose and recombine, and possibly destroy” (p. 118). Perhaps imperial archives could also be understood through Castoriadis’ notions (2005) as an *institution of society*. In that instance, the *system of statement* would be the imagining that brought it into being.

**45.** The constructions of ethnography are not purely from the coloniser’s point of view, but as Steinmetz says, dialogic, in the way that “colonized populations responded to European expressions of paternalistic affection or demonization” through an “array of practices ranging from resistance to cooperation by the colonized” (p. xix). Although Steinmetz contends that this “has been explored in great detail in the recent colonial historiography,” even overemphasized to redress early historic tendencies to focus on the agency of the colonisers (p. xix). Steinmetz ultimately contends that, “[t]he colonized were not the authors of their own native policy, even if they sometimes revised it or selectively reinforced certain parts of it” (p. xix).

**46.** One distinction worth making is that while imperialism and colonialism are interconnected, colonialism was merely an outcome of imperialism. A helpful definition of imperialism to defer to is that of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012, p. 60):

Imperialism tends to be used in at least four different ways when describing the form of

### 3.3.2 A Moana Example

Moana scholarship and artistic practice today is still having to contend with the imperial impositions the *colonial imaginary* placed on the region between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. Historian and gender studies scholar Maile Arvin (2019) recalls that such impositions across the Moana are part of larger settler colonial projects. During the nineteenth century, imperialism and the subsequent colonisation<sup>46</sup> of the Moana intensified and led to a rather fast-paced, haphazard, grab-bag approach (Banivanua Mar, 2016).

After crossing huge expanses of ocean, European and American explorers experienced and spoke of the Moana as being tiny “islands in a far sea” (Hau’ofa, 1994, p. 152). Across the Moana, imperialism literally and figuratively parted the sea. This was not only implemented physically through the introduction of national borders but also occurred in the *colonial imaginary* of the region and its people. By the end of the nineteenth century, “most islands in the Pacific were partitioned, parcelled, transferred and traded by European powers in a process that incorporated the Ocean and its people into the global dynamics of empires, capital and nation-making” (Banivanua Mar, 2016, p. 24). The resulting colonial Moana ushered in the era of modernity—an era associated with industrialisation, nation building, emerging bureaucracy, the growth of capitalism and increasing individualism.

Furthermore, according to historian Matt

European imperialism which ‘started’ in the fifteenth century:

(1) imperialism as economic expansion; (2) imperialism as the subjugation of ‘others’; (3) imperialism as an idea or spirit with many forms of realization; and (4) imperialism as a discursive field of knowledge. These usages do not necessarily contradict each other; rather they need to be seen as analyses which focus on different layers of imperialism. Initially the term was used by historians to explain a series of developments leading to the economic expansion of Europe. Imperialism in this sense could be tied to a chronology of events related to ‘discovery’, conquest, exploitation, distribution and appropriation.



Matsuda, the Pacific has been continually reimagined: by historians, from tales of ancient voyagers, to Magellan's space of transit, to an Enlightenment theater of sensual paradise, to a strategic grid of labor movements and military "island hopping," to a capitalist basin, the key to a Pacific Century of emerging wealth and "globalization" at the end of the last millennium. (2012, p. 2)

The Pacific, as a regional and fixed entity under that name, is historically European (Matsuda, 2012, p. 2). Matsuda contends that the concept of Pacific rims is a Euro-American creation, as are many of the conventions used to describe the "peoples and boundaries of the great ocean" (p. 2). Imaginary lines drawn across the Ocean confined Moana people to cartographically small islands, dispersed across and dislocated by a great ocean and its many seas. As Suliman et al. write, "the right and capacity to move (or stay) for Indigenous and subject populations was colonised along with their lands" (2019, p. 304). Moreover, "Pacific worlds shrank during the formal colonial era and the expansiveness of trans-Pacific trade and movement was replaced with sanctioned contraction and isolation" (Banivanua Mar, 2016, p. 40). Nineteenth-century imperialism brought with it the Western notion of the nation-state, and the attendant national borders that also enforced the isolation of Indigenous people, severely disrupting established mobilities. This cut Moana peoples off from their far-flung sources of wealth and cultural enrichment and set the understanding that Moana countries are small, poor and isolated (Lopesi, 2018c, p. 36).

Europeans then learned about the region through the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century travel narratives of their voyaging countrymen. As literary scholar Sina Vaai writes, the region "became

the exoticised and romantic terrain for Europe's conquest, typified by the visual and textual images of the Pacific" (1999, p. 17). This evoked and reinforced the notion that the Moana was "a feminised and sexualised space" for Pālagi domination (Thomas, 1993). Western artists painted over the agency and power of Moana peoples with derogatory and belittling views, representing them as naïve and exotic—embedding noble savage and dusky maiden caricatures. Colonisation thus produced fictional worlds of the Moana that drew on "varied shades of attractiveness and repulsiveness by early European writers who had spent time travelling in various capacities and living in the South Seas" (Vaai, 1999, p. 19).<sup>47</sup>

Art historian Bernard Smith acknowledges the importance of the artists who went on Cook's voyages (1992). The art schools that taught drawing for the purpose of recording information provided the training for the drawings done on Captain Cook's Pacific voyages (1992, p. 30). The three young artists who accompanied Joseph Banks and died on the voyage drew approximately 200 drawings of coastal views, and another 200 drawings relating to the peoples of the Pacific, their artefacts and the places in which they lived. At the time, it was novel to amass so many drawings by professionally trained artists on an exploratory expedition (p. 43). Banks argued that the science of the drawings was superior to writing in what they were able to convey (p. 77).

However, the exoticisation of Moana people and places is now well documented in art historical discourses. By the third voyage, the native peoples of the Pacific and "the nascent science of ethnography" had captured scientific and popular interest (Smith, 1992, p. 193). According to Smith, "exotic tropes were the aesthetic mode of the time in which first-hand records were given an ideological function" (p. 10).

**47.** In Vaai's great overview of writers who have been influential in fictionalising the Moana, she specifically acknowledges: "Herman Melville, (notably his novel *Moby Dick* and more importantly, for their emphasis on escapism, freedom and sexuality, his first two novels, *Typee* and *Omoo*, set in the

Marquesas and Tahiti respectively), Charles Warren Stoddard, Robert Louis Stevenson, Paul Gauguin (whose *Noa Noa* along with his paintings of immobilised, available Polynesian women continued the Rousseau idea), Louis Becke, Joseph Conrad and Somerset Maugham" (1999, p. 19).



Engravers apparently “altered original drawings of Pacific peoples who possessed little or no ‘oriental’ features” (p. 175).

English artist John Webber’s painting of Poedua (*Poetua: daughter of Oreō, chief of Ulaietea, one of the Society Isles*) is commonly regarded as the first depiction of a ‘dusky maiden’ for European audiences. The original portrait was made in Tahiti, on one of James Cook’s Pacific voyages. Once back in London, Webber painted three versions, one of which was acquired by Te Papa Tongarewa in 2010. In the painting *Poetua*, with her European facial features, is bare breasted with tapa cloth around the rest of her body, in a neoclassical pose, surrounded by lush foliage. However, it is likely that when she posed for the portrait, she was in fact detained on board the ship (Rice & Tonga, n.d.).

Dr John Hawkesworth, known for his writing on the ‘discovery’ of the Moana, wrote about the Tahitian Queen Purea, commonly known as Oberea in English (Hawkesworth, 1773). Married to high chief Amo, she became known in England for her love affair with botanist Joseph Banks. Purea, the ‘hotty-tooty queen,’ became popularised and satirised as a succubus with loose morals. She was even immortalised as ‘Oberea the Enchantress’ in a pantomime entitled *Omai or a Trip Round the World*, where she was reduced to an exotic and erotic figure. The pantomime was performed in London in 1785, helping to reinforce the ‘dusky maiden’ trope as a form of entertainment—sexual or otherwise—in the minds of the European public.

Whether depicted as a paradise or a purgatory, these popular representations were intended to be received on an emotional level (Smith, 1992, p. 190). These images were a part of the decision-making process for Pālagi, who would enter the Moana in their thousands and, in places like New Zealand, come to dominate it (p. 191). Significantly, this is not a historic phenomenon: Vaai mentions James Michener and Paul Theroux as contemporary writers who continue to depict the Moana with “imperial eyes” (1999, p. 21). These literary imaginings and constructions are then

“moulded to suit the tastes of their descendants in the post-colonial present” (p. 24).

One of the *colonial imaginary*’s perverse elements is how it has assured itself to be history, one which is “intimately linked to totalizing Western world images and stereotypes” (Geyer & Bright, 1995, p. 1036). Just as those explorers drew lines on the Pacific Ocean and parcelled up land to be colonised, these lines were reinforced through new conceptual lines of segregation and distinction, “imagined in racialist world views that set the white European–Atlantic region and its dispersed settlements around the world apart from the rest and ensured their privilege” (Geyer & Bright, 1995, p. 1050).

This Eurocentric perspective posits that Moana nations were “too small, too poorly endowed with resources, and too isolated”—with its people “simultaneously lost and degraded souls to be pacified, Christianized, colonized, and civilized” (Hau’ofa, 1998, p. 119). The *colonial imaginary* of Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa with its White saviour mentality then justified the colonisation of the region. Imagined as a “hole in the doughnut” (Hau’ofa, 1998, p. 393), encircled by large regions such as the Americas and Asia, Oceania was seen as dispensable. In both world wars, Hawai’i, American Sāmoa and Guåhan, which are all still militarised today, were used as convenient American military bases. Dispensability was demonstrated with the mining of Banaba, Papua New Guinea and Bougainville, and yet again with the atomic testing on the Marshall Islands, and the use of the Fijian army as frontline soldiers during the testing regimes. These are all examples in which Moana peoples had no agency in their lands, which were treated as sites of experimentation to serve the strategic ends of exploitative powerful nations—with no repercussions.

This imagining over the region today has prevailing impacts in light of climate change: the region contributes the least emissions, yet is one of the most significantly impacted. The Moana will most likely be the first to face real loss and catastrophe, at the hands of global powers who render the region small and

dispensable.

This enduring *colonial imaginary* has provided the background for contemporary Moana artists and writers *imagining* a different Oceania (Subramani, 2001, p. 150). Increasingly, decolonial Moana scholarship works with Indigenous ideas and concepts, returning to new–old ways of understanding the region. These moves to decolonisation enable “re-construction and the restitution of silenced histories, repressed subjectivities, subalternized knowledges and languages,” all in the name “of modernity and rationality” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 451). Not coincidentally, perhaps, *decolonial Moana Imaginaries* have thrived in the literature produced by Moana writers, where they took shape by “promoting and affirming a decolonized sense of self” and national identity (Vaai, 1999, p. 14), in a “re-writing of global history from the perspective and critical consciousness of coloniality and from within geo and body-political knowledge” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 484).

Such rewriting, however, does require a negotiation with the *colonial imaginary* through an ability to see the constructed characteristics of one’s world, noticing “how people construct their worlds and are in turn constructed by them” (Subramani, 2001, p. 153). Acknowledging the constructed or creative element of the *colonial imaginary*, and the way Moana people the region have been imagined within it, offers contemporary Moana artists an emancipatory freedom to imagine their own worlds, autonomous of the *colonial imaginary*.

### 3.4 Decolonial Imaginaries

#### 3.4.1 Decolonial Imaginaries

The universality found in much Eurocentrism, including colonial thought, history and philosophy, is known to be no longer universal, but rather to offer a local European perspective. The ability to narrate

a world history outward from one place has become increasingly difficult and questioned, and multi-perspectival realities are becoming more and more prescient. Understanding this through the lens of the *imaginary*, then, we are able to see how every school of thought, philosophy or history from all societies has an equal component of *imagination*.

Making room for multiple perspectives (or pluriversity<sup>48</sup>) aligns with Walter Mignolo’s *decolonial option* (2011), which suggests that European thought needs to be rescaled: in the case of the *imaginary*, a *colonial imaginary*, for example, is *rescaled* to not be dominant but as one *imaginary* in amongst many others. This decolonial rescaling echoes geographer Angelos Varvarousis, who argues that decolonisation of dominant *social imaginaries*, can only occur when people understand “how and why social imaginaries are rendered susceptible to change” (Varvarousis, 2019, p. 8). Meaning that there is a need to understand the created element of the *imaginary*, while understanding all *imaginaries* as being equal.

*Colonial imaginaries* and their claims to universality have sustained continual critique since the work of postcolonial scholars such as Frantz Fanon (1967) and Edward Said (1978), which has given rise to multifaceted and multi-perspectival non-Western scholarship. However, even in the many efforts to get out from under totalising Western world images and tropes, this scholarship is still intimately linked to them. American historians Michael Geyer and Charles Bright put it well when they write, “The effortlessness with which Western world images prevailed and the exertion it took to escape them was (and is) scandalous” (1995, p. 1036).

*Decolonial imaginaries* are required to deal with colonial residues while being a “new kind of intellectual work and political education” or an “alternative new humanism” (Gibson, 2003, p. 21). The *imaginary* in this context “signifies a refusal of accepted realities; it also

<sup>48</sup>. Mignolo, Boaventura de Sousa Santos and other decoloniality scholars. It is a conception of the world based on

plurality and sits in contrast to universe or universality, which is a similar concept, but based on singularity.

means putting faith, against all odds, in a seemingly unrealizable future” (Gibson, 2003, p. 60). The role of the decolonial scholar or artist here is to first engage the social and political conditions of their experience, acknowledging the prevailing nature of the *colonial imaginary* (and/or other *central imaginaries*), while also building new worlds, outside the power of colonial apparatus.

The *decolonial imaginary* involves a critique of the epistemic history of Eurocentric violence and of the knowledge that contributed to colonial domination. It offers a means to think about colonisation from the position of the subjugated and an insistence that one confronts the here and now, by bringing “invention into existence” (Fanon, 2008, p. 179). At the same time, it attends to the imagining of others ways to be, and to love (Maldonado-Torres, 2008).

In Chicana historian Emma Perez’s work the *decolonial imaginary* is a transdisciplinary tool to examine and challenge the long-lasting impact of the *colonial imaginary*, specifically in the Americas, while also offering a way to reconceptualise histories (1999). Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that “[d]ecolonisation must offer a language of possibility, a way out of colonialism” (2012, p. 324). Smith continues, saying that “reimagining the world is a way into theorising the reasons why the world we experience is unjust, and posing alternatives to such a world from within our own world views” (p. 324). Therefore, there is an acknowledgement that there is no single, “pure, authentic, original history,” but just many stories (Perez, 1999, p. xv). The *decolonial imaginary* then becomes a theoretical tool for uncovering and repeating “the voices previously unheard, rebuffed, or underestimated as we attempt to redeem that which has been disregarded in our history” (Perez, 1999, p. xv).

Michael Lujan Bevacqua reads Epeli Hau’ofa’s work to mean that *imagination* is required to understand how the Ocean is in us (Bevacqua, 2010; Hau’ofa, 1998). This decolonising move entails contending with the remnants of the *colonial imaginary*

over the Moana discussed in the previous section, which have “seeped and settled into the most intimate ways in which Pacific Islanders conceive of themselves” (Bevacqua, 2010, p. 83). Drawing on Indigenous understandings of the Moana, Hau’ofa’s work functions primarily as a reminder to rethink and contest hegemonic formations over the Moana (Bevacqua, 2010, p. 83), reminding readers of the imagination required in the first place to form the *colonial imaginary*, offering a new way of understanding the region.

Hanna et al. use the *decolonial imagination* as a framework to study the literary, cultural, and political work of author Junot Diaz (2016). In creative works, the *decolonial imagination* becomes the productive force to “manage, evaluate, and challenge colonial difference” (Hanna et al., 2016, p. 8). At a political level, the *decolonial imagination* is “an act of social and cultural criticism,” because it is through imagination that an artist “is able to envision and articulate alternatives” to the logic of colonisation (2016, p. 8). Hanna et al. suggest that Diaz’s novels are exemplary of the *decolonial imagination* by the way in which they critique the colonial matrix of power. The main characters let their decolonial perspectives take centre stage, enabling other histories to become “powerfully apparent” (2016, p. 6). Therefore, his novels balance a critique of the epistemic violence of Spain’s colonial domination with the imagining of new worlds. In the work of Diaz, the *decolonial imagination* is the productive force and creative faculty that highlights the “powerful and generative capacities both for cultural production and for activist work” (2016, p. 9).

The *decolonial imaginary* is a productive force: in reacting and relating to the limits of a *colonial imaginary*, it is involved in a world-building process. Dismantling pervasive colonial structures of thought, while building something else, occurs at the most creative level of the imagination. This understanding of the *decolonial imaginary*, as requiring constant work, shapes the *decolonial imaginary* as a framework to

understand art making involved in the constant acts of *radical imagination*—engaging in simultaneous acts creatively and culturally.

### 3.4.2 Future Imaginaries

*Decolonial imaginaries*, as they build worlds beyond the limits of one's current situation, have an inherent sense of futurity. The political potential of imagined futurity for Indigenous and racialised people is well discussed within concepts of *Indigenous futurism* (Dillion, 2012; Nixon, 2020), a concept previously discussed in *Imagining Two*. Indigenous futurism contends that the end of the world as Indigenous people knew it has already arrived, and so the imaginative capacity of science fiction offers a new framework to envision Indigenous futures.

The *colonial imaginary* includes Indigenous ethnocide, so imagining Indigenous futures offers a counterpoint to the “Indigenous disappearance” (Nixon, 2020, p. 332) and ongoing decimation of Black and Indigenous life in the *colonial imaginary*. Grace L Dillon (2012) argues that imagination in this sense is not detached from reality but rather a way for people to conceive of futures beyond their lived realities, with the aspiration that the imagined will become real.

### 3.4.3 Diasporic Imaginaries

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall observed that diaspora identities constantly produce and reproduce themselves anew, enabling diasporic communities to “live inside with a difference” (1994, p. 253). It is this sense of difference, according to Perez, that leads to a constant creation or production of diasporic identity through music, food, clothes, style, or language (1999). The inherent mobility of diaspora enables people to continually “grasp and re-create culture, to re-create oneself through and with diasporic communities,” always “re-creating the unimagined” (Perez, 1999, p. 79). Similarly, Brunt et al. contend that, for contemporary Moana artists in diaspora, notions of home are remade and changed, challenging “the way

we create, think and write about ourselves” (2012, p. 465).

This constant mode of production for diasporic identities is the work of *diasporic imaginaries*. For diasporic peoples, expansive world making through *decolonial imaginaries* “throws into relief the temporal, social differences that interrupt our collusive sense of cultural contemporaneity” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 6). Social anthropologist Vytis Čiubrinskas writes that notions of space are empowered through a remembering of imagined lands and communities that relies on the memories of places left behind or handed down (2016, p. 134).

Imagined lives, then, form the bedrock of transnational identities that exist beyond national borders (Perez, 1999, p. 14). Identity in this sense is perspectival and “fundamentally unstable” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 183). This instability is key because diasporic identities change; as groups of people weave through historical moments, previously unmarked identities become ordered and categorised according to the places they travel (Perez, 1999, p. 77). An important distinction to make here is that while immigrants are expected to become part of a dominant culture, diasporas intervene and “construct newness” (Hall, 1993, p. 235). *Decolonial imaginaries*, then, which accept these conditions of difference (rather than attempting to assimilate) are able to make room for complex and diverse diasporic lives (Perez, 1999, p. 78).

Bhabha's (1994) seminal concept of *third space* offers another kind of imagined space for diasporic people. When the surrounding world is not nationally bound but a different geography altogether, the apparatus of power changes. The “imaginary of spatial distance” entails “liv[ing] somehow beyond the border of our times” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 6). *Third space* is a global space beyond national borders, “where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 312), and where Perez finds the decolonising subject negotiating new histories. *Hybrid hyphenations*

exist in the *third space* because these “stubborn chunks” cannot easily fit into national boundaries, and therefore work against the totalising borders of the colonial nation-state and the *colonial imaginary*, which rely on essentialist and stereotypical identities (Bhabha, 1994, p. 313). For Bhabha, these hybridities harbour new, future-facing possibilities. Perez notes the way new possibilities splinter “the object in a shattered mirror, where kaleidoscopic identities are burst open and where the colonial self and the colonized other both become elements of multiple, mobile categoric identities” (1999, p. 7). Within the *decolonial imaginary*, things shift beyond a coloniser–colonised binary into a negotiation in which all identities—including diasporic identities—participate, in one way or another (p. 7).

With the advent of continually changing technology and social media, *imaginaries* today include ways of producing diasporic identities online. Or, from another perspective, there is a new way for diasporic people to imagine. Moana communities, which were once deeply connected to territory, are now spread out globally with networks extending to sites like Twitter and Facebook. The binaries of home and away seem to dissolve in these online spaces and, instead, new *Moana imaginaries* occur. Contemporary diasporic reality, then, includes aspects of being local and global, connected and disconnected, physical and virtual—all at the same time. Thus, the online production of textual, visual and audio *cultural objects* on various platforms extends the formal repertoire of cultural objects being made by *Moana Cosmopolitans* (Poster, 2007, p. 365).

#### 3.4.4 Cosmopolitan Imaginaries

If we take Castoriadis’ idea that the creation of a new *social imaginary* occurs at the demise of previous *imaginaries*, and pair that with the aforementioned idea that diasporic identities are constantly imagining themselves, then perhaps we can assert that *Moana Cosmopolitanism* is a natural assertion in the demise of

what has previously been *imagined* as *Moana diaspora*. This is discussed in more detail in the following chapter, Chapter 4, *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, yet introducing this discussion here is useful to connect the role of the *imaginary* to *cosmopolitanism*.

Within Castoriadis’ *imaginary* concept, *cosmopolitanism* is an *imaginary*, made in relation to, while refuting, Anderson’s (1983) *national imaginary*, which binds people to nation states (Delanty, 2009, p. 14). Thus, according to sociologist Gerard Delanty, *cosmopolitanism* is a creative process that “can be seen as entailing the opening up of normative questions within the cultural imaginaries of societies” (2009, p. 14), and is shaped by “modes of self-understanding, experiences, feelings and collective identity narratives” (p.15). Within this thesis, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* and *Moana Cosmopolitanism* are co-constitutive in the way that *Moana Cosmopolitanism* is an *imaginary*, and identifying as a *Moana Cosmopolitan* further influences the way one imagines. This follows what Delanty discusses when commenting that the “imaginary is both a medium of experience and an interpretation of that experience in a way that opens up new perspectives on the world” (2009, p. 15).

Delanty argues that the normative significance of globalisation requires “a new kind of imagination”, which he terms the *cosmopolitan imagination* (2009, p. 2). This is a critical social approach, which makes it possible to see the world in new ways that are related to the emergence of new norms and new worldviews (Delanty, 2009). An *imaginary*, as Delanty defines it, “takes shape in modes of self-understanding, experiences, feelings and collective identity narratives” (2009, p. 14).

In a related manner, Arjun Appadurai’s *work of the imagination* creates “a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern” (1996, p. 4). For Appadurai, a “projective sense” is part of “the imagination, the sense of being a prelude to some sort of expression, whether aesthetic or otherwise,” and this enables it to function as a “staging ground for

action” (1996, p. 7). *Imagining* lands and communities in this way is a world-making process in which diasporic people can generate shared imagery and ideas, to identify themselves and relate to each other as diasporic communities (Appadurai, 1996). Perhaps even as that *imaginary* moves beyond idea of diaspora.

As discussed in the following chapter, the cosmopolitan character of today’s lived Moana experience requires a new *imaginary* for Moana diasporic identities. Varvarousis specifically notes the potential of personal and collective liminal identities, those in transition as being “capable of thinking and acting in unauthorized, unexpected and potentially innovative ways” (2019, p. 10). I would argue that the cosmopolitan character of today’s Moana diasporic identities contributes to a liminal Moana identity, which does not position itself in crisis, but rather encompasses the liminality as a kind of cosmopolitan privilege.

### 3.5 Conclusion

Artists today still have to contend with the *colonial imaginary* as a *central imaginary* reigning over the Moana. In 2021, after a turbulent 2020 with an increasingly heated political and racial climate globally, we are reminded of the continued need to acknowledge and call out dominant racialised systems and structures of power. There is a perverse way in which an *imaginary* can become invisible, making people forget it was created in the first place and perpetuating an *imperial feel*. However, reinvigorating the notion of the *imaginary* to talk about society and its institutions places the creative element of society into the fore and reminds contemporary Moana artists of the political and emancipatory nature of *radical imagination*.

Diasporic identities are those that are in constant reproduction, redefining their *imaginary* within host societies. Understanding individual and collective autonomy in the *radical imagination* means that Moana people are able to free themselves from *social*

*institutions* engaging in critique and imagination to create their own ways of being and living. This includes the social *institutions* of the *colonial imaginary*.

Therefore, building on the concepts of *decolonial*, *diasporic* and *future imaginaries*, I define *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* as an additional way in which diaspora identities produce and reproduce themselves. Within this thesis, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* and *Moana Cosmopolitanism* are co-constitutive in the way that *Moana Cosmopolitanism* is an *imaginary* and identifying as a *Moana Cosmopolitan* further influences the way one imagines. *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* then becomes another lens through which we can understand contemporary Moana art, while also understanding how contemporary Moana art refines the *imaginary*.



# Imagining 3.

## More Roots than Trees

### Emily Parr's *Moana Calling Me Home* (2019–2020)



Figure 11. Parr, E. (2019–2020). *Digging at the roots* [Moving Image].

#### Introduction

Moana writing about Moana art from Aotearoa implies, in a very simplistic sense, a history of movement. The well-documented movement of Moana people from island homelands to Aotearoa<sup>49</sup> has resulted in today's significant Moana diaspora,

currently sitting at 10 percent of the national population. Subsequently, this has resulted in a critical mass of Moana artists within the national arts scene, built over decades. This particular movement from island homelands to the diasporic home in Aotearoa is the Moana migration narrative that has been popularised in Aotearoa. However, histories of mobility and movement across the Moana are much longer and more expansive than the simplistic binary of

**49.** Moana migration to Aotearoa occurred en masse from the 1950s to the 1980s at the instigation of the New Zealand government looking for cheap, unskilled labour in the islands.

There is a great overview of this history in Mallon et al.'s *Tangata o le Moana: New Zealand and the People of the Pacific* (2012).

homeland–diasporic home allows.

Histories of movement, mobility and globality have always existed across the Moana, in different ways across different times. Ancient trade networks and histories of voyaging highlight one mode of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, while the colonial era ushered in another phase of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* established along colonial pathways. This era closed certain cosmopolitan routes while opening others. Today that cosmopolitanism has changed again with increased air travel, well-established diasporic communities and a digital flavour. Covid-19 will surely impact *Moana Cosmopolitanism* once again, as the regional routes Moana people and economies have relied on are closed,<sup>50</sup> forcing people online for funerals, church services and conferences. Perhaps the next era of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* will be typified by the Zono and the Zui.<sup>51</sup> That is something we will need distance from to fully grasp.

Between the nationwide lockdown and the second Auckland lockdown, Emily Parr exhibited her Master of Visual Arts work at ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT, Auckland, titled *Moana Calling Me Home* (2019–2020). Sitting in extreme contrast to the border closures that have come to typify 2020, *Moana Calling Me Home* shows a *Moana Cosmopolitanism* pre-Covid-19, when those routes were still open. There is one line of the narrative voiceover in the vignette titled *Digging at the Roots*, one of the six parts that make up *Moana Calling Me Home*, in which Parr is retelling something a Sister from St Mary's school in Savalalo tells her. The Sister says, "that Sāmoans love to dig at the roots, and that trees have less roots than the Sāmoan people." This comment epitomises the deep-set legacy of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, and that when one starts digging at one's *roots* one also finds one's *routes*, as Teresia Teaiwa wrote (1995b).

When I asked Parr where the impetus for *Moana*

*Calling Me Home* came from, she told me that the project was born out of being in activist and organising spaces in which the kaupapa required knowledge of your whakapapa in order to share it and to build relationships with people. Parr felt as though she could better show up to the kaupapa if she knew the fullness of her whakapapa. Up until this point, Parr had always presented as Pākehā or Pālagi and identified as such, but after a while that began to feel like a disservice to her non-Pālagi ancestors. For Parr, the owning of her Pālagi identity, or her being "a good White person," erased the existence of her Indigenous women ancestors. In acknowledging that she benefits from whiteness, there was a feeling that she did not want to just claim her whakapapa, but felt she needed to know "what had happened between them leaving their homelands and me."

Through the work, the audience is witness to Parr's incredibly rich and deep *Moana Cosmopolitan* genealogy, which connects Māori, English, Scottish, Sāmoan, Jewish, Portuguese, Tongan, German and Irish whakapapa. More specifically *Moana Calling Me Home* reveals the settler–Indigenous relations between settler men and Indigenous women in Parr's genealogy. While the men have a place within the colonial archive through histories of collecting and benefiting from the Eurocentric, patriarchal logic of the *colonial imaginary*, the women are absent. Thus, *Moana Calling Me Home* writes Parr's Indigenous women ancestors into the archive, and into histories of cosmopolitanism. Researching or writing back to the colonial archive to include Parr's Indigenous women ancestors requires a decolonial approach. This decolonial approach reveals the artist's own *roots* and *routes*, in turn highlighting a larger web of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*.

*Moana Calling Me Home* (2019–2020) is a six-part moving-image work. The six parts, titled *Sleeping Tides*, *Oli Ula*, *Digging at the Roots*, *Port of Refuge*,

<sup>50</sup>. At the time of writing, the majority of national borders globally have been closed for almost one year now. As Léuli Eshraghi said in talanoa, the only access to home for Moana people in diaspora for the indefinite future is over the internet, and what does that mean for Moana peoples long term?

<sup>51</sup>. Replacing the first letters of fono and hui with Z for Zoom, Zono and Zui were phrases that developed during Covid-19 for fono- and hui-like gatherings that occurred on Zoom.

*Tūrangawaewae* and *Whakapaparanga*, together play for 72 minutes. The vignettes can be played as stand-alone works or together as a complete series. The works are shot in Parr's ancestral homelands, settler homes and places of significance, including Pirongia, Ihumātao, Ōtūmoetai, Āpia, Upolu's southeast coast, Nuku'alofa, Neiafu and Tauranga Moana.

Emily Parr (Ngāi Te Rangi, Sāmoan, Tongan, Pākehā) is a moving-image artist based in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Parr's work draws on ecological and political concerns, and most recently settler-Indigenous relations. In 2020, Parr graduated with her Master in Visual Arts from Auckland University of Technology with the work *Moana Calling Me Home*. In 2019 Parr was the recipient of the Iris Fisher Scholarship from Te Tuhi. Parr is also a member of Accompany—a collective supporting community organisations and social movements by making posters, recording actions, and filming short documentaries.

## Colonial Archive

The colonial archive is a powerful tool of the colonial imaginary that all the artists discussed throughout this thesis have to contend with at various levels. As previously discussed in Chapter 3, colonial archives control territory and people by producing, recording and historicising knowledge through colonial logics (Basu & De Jong, 2016, p. 5; Richards, 1993, p. 7). The underlying logics of an archive control, disturb and impose on the archive itself (Foucault, 2002, p. 123). This imposition is the archival logic behind any archival practice, and in the case of colonial archives, that logic is colonialism and is empowered in the notion of the *colonial imaginary*. The biggest danger of the colonial archive is that only certain knowledge enters it, and from that knowledge, notions of truth, value and relevance are determined. These notions of truth, value and relevance, as we know, privilege an imperialist perspective, leaving out Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world.

Giorgio Agamben names this system 'manuscript tradition,' which occurs in modern culture "when knowledge defines and regulates textual criticism, thereby transforming the very access to the sources into a special tradition" (2009, p. 88). Manuscript traditions "often substituted an invisible, unmovable, and homogeneous world of power for itself" (Latour, 2005, p. 86). Thinking with Castoriadis' notion of the *imaginary*, as discussed in the previous chapter, the colonial archive is a *social institution* of the *colonial imaginary*, ignorant of its own creation.

In contemporary art, power is expressed through canonisation, with the risk that only what makes it into the canon is stored as a part of art history. When the diversity of critics and art historians is limited, this is a problem. It is a problem because who and what is canonised is subsequently also limited. Like the colonial archive, the canon is intended to control—in this case, the qualities and criteria of good art. Today, however, the canon is criticised for excluding artists across the gender spectrum "working outside of the so-called Western world (by now a cultural more than strictly geographical designation), as well as women artists and artists of color in the West" (Iskin, 2016, p. 16).

Edward Said famously probes the archive's function of perpetuating imperial and colonial power (1978). Said concludes that the records or knowledge that enter into an archive have long-lasting and often misleading effects on society at large: these societal effects are what I call the colonial imaginary. In many instances, they depict non-Western people and communities as Other—on the peripheries—in relation to the Western centre. Ali Gumillya Baker (2018) calls colonial archives anti-memorials, whose "absence of honouring is profoundly disturbing" (para. 2), adding that they are made up of "documents of abuse and lies [creating a] pit of sadness [that] could swallow me up as I walk. I could fall in and never be seen again" (para. 2).

The archive, social theorist Boaventura de Sousa Santos writes, "cannot shed light without

casting shadows” (2018, p. 200). The knowledge colonial archives hold near and dear is what Santos calls *monumental knowledge*. For Santos, demonumentalising *monumental knowledge* allows non-Western knowledge to contribute to diverse understandings of the world (2018, p. 187). This approach is reminiscent of *archaeology* (Agamben, 2009; Latour, 2005), another method that questions epistemological inquiries predetermining archival and knowledge traditions.

For Indigenous women, it is the combination of both Eurocentrism and patriarchy that can exclude women’s experiences from both colonial and *other* archives. Following the seminal work of Saidiya Hartman, in attending to other lives—and in Hartman’s work specifically the lives of Black women—a very different and unexpected story emerges (Hartman, 2019, p. xv). This focus on other lives implicitly questions power, authorship and exclusion in the flawed and utopic nature of colonial archives. Crystal Fraser and Zoe Todd suggest that—given the colonial logics of colonial archives—one should apply a decolonial sensibility in any engagement with them (2016, pp. 33–34). This mode of engaging with the colonial archive is reminiscent of what Tiffany Lethabo King names *shoaling*, which is a way of disrupting the *colonial imaginary* to “betray the archive and to read it for what else happened” (2019, p. 78).

For Parr, the lives of her settler male ancestors are well documented and recorded in the archive. In fact, the Kronfeld Collection, named after Parr’s

ancestor Gustav Kronfeld, is held by Te Papa Tongarewa, and consists of over 200 items that Kronfeld collected across the Moana.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the colonial archive as an *institution* of the *social imaginary* is incredibly pertinent to *Moana Calling Me Home*. The work follows Noelani Arista’s question; what and how do things get “lost in plain sight?” (2020, p. 32). In Parr’s case, the answer is the artist’s Indigenous women ancestors, who get relegated to just being someone’s wife or daughter. In a way, *Moana Calling Me Home* is the latest piece of the Kronfeld Collection, a piece that adds a whole new perspective to what is already stored as part of the official history.

## Decolonial Imaginary

Linda Tuhiwai Smith places “researching back” in the tradition of ‘writing back’ or ‘talking back,’ which requires a “‘knowing-ness of the colonizer’ and a recovery of ourselves, and analysis of colonialism...” (2012, p. 8). This act of researching, writing, or talking back is something that needs constant reworking so that the impacts of imperialism and colonialism can be understood (2012, p. 25). For stories that exist outside of the colonial archive, “leaps of imagination” (2012, p. 323) are required to connect disparate, fragmented pieces of a puzzle and to say that they belong together—this is decolonial work.

This decolonial approach of connecting disparate parts mirrors the methodology of *su’ifefiloi*. Parr references Leali’ifano Albert Refiti’s use of *su’ifefiloi*



**52.** Most of the collection can be viewed online at <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/agent/4352>

**Figure 12.** Parr, E. (2019–2020). *Sleeping tides [Moving image]*.



as a way to construct narratives that bring together diverse elements to “construct a sequence or build a surface area from many pieces, [establishing] an order without denying heterogeneity and discontinuity” (Parr, 2020, p. 36). Each part in the *su’ifefiloi* is whole in and of itself, meaning that it can stand alone, but when carefully selected and combined, the multiple elements produce something different. In this instance, *su’ifefiloi* led to Parr’s imagining of her ancestral relations and specifically her tūpuna wāhine, or female ancestors. Within each of the six parts, Parr layers moving image, sound, and pūrakau through narrative voiceover and drawing. Therefore, each of the six parts include a further sense of *su’ifefiloi*, making it central to the way Parr creates “from fragments of stories and moving-images (the flowers), and strings them together to form the series (the necklace)” (Parr, 2020a, p. 36).<sup>53</sup>

As mentioned, Parr has a unique family history, in which her settler male ancestors (Gustav Kronfeld, Gustav Wolfgramm and John Lees Faulkner) exist to varying degrees within formal archives and written records of the time. This gives Parr a direct relationship to the colonial archive, not only because of what it holds but primarily because of what is absent from the stories of these men, i.e., their Indigenous wives. For Parr, colonial archives perpetuate Eurocentric value systems and hold a “dominant version of New Zealand’s history,” which “has been manufactured by Pākehā, then warped by settler guilt and obfuscated by colonial amnesia” (Parr, 2020a, p. 85).

In *Moana Calling Me Home*, Parr reclaims her familial histories from the colonial archive, inserting her tūpuna wāhine and other knowledge sources not currently stored in the archive proper. This intervention into her familial history outlines Parr’s decolonial ethic. The archival component of this project, in particular, highlights this. In *talanoa*, Parr comments:

archives hold the stories of the settler men. A lot of the material I was reading was written

from a very colonial perspective and it was, frankly, horrible and racist. Trying to grapple with that as being a part of my history, and my ancestry, has been difficult, but I think that unless we can confront the really ugly parts of colonisation, we can’t fully understand the ongoing effects and find ways to make right.

Yet, because of the settler history within her family, many familial belongings already exist in the public realm, and there is a potential that they “could be used for people to learn more about colonisation through my family’s history.” This offering of her family’s history as a way to talk through settler-colonial relations and colonial capitalism of the Moana more broadly comes through strongly in *Moana Calling Me Home*.

For Parr, “placing fragmented histories in their context and tying them to our political present” enables the work to explore “the complexities of settler–Indigenous relationships, both micro- and macrocosmically.” While today’s rhetoric of ‘dismantling capitalism’ and colonialism are commonplace within *digital native Moana Cosmopolitan* narratives, there is importance within decolonial work to also be building something at the same time. Parr’s work, then, is concerned with questions of “what has been there all along, what do we need to build back up again.” The micro and macro decolonial conversation in Parr’s work is intimately intertwined. For Parr, part of decolonisation is to understand one’s stories and the breadth, complexity and nuance of said stories. She tells me, “I felt, for me personally, it was important to know how my ancestors both colonised and were colonised, or resisted colonisation. And in learning my own stories, I could better understand how colonisation functioned more broadly.” By extracting the complexity from her own ancestry, Parr imagines the narrative adding to the archive, while simultaneously critiquing what exists

**53.** The metaphor is perhaps even more symbolic within Parr’s work, as her great-great-grandparents Louisa and Gustav Kronfeld’s house in Eden Crescent, Auckland, in the 1890s was

named Oli Ula, the ula or flower garland made from the fragrant red flower of the now rare olioli tree. This is discussed more in the following section.



there already. This is particularly pertinent in the way that she adds a fuller picture to pre-existing stories in which her White settler male ancestors dominate and the Indigenous women are rendered invisible, or the significance of their contributions is muted.

*Moana Calling Me Home* centres on a larger narrative of settler–Indigenous relations as told through her own family’s ancestry and so requires a critical interrogation of her own ancestors, which undoubtedly raises many questions. Parr tells me that she did not know of her Sāmoan or Tongan ancestry until she was an adult, and her Māori ancestry is only occasionally acknowledged—although increasingly acknowledged since these works. However, despite periods of disconnection, it is clear that her parents and their siblings want to know more about their family histories.

While we have previously discussed *intergenerational trauma* in relation to Ahilapalapa Rands’ *Lift Off*, one specific element worth introducing in relation to *Moana Calling Me Home* is the silencing of narratives.<sup>54</sup> For people who have experienced incidences of trauma, it is common to not pass down stories. This silencing of narratives can be either conscious or a by-product of trauma, in which family members conceal their trauma from their loved ones in an attempt to protect them from pain and emotional burden (Buonagurio, 2020; Connolly, 2011). However, considering the *intergenerational trauma* literature in regard to epigenetics, this silencing becomes an issue for subsequent generations, who experience symptoms of *intergenerational trauma* but are locked out of knowing the full story. We know this to be important because self-narratives, whakapapa or gafa place us in our social worlds and offer frameworks through which we can relate to each other, which offers a sense of “safety and security in our perception of the world” (Buonagurio, 2020, p. 8).

While histories of assimilation are notable for many Moana people in diaspora, Parr is quick to not be

judgemental of those histories within her family. Rather she sees her role as an artist as forging reconnections; as she tells me, “so that if I have children, they can know who they are.” She admits that her whakapapa was once intimidating and now she finds it emboldening; this information has been funnelled down and now it is her role to do something with it. While Parr bravely acknowledges the strangeness of descending from both coloniser and colonised, for her, “connecting with my women ancestors was very healing.” It is clear in the work that Parr is not only dealing with a complex family history but also with successive generations of non-belonging to their Moana ancestry.

### Moana Cosmopolitanism

Echoing the comment by the Sister at St Mary’s, Parr spent her master’s research digging at her *roots*, revealing the *routes* (Gilroy, 1993; Clifford, 1997, 2013; Teaiwa, 1995b; Diaz & Kauanui, 2001; Diaz, 2019) of her family’s own particular *Moana Cosmopolitanism*. While there are many facets of *Moana Calling Me Home*, including the aforementioned elements of speaking back to the archive and discussing settler–Indigenous relations, it also is a work simultaneously from and about *Moana Cosmopolitanism*.

*Moana Cosmopolitanism* as a concept explains a particular kind of globality and relational ethic, exacerbated because of globalising technologies including the internet; however, as is consistently argued throughout this thesis, *cosmopolitanism* is not new to the Moana, nor to a digital native generation either. It has always been present, though the characteristics do change. Thus, when thinking about early examples of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, the lives of people like Queen Emma (1850–1913)—born of Sāmoan royalty, and an American businesswoman whose commercial empire and tumultuous life saw

<sup>54</sup> In our *talanoa*, Parr revealed the particularities of her own *intergenerational trauma*, which I have not disclosed within this thesis.

her venture all over the globe, dying in Monte Carlo—come to mind. In addition, Laulii Willis (born 1865, date of death unknown), the first Sāmoan to migrate to the United States, publishing her autobiography in 1889. Similarly, the Pacific people in Hollywood as early as the 1920s are clear examples of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*.

Throughout *Moana Calling Me Home* we come to understand how three lines of Parr's family are examples of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*. A hint of this *cosmopolitanism* can be gleaned from Parr's exegesis, which reads:

A whaling ship brought Augustino Silveira, a sailor and Catholic priest from the Portuguese Island of Faial, to Sāmoa. He jumped ship on Upolu, marrying the daughter of High Chief Fiamē of 'Āiga Sā Levāfasi in Lotofaga. Augustino and Malaisala's youngest daughter was Louisa. I descend from them.

Born to a Jewish family in the medieval Prussian town of Thorn, Gustav Kronfeld sailed to Sāmoa as a young man in 1876. He met Louisa in Āpia and they eloped to Vava'u, Tonga, where my great-grandfather, Samuel, was born. Gustav, Louisa, and the first five of their ten children travelled by ship to Tāmaki Makaurau in 1890. The Kronfelds lived downtown, on Eden Crescent. I descend from them.

Among the first German men to sail for Tonga was Gustav (Lui) Wolfgramm. His forebears were the Heidemann, Sanft, and Klix families of Pomeranian villages near the shore of the Baltic Sea. Lui married 'Ilaisaane of the 'Uhi family in Kolomot'a, Nuku'alofa, and raised a family on Vava'u. Their daughter Anna Bertha married Alfred Schultz, Gustav Kronfeld's

German colleague and fellow prisoner of war. Anna and Alfred's daughter, Clara, married Gustav and Louisa's son, Samuel. My nana Tui and I descend from them. (2020a, p. 22)

That house on Eden Crescent Parr writes about was named Oli Ula. The grand estate belonged to Parr's great-great-grandparents, Louisa and Gustav Kronfeld, who, after eloping in Tonga (as the Sāmoan nuns of the convent Louisa was raised in did not approve of Gustav being Jewish), migrated to Aotearoa in 1890. Oli Ula in itself is a significant site of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* in Auckland. The estate hosted and entertained international sports figures, writers, musicians and Moana royalty. Their musical guests included Polish pianist Ignacy Paderewski and the American bandmaster John Phillip Sousa. The Kronfelds also housed the sons and daughters of other Moana families, who sent their children to Aotearoa for a better education. One such student was Queen Sālote, who stayed in Oli Ula from 1910 until she entered Diocesan School for Girls in 1913 (Tonga, 2018).

Oli Ula is well known also for the items it once housed, primarily collected by Gustav, and that make up what is now named the Kronfeld Collection held by Te Papa.<sup>55</sup> As a site of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, Oli Ula is somewhat of an anomaly for its time and predates the more typical Moana migration story told in Aotearoa. Not only is it decades earlier than the mass migrations of the 1960s–80s, but it is also a different kind of class story, which sits outside of the dominant narrative of unskilled labour migration.

The above is only a fraction of Parr's family history, a pretty intimidating ancestry to reconcile. Understanding her family history within a relational social world or *Vā Moana*, Parr reveals, “helped me to understand my place in that web, and, while it looks very different now, mobility, exchanging, meeting and binding cultures has always been practised by our ancestors.” With a family history that is undeniably

**55.** While this thesis does not go into museum collections, *Moana Cosmopolitanism* offers an interesting alternative framework for thinking through collection items like those

belonging to the Kronfeld family. How could we understand webs of relation differently if we applied a *Moana Cosmopolitan* frame to collections and the items they hold?

cosmopolitan and complex, it is no wonder that Parr never felt an affinity with the term diaspora. She tells me, “I use it occasionally to refer to Louisa, for lack of a better term, but I don’t even think it applied to her.... I think she would have loved the term Moana Cosmopolitan because she had a very cosmopolitan home. They were hosting writers, musicians, politicians, royalty, people from the islands all the time. Imagining this home in downtown Auckland in 1890 is very strange to me, so I feel like it’s the perfect term.” Parr has since gone on to use the phrase *Moana Cosmopolitan* when describing her family and herself (Parr, 2020b). This disconnection to the term diaspora and draw to *Moana Cosmopolitanism* speaks to Stuart Hall’s (1994) notion that diasporic identities continually reproduce themselves anew. Moreover, it reveals how *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* co-constitute each other. Meaning that one’s cosmopolitan experience determines how one imagines their subjectivity.

*Moana Cosmopolitanism* is similarly rooted deeply in Ahilapalapa Rands’ family history spanning back generations, namely through the Kaai family. In fact, the Kaai family and the Kronfeld family used to go on camping trips together. This genealogy of cosmopolitanism is well documented through Andrea Low’s (2016) PhD research into her grandfather, Ernest Kaleihoku Kaai and grandmother Tuavivi Greig Kaai, who travelled the world in the early 1900s as part of Kaai’s Hawaiian Troubadours, a pan-Moana group of performers. Ernest and Tuavivi are Rands’ great-grandparents. Having this cosmopolitan genealogy, Rands tell me, is something that she feels present to. Rands being an artist in London, you could make the connection that she was following in the footsteps of her ancestors, who travelled the world for their creative pursuits generations before her. Similarly, before Parr started her master’s degree she was living in Toronto, which she acknowledges as being a catalyst for *Moana*

*Calling Me Home*. She tells me, “I had just been another random person who had moved to Toronto and then tried to build a life there, so I guess feeling that far away from Aotearoa made me really want to deepen my connection to home. And not just home as in the place I grew up, but my ancestral homes, the ones you feel in your bones.” Interestingly, it was these global *routes* that reaffirmed her need and desire to find her *roots*, and digging at the *roots* simultaneously discovered more *routes*. In many ways, being a part of *rooted* and *routed* global worlds is a kind of movement familiar to Rands, Parr and their families.<sup>56</sup>

Between Parr’s and Rands’ ancestors’ movements and theirs, however, there have been significant shifts in *Moana Cosmopolitanism*. On the one hand, the level of access to *Moana Cosmopolitanism* has increased due to more accessible pathways of mobility, both physically and virtually. But also, the communities this mobility places Moana people in relation to has shifted over time, to include other global Indigenous communities and communities of colour. In addition, modes of relating between *Moana Cosmopolitan* communities across diasporic homes, and between *Moana Cosmopolitan* communities and the Indigenous hosts whose land they have settled on have also shifted.

### Your Place in the Vā

Connecting the Sāmoan notion of *vā* to the word *Moana*, I contend that the *Moana Cosmopolitan* is not bound by restrictive notions of home but rather occupies a social world of *Vā Moana* based on relational concepts of *vā*. *Vā Moana* foregrounds the different ways *Moana Cosmopolitans* are in both local and global worlds, which emphasises the need to build relations with each other based on that mediation of difference. It is through this relational space that we see how the use of language from critical race theory finds its place amongst *Moana Cosmopolitan*

these families. *Moana Cosmopolitanism* encompasses these movements as well as other forms and histories of Moana mobility.

<sup>56</sup>. Significant to note, however, is that Parr and Rands’ familial histories of cosmopolitanism are unique examples, and moreover are examples of cosmopolitanism unique to

communities.

Parr's language around Whiteness and White privilege is firmly rooted in the literature around *critical race theory* out of America, which examines the ways in which race and colour (along with other intersecting minority identity markers) shift the systemic racism and discrimination faced by any such individual and community. This kind of rhetoric is found firmly in the vernacular of the *Moana Cosmopolitan* and is part of understanding *Vā Moana*, or a relational geography that the *Moana Cosmopolitan* inhabits, as it foregrounds the different ways in which we are in both local and global worlds, and emphasises the need to build relations with each other based on that mediation of difference.

This desire to build relationships by knowing one's whakapapa can be understood as *vā relations*. When I ask Parr about the notion of *vā* in her work she tells me that she came late to *vā* in her own research and reading, but once she found it, she found a home within it. In the vignette *Digging at the Roots*, we learn of how Parr's ancestor Louisa held all the knowledge of marriages between people from Sāmoa, Tonga and Niue. For Parr, this is evidence of the "ancient roots that Epele Hau'ofa talks about of trade and the meeting of cultures, and this web between islands that has always existed, and continues to exist in different forms." Acknowledging this web helped Parr understand her place within those *vā relations*. The Sister that Parr references in that same vignette immediately helped Parr to locate herself within Sāmoa, and also her relationship to Sāmoa. She tells me, "to find out that there's this wonderful, established way of relating to people and figuring out where you are in that web, or that network, is really awesome." Parr demonstrates how knowing one's place within *Vā Moana* or a *relational geography* can be empowering, and can simultaneously empower *vā relations*.

For Parr, art is her way to know and imagine these relationships (Parr, 2020a, p. 20). Comparing her own sense of moving image being a relational tool with the more ancestral notions of *vā relations* is reassuring for

the artist (2020a, p. 29). Furthermore, she brings her audiences into this web of relations. Parr references Shawn Wilson and his notion of research as ceremony:

In receiving the story, you as an active listener are responsible for putting the story into a relational context that makes sense for you and for listening with an open heart and open mind. If you choose to pass along the story or my words, you also take on the responsibilities of the storyteller yourself.

In her exegesis she tells us, "Through sharing my moving-image works with you, I hope to grow (or strengthen) the relations between us" (2020a, p. 30).

## Contemporary Moana Art References to Vā

Vā  
Is not empty.  
Space  
Enters the space  
Enters the meaning  
Changes the creature.  
Mana  
Vā  
Manava  
Mānava  
Breathe  
Vā  
Sā  
Sacred  
Ocean  
Vasa

—Tusiata Avia, *Blacking out the Vā (ii)*, 2020

There is a Vā between my thighs.  
a pa'ia space where  
binaries of alofa and pain,  
and the passing of old and the coming of new  
coexist in swirling tangles.

—Ria Masae, *My Vā*, 2020

*Vā* as a relational understanding of space<sup>57</sup> has proven to be a seminal concept for Moana artists in Aotearoa across art forms since the 1990s. In Albert Wendt's (1996) essay 'Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body' he likened the contradictions that come with wearing both a pe'a and sneakers with the way in which post-colonial literature takes from many histories, operating in multiple canons of knowledge; it is this meeting point that he refers to as the *vā* (Wendt, 1996). *Vā* here is a space where a blend or new development can occur.

Early proponents of *vā* within contemporary art include Lily Laita and John Pule, who explore *vā* alongside Homi Bhabha's (1994) notion of a third space. For painter Lily Laita, *vā*, or the creation of a third space, is a recurring theme, as seen in the works *Ta i va* and *Va i ta* (Whimp, 2009). John Pule's 1991 work *Mamakava*, is an articulation of a "third space, where the elements of a displaced homeland are unreachable and only disjointed parts have been recreated in a new urban landscape" (Taouma, 1999, p. 13). Interestingly, this connection between *vā* and Homi Bhabha's (1994) third space has also been utilised within Talia Smith's current master's work. In *talanoa*, Smith tells me *vā* becomes a safe space through which she can interpret her identity.

*Vā* has also been used to describe the active state of space between an artist and their audience. This has been well articulated by Rosanna Raymond, who drew on the work of Hūfanga Okusitino Māhina, Wendt and Refiti to generate her own conceptualisation of *tā-vā*, or *time-space* (Raymond, 2016). Raymond asserts that *vā* or *tā-vā* is a sense of space that becomes active when people and things are connected together in reciprocal obligations" (Raymond, 2016). It is this understanding of *vā* that is at the basis of the SaVAge K'lub, an art collective founded by Raymond herself. They are clear in asserting that they are not performers or performance artists, but activate the *vā*, as a way of traversing bound understanding of time and space (Raymond, 2016). This conceptualisation of *vā* also breaks down disconnections

between performers, or in this case 'actiVAtors,' and audiences, forcing everyone to participate (Raymond, 2016).

Extending this notion, Raymond also acknowledges the body as a site where things converge both in a spatial and temporal sense. She writes, her body becomes a place of resistance (Raymond, 2016). Ioane Ioane has similarly explored *vā* as a space between, which started with his rejection of producing art that looked ethnically Pacific (Mallon & Pereira, 1997, p. 38). Since the early 1990s, his exploration of *vā* has shifted from looking at a space between to looking at a space within. Interestingly, dancer Lemi Ponifasio notes that "Here is the Pacific, the notion of *va* is the lived and cognisant body relationship with the world. The *va* of the body's intentionality is the foundation of all expression, including dance" (Taouma, 2012, p. 140). Ponifasio connects *vā* and the body, in what he calls the *vā-body*, which he defines as type of consciousness and responsibility (The Newsroom, 2010). In an interview by The Newsroom for *The Scotsman*, he explains *vā* as being "the gap in the rock reef around an island. It's where the islanders' boats come in and go out for fishing or travel and it's the most dangerous part of the ocean" (The Newsroom, 2010, para. 23). Ponifasio continues, "In Samoa we say in the *va*, that's what politeness is—it means to be in the space, to be paddling on both sides of the canoe, to be in balance. Maintain the space, it's like a motto in Samoa. That's the kind of theatre I'm trying to make, it's about being in the space" (The Newsroom, 2010, para 24).

More recently, a shift in the way we may think about the *vā-body* is seen with women using *vā* to address issues related to womanhood. This articulation of *vā* builds on the work of Rosanna Raymond, as well as the Pacific Sisters, who were seminal in their reclamation of Moana womanhood in the 1990s, much to the dismay of the Moana community more broadly (Raymond, 2020). Ria Masae's poem *My Vā* uses the concept of *vā* to discuss sex, sexual abuse and pregnancy, which bear

<sup>57</sup> This section offers a review of artworks that use the concept of *vā*, in order to demonstrate the way in which *vā* is used

and articulated within art. The theoretical element of *vā* is presented in more detail in Chapter 5, *Vā Moana*.



similarities to Tusiata Avia's use of *vā* in her trilogy of poems *Blacking out the Vā* (i), *Blacking out the Vā* (ii) and *Blacking out the Vā* (iii). This is an interesting shift to uses of *vā*, given the context of Parr's work and writing her Indigenous women ancestors back into the archive. While these women have always had their place within this particular familial history, emphasising a Pākehā family tree over *vā* relations as a social system de-emphasises their significance and forces them from view. Using *vā* within the context of Moana womanhood offers a pertinent reclamation of the Moana women's experience within discussions on *vā*.

## Conclusion

I think often about *Moana Calling Me Home*, and in particular, the words: "that Sāmoans love to dig at the roots, and that trees have less roots than the Sāmoan people." Sāmoans have more roots than trees, roots that take them and locate them in complicated, globally expansive social worlds. Parr descends from incredible and very particular familial histories of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*. While this is just one example of a *Moana Cosmopolitan* genealogy, *Moana Cosmopolitanism* more broadly, being a Moana experience of life that is routed globally, is now an everyday occurrence.

*Moana Calling Me Home* takes us on a multilayered 72-minute journey. In parts the narrative becomes so complex and shifts so far from the common Moana narratives we come across in artworks that it borders on unbelievable, shocking at times. The work is definitely a journey, until the last vignette, *Whakapaparanga*. At only three minutes long it is the shortest vignette of all. As the artist recites her pepeha, for perhaps the first time in the work, we hear Parr standing in her *mau*. There's almost a redemptive quality to it, where after wading in the difficult and murky territory of complex family histories she emerges stronger because of that complexity.

Parr writes in her exegesis that at this stage in the work she combines all of the parts of herself to become

whole, not through "accounting for all the fractions" but "through the stories passed down to us and the mauri that connects us" (2020a, p. 97). She continues that by learning and retelling her ancestral stories, her integrated identity comes into being. What may seem like fragmented strands of her whakapapa are su'i-ed or stitched together. Parr writes:

Deep roots have grown from the seeds planted early in my research. My project has formed the base: I now know whose waters I come from, what my waka look like, my stories. And through moving-image practice, I can not only connect, but nurture the fragments from which I grow. (2020a, p. 96)

Rather than being distressed about convergence of multiple identities, Parr is emboldened by it, ready to be in the world and keep making work. Through the strength in her whakapapa also comes strength in her voice in what she can contribute through her work on her own terms. In our talanoa she tells me that, "Filming and talking about my experiences is a way of sharing that information on my own terms, and not in isolation, but linking histories together, linking history to our present and building connections between important things that are often seen in isolation." This includes adding her own family story to the public record, which is not always complimentary to some of her ancestors. She tells me it can be "uncomfortable, but an important step towards repair."

# Fa'amaumauga

Wednesday, 24 October 2019 /  
Monday, 14 December 2020

*For as long as I can remember I have received fofō from my Nana Sala, Dad and even Mum.*

*For the most part, it was needed for lifelong cramps I have in the back of the calf muscles, which spread up into my thighs. I've never been able to figure out what the cramps are from or how to get rid of them but they've been there since I was two years old, and now it seems my son has inherited them too. At certain stages, fofō has also been to alleviate some pregnancy-related strains in my body and to get the babies in the right position. And, currently, it's for a recurring shoulder injury, which is being treated with both fofō and osteopathy. Fofō is a type of massage, but also a method of healing. There are many techniques, and often extra components are added in such as oils or tī leaves. But from a young age, I also learned how to fake certain ailments so that I could receive intergenerational empathy through the form of fofō. It's safe to say I'm addicted to my Nana Sala's painful yet nurturing touch.*

*At the moment, I am trying to train my daughter to fofō. Fair to say, she's pretty reluctant. We time it during television ad breaks (feel likes a short enough time to not be exploitative of my child): she counts, "taaasi, luuuu, tooolu" (one, two, three) until she gets to "seelaaau" (100). With each number comes a firm squeeze. At the age of five, her hands are pretty strong. And definitely stronger than they were at four. Here's hoping by the time she hits ten we'll be home and hosed.*

*When I was in Taiwan, homesick, I stumbled across tī plants, 30 of them growing together in Taitung, dutifully planted in the bordering gardens of a community centre. It is a stubby tree, with pink and dark-green leaves (although in saying that there are a few varieties). I'm a novice when it comes to many things 'Sāmoan' but tī for me is intimately connected to*

*the loving yet spine-crushing hands of a fofō. Those tī plants felt, looked and smelled like a home away from home.*

*Surprised and enthused by my discovery, I sent a photo to my grandmother through Facebook messenger to ask if this was like the tī at home, the same tī from my treasured fofō. I got back an audio message. It started "Hey Lana, it's Tylah just helping Sala..." Nana Sala apologised for not being able to type in English and proceeded to tell me about the tī, and sent through photos of hers planted firmly in her backyard in Henderson. It was a reminder of home, home being Sāmoa as known through West Auckland, New Zealand, but also a realisation that perhaps my ancestors had already been here before me.*

*When I was in Sāmoa in 2016, there was a shortage of fa'i palagi, meaning outsider bananas but referring specifically to Cavendish bananas. Fa'i palagi, as the name suggests, are not of Sāmoa, but rather were introduced in the mid-nineteenth century by Reverend John Williams from the Duke of Devonshire's estate at Chatsworth). While fa'i pālāgi is arguably the preferred banana in Sāmoa and has cemented a key role for itself in the Sāmoan diet, I didn't mind the shortage so much, as fa'i misiluki, the ladyfinger banana, was on offer instead.*

*I would never voluntarily choose a ladyfinger over a Cavendish—something about its overly sweet-smelling plumpness puts me off—but it's a banana nonetheless. I had assumed it was a local variety that had lost its popularity to the fancier international Cavendish. I was wrong. Fa'i misiluki, or musa balbisiana as it is scientifically known, is not a native plant species at all but is thought to have been introduced to the archipelago from either Java or Brazil. I think it's interesting that something as synonymous with the Sāmoan staple diet as these*

two fa'i are not of Sāmoa. In fact, fa'i Pālagi and fa'i misiluki are so widely established today that the native varieties of fa'i have become displaced.

Looking at the mobilities of a banana or a tī plant perhaps sheds light on longer-standing Moana mobilities—mobilities of the people who travel with this flora in the first place.

Research into Sāmoan medicine reveals the ways that healers have used and incorporated foreign plants into their healing. In one case it was found that a Sāmoan pastor who served as a missionary in the Solomon Islands in the late nineteenth century studied Solomon Islanders' uses of plants and later collected and repatriated the most useful of them. Passing them on to his mother, a healer, they had been incorporated into her medicine, becoming a part of Sāmoan traditional medicine, their Solomon Island origins made invisible. In another case, medicinal plants were brought back to Sāmoa by a pastor who had served in Papua New Guinea in the early twentieth century. This time they were given to his mother-in-law, a healer who again incorporated these into her medicine. Another man who spent time in Papua New Guinea, this time as a rigger, discovered the therapeutic properties of a plant while hunting with locals who used the plant to relieve muscle cramps. He brought this plant back in the 1970s and it is now widely used for healing. Yet it's not just across the Moana that Sāmoans have ventured and found plants to heal and cure. Apparently there is also an instance of a Mormon missionary bringing a plant to Sāmoa that he had seen being used by First Nations communities in Colorado, and had offered it to a Sāmoan healer who integrated it into her traditional practice.

Flora as a technology has been tried and tested by Sāmoans since our early ancestors arrived on the archipelago over 3000 years ago. Once our Sāmoan ancestors settled in the archipelago, they developed new architectural and building technologies to construct larger, more elaborate and sophisticated houses to meet the requirements of an increasingly complex society. They also refined the naval architecture and navigation techniques that made possible the later stages of the exploration and settlement of the eastern Moana. By the time further new technologies were introduced to the islands by Europeans, Sāmoans were already adept at incorporating new technologies into their lives.

It has been pretty hard to get a fofō as of late. Arpi's six now, pushing seven and is not as easy to coerce into an ad-break fofō. Instead, she offers to fofō my back with the massage gun. We got the massage gun from a friend who was forced home due to Covid and had a spare one lying around, so dropped it off once we got out of lockdown. It was a pretty sad turn of events, actually, as it was for most people living and working overseas. Our friend was in pre-season camp for a rugby team in South Africa. This was his first season for them after having played in France the year before. Our friend was one of the many men whose Moana Cosmopolitanism comes through the very specific rugby pathway—the same kind of pathway my partner retired from eight or so years ago.

Rugby is a pretty amazing, yet strange, route for Moana men, offering a way of travelling around the world free of cost and an opportunity to earn decent coin. Even for those who don't play top-grade rugby, there's still a huge number of lower-ranking teams and 10s tournaments that won't make you rich but will give you access to travel. Along these routes are groups of Moana men who find each other in places like France, setting up community and reimagining home; a phenomenon documented by Edith Amituanai in her photographic series Déjeuner, which followed Moana rugby players to France and Italy to depict their lives over there.

When my partner was living in France, a group of the boys would get together on a Saturday night after their games to drink kava. This was supplied and served by some of the Fijian players and was a mode of recovery, given the healing properties of kava, but I imagine it was also a way of retaining roots on the other side of the world. I mean literal roots, too, as that's what kava is—the ground roots of the plant. Daniel Hernandez writes about the transportation of kava roots as a way that diasporic Moana people literally take the earth with them as they move and travel. It was clear where players' roots really lay as the borders closed. Many of the players who had perhaps a more transient life came home to Aotearoa to family, and to security, while others who have rooted themselves in France, Ireland and the UK stayed in their newer homes, with their families who comprise a new generation of Moana Cosmopolitan rugby kids.

I often think about the international art market pathway alongside the international rugby pathway. When I was in London in 2018, I crossed paths with some of the rugby boys who were playing up there.

*While there are no major rugby teams in London itself, Coventry is not far away. It's almost as if in particular moments and in particular places both routes can collapse into themselves. To collapse into a wider web of Moana Cosmopolitanism, past, present and yet to be imagined.*

# Chapter 4.

## Moana Cosmopolitanism

### 4.1 Introduction

The world we find ourselves in today is of a particular kind of globality enabled by a combination of air travel, the global economy and digital technology. Global interconnectivity, though, is not new. Sociologist Gerard Delanty writes about the “overwhelming interconnectivity of the world,” contending that “[v]irtually the entire span of human experience is in one way or the other influenced by globalization” (2009, p. 1). This is what interdisciplinary scholar Lisa Lowe describes as global intimacies (2015), often masked by the *colonial imaginary*, which, through the writing of history, seeks to separate groups of people from each other. Today, the normalisation of globality is also heightened for the *Moana Cosmopolitan* through the specific globality enabled by digital technology. This characteristic of life offers a framework to think through the current lived reality of Moana people, through a *local cosmopolitanism*—*Moana Cosmopolitanism* to be specific.

However, while *Moana Cosmopolitanism* is a productive concept in the context of this thesis, from a decolonial perspective there is a need to fracture grand narratives of a group of people’s experiences. Therefore, *Moana Cosmopolitanism* is consciously only one local theoretical framework amongst many (both in existence and still to come). As Ioana Gordon-Smith said in our talanoa, “I think it’s useful to have a name only if it can be used as an alternative to a current lack of options.” Gordon-Smith continued, “It’s almost more

useful for people who don’t subscribe to this [idea of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*], than it is for the people who do....” Gordon-Smith implies that the need to name the cosmopolitan character of Moana life is redundant for those who have already accepted it—it is just life. Rather the concept is more valuable to those for who it reveals something new.

*Cosmopolitanism* has a very long academic tradition, which can be traced back to Stoic origination and later used in the European philosophical tradition by Immanuel Kant (1991, 2006). Since then, it has undergone endless reconstructions and theoretical reworkings. *Cosmopolitanism* is often used to describe particular relationships to wealth and resources, with attempts made to identify a social category of cosmopolitans (Rapport & Stade, 2007). Definitions of *cosmopolitanism* tend to be based on the assumption that it involves cultivating knowledge of the world beyond our immediate horizons, through literacy, travel, and privilege (Appadurai, 2013). Cosmopolitans are often identified with seekers of the new, who are not content with their identities and cultural values. This school of *cosmopolitanism* is loosely associated with post-nationalism and multicultural politics; it values a general openness to cultural experimentation, hybridity and international exchange (Appadurai, 2013).

One of the prominent critiques of this school of *cosmopolitanism* is the binary it creates between privileged border crossers (cosmopolitans) and poor villagers (locals), because of an implicit assumption that only those who travel abroad are exposed to



new worlds and interested in a cosmopolitan politic. *Cosmopolitanism*, then, tends to be contrasted with ideas of the ‘local,’ or *rootedness*. *Rootedness* is typified by a general attachment to one’s own friends, group, language, country and class, coupled with a certain lack of interest in crossing these boundaries (Hannerz, 1990; Appadurai, 2013). This juxtaposition places cosmopolitanism at odds with local or tribal identities.

I follow sociologist Gerard Delanty’s *critical cosmopolitanism*, which distinguishes cosmopolitanism from globalisation—precisely because cosmopolitanism occupies a site of tensions between the global and the local. Thus, *cosmopolitanism* represents a reality that concerns the field of tensions created when global forces interact with the local (Delanty, 2009, p. 15). Accordingly, I argue that Moana people, like many other Indigenous communities globally, simultaneously hold on to local and global identities—rather than treating them as binary positions that cancel each other out.

Walter Mignolo’s *decolonial option* made an important intervention in cosmopolitanism theory (2011). The *decolonial option* rejects hegemonic characteristics of globality and advocates *local cosmopolitan* articulations. Mignolo’s *decolonial option* fractures notions of universality and proposes, instead, a pluriversal and local approach to *cosmopolitanism* (2011). This decolonial intervention into *cosmopolitanism* offers a theoretical break from earlier cosmopolitan philosophers and rescales *Enlightenment cosmopolitanism* as one local iteration of cosmopolitan theory amongst many.

This option creates room for local articulations like *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, which also draws on the cosmopolitan notions of *roots* and *routes* (Gilroy, 1993; Clifford, 1997, 2013; Teaiwa, 1995b; Diaz, 2019). These enable Moana people to understand mobility and place as connected in the discussion of the experiences of a global Moana population. *Roots* and *routes* literature builds on the work of Paul Gilroy (1993), who argued that the routes of the slave trade had to be

included in the rhetoric concerning modernist nation-building. *Roots* and *routes*, as conditions of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, allow for regional expansiveness without sacrificing local specificity. This makes room for understanding the multiple ways of being in the Moana diaspora, enabling people to simultaneously hold onto identities which are *rooted* specifically and *routed* expansively.

In this chapter I begin with a literature review focusing on four theoretical cornerstones of *cosmopolitanism*: *Enlightenment cosmopolitanism*, the *decolonial option*, *local cosmopolitanism*, and *cosmopolitan relationality*. Building on the literature, the following section discusses the concept of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* as an *imaginary* and new identity which is *rooted* and *routed* as well as predicated on relational ethics. Finally, this chapter ends by looking at historical legacies of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, reimagining Moana histories of globality through *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*.

*Cosmopolitanism* has faced much criticism insofar as it is seen as an extension of the colonial civilising mission, kin to early missionary work. The clear connections between *cosmopolitanism* and *globalisation* (a project of Western expansion) highlight links between cosmopolitanism and coloniality. Simply put, coloniality is the pre-history to the conditions of globality we experience today. My intention in this thesis is not to subsume Moana experiences within the vast pre-existing literature on *cosmopolitanism*. Nor should there be a singular experience of *cosmopolitanism* for Moana people. Rather, in today’s world where border crossing can occur through the internet (itself a product of US militarisation), or through privileged access to travel and visas (in New Zealand through citizenship, and histories of labour and education recruitment in the Moana), cosmopolitanism offers a theoretical framework to analyse current conditions of globality as they are experienced by Moana people in diasporic systems and structures. Rather than shying away from this constellation, I argue that articulating its tensions locates contemporary

Moana experience within a matrix of power. This highlights the *radical imagination* required in *Moana imaginaries* that critique and imagine existing *social institutions*, resulting in emancipatory potentials.

## 4.2 Cosmopolitanism and the Decolonial Option

### 4.2.1 Early Cosmopolitan Ideals

The often-cited Stoic use of *cosmopolitanism* in the third century CE centres on the notion of individual citizens of the world, or the cosmos. The Stoics made a positive commitment to philosophical *cosmopolitanism* and suggested that a cosmopolitan considered moving abroad as a way to serve the greater cosmos, or humanity at large (Kleingeld & Brown, 2019). This speaks to a particular moral and ethical way of being, in which one's responsibility to others informs a relational ethic to live by. In contrast to today's world, the Stoics lived in a *cosmopolis*, a near-universal state and civilisation whose citizens had some uniformity in their rights and obligations (Glazer, 1994).

A few centuries later, *cosmopolitanism* was established within the European philosophical project through the work of Immanuel Kant (1991; 2006). For Kant, cosmopolitanism is “the matrix within which all the original capacities of the human race may develop” (1991, p. 51). His *cosmopolitanism* combined the philosophical concept with democratic forms of governance (Shaw, 2017, p. 3). Philosophers like Kant continued the universality of Stoic *cosmopolitanism* in a very different societal context, without accounting for different experiences had by different people (a notable characteristic of most Western philosophy of the Enlightenment era).

In the nineteenth century, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels discussed *cosmopolitanism* in relation to market capitalism, which breaks national boundaries and makes way for economic globalisation (Marx, 1994). Humanists with a Marxist bent revisited *cosmopolitanism* within Western philosophy toward the

end of the twentieth century (Mignolo, 2011). Despite the fact that these scholars were opposed to neoliberal globalisation, their discourse of *cosmopolitanism* ran parallel with the neoliberal promotion of globalisation, and the beginning of a “marvellous borderless world” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 13). As Mignolo points out, these *cosmopolitan* ideas as seen in the work of Kant, Marx and Engels were entangled with imperialist ideals of global expansion (2011, p. 14). Mignolo continues that, while this strain of *cosmopolitanism* looked like a global project, the “right of the citizen” was more accurately concerned with becoming modern, making it one piece in the “complex transformation of monarchies into modern nation-states” (2011, p. 14).

In the twentieth century, this type of *cosmopolitan* universality continued to influence thinking during the world war era in connection with peace-making efforts and the legislation intended to protect human rights. In the early 1990s, philosopher Martha Nussbaum insisted that “we should give our first allegiance to the moral community made up by the humanity of all human beings” (1997, p. 7). *Cosmopolitanism* at this time coincided with increased globalisation, the growing use of the internet and, increasingly, cosmopolitanism began to be conflated with globalisation in attempts to explain our place as citizens of the world, to overcome the limits of nationalism and nationalist thinking (Mignolo, 2011).

With globalisation happening at a rampant rate, cross-cultural dialogues began to be proposed as ways toward new futures. However, this universal school of *cosmopolitanism* does not account for different experiences amongst humans, let alone those outside of the human category (Wilderson III, 2020; Warren, 2018). Therefore, Kant's and Nussbaum's *cosmopolitanism* in particular has sustained enduring critique for its hegemonic approach to understanding a globality and relationality, which creates a “sense of false concreteness and unity” (Shaw, 2017, p. 10).

The use of *cosmopolitanism* in the formation of modern nation-states highlights the connection between *cosmopolitanism* and colonisation—

colonisation was in many ways the pre-history of contemporary globalisation. These murky beginnings raise questions as to why *Moana Cosmopolitanism* would be a helpful framework when thinking through Moana diasporic experiences, and it raises further questions about how the concept *Moana Cosmopolitanism* can be useful at all. I suggest, however, that positioning a Moana experience within a matrix of power offers a useful way to explain that today's condition of globality does not occur on a far-away island disconnected from the long-lasting impacts of colonisation but is rather entangled within Moana experience.

#### 4.2.2 Critical, Subaltern, Peripheral and Everyday Cosmopolitanisms

Through a decolonial lens, *Enlightenment cosmopolitanism* is not the blueprint for cosmopolitan theory in general, but rather as one local cosmopolitan world amongst many, specifically a European idea: “Since such imperial cosmopolitanism now is untenable, it is necessary to reduce Kantian legacies to size for there are many other local histories in which cosmopolitan projects emerge” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 44).

Minhao Zeng's *subaltern cosmopolitanism* (2014) offers a useful conceptual framework to think through local articulations of *cosmopolitanism*, which conceptualise a wide range of peripheral subjectivities encompassed in *local cosmopolitanisms*. *Subaltern cosmopolitanism* looks at “how new patterns of human association and new operations of labour and capital produce opportunities for new forms of connectivity and solidarity for the disenfranchised” (Zeng, 2014, pp. 137–138). *Subaltern cosmopolitanism*, then, resonates with the field's shift of emphasis from focusing on elites to everyday people and places (Hannerz, 2004, p. 75). *Subaltern cosmopolitanism* in this sense has no single form but rather—echoing Mignolo—thrives in the plural (Zeng, 2014, p. 143). The concept examines how the wide range of cosmopolitanisms emerging from various racialised and marginalised positions can lead

to transformative possibilities through *cosmopolitan imaginaries* (Zeng, 2014, p. 147). I would suggest that *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, as discussed in the following section, could be understood as a type of *subaltern cosmopolitanism*.

Similar to Zeng, Arjun Appadurai offers the concept of *cosmopolitanism from below*, in which “the urge to expand one's current horizons of self and cultural identity” and to connect with a wider world could belong to anyone and apply in any circumstance (2013, p. 198). In this *cosmopolitanism*, the defining feature is cultural coexistence, the positive valuation of mixture and intercultural contact, and a “strong sense of the inherent virtues of rubbing shoulders with those who speak other languages, eat other foods, worship other gods, and wear their clothes differently” (2013, p. 200). Therefore, the construction of the local, the assumed anti-cosmopolitan position, is not a default condition. Rather, as Appadurai suggests, the local requires effort, imagination, deliberation, and persistence in the *production of locality* (2013).

Similarly, James Clifford asserts against a cosmopolitan–village binary by suggesting that there is no single place from where to tell a whole story, but only contestable narratives (2013, p. 41). Clifford describes multi-perspectival Indigenous experience as a kind of *realism* (p. 41) in contrast to convenient binaries that position “before/after progress” as “village life to cosmopolitan modernity” (p. 52). Contemporary Indigenous experience, then, manifests as simultaneously “articulated, rooted, and cosmopolitan,” enabling complex and emergent possibilities (p. 65). For Clifford, the complexities of contemporary Indigeneity lie in what he dubs *cultures of commute*, where everyone belongs both to a community at home and one away, both to the village and the metropolis (2013). Internet and air travel enable the commuting that helps to dismantle the cosmopolitan–local binary. Thus, *cosmopolitanisms* are located in both local cultures and global networks (2013, p. 52).

Boaventura de Sousa Santos' *insurgent*

*cosmopolitanism* echoes Clifford's *cultures of commute*, similarly connecting the local and the global. Santos defines *insurgent cosmopolitanism* as "transnationally organized resistance against the unequal exchanges produced or intensified by globalized localisms or localized globalisms" (2006, pp. 397–398). The term includes literary, artistic and scientific movements on the peripheries, which are in search of non-imperialist, counter-hegemonic cultural values. It is "a global emergence resulting from the fusion of local, progressive struggles with the aim of maximizing their potential in loco (however defined) through translocal/local linkages" (2006, pp. 397–398). This production of *local cosmopolitanism* is the work of the *imaginary*. In contrast to the idea that cosmopolitanism is reserved for elite travellers, the imaginative work as Appadurai argues is the work of ordinary people (1996).

All the above notions of *local cosmopolitanism* highlight the inescapable interconnected character of the world. Daily we rub shoulders with each other from our locales, whether it is due to histories of migration that have brought us together in a local place, the global influence over our food, clothing and television, or because of the technology and social media platforms we access. This local approach to *cosmopolitanism* helps us understand the everyday nature of *cosmopolitanism*. More and more, cosmopolitanism is less of an elite ideology and becoming a reality for many who are living an *actually-existing* (Robbins, 1998) or *mundane cosmopolitanism* (Rovisco & Nowicka, 2009). Anthropologist Michel Agier calls this *ordinary* or *banal cosmopolitanism* and argues that it is increasingly shared in more and more situations of everyday life. Like Appadurai, Agier argues that, historically and currently, humans constantly invent new borders in order to "place" themselves in a social world in relation to others (2016, p. 18). This

requires the active continuation of "rituals" and "rites" that create social worlds or "borders" that keep people in and out (Agier, 2016, p. 24). By looking at *local cosmopolitanisms* from this vantage point, we see just how ordinary the *cosmopolitan condition* is (Agier, 2016, p. 8). In a global, hybrid and digital world, the experience of *cosmopolitanism* is pervasive.

#### 4.2.3 Relational Cosmopolitanisms

From the literature on *local cosmopolitanisms* discussed so far, a relational component emerges: by understanding oneself within cosmopolitan and global worlds, one also comes to understand that one is coming into contact with other people constantly, which, as discussed below in this chapter, requires hospitality toward cultural difference and entering into an ethical relationship with others.<sup>58</sup> This section focuses on the relational element of *cosmopolitanism*.

*Cosmopolitanism* understands *cohabitation* and *neighbourliness* as part of the multiplicity of cosmopolitan worlds.<sup>59</sup> Anthropologist Prina Werbner acknowledges this multiplicity, defining *cosmopolitanism* as "reaching out across cultural differences through dialogue, aesthetic enjoyment, and respect," which requires "living together with difference" (2018, p. 2). This echoes cultural theorist Kwame Anthony Appiah's work on *cosmopolitanism*, in which he notes, "in the human community, as in national communities, we need to develop habits of coexistence" (2006, p. xvii). However, he is also quick to mention that, given the deeply unequal cultural and political systems in the age of globalisation, it becomes clear that "cosmopolitanism is the name not of the solution but of the challenge" (2006, p. xiii).

*Cosmopolitanism* then requires constant acts of cultural translation, which involve "a commitment to imagining an alternative community" as a mode of

<sup>58</sup>. In the following chapter, I argue this relational component bears much similarity to the Sāmoan concept of *vā*. This connection is vital to *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and the social world of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*.

<sup>59</sup>. Multiplicity, however, is not to be confused with multiculturalism, as Annemarie Bodaar differentiates:

multiculturalism is an "adherence to the culture of the group," whereas cosmopolitanism is the "loose and multiple" socio-cultural ties that exceed the fixed boundaries associated with ethnicity alone (2006, p. 171). Therefore, while multiculturalism suggests a sense of homogeneity, cosmopolitanism focuses on heterogeneous forms of belonging that arise through acts of individual ethical agency.

comprehending and evaluating cultural similarities and differences (Papastergiadis, 2011, pp. 1-2). Translation, in this sense, is not about finding precise equivalences but rather placing your culture in conversations that extend ideas of dispersion and dislocation (Papastergiadis, 2011, pp. 16-17). Thus, it is about the “bumpy process of working out how to live with others” or the “bumpiness of living with difference” (Ahmed, 2017, pp. 166-167).

For German sociologist Ulrich Beck, the need to work out the process of living together became necessary at the turn of the millennium, when a *cosmopolitan* outlook in which people saw themselves as both “part of a threatened world and as part of their local situations and histories” was imperative (2008, p. 4). Beck insists that a cosmopolitan society includes its enemies (2002). This is a significant shift away from *universal cosmopolitanism*, as it suggests that the concept relies just as much on conflict as it does consensus—it relies on tensions between difference. *Realistic cosmopolitanism*, then, removes itself from its philosophical precedents and engages with the problem of how societies handle otherness and boundaries within globalisation (Beck, 2007, p. 60). Beck’s *Realistic Cosmopolitanism* is a recognition of otherness, both externally and internally; differences are accepted and neither arranged in a hierarchy nor dissolved into universality.

The space of *cosmopolitanism* is a space of “interactive moments, and conflicting principles and orientations” (Delanty, 2009, p. 15). Therefore, *cosmopolitanism* is linked to a dialogue with critical potential of opening new horizons. Delanty’s aforementioned *critical cosmopolitanism* refers to the moment in which cultures encounter each other and undergo mutual transformation, which Delanty describes as an orientation developed at the relational intersection between self, other and the world (2009, pp. 251-252). Working through differences, *cosmopolitanism* can be a constructive process that creates new ways of thinking and acting. This results in “collective identity processes, such as

debates, narratives, forms of cognition, networks of communication, ethical and political principles” (p. 252).

Democratic theorist Bonnie Honig’s articulations of *cosmopolitanism* enable otherness to have legitimacy, rather than silencing it as abnormal (1993, p. 65). The ethical demands of *cosmopolitanism* require neighbourliness, which relies on the reversibility of proximity and distance (Butler, 2012, p. 137). This results in a realisation that “one’s life is also the life of others, even as this life is distinct and must be distinct” (Butler, 2012, p. 141). For queer theorist Judith Butler, our individual life “makes no sense, and has no reality, outside of the social and political framework in which all lives are equally valued” (2012, p. 143). This relationality is what scholars Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins name an accountability we have to each other in this “newly dynamic space” (1998). The challenge, then, is to get others to care sufficiently to allow people to live together in relation to each other in balanced, harmonious and boundaried ways (Appiah, 2006; Efi, 2018). The imaginative potential, then, is to ground *cosmopolitanism* in the dynamics of transformations, which remake the world’s geography (Harvey, 2000, p. 560).

This relational aspect of *cosmopolitanism* has important implications for *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, as it corresponds to the relational element of global Moana experience. Furthermore, it highlights the need for relationality between Moana people and others, as well as the *imaginary* and imagined element of *cosmopolitanism*. In the next chapter, I will discuss how relationality offers a way to understand *Vā Moana* as a relational social world of the *Moana Cosmopolitan*.

#### 4.2.4 The Decolonial Option

As mentioned previously, early cosmopolitan concepts and discourses can be connected to the imperial project of Western expansion, a pre-project to globalisation. Moreover, before *cosmopolitanism* as a concept can be deployed usefully in this project,



it has to be viewed through a decolonial lens to find a form of *cosmopolitanism* that “dwells in the borders, in exteriority, in the colonial difference” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 39). Walter D. Mignolo distinguishes globalisation, as “a set of designs to manage the world,” from *cosmopolitanism*, as “a set of projects toward planetary conviviality” (2000, p. 721). Here, we see a conceptual shift from a *cosmopolitanism* as just describing a global character, to the implicit sense of relationality arising from said global character. Thus, in the decolonial tradition, *cosmopolitanism* only works if there are no hegemonic attempts to privilege universal conditions of globality, but rather an agreement of difference. Mignolo asked the question, “how could cosmopolitanism be possible when the designer of the project had a hierarchical view of humanity around the planet?” (2011, p. 14). For Mignolo, the only way to maintain cosmopolitan ideals is to move toward a *decolonial cosmopolitan order* (2011, p. 22). This type of cosmopolitan project is about “a pluri-versal world order built upon and dwelling on the global borders of modernity/coloniality” or, in other words, a *cosmopolitan localism* (p. 22).

Similar to the *decolonial imaginary* discussed in Chapter 3, a decolonial approach to *cosmopolitanism* breaks down ideas of universality created by *central imaginaries* including the *colonial imaginary* and commits to transforming globality into a pluri-versal condition (Mignolo, 2011, p. 37). *Decolonial cosmopolitanism*, like the *decolonial imaginary*, narrates silenced histories and, by extension, also the very history of the formation and transformation of the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2011, p. 40). In this sense, what is required then is a remembering of the moment of creation across all *imaginaries*, and all experiences of cosmopolitanism to reveal all *social institutions* as equal.

By taking the *decolonial option* (Mignolo, 2011) to think about and through *cosmopolitanism*, we begin to see how the commitment to a *cosmopolitanism* that safeguards a plurality of views and perspectives can become a corrective to the hegemonic cosmopolitan

projects of Enlightenment. This offers a conceptual break from the dominant school of thought and allows us to look to the peripheries for multiple origin points of cosmopolitan philosophies (George et al., 2016), echoing Castoriadis’ aforementioned concept of the *peripheral imaginary*. Taking into account a wide range of subjectivities, and situating them in their specific social and historical contexts, is part of the collective effort in today’s *cosmopolitan studies*.

### 4.3 Moana Cosmopolitanism

In this section, I build on the literature of *roots and routes* (Gilroy, 1993; Clifford, 1997, 2013; Teaiwa, 1995b; Diaz, 2019), and on Mignolo’s (2011) *decolonial option*, to develop the concept of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* as a lived experience that is ancestrally *rooted* in the Moana and globally *routed*. As a *local cosmopolitanism*, *Moana Cosmopolitanism* allows, following Native studies scholar Vicente Diaz, for expansiveness without “sacrificing specificity, ways that ground indigeneity without essentialist insularities,” and it “might be nudged mind-fully into potent forms of decolonized indigenous futures” (2019, p. 3). But perhaps most importantly, *Moana Cosmopolitanism* is not a new phenomenon. Toward the end of this chapter, I will demonstrate how Moana people have always participated in cosmopolitan worlds.

The conceptualisation of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* has been about making space for and giving value to global Moana experiences as they are presented in today’s contemporary Moana art. *Local cosmopolitanism* relies on a relational ethic, a politics operating in the spaces between our differences as global societies. Accepting *Moana Cosmopolitanism* requires imagining new ways forward, new collective identities, and new Moana *imaginaries*.

More than just an alternative term to *Pacific*, *Moana* was developed as a more expansive term for the region—mainly in the diaspora, in cosmopolitan

cities, art galleries, museums and universities—as part of decolonising processes. In diaspora, decolonising concepts and thinking take the place of other, more tangible decolonial projects. Therefore, *Moana* as a word and a concept has an inherent diasporic, decolonial and cosmopolitan character, hence its use in the concept *Moana Cosmopolitanism*.

#### 4.3.1 A New Identity

Diasporic experience—the experience of ethnic communities living outside of the homeland—is often theorised through ideas of displacement, assimilation and non-belonging. James Clifford writes that the language of diaspora is used by “displaced peoples who feel (maintain, revive, invent) a connection with a prior home” (1997, p. 255). He notes that this sense of connection must be strong enough to resist erasure through assimilation and forgetting. In that case, diaspora signifies transnationalism and mobility simultaneously with a political struggle to define the local as a distinctive community within its historical and geographical contexts (Clifford, 1997, p. 252). The lived separation and entanglement of living here and remembering there becomes a key characteristic of diaspora, together with a need to both accommodate and to resist the host country’s norms. Consequently, diasporic peoples balance “a complex combination of resistances and negotiations” (Gilroy, 2002, p. 204). Wīnak (Mayan) ethnomusicologist Daniel Hernandez conceives of diaspora as “an ontological confusion lost in the midst of colliding temporalities in contested spaces” (2019, p. 162).

Displacement and contestation are partly emphasised in diaspora literature because positive articulations of diaspora do not fit into the *colonial imaginary* of nation-states (Clifford, 1997, p. 251). In that sense, diaspora is a construction of the *colonial imaginary*, from which we can conceptualise or imagine ourselves in other decolonial ways. However, the diasporic fixation on non-belonging is no longer useful for a *digital native* generation of Moana people who are

interested in imagining themselves in more productive ways. Notably, each of the artists I had *talanoa* with for this research did not feel an affinity to the term diaspora precisely because of the way in which it was associated with particular ‘identity issues,’ which the artists did not feel akin to. Ahilapalapa Rands told me, “I’ve been shaped by the water and the mountains of this place”—an experience which the term diaspora does not account for. The aforementioned literature on *diasporic imaginaries* highlights the ways in which relationships to space and place are empowered through the *imaginary* (Čiubrinskis, 2016, p. 134). The *imaginary* thus is a mode of world making through the constant reproduction of diasporic identities, to create what is yet to be imagined (Perez, 1999).

*Moana Cosmopolitanism* then sits in this legacy of diasporic identities reproducing and reimagining themselves. It provides an important intervention in the literature on Moana experience in diaspora as an alternative theoretical framework through which Moana experience can be thought of as part of a global conversation outside narratives of colonial displacement and dislocation. Taking into account the cosmopolitan nature of Moana life, *Moana Cosmopolitanism* offers an alternative way of articulating Moana lived experience.

Thinking on Moana regionalism in 2010, Teresia Teaiwa commented that “when we think about cosmopolitanism, there’s a way in which it’s unavoidably tinged by a certain elite privilege. Now, globalising—and, ironically, even some neo-liberal economic restructuring—processes have helped to make cosmopolitanism and regionalism something that is much less an elite privilege than it used to be...” (quoted in Brunt, 2010, p. 92). Therefore, there is no distinct line between who is and is not a *Moana Cosmopolitan*. Following in the vein of James Clifford, this thesis posits there is no essential opposition between Indigenous and diasporic experiences (2006, p. 61). Rather, as Clifford acknowledges, there is a struggle for language that represents the “fuzzy and dynamic” nature of Indigeneity without “imposing

reductive, backward-looking criteria of authenticity” (p. 62). This multiplicity is present in geographer Karin Amimoto Ingersoll’s concepts of *oceanic literacy* and *seascape epistemology*, which resist “imposing a specific framework, allowing for individual interpretation and adjustment within the continually changing and growing space and time of the ocean” (2016, p. 93). Ingersoll continues, the “seascape’s boundaries are never complete, and thus a state of change is inherent within the epistemology, because it is change” (2016, p. 93). This acknowledgement of the state of change encompasses the ability of an identity to continually recreate itself. *Oceanic literacy*, then, enables a way to create fluid identities “anchored in place” (p. 93). Therefore, rejecting the need to present an exclusionary definition of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, this thesis contributes to Moana diasporic identities by sewing another element to the ever-expanding ula.

#### 4.3.2 Roots and Routes

One of the large critiques of *cosmopolitanism* is the binary it creates between a privileged border crosser (the cosmopolitan) and a ‘poor’ villager (or local). The implication is that only those who travel abroad and are exposed to new worlds are interested in a cosmopolitan politic. *Cosmopolitanism*, then, is usually contrasted with various forms of the ‘local’ or *rootedness*. However, exposure to new worlds happens every day without even leaving your seat by proxy of the way things, thinking and people circulate the globe physically and digitally, including in the village.<sup>60</sup>

For that reason, this research concentrates on the cosmopolitan intervention of *roots* and *routes* (Gilroy, 1993; Clifford 1997, 2013; Teaiwa, 1995b Diaz & Kauanui, 2001; Diaz, 2019), which enables Moana people to understand mobility and place as simultaneously connected, to discuss the experience of a global Moana population. For the *Moana Cosmopolitan*, a sense of

globality or of crossing borders is normal, and in fact heightened through increased use of digital technology. But this is arguably not at the cost of a local identity rooted in place. *Roots* and *routes* as theoretical underpinnings of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* allow for a regional expansiveness without sacrificing specificity, which enables room for understanding pluralistic ways of being in the Moana diaspora. *Moana Cosmopolitans* hold the tensions between specific *rooted* identities alongside expansive *routed* ones.

Teresia Teaiwa writes, “Borrowing a notion from Black British scholar Paul Gilroy, I have come to understand... that to search for roots is to discover routes” (1995b). Similarly, Diaz and Kauanui write, “Roots and their identities and traditions are also routed, both metaphorically and literally, as in the sense of moving islands” (2001, p. 319). In the Moana context, we can take the essay ‘Our Sea of Islands’ (Hau’ofa, 1994) to reveal the sea as routes and the islands as roots. Land and sea together, not separately, constitute Moana genealogies, and also lie at the heart of Indigenous sovereignty movements (Diaz & Kauanui, 2001, p. 318). Most significantly, they are intrinsically connected; there are no islands without the sea around them and there is no sea within islands in it. They are mutually informing and constantly changing.

In *The Tree and the Canoe: History and Ethnogeography of Tanna*, French cultural geographer Joël Bonnemaïson writes about the metaphor of the tree and the canoe as understood in a Tanna worldview, arguably a prehistory for *roots* and *routes* (1994). Bonnemaïson describes the Tanna concept of space as a timeless “Great Space,” and continues, “Their space is a sea, but their sea is a road. To establish linkages means to survive” (p. 105). In the Tanna worldview, these *routes* sit alongside *roots*, he writes further, “Men reach self-realization where they are and do so by rooting themselves deeply into the ground and

<sup>60</sup>. One interesting example of how the internet is playing a role in *rooted* and *routed* cultural expression has been the cyber or virtual aupaïpese, which have popped up during Covid-19.

Cyber or virtual aupaïpese have been a way for Sāmoans spread globally to sing together, forming virtual choirs.

pushing their foliage toward the sky” (p. 304). As in the Tanna example, the concept of *roots* acknowledges the significance of place in relation to the diasporic experience and takes hold in two ways. On the one hand, it is the way in which Indigenous people hold onto deeply *rooted* “(in deep time and place) aboriginal belonging to place in productive relation to histories, narratives, and technologies of travel or geographic reach” (Diaz, 2019, p. 3). And on the other, it is the way in which diasporic peoples establish new roots or new identities and new *imaginaries* in new places.

Diaz and Kauanui highlight the way *routes* and *roots* can lead to the production of something new through the example of taro and the Hawaiian word ‘ohana, meaning family (2001, p. 320). ‘Oha is the name of the taro corm grown from old taro roots, while na turns it into the plural form. ‘Oha are able to be transplanted, becoming new parent shoots for future plants. Kānaka Maoli who live outside of Hawai‘i are referred to as transplants. Making a comparison between these plants and people, transplanting can be understood as the process of taking root in new places.

These distinct new varieties of taro can be likened to the distinct identities that form or are produced in diaspora. Just as the taro is transplanted and still continues to grow in new places, so too do *diasporic imaginaries* that are simultaneously *rooted* in one’s Indigenous culture and also re-rooted in a new place. The key is to not hold on to an idea of the authentic taro with attempts to replicate it in a new place, but rather to understand that the newly transplanted offshoot is a combination of its original roots, its new roots and the routes it took to go between the two. Diaz acknowledges that *roots* and *routes* have been overlooked within recent theorising over Oceania, which can have hegemonic tendencies (2019). His argument is that conceptualisations of Oceania that emphasise expansiveness and fluidity can erase the specificity across the region, resulting in tokenistic and romantic depiction of Moana Indigeneity (2019, p. 30). Rather, *roots* and *routes* are a framework that allows for expansiveness without “sacrificing specificity” (2019,

p. 3).

James Clifford describes this form of *rooting* in a new locality as *becoming* (2013, p. 7). Further becoming requires reaching “back selectively to deeply rooted, adaptive traditions: creating new pathways in a complex postmodernity.” As discussed, Clifford relies here on the metaphor of *commuting*, in which individuals maintain multiple connections to place (1997, p. 2). Internet and air travel enable *commuting*, which helps to dismantle the cosmopolitan and local binary, placing Indigeneity in world-spanning networks (1997, p. 58). Emphasising patterns of “visiting and return, of desire and nostalgia, of lived connections across distances and differences” (1997, p. 52), Indigenous cultures are *cultures of commute* that exist within global forces not outside of them.

The *Moana Cosmopolitan* has transmigrant characteristics (Glick Schiller al., 1995; Mirón, 2018)—those of people “whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state” (Glick Schiller al., 1995, p. 48). Transmigrants, similarly, have not uprooted themselves, leaving behind their homeland and facing the often-painful process of incorporation into a new national culture. Instead, in part because of the facilitation of two-way traffic, physical, digital and metaphorical, made possible by modern transport and communication technologies, they have been able to forge multi-strand ties that link together their society of settlement and origin (Mirón, 2018). A relational social world is no longer simply confined within the boundaries of a single territorial national space.

Acknowledging a Moana identity as *rooted* and *routed* requires an *imaginary* that moves beyond the *diasporic imaginary*, which fixes Moana people in diaspora as fractured and displaced. The *Moana Cosmopolitan* experience enables imaginings of alternate publics and communities that “maintain identifications outside the national framework (Clifford 1997, p. 251). *Roots* and *routes*, then, not only rub up

against nation-state ideologies of citizenship (Mirón, 2018) but also help to contextualise histories of Moana mobility in the twenty-first century, in ways that highlight the Moana place in global relationalities.

#### 4.3.3. Relational Ethics

Accepting the cosmopolitan condition of Moana life places Moana people in a global world where cohabitation with diverse groups of people is an undeniable fact. This requires entering into an ethical relationship with others, which requires *imagining* new ways forward together. This is significant to note, as *Moana Cosmopolitanism* then is an identity that requires a consideration of relationships to other people, or relational ethics of living together with difference. In a political era typified by partisan politics, what is interesting is how *cosmopolitanism* ties people to one another; one enters into an ethical relationship that allows each party to maintain their difference while also being in relation to each other. This space of *cosmopolitanism*, then, is the moment of cultural encounter, which creates a dialogic relationship with the future critical potentials (Delanty, 2009). In the process of working through difference, *cosmopolitan imaginaries* lead to collective identities being formed.

Within *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, this element of relationality is about cohabitation with Moana people and others, as well as Moana cohabitation with each other. In other words, in addition to being concerned with Moana relationships with others, *Moana Cosmopolitanism* also provides a structure for accepting the many specific localised and *rooted* identities that exist within *rooted* regional ones. Therefore, rather than a single homogenising Pacific, Pasifika or Moana identity, *cosmopolitanism* allows for an intrinsic multiplicity within a Moana subjectivity.

This multiplicity aligns with the findings of the Ministry for Pacific Peoples' *Pacific Aotearoa Lalaga Fou report* (2018), which include a need for "acceptance, recognition and celebration of the increased diversity within many Pacific cultures,"

including experiences across "gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, education and religion" (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2018, p. 17). The report states that while participants acknowledge and accept the terms 'Pacific' or 'Pacific peoples' to collectively describe a broad range of people, those terms do not always imply unity or homogeneity.

Terms like 'Pacific,' 'Pasifika' and 'People peoples' have been used for community formation, policy and advocacy more broadly in vital ways. While that regional identity is still incredibly significant, the relationships that exist within those broad identities are also significant. That inter-Moana relational ethic is vital to ensure all Moana people have access to larger conversations in society. *Moana Cosmopolitanism* as an identity makes space for these relationalities.

#### 4.4. Legacies of Moana Cosmopolitanism

##### 4.4.1 Always Was, Always Will Be

If we rethink travel through Indigenous Moana traditions and *historical predicaments* (Clifford, 1997, p. 82) we begin to see that *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, in a sense, has always been there. In *talanoa*, Léuli Eshrāghi comments, "I really find even just the word cosmopolitanism is so strong, and it's always been real, it's still real." While *Moana Cosmopolitanism* may have been disrupted by colonisation and the formation of nation-states and then amplified by air travel and the internet, if we dig deep enough we can find its early traces. What I mean is that a pre-colonial Moana world shares the two core qualities of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*. These are, on the one hand, that the Moana has always been a part of global and mobile worlds and, on the other, the relational ethic of *cosmopolitanism* or a characteristic of *vā relations* has always been found in the Moana. So while *Moana Cosmopolitanism* today has been "re-wired" (Salesa, 2003) through new *routes*, forming expansive and kin networks, it is reminiscent of Moana mobilities that have always existed. Or to borrow from Jim Vivieaere,



*Moana Cosmopolitanism* over time is just, “different people, different time, different approach” to the same phenomena (quoted in Brunt, 2010, p. 84). In this section, I contend that the Moana has always been cosmopolitan. While there are many cosmopolitan networks that have spanned over the Moana, due to the limits of this thesis I focus specifically on Sāmoan examples.

The story that tends to preside over the Pacific Ocean, Te Moana Nui a Kiwa, Vasa loloa is one in which Moana people were residing on their island homelands and European explorers encountered them unmoved and untouched. However, it is safe to say that “Sāmoa is not, and has not been, as isolated as one might expect” (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2010, p. 7). Even before Sāmoans were Sāmoan, writes Damon Salesa, “Samoans had come from over the sea, and they never stopped traversing it” (2003, p. 171). Thus, Sāmoans have always been “travel-happy” (Kramer, 1994; Salesa, 2003).

Evidence of Sāmoa being part of an expansive world can be found in many places. One of the first places to look is, perhaps, navigational prowess. The exploration and settlement of the Moana began some 40,000 years ago in Asia. The eastward movement of Austronesian explorers into the Moana commenced about 8000 years ago and ended with settlement in the outer reaches of Polynesia only 900 years ago (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2010). Like all Moana peoples, Sāmoans were voyagers who witnessed “4000 years of Pacific maritime history and the thousands of square kilometres of far-flung Pacific settlement” (Salesa, 2003, p. 171). Vicente Diaz argues that this is when the Pacific diaspora began (2011).

For Sāmoans, the Pacific Ocean was an overlay of vibrant and changing “*Native Seas*,” as Damon Salesa calls them (2018, p. 52). These *Native Seas* included multiple orbits of encounter that were multilingual, multicultural and connected. Salesa writes:

These Native Seas were indigenous Pacific networks of voyaging, relationships and commonality. Their existence meant that few

people of the Pacific were isolated. Native Seas many of which were truly immense can be found throughout the Pacific. (2018, p. 52)

These orbits and networks placed Sāmoans in relation to other Moana peoples and created a type of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* reliant on a relational ethic for trade, politics and exchange. However, this also involved war and struggles for power. Therefore, the *vā relations* of this *Moana Cosmopolitanism* involved chaos and disharmony alongside more peaceful relations. This cosmopolitan relational ethic existed because their local worlds relied on these global networks.

#### 4.4.2 Changing Cosmopolitanisms

Of course, since then the ability to move freely around the Moana has been colonised along with the lands (Suliman et al., 2019, p. 304). Up until this point, most Moana people had autonomy over their mobility, until the partition of the Moana. As Banivanua Mar writes, “Pacific worlds shrank during the formal colonial era and the expansiveness of trans-Pacific trade and movement was replaced with sanctioned contraction and isolation” (2016, p. 40). This colonial period resulted in a significant rewiring of pre-colonial routes. Yet as Salesa writes, “Native Seas could be subsumed, but they could not be erased. And they would not be forgotten” (2018, p. 53). This rewiring created other Moana configurations, and Moana people still formed the great majority of those who travelled the Moana in the nineteenth century. Thus, even with new, ‘foreign’ complexities, it remained a “Brown Pacific” (Salesa, 2003, p. 172).

New routes for Moana peoples included labour, military and education recruitment from nation-states such as New Zealand and the United States (Māhina-Tuai, 2012b). This shifted the specificities of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* into “transnational kin corporations” (Bertram & Watters, 1985, p. 1986). Bertram and Watters likened transnational Moana kin-groups to transnational companies that act globally, deploying

and employing resources and capital in a way that was designed to maximise advantage to the company at any given time, coining the phrase (1985, p. 1986).

This idea can be usefully applied to Sāmoan transnational villages. The transnational village routinely, and quite deliberately, seeks to identify and harness the strengths and resources of various nodes of the village to its advantage (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2010). For example, churches and buildings on-island are made possible because village leaders are acting globally, made possible because of the size and wealth of the village's nodes, or sub-villages, created by histories of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*. Extending Hau'ofa's metaphor of the Moana as something that connects rather than separates (1993) can help us to think of the parts of the modern village and family as connected rather than disconnected. This also expands and diversifies the village economy by extending the range of sources of capital, credit, ideas and technologies available to the village. This has redistributed risk in fundamental ways and has made the village economy more robust (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2010).

Understanding the village as defined by the nature of interaction of its members rather than through spatial boundaries, it becomes clear that the growing international Sāmoan population does not signal the 'loss' of the village population but rather its relocation (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2010, p. 82). New ways of thinking and talking about village and family reflected these new spatial realities. Cities like Auckland became *pitonu'u*, or sub-villages, meaning they were extensions of the village with limited autonomy (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2010, p. 83). Salesa points to Sāmoa's beloved band Five Stars and specifically their song 'Pipa,' as evidence of this transnational Sāmoan world that spanned "Niu Sila (New Zealand) to Amerika (America) but always retained Samoa ('Hamo'—a colloquialism) at its centre" (2018, p. 51). Even in these new places, the "institutions of culture, of language, rituals and principles of tapu—is no less than that felt by those

living in their homelands" (Efi, 2018, p. 119). For these people, their world was global, but "their homelands never left them" (Salesa, 2018, p. 52).

#### 4.4.3 Virtual Routes

Dynamism is integral to the ways Sāmoans have experienced rewired mobilities and rewired said mobilities themselves. This has led to the establishment of thriving transnational kin networks. More recently these thriving networks have also been extended to the online environment. The online space has been recognised as an inexpensive way to maintain a sense of mobility and connectivity, empowering familial relationships (Salesa, 2017). The social media environment, therefore, offers *Moana Cosmopolitans* a way to imagine new identities based on shared connections, "often in the face of the erosion, dispersal, and implosion of neighbourhoods as coherent social formations" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 199).

Early Moana internet uptake has been well documented, with the chat room *The Kavabowl* founded in 1995 by Taholo Kami, who was based in the United States at the time. *The Kavabowl* was soon followed by *Polynesian Cafe*, another chat room, this time run by Al and Sue Aiono out of Los Angeles (Franklin, 2004; Salesa, 2017; Lopesi, 2018c). Both sites proved to be popular amongst Moana internet users, offering a space where *Moana Cosmopolitan* discussions around culture could occur, at a scale and level of accessibility not seen before.

More recently, free-to-use social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have gained prominence as a space for Moana people. Moana social worlds extend to include social media (Salesa, 2017; Lopesi, 2018c; Nishitani, 2020), with its connectivity features. Therefore, social media becomes pertinent for *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, for the way it offers cheap ways to keep connected and participate in global worlds.

Covid-19 reinvigorated the importance of the online environment for *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, especially as it is the only route currently open to

experience global worlds, gaining scholarly attention (Enari & Matapo, 2020; Refiti et al., 2021). Where the fusion of the online and away from keyboard space was becoming more seamless, Covid-19 has thrust the online environment back into purview. Currently, it is the only way to experience the rest of the world, and for those in diaspora the only way to experience homelands. Interestingly, Covid-19 has also extended the regular social media platforms used to include the likes of Zoom.

However, just as other *Moana Cosmopolitan routes* operate within systems and structures of power, so too does the internet. The internet is a product of American militarisation and reproduces the same dominant dynamics of the world it comes from, which is built on a tradition of knowledge production “deeply implicated in both colonialism and neocolonialism” (Risam, 2018, p. 4). Moreover, “Unthinkingly, without malice” and because of a lack of critique, the hallmarks of colonialism have moved over into the digital space through its own infrastructure (Risam, 2018, p. 5). Therefore, to some extent, Moana internet users must understand and conform to the “architecture (and all of its limitations and restrictions) of the space,” its systems and its structures (O’Carroll, 2013, p. 162).

The notion that the Moana has always been cosmopolitan highlights the “enlarged world of Oceania” (Hau’ofa, 1998). The *routes* of an early *Moana Cosmopolitanism* did not result in a displacement or non-belonging but rather contributed to the establishment of *roots* as new homelands were settled. Fauna, custom and culture were made mobile and firmly replanted in new places. In a contemporary sense, in which Moana people are contending with the impacts of colonisation, available routes have shifted dramatically, albeit rewired to align with colonial relationships. Yet with air travel and digital technologies, new routes for *Moana Cosmopolitanism* open and shift. *Moana Cosmopolitanism* references the expansive, multilayered and complex movements Moana people have made and continue to make globally, these cosmopolitan routes encompassing

ancestral voyaging, labour migrations, even international travel for rugby, art, academia and, of course, the additional mobility enabled through Twitter and Tik Tok. Pre-colonial and contemporary movements across the Moana and the globe by Moana people are multilayered, complex and overlapping; moreover, they operate on a scale and within a timeframe that is impossible to encapsulate.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

The Moana has always been cosmopolitan in various ways, shifting over time. Yet in the most recent *Moana diasporic imaginaries*, the fixation has been on displaced diasporic identities. Diasporic identities are those which require constant reimagining and reproducing. *Moana Cosmopolitanism* as part of an *imaginary* comes from the need for new articulations of Moana diasporic subjectivities, which encapsulate the cosmopolitan worlds Moana people are part of. By accepting the cosmopolitan character of Moana life, one can imagine *Moana Cosmopolitanism*—the identity and the lived experience thus co-constitute each other.

*Moana Cosmopolitanism* is an identity that is *rooted and routed*, it relies on the *imaginary* for new ways forward, and relational ethics of cohabitation. It offers a break from the Moana creations of the *colonial imaginary*, projecting another alternative proposition: a proposition of a world not flattened but where the social world in which we are all intimately linked emboldens a need to hold the tensions of difference.

## Imagining 4.

### Great Ocean Curating

#### *The Commute, Layover and Transits and Returns (2018–2020)*



**Figure 13.** The Visiting Curators (left to right): Sarah Biscarra Dilley, Lana Lopesi, Tarah Hogue, Freja Carmichael and Léuli Eshrāghi (2019).



## Introduction

In late 2017, Sarah Biscarra Dilley, Freja Carmichael, Tarah Hogue and myself were invited by Léuli Eshrāghi and the then directors of the Institute of Modern Art (IMA), Aileen Burns and Johan Lundh, to co-curate an exhibition for late 2018, which coincided with the 9th *Asia Pacific Triennial* (APT9). We ended up calling ourselves the Visiting Curators and co-curating three exhibitions in total. The three exhibitions were *The Commute* at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane; *Layover* at Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland; and *Transits and Returns* at Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver.

As a group of Indigenous curators, we were all art-school trained and worked within the contemporary art world in various ways. We were conscious of the convenient timing of APT9 and the potential pressure for us to be positioned by the IMA and art critics in opposition to that exhibition. Performing the role of being a rented, brown mouthpiece. The systems and structures of the Western art world often become the *central imaginary* for the Indigenous or racialised artist who enters that space. For some, the preference is to be a part of that mainstream art world, as just an *artist*, while others opt into the category of *Indigenous artist*. That duality bears an uncanny resemblance to Ralph Hotere's famous words that he is not a Māori artist, but an artist who happens to be Māori. Yet we know from art history that an artist's own assertions do not affect the way others may categorise or politicise someone and their practice.

Opting into the Indigenous art category, Métis art critic David Garneau writes, is "to declare your belonging to the Indigenous art world and its discourse" as a way to bend or snap the *colonial imaginary* (2018, p. 22). While each of the curators and the artists involved in these three exhibitions has their own relationship to the Indigenous art category, these exhibitions as a whole were politically located within

it, as sites of *creative sovereignty*. Having *creative sovereignty* (Garneau, 2018)<sup>61</sup> over these projects required a curatorial methodology that interrogated the curators' relationships to each other—cultural and creative—which relied on a framework of relationality or *vā relations*.

As curators, we developed a curatorial methodology based on notions of travel and place, namely *visiting* and *commuting*, to encapsulate the mobile yet located nature of being Indigenous across the Moana. The framework, based on notions of relationality and mobility, offered a different kind of social world for the exhibitions to live within. As none of the curators were ancestrally from Brisbane, the location of the first exhibition *The Commute*, the idea that we were all commuters, visiting this territory, helped us to understand the ways we were coming together to be a part of this wider, global contemporary Indigenous art movement. This also allowed us to hold onto our own particularities as visitors, from specific places. Visiting also named a social and ethical responsibility to other people, and to place—raising the question of how to be good guests. That first exhibition was held from 22 September to 22 December 2018 and included eight new commissions by Natalie Ball, Hannah Brontë, Bracken Hanuse Corlett, Chantal Fraser, Lisa Hilli, Carol McGregor, Ahilapalapa Rands and T'uy't'tanat-Cease Wyss.

The second exhibition, titled *Layover*, was held at Artspace Aotearoa from 15 March to 25 May 2019. The project was exactly midway between *The Commute* and the final iteration *Transits and Returns*. Being the smallest of all the venues, it gave us a chance to have a moment of pause as curators, and to regroup as visitors in this new place. While I was the home curator, in a sense, being from Auckland, the fact that my Indigeneity is diasporic means also that I am a visitor. Continuing to use the language of travel, a layover as we saw it can be a moment of respite, a delayed arrival,

<sup>61</sup> I connect Garneau's notion of *creative sovereignty* (2018) to the concept of *mau* within this thesis. This is discussed in more detail in Imagining Five.



a change in direction or the anticipation of the next movement (Lopesi, et. al., 2019). This idea catalysed an exhibition and gathering that explored the dynamic ways in which culture moves—physically, spatially and temporally—as well as how we actualise notions of home within moments of movement. Two new projects, by BC Collective (Cora Allan Wickliffe and Daniel Twiss) with Louisa Afoa and Edith Amituanai, were commissioned for *Layover*.

The final exhibition of the three, *Transits and Returns* was held at Vancouver Art Gallery from 28 September 2019 to 23 February 2020. As the last iteration of the project, the exhibition continued the ideas of visiting and *dwelling-in-travel* (Clifford, 1997). Namely, the relational space of the Great Ocean was further acknowledged as territories of land, sky and waters, which are forms of Indigenous interconnectivity (Garneau & Moulton, 2019). The exhibition brought

together all the previous ten commissioned projects, alongside works by nine additional artists: Christopher Ando, Drew Kahu'āina Broderick with Nāpali Aluli Souza, Elisa Jane Carmichael, Mariquita “Micki” Davis, Maureen Gruben, Taloi Havini, Marianne Nicolson and Debra Sparrow. By far the most significant exhibition, the show brought together 21 Indigenous artists living in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States.

The conceptual framework of travel and place, *routes* and *roots*, the global and the local, *visiting* and *commuting* articulated a kind of relational social world which in the final instance was conceptualised as the *Great Ocean*. Rather than relying on incidences of comparative colonial histories as a point of connection, or the *colonial imaginary* as a space for the mediation between peoples, these exhibitions tried to find another way to be in and of the world, one that is relational, decolonial and creatively sovereign.



**Figure 14.** Amituanai, E. *Gallony Ave* [Photograph]; *David's residence* [Photograph]; *Tamakautoga photo with a hero* [Photograph]. Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://artspace-aotearoa.nz/exhibitions/layover>



**Figure 15.** Amituanai, E. (2019). *Millenial* [Photograph]; *Diamond* [Photograph]; *Candy leis for Senior Night* [Photograph]; *Billie in Las Vegas* [Photograph]; *Dante, Shiloh and the Hummer* [Photograph]. Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada. <https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/exhibitions/transits-and-returns>

## Global Indigeneity

Contemporary art as we understand it today is predicated on a Western art system and a Western model of canonisation. Contemporary art perpetuates the same biases of the broader society its legacy comes from. This means what we loosely name the ‘contemporary art world’ is dominated by Western ideals of art, form and concepts. Moreover, in contemporary art, power is expressed through canonisation. The risk is that only what makes it into the canon is stored as a part of art history. When the diversity of critics and art historians is limited, this is a problem, as who and what is canonised is subsequently limited. Like the *colonial imaginary*, the canon is intended to control what is included; in this case that control is over the qualities and criteria of good art, while forgetting its point of creation. This becomes problematic when what is good is determined by only one worldview. Art is of course only one example of the ways in which these pervasive Western views underpin the power structures of the institutions we find ourselves in. For Indigenous artists who live in settler-colonial nations, the *colonial imaginary* becomes the *central imaginary* and mainstream art galleries and institutions become the *institutions* of that *imaginary*.

It is within this context of contemporary art that we can understand the category of the ‘Indigenous artist’ or ‘Indigenous art.’ Métis art critic David Garneau acknowledges Indigenous as an emerging category that extends and adapts First Peoples’ “ways of knowing and being into the contemporary moment and beyond” one’s “home territories” (2018, p. 16). It is a form of identification developed through international networks and the collective consciousness of people who otherwise would identify through their land-based identities. And as Garneau writes, “Art is part of this movement” (2018, p. 16). This Indigenous category emerged because of technologies that “allowed us to know of, meet and communicate with each other. Indigenous is a discursive and contingent space characterised by mobile relations that are

enabled and maintained virtually through the internet, telephones, in reading and writing, etc, and physically thanks to rapid travel” (Garneau, 2018, p. 27). Thus, in many ways, Indigeneity is an alliance of people who connect outside of colonial modes of relationality. To describe Indigeneity as a global identity understands the way in which Indigenous artists and curators live and work in individual cultures and territories, while also participating in global art worlds and discourses (Garneau, 2018, p. 16). The Indigenous frame thus provides a site of commonality where people “find they have more in common with Native peoples in other territories than they do with their colonizing neighbours” (Garneau, 2018, p. 30). This leads to a productive network of relationships, thought and work across time zones and “within a discourse that both emerges from and exceeds the imaginaries of both individual nations and the settler states” (Garneau, 2018, p. 30). Because of this connection to internationalism, Garneau and Yorta Yorta curator Kimberly Moulton contend that Indigenous people are a “privileged minority of First Peoples who connect through the internet, and especially through travel, with other First Peoples in their home territories” (2019, p. 19). Moreover, Garneau and Moulton assert this privilege also comes with responsibilities.

Unlike the ethnic identities we inherit through birth, Indigeneity as an additional identity marker is a political choice (Garneau, 2018). Specifically, it is a choice that predicates a connection to a politic that hopes “to stop the reproduction of the colonial and misguided idea that art, criticism and identities are forms of universal” truths, rather than the upholding of “agreements among similarly trained elites” (Garneau, 2018, p. 31). Therefore, the Indigenous category actively contends with the *colonial imaginary*, and “marks the end of distorted identities and Native people made invisible or degraded by an ontological hierarchy built to benefit its colonial designers” (Garneau, 2018, p. 31). This political shift in moving out from the *colonial imaginary* sees Indigenous art practices as forms or questions, attempts to “new knowledge, new feelings,

new sensations, thoughts and intuitions and new identities.” (Garneau, 2018, p. 20).

It was within this context of contemporary Indigenous art that these three exhibitions were located and conceptualised. Our initial time together as a curatorium required discussing and meditating our relationality to one another as Aboriginal, Moana and Native people who lived across Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. Indigenous, within this context, offered a way to frame our relationships to each other outside of the *colonial imaginary* and the settler-colonial connections that have been instrumental in building Indigenous art relationships across Australia, New Zealand and Canada specifically.<sup>62</sup> At that moment it felt like a political shift that was necessary for the project to achieve a sense of *creative sovereignty* or *sovereign display territories* as described by Eshrāghi (2018).

### The Indigenous Turn in Moana Art

Each of the artists and curators in the exhibition had different relations to home territories, but perhaps the most relevant position to discuss within this thesis is the place of the Moana artists who lived in diaspora. This throws up an interesting question: What place do Moana artists and curators in diaspora play in this Indigenous art world? I ask that because Moana diaspora artists and curators are typically excluded from trans-Indigenous art exchanges between Australia, New Zealand and Canada, which prioritise those Indigenous to the three aforementioned countries. While I agree with that prioritisation, this project, which received government funding from each of those three nations, sat outside of any formalised trans-Indigenous partnership. Therefore, our project added another layer, one that asked about the place those who are Indigenous but not Indigenous to the place they live have within this Indigenous art

discourse. Throughout the exhibition process, while the project as a whole was situated within this notion of Indigeneity, the specific question of whether those in the diaspora identified as Indigenous was raised many times by artists who felt the characteristics of their Indigeneity were different to the First Nations artists. The questions circulated around whether Moana diasporic experiences were comparative to First Nations people across New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States. There was a caution about Moana diasporic artists calling themselves Indigenous, as there was a consciousness about not wanting to conflate different experiences with colonisation as being universal. While throughout the exhibitions we maintained an interrogation of terms and languaging, I would suggest that this question was never resolved.

This point raises a further question for contemporary Moana art, which is when did the Indigenous turn happen? By that question I mean, when did Moana art stop being siloed as only ‘Pacific art’ and find its place within the Indigenous art category? I discussed with co-curator Léuli Eshrāghi in our *talanoa* together, who shared the response of senior Aboriginal curators to their involvement in the Sovereign Words Residency (2018), funded by the Office of Contemporary Art Norway, Artspace Sydney and Australia Council for the Arts. Despite Eshrāghi’s participation being funded by Norway and not taking a spot reserved for an Aboriginal curator by the Australia Council for the Arts, they still received comments like “oh, interesting, now you guys are sitting here with us and suddenly you’re Indigenous”.

Eshrāghi’s initial involvement in the global Indigenous art circuit was on a Visual Digital Arts Residency held by the Banff Centre in 2016, with another Moana Australian artist, Salote Tawale. The residency was hosted by Candice Hopkins and David Garneau, and involved revisiting *Making a Noise!*:

**62.** Since 2015 Creative New Zealand, Australia Council for the Arts and Canada Council for the Arts have run a tri-nation Indigenous curatorial exchange programme, which has resulted in a number of exhibitions, publications and symposia. This

exchange has been well documented in the book *Becoming our Future: Global Indigenous Curatorial Practice* (2020) edited by Julie Nagam, Carly Lane and Megan Tamati-Quennell.

*Aboriginal perspectives on art, art history, critical writing and community*, which was a book of papers from a 2003 conference held at the Banff International Curatorial Institute. *Making a Noise!* included an essay by Jim Vivieaere in which he asked a similar question of the Indigenous turn in Moana art: “Can New Zealand Pacific Islanders speak as ‘Indigenous’ in the New Zealand context?” Acknowledging his sensitivity to the topic, he identifies himself as both an insider and outsider, as someone Indigenous to the South Pacific region but not to Aotearoa (2003, p. 156).

It is curators who perhaps have the most active role in contextualising and conceptualising an artist’s work in place. An argument could be made that through the increasing opportunities for Moana curators in these Indigenous exchanges, as well as global opportunities for Moana curators more broadly, more artists of the Moana diaspora have found their place in the Indigenous art discourse. As a member of a creative community predicated on kinship networks, my personal opting into the Indigenous arts category came through those who already had relationships with the community, such as Eshrāghi. The increasing global presence of contemporary Moana art, as well as the technological advances that allow contemporary Moana art to travel virtually, has offered contemporary Moana art other frameworks of relationality. The cosmopolitan character of Moana life, and by extension Moana art, requires the reproduction of Moana identities with the groups of people whom they share space with. Arguably, this is part of the Indigenous turn of contemporary Moana art.

### Visits, Commutes and Layovers

For the curatorium, working together for the first time required finding a common ground of relating that was global but also predicated on an ethic of care essential in both curatorial work<sup>63</sup> and *trans-Indigenous relations* (Allen, 2012). This ethic was developed largely

through the curatorial methodology of visiting, which described both our primary activity as a collective and a consideration for the way in which visiting informs a mode of working together (Biscarra Dilley et al., 2019, p. 13). This notion of visiting also acknowledged previous meetings and collaborations that had occurred within the curatorium in places like Auckland, Brisbane, Banff, Victoria and Whitehorse, which involved “meeting as visitors in territories that often weren’t our own; travelling for conferences, exhibitions, residencies and other manner of art world activities” (Biscarra Dilley et al., 2019, p. 13). Participating in the global art world highlights cosmopolitanism in each of our artistic careers and, furthermore, how that cosmopolitanism has connected members of the curatorium at various stages and various times.

The notion of visiting meant that we approached each exhibition as an opportunity for exchange across the places where we (the participating artists and Visiting Curators) were from, where we lived and where we were guests. This required bringing our respective sovereignties—as citizens of Indigenous Nations and as artists and cultural workers articulating our own self-determined visions—into dialogue with one another while being respectful of and responsive to the place where the work took place. (Biscarra Dilley et al., 2019, p. 14).

Many of our early conversations considered the experience of coming together as arts workers and the mobility that enables these instances of visiting, which “deeply, and differently, informed our individual senses of self and enabled collective dialogue with other Indigenous people around the world” (Biscarra Dilley et al., 2019, p. 13). These early conversations also acknowledged how mobility and Indigeneity can be framed as being at odds with each other—that to acknowledge one’s *routes* can lead to questions over one’s *roots*. This project accepted the notion of *roots* and *routes* simultaneously being key to Indigenous experience while being experienced in varied ways.

<sup>63</sup>. The oft-cited derivation of the word ‘curation’ is from the Latin ‘cura,’ which means to take care.

Within an art context, it is the cosmopolitan nature that has allowed an Indigenous art scene to develop in the first place. Furthermore, there was a clear acknowledgement that mobility privilege is unevenly experienced across Indigenous peoples, with artists and arts workers holding a unique privilege in this area: a mobility pathway as a result of access to education and resources. Highlighting this mobility, rather than hiding from it, within the exhibition premise was a “conscious counter-action to the colonial control we have endured as First Peoples” (Garneau & Moulton, 2019).

*Commuting* was the initial mode of visiting focused on for the exhibition at the IMA, Brisbane, as it described how the curators were working, and also acknowledged that the exhibition was only possible through these international commutes from our respective places to Brisbane. The exhibition essay reads:

Commuting between centres and edges, between cities and countrysides, and between worlds is increasingly normal—necessary even. A commute or regular journey of some distance to and from one’s workplace is something many of us engage in on a daily basis. A commute as a multidirectional trip not only takes one to work but also leads one home and to places of learning and social/political connection. If we take this as fact, then we understand commuting as comprising two key factors, place and travel. (Carmichael et al., 2018).

Drawing on James Clifford’s notion of *commuting cultures*, commuting offered an affirmative way to think about Indigenous connections to mobility, and Indigeneity as being “articulated, rooted and cosmopolitan” (Clifford, 1997). But, as we argued, this also requires vigilance of the forces driving our understanding of place and movement, such as displacement, diaspora and ecological devastation across various territories. As an exhibition framework, this made room for all contemporary Indigenous

experiences.

Another mode of visiting explored in these exhibitions was that of a layover—a moment of pause, change in direction, delayed arrival, or anticipation of the next movement in the midst of ongoing motion. The notion of a layover felt important for those Moana diasporic artists discussed earlier in this imagining. In particular, as *Layover* was in Auckland and I would be the lead curator on the ground, it offered another chance to consider visiting and Indigeneity from a different perspective. The exhibition suggested that “for Indigenous peoples not at home, layovers can mark the places we settle in for generations at a time, new kinds of neighbourhoods. Maybe they are moments of respite which never end. Or perhaps they represent the ongoing journeying which never quite stops” (Lopesi et al., 2019). The exhibition asked “what a home may look like for cultures in motion” (Lopesi et al., 2019).

*Transits and Returns*, the title for the last exhibition, was the final mode of visiting explored in the project. It was largely conceptualised as the dynamic between being in motion and being in place. Connecting to Garneau’s articulation of the Indigenous category, the artists involved have practices that,

are both rooted in the specificities of their places and cultures of origin and routed via their travels—artistic, embodied and intellectual. These dual forces of situatedness and mobility, working in synergy and in tension with one another, come to shape highly specific and globally interconnected dialogues on Indigeneity (Biscarra Dilley et al., 2019, p. 29).

This ongoing interrogation of visiting sought to reveal the way in which physical, conceptual and virtual movements could hold the capacity to reimagine the expansiveness of worlds beyond colonial borders. The intention was that this conceptual framework would give the artists in the exhibition *creative sovereignty* to determine their own articulations of the world. For Garneau, Indigenous people “are sovereign by virtue of our motion,” meaning that we can understand



moving, visiting, migrating as exercises of autonomy (Garneau & Moulton, 2019, pp. 23–24). The artworks in the exhibition overlapped and intersected along with points of resonance, specifically the idea of movement, inscribing a range of relationships to place, culture and home. This offered an expansive conceptual and physical space where kinship relations could imagine “ways of living, working, loving and being in the world; and strategies of representation that navigate the fraught space between participation and refusal through critical (dis)engagement and/or future-oriented imaginings” (Biscarra Dilley et al., 2019, p. 30).

### Great Ocean and Moana Geographies

Working on this exhibition it became clear that for us to have *creative sovereignty* as a globally located group, we needed to understand our global geography through a relational framework predicated on our understanding of kinship systems rather than through the *colonial imaginary* and its key modes of control—cartography and the nation state. This follows the work of social geographers who argue that there are many ways of understanding spatiality and that the spatial understanding of the world that dominates today is just one understanding of space, as discussed in the following chapter. In this vein, conquest itself “is a geography and spatiality that humans are still trying to refashion and make work” (King, 2019, p. 46).

The Indigenous framework already signals a refusal to engage in the *colonial imaginary*, yet the project also engaged in an exercise of world building by conceptualising what an alternative spatial geography for the project could be. The project took heed of Anishinaabe scholar Lawrence Gross, who suggests that the task of building new worlds that are located in knowledge of the past while being attentive to our complicated present(s) is challenging yet gratifying (2014). The question of how as curators we could

enable the artists to have *creative sovereignty* was of great concern: how could we prioritise mutual care, shared responsibilities and strong relationships as forming a social geography outside of colonial frameworks?

With the emphasis on notions of motion and visiting required for the project, we considered our experiences of crossing water, whether by boat, plane or internet, as an act brought about from this desire to work together. We spent time together in ways that would be otherwise impossible without crossing the ocean space. So we worked with the notion of the *Great Ocean* as a potential shared space where we could “soften the waters that join us together” (Biscarra Dilley et al., 2019, p. 16). The *Great Ocean* in this sense can be understood as an example of *Vā Moana*<sup>64</sup>—a social world that is relational, *rooted* and *routed*, physical and digital all at once. *Vā Moana* is a way of describing the web of relations that make up the social world of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. The *Great Ocean* similarly made up the social world of these exhibition projects and all those involved.

The *Great Ocean* parallels the framing of Moana scholars who articulate the Pacific Ocean or the Moana as a non-colonial space of connection for Indigenous peoples. Premised on both *deep time* and contemporary forms of movement—migrations, visits home through air travel, remittances and extended communities online—re-conceptualisations of the ocean offer culturally informed and historically grounded responses to modernity and globalisation. This moves away from the colonial understanding of the ocean as dividing islands in the Moana and instead encompasses it as a mode of connection that is part of an Indigenous Moana spatiality.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Oceania as developed by Mauaiva Albert Wendt and Epeli Hau'ofa was seminal in the demonumentalising of the *colonial imaginary* over the Moana. Wendt and Hau'ofa

**64.** *Vā Moana* as a relational social world is conceptualised in more detail in the following chapter.

advocated for a shift in mentality from a disparate and dislocated Pacific to an expansive and interconnected network of Oceania (Wendt, 1976; Hau'ofa, 1994, 1998). Their work in tandem—and as has been developed by other Moana scholars (Banivanua Mar, 2016; Teaiwa, 1999; Diaz, 2019)—is based on a pre-colonial understanding of the region's expansiveness. Inherently decolonial while also actively involved in a type of world building, *Oceania* as an example of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* highlights how an *imaginary* simultaneously critiques a *colonial imaginary* while imagining something new.

Hau'ofa, in particular, traced back to the pre-colonial ways in which the region functioned, informing readers that it was a region in which peoples moved, migrated, married and traded across the ocean (1994). This economic and social world relied on a relational world spanning many seas, not just the single islands Moana people were thought to be confined to. A collective understanding of Oceania, Hau'ofa believes, “would free us of externally generated definitions of our past, present and future” (1998). This would emphasise our relational responsibility to each other, helping “us to act together for the advancement of our collective interests, including the protection of the ocean for the general good” (1998). This identity, he continues, “grounded in something as vast as the sea should exercise our minds and rekindle in us the spirit that sent our ancestors to explore the oceanic unknown and make it their home, our home” (1998).

Drawing on these earlier conceptualisations, the *Great Ocean* was a form of Indigenous interconnectivity that not only connects us spatially but also connects us temporally to ancestors and to futures. This shift in seeing Indigenous people as mobile, and not locked on islands by the ocean, offers a more affirmative perception of Indigenous social worlds. Moulton writes that we “travel because we can, because it opens our minds, and we connect with our fellow First Peoples” (Garneau & Moulton, 2019, p. 21). This notion was established across all of the exhibition projects, which saw motion as something to be reclaimed and not in

opposition to one's Indigenous identity.

Seeing motion and Indigeneity as simultaneous was further established in the notion of the *Great Ocean*. Implicit in this notion is a sense that we are also able to hold on to our unique cultural specificity within the wider framework, or mentioned earlier the uniqueness of our waters which also meet together. As Moulton acknowledges, “There is immense power in our voices travelling as a collective. Our work comes together as the global Indigenous and makes space where we have been either absent or directed by a Western colonial framework. At the same time, each artwork talks specifically to a cultural context unlike the others” (Garneau & Moulton, 2019, p. 24). Having a larger conceptual framework while not smoothing over the specificities within draws on the literature discussed throughout this thesis on *roots* and *routes*, and also references the ideas of Vicente Diaz, who writes about the need for Moana scholars to not get caught up in homogenising notions of the ocean but to also hold on to the uniqueness of seas (2019). As Diaz argues, it was the specific knowledge of each sea within an ocean that enabled voyagers to travel (2019).

More recently, Moana scholars (Māhina, 1999a, 1999b; Mallon et al., 2012; Eshrāghi, 2019; Ka'ili, 2017; Lopesi, 2018c; Hernandez, 2019) have further developed the concept of Oceania by exploring the use of the term ‘Moana’ (and its variations ‘Moanan’ and ‘Moananui’). As Gordon-Smith writes on these phrases, they continue to “use the ocean as a defining geographical parameter” while notably pulling “descriptors used for the sea from a number of indigenous cultures: in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, the ocean is Ka Moananuiākea; in Aotearoa Māori the phrase is Te Moananui a Kiwa and in Rarotonga Māori the sea is referred to as Moananuiakiva” (2015, para. 11). As she asserts, this then “offers a balance between the regional whole and the culturally specific” (2015, para. 14).





**Figure 17.** Welcome to country for The commute (2018). Institute of Modern Art Brisbane, Brisbane, Australia. <https://ima.org.au/exhibitions/the-commute/>

**Figure 16.** Carmichael, F., Biscarra Dilley, S., Eshraghi, L., Hogue, T., & Lopesi, L. (2018). The commute [Exhibition]. Institute of Modern Art Brisbane, Brisbane, Australia. <https://ima.org.au/exhibitions/the-commute/>



## Placing Moana Art in the Ocean

Oceania as a sea of islands (Hau'ofa, 1994), and endless ocean metaphors that followed, is arguably one of the longest enduring *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. The ocean and its reconfigurations have been a recurring conceptual framework for Moana contemporary art since its foray into the contemporary art gallery infrastructure. The seminal exhibition *Bottled Ocean* (1994), curated by Jim Vivieaere and discussed in *Imagining 1*, is an early example of how Moana curators used the conceptual frame of the ocean for subversive means within the white cube.

The 2012 publication *Art in Oceania: A New History* drew from Hau'ofa's Oceania to articulate a history of Moana art. The seminal text sought to address “a failure to place the arts of Oceania within

their historical context” (Brunt et al., 2012, p. 12).

Drawing on Hau'ofa's expansive Oceania, the book looks at Moana art forms beyond the “isolated local aesthetics” and instead through “histories that were entangled in many ways before, during and after the colonial periods” (Brunt et al., 2012, p. 23).

Te Papa's long-term exhibition *Tangata o le Moana: The story of Pacific people in New Zealand* uses this phrase ‘people of the ocean’ as a way to describe Pacific people. The exhibition asks, “Aotearoa is a Pacific place in location and history. But do New Zealanders consider themselves Pacific Islanders? Do you?” (Te Papa Tongarewa, n.d.). This is a significant proposition for the national museum. Similarly, *Seeing Moana Oceania* at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (2 June 2018 to 13 September 2020) was a rehang of the gallery's collection and long-term New Zealand



**Figure 18.** Hogue, T., Carmichael, F., Biscarra Dilley, S., Eshraghi, L., & Lopesi, L. (2019–2020). *Transits and returns* [Exhibition]. Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada. <https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/exhibitions/transits-and-returns>



**Figure 19.** Hogue, T., Carmichael, F., Biscarra Dilley, S., Eshraghi, L., & Lopesi, L. (2019–2020). *Transits and returns* [Exhibition]. Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada. <https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/exhibitions/transits-and-returns>

exhibitions. Picking up on the work done by Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai, Nigel Borrell and Ron Brownson, two of the gallery's curators, created a show which "empowers and privileges Indigenous perspectives, which are strongly connected to Aotearoa and share roots with the wider Moana Oceania" (Auckland Art Gallery, n.d.). This exhibition marked an important decolonial shift to the way in which the gallery had previously categorised these gallery spaces and rather focused on presenting "works by artists who affirm their diverse Moana Oceania cultures within contemporary art practice" (Auckland Art Gallery, n.d.).

*Oceania* at the Royal Academy of Arts (29 September to 10 December 2018) is a significant and recent example of the use of oceanic conceptualisations. Curated by Peter Brunt and Nicholas Thomas, the exhibition arguably built on the conceptualisations in their seminal text *Art in Oceania: A New History*. *Oceania* included contemporary artworks (namely by Moana and Māori artists in Australia and Aotearoa) alongside ancestors and ancestral belongings. The exhibition asked if the exhibition houses of Royal Academy of Arts and the musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, where the exhibition toured too after London, "which are indeed caretakers in trust of the cultural treasures they hold, decolonise themselves, and what would that decolonisation look like? Can they go to the ocean, the moana, the water?" (Brunt & Thomas, 2018, p. 34).

The exhibition was a continuation of the Royal Academy of Arts' previous exhibitions exploring world cultures, which included *Africa: The Art of a Continent* (1995), *Aztecs* (2002), *Turks: A Journey of a Thousand Years* (2005), *China: The Three Emperors, 1662–1795* (2005), *Byzantium 330–1453* (2008) and *Bronze* (2012). Placing *Oceania* in this history of exhibition-making, as well in the 250 commemorations of Cook's Pacific voyages, offered a particular function for the exhibition. Oceanic spatial understandings in this sense were interventions into the *colonial imaginary*, while perhaps also being co-opted within these

commemorations of the *colonial imaginary*.

While Moana scholars have been pushing this framework, New Zealand arts' place in the Pacific has been more complicated. The sense of place shifted with the assertion of the Asia-Pacific or Pacific Rim framework, which swept through New Zealand's contemporary art in the 1990s. This moment in time, which came off the back of the Māori renaissance, ushered in a new way to contextualise Moana experience and art as well as the new political concerns of a post-colonial nature.

The geopolitical region of the Asia-Pacific placed the Moana geographically within the Pacific Ocean, yet still allowed the Moana to connect internationally to art centres in Asia as well as America's West Coast. The geopolitical space was a framework for international relations. In art, however, the rise of the Asia-Pacific arguably came through the establishment of the *Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art* in 1993. The Australian Prime Minister at the time, Paul Keating, was adamant that Australia see itself as part of Asia, because of the way that, according to Keating, Australia's future would be linked to Asia rather than Europe (Brunt et al., 2012, p. 416). The exhibition today is held between Queensland Art Gallery and the Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, and is highly regarded as one of the premier exhibitions in the region.

The phrase Asia-Pacific or Pacific Rim acknowledges the Pacific location of New Zealand while also holding desperately on to an international framework. This duality was important in contemporary New Zealand art as the legacy of the 'backwater' mentality has been long-standing. Perpetuated by New Zealand's mid-century artists, this mentality was the belief that to get art and to get good at it, you had to leave New Zealand. However, over the past five years, non-Moana curators have been framing contemporary art more broadly within oceanic concepts. The co-option of Moana spatial understandings of the ocean by curators and institutions, particularly in Aotearoa, is an interesting shift, in light of the attempted decolonial turn in the national art discourse a few years ago.



In Aotearoa, we have seen this non-Moana co-option of oceanic metaphors. London-based critic and scholar Erika Balsom utilised the ocean to write *An Oceanic Feeling: Cinema and the Sea* while on residency at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery / Len Lye Centre in Taranaki (2018a). Curator Gabriela Salgado's exhibition *Moana Don't Cry* (2019) approached the ocean "from a number of angles" including Indigenous epistemological understandings of the ocean, and climate change (Lopesi, 2019b). As I wrote in my review of *Moana Don't Cry* at the time, scholars have been critical of expansive takes on the ocean, as it "has, unleashed a tidal wave of expansive thinking through abstracted or improperly scaled or just plain tokenized ideas of Oceans..." (Lopesi, 2019b). Teresia Teaiwa (2001) writes that from the edge of the ocean "you can take what you want from the islands," leaving what you don't want behind, implying that those who are not in and/or of the islands get to cherry-pick the parts they want, leaving everything else behind. While these critiques are geared at Moana scholars and thinkers themselves, they offer a helpful way to think through this non-Moana co-option as well (which is perhaps even more dangerous as it is a level further removed). I would suggest that curatorial uses of Moana spatial understandings can result in curatorial exercises that are detached from deeper ancestral and cosmological understandings of the Moana gleaned from the genealogical relationship of being Indigenous to the Moana.

## Conclusion

This *imagining* has traced the curatorial premise of three exhibitions, *The Commute* at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane; *Layover* at Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland; and *Transits and Returns* at Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, curated by the Visiting Curators between 2018 and 2019. Conscious of the dominant Western ideas found in contemporary art, the Visiting Curators, an international group collaborating for the first time, developed their own curatorial

methodology predicated on notions of *visiting* and *motion*, as a way to sit outside of colonial modes of relationality. This prioritisation of Indigenous ways of knowing and being cemented these projects within the category of Indigenous art and its political discourse. The Visiting Curators described the space of the exhibition—a global kinship network reliant on modes of international travel and visiting, physical, conceptual and virtual—as the *Great Ocean*. The conceptualisation drew on a canon of work by Moana scholars reclaiming Indigenous spatial understandings. The required *imaginary* for this type of conceptualising outside of the *colonial imaginary* enables a form of *creative sovereignty* in which curators and artists can stand strong in their *mau*, imagining new worlds in relation to each other.

# Fa'amaumauga

Thursday, 19 November 2020

Over the summer of 2017, I was awarded a summer research grant to complete a literature review for the Vā Moana – Pacific Spaces research cluster (then named Pacific Spaces) at AUT, on uses of vā from the past 10 years across disciplines, and across the region. Before this point, I had actively avoided anything to do with the notion of vā. Partly because I didn't understand what vā was. I mean I knew it was the “space between,” as artists, curators and academics had told me, but I didn't know know. There is something particularly uncomfortable when cultural concepts are taught back to you through the likes of art discourse, with its particular kind of smug intellectualism, quests for authenticity and unique vernacular. Being introduced to vā in contemporary art forced me to associate it with a kind of cringe. The space between what? I always asked myself, eventually confiding in a friend that I didn't understand what the hell people were talking about, what the heck is vā?

I was living with Mum and Dad while I was doing the literature review. One morning Dad asked what I was working on.

“I'm doing a literature review on the uses of vā over the last 10 years in academia.”

With a confused face, he asked me “What do you mean by vā?”

I felt even more confused than his face looked. I didn't understand why someone fluent in gagana Sāmoa would be asking what vā meant. (I mean I didn't know, so how was I going to help him.) I quoted Albert Wendt's “unity-that-is-all” and still he looked confused. “Like the space between.”

“Between what though?”

“You know like teu le vā.”

“Yea I know what teu le vā means, but you can't just have vā on its own, it's a part of

something. It connects what is on either side.”

That exchange reinforced my desire to keep avoiding the concept vā. I still asked myself, What the heck is vā? I read the literature and understood it in that sense. I understood how various scholars and artists had articulated and developed the concept, but it felt abstract. A concept that felt flattened, stripped of life, and a concept from which I felt disassociated.

I eventually got it, but only when my Papa died in late 2019, two years after my literature review. His death was unexpected and I never did make it to see him one last time. I arrived at the hospital, my kids in my arms and his lifeless body still with machines everywhere. The staff smiled as we entered, but kept their eyes downcast. We had that night with him in the hospital to cry, to hold each other. As we waited for my uncle (his youngest son) to fly in from Christchurch and my aunty (my Papa's closest sister) to fly in from Wellington, we were moved into another room; I guess a room they often filled with dead bodies and grieving families. In the days following, we all assumed our roles, suited up the way Sāmoans know how, ie lavalava around our waists, and maintained our relationships with each other. Mum's kitchen became Aunty Foga's kitchen and we absorbed her fury—a mix of stress and grief; we bowed as the Pastor walked in, and scuttled around putting plates together to be perfectly timed for when he left; we served ipu ti highest to lowest ranking, and when only we were alone we laughed and cried. We all held different relationships to each other and acted according to the vā, to tend to the space between.

Since then I see vā everywhere. I realise I always knew what it was. It's the way you adjust your behaviour depending on who comes into the room; the way you respect elders; the way you care for your relationships with family, friends, colleagues; it's that

*feeling when a relationship is bad; it's how all of that impacts how you behave. I hold on to that memory of my dad questioning what I was talking about because it reminds me how abstract cultural concepts can appear to said communities when they are plucked from spaces where they just exist and inserted into spaces such as the university or contemporary art, where they become something we describe and theorise. But it also reminds me of my own shifting relationship to the concept of vā over time.*

*In one of the cluster's reading groups, Albert described vā as if we were all holding strings of a harp or a guitar, and the ends of the strings had to be held at the right tension for the music to be made. If one string was too loose or too tight the harmony of the sound would be off. And those strings between people are vā relations. But sometimes I wonder, what about those who aren't even holding strings, those people who haven't even been invited to the circle in the first place? Can we really talk about vā when there are already so many people who are excluded—is the vā already soli-ed, or destroyed? I guess, specifically, I'm thinking about our community members whom we render invisible.*

*I wonder, too, what if someone drops the other end of the string without you actually realising? Or gives it a bit too much slack, or a bit too much tension? Vā within a fixed kinship structure forces you to tend to those relationships because the very structure is fixed—the relationships aren't optional but rather are part of an existing structure. In a way, you don't have to choose to not tend to them, even if the relationship is bad it's not going anywhere. But how does it work within an arts community, where people can choose to come in and out of relation with each other as they please?*

# Chapter 5.

## Vā Moana

### 5.1 Introduction

Global communities have been drawn into forms of interdependence, with histories of connection that are fraught with unequal outcomes (Ballantyne & Paterson, 2020, p. 1). Maile Arvin writes that to regenerate and remap the Moana requires paying “critical attention to regional and racial boundaries colonialism imposes, and acting on and renewing the ancestral and contemporary responsibilities and solidarities forged between Indigenous Pacific peoples, so that our struggles for decolonization are never made in isolation” (2019, p. 234). Thus, accepting cosmopolitanism requires working out new ways to move forward together. Reimagining Moana experience as being cosmopolitan predicated on *roots* and *routes* and a relational ethic toward cohabitation, this thesis argues, places the *Moana Cosmopolitan* in a relational social world that exists beyond national boundaries and transnational connections. But what actually is that social world? Building on the cosmopolitanism discussed in Chapter 4, this chapter discusses the social world of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* as *Vā Moana*.

Using the Sāmoan of concept *vā* (Wendt, 1996; Airini et al., 2010; Anae, 2010, 2016, 2019; Refiti, 2014; Tuagalu, 2008) as a relational concept of space and the regional descriptor of Moana, I suggest *Vā Moana* can be a way of understanding the complex webs of the relational social world of a cosmopolitan Moana people. *Vā Moana*, then, is a geographic space that is relational, *rooted* and *routed*, physical and digital

all at once. This is significant because these webs and the *vā relations* formed within them mean that *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* are formed in relation to homelands, the diasporic home, other Moana people, global Indigenous communities and global communities of colour. Léuli Eshrāghi acknowledges this, commenting in *talanoa* that “a Moana imaginary is linked to the network that we unconsciously or consciously interact with and are a product of.”

Since Albert Wendt’s seminal 1996 text ‘Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body,’ *vā* has been used conceptually by Moana scholars across the fields of education, health, policy and contemporary art. Its wide and sustained use evidences the affinity many scholars feel toward *vā* and its unique ability to articulate the relational element of Indigenous Moana ontologies.

Within the Sāmoan language, *vā*, which describes the relations or relationships between two things or people, is a prefix that attaches to a variety of other words, shifting the relation and relationship between the people, places and things it describes. For example, *vāapiapi* describes a narrow interval between two things, such as a path; *vāfealoa’i* describes a kind of expected social etiquette; *vālatalata* describes a closeness between things. Therefore, *vā* as a foundational way of understanding relations and relationships is found deeply embedded in Sāmoan language and culture. While there are many ways of understanding this concept, in this thesis I focus primarily on the concept’s diasporic formulations in academia and contemporary art. This is a distinction

that is significant to note, to avoid the assumption that everyone's interpretations and experiences with *vā* are the same, and to be clear about the localised way in which place shifts the thinking around *vā*. As Refiti contends, in diaspora it is the concepts that remain and provide a bedrock for Moana lives (2012, p. 12). *Vā* offers a way to articulate relational ways of being in Western contexts, in which the sense of relating to each other is dominated by Western norms of interpersonal connection and relation. *Vā*, however, in its home island context just simply exists without the need to deliberately acknowledge and describe it, because it is already present and understood by those within that social world.

This chapter begins with a literature review of *vā*, focusing on the particular facet of *relational ethics* (Anae, 2016, 2019). The sustained use of *vā* and presence within Moana scholarship points to its unique ability to describe the intangible relational element of Moana life, which today spans geographical and virtual distance. This can be paired with the work of social geographers (Louis, 2017; Chang, 2017; Fermantez, 2012; McKittrick & Woods, 2007; King 2019) who actively contend with the *colonial imaginary* in relation to the *social institution*—to use Castoriadis' term—of cartography. Scholars working in this field assert Indigenous and other local spatial understandings to demonstrate the ways in which cartography is a tool of the *colonial imaginary*, meaning that it is only one way amongst many other ways of understanding space. Building on the Indigenous intervention into social geography and pairing it with *vā relations*, the final section articulates *Vā Moana* as a Moana social world. *Vā Moana*, as it is argued, is a relational and spatial framework embedded in Indigenous knowledge through which we can conceptualise a Moana relational geography.

The sentiments made by artists during our *talanoa* delineate a particular use of *vā* in this thesis. *Vā* here is not an optical material for making art, but rather an ancestral, genealogical and largely intangible relational ethic that influences the way in which a

*digital native* generation of *Moana Cosmopolitan* artists connects to each other, as well as other groups more broadly. As Ioana Gordon-Smith shared, if we take a relational ethic or *vā relations* to be something implied then, admittedly, there is a strangeness when we are talking about *vā* as an optical thing. However, for *Moana Cosmopolitans* relationality is the deterministic factor in one's social world, and therefore their art.

## 5.2 *Vā* Relations

### 5.2.1 *Vā* as Relational Ethic

In 1996, Albert Wendt wrote what is largely considered the first scholarly use and definition of *vā* generally defined as the space between. In that essay, 'Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body,' Wendt likened the survival of *tatau*, from "the onslaught of missionary condemnation and colonialism," to the history and development of postcolonial literature. According to Wendt:

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 things. The meanings change as the relationships/the contexts change. (We knew a little about semiotics before Saussure came along!) A well-kown [sic] Samoan expression is 'ia 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. (1996, para. 15.)

Through Wendt's interpretation of *vā* as describing the mode of relation between things, he acknowledges the phrase 'ia teu le vā' as being the process of caring for the *vā* or relationships. Pacific studies scholar Misatauveve Melani Anae has since developed the phrase *teu le vā* as a research



methodology and cultural reference that draws together *vā* tapuia (sacred relationships) and genealogy to focus on the centrality of reciprocal relations (2010, 2016, 2019). By describing the full phrase *teu le vā* and not just *vā* as the cultural reference, Anae highlights the active process of tidying up the “social and sacred space that separates and unites” (Anae, 2010, p. 224). Tēvita O. Ka’ili critically examines the comparable Tongan concept of *tauhi vā*, in which, like ‘teu,’ ‘tauhi’ describes the action of caring, tending or nurturing that space between (2005). For Ka’ili, *tauhi vā* is “the Tongan value and practice of keeping good relations with kin and friends. It is also thought of as a commitment to sustain harmonious social relations with kin and kin-like members. The practice of maintaining such connections in space requires continuous reinforcement and reciprocity” (2005, p. 92).

The underlying notion of *vā* is its spiritual underpinnings. Within particular relationships, tapu and *sā* exist as a way to define the mode of relationality between people (Tamasese et al., 2005, p. 303). This shares similarities with Tui Atua’s writings on harmonies and boundaries. He writes that the Sāmoan social world relies on harmonies and *tuao’i*, or boundaries, that hold the balance of peace (2018, p. 104). Social *tuao’i* can be likened to land boundaries, which are dependent on practices of nurturing *vā* relations as sanctioned by the Sāmoan social world (Tuagalu, 2008). I’uogafa Tuagalu notes that *vā* and *tuao’i* do get used interchangeably; however, “Tui Atua notes that the difference between the two, is one of perspective: one talks about the *va* between themselves and others. However, one (or a third party) observes and comments on the *tuao’i* between other people” (Tuagalu, 2008, p. 114). This *vā* is not fixed but rather is a malleable, negotiated space in which one’s specific position becomes inherently important. This includes the importance one puts on reciprocal relationships; if one views all reciprocal relationships as sacred, then it will be tended to more closely (Anae, 2010, p. 224).

Sāmoans define themselves in relation to their

social worlds, meaning that the Sāmoan concept of self only has meaning in relationship or interaction with others, not as an individual (Tuagalu, 2008). Refiti writes that “*vā* is the organising principle in which things are given their place and relations are forged between people, as well as between people and objects, and space and territory” (2014, p. 18). Refiti continues, stating that it is a principle of interdependence in which one is meaningless without the other (p. 18). This relational ethic is an essential character of Sāmoan life as the Sāmoan social world is relational. From an early age, children come to understand and model the relationships that make up the Sāmoan social world. This is a world where “gerontocracy, kinship, respect, reciprocity, order, power and authority are embodied in social life” (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2010, p. 13). This social world relies on harmonies that hold the balance of peace (Efi, 2018, p. 104). Thus, Sāmoans understand themselves as social, cultural, political and spiritual beings with a collective and reciprocal life (Efi, 2018, p. 109).

These harmonies are what I would describe through the concept of *vā relations*. *Vā relations* within Sāmoan or Moana settings, as well as social worlds more broadly, create a relational ethic or *Pacific Relational Ethics* (PRE) (Anae, 2019; Iosefo, 2019). PRE draws from normative ethical principles while additionally drawing on the Indigenous Moana ethical codes embedded in *vā*. Specifically, PRE relies on *teu le vā* for the way in which it implies a commitment to ethical behaviour that one “must follow to correct the relationship and/or the relational arrangement if a breach of the tapu in the *va* has occurred” (Anae, 2019, p. 11). This is what Anae calls putting *a’ano* or flesh on the bones in a way that “recognises and demands respect, attentiveness and responsiveness to our commitments to each other in the humanity of relationships” (2016, p. 118). Where Anae’s PRE and *teu le vā* are specific to research ethics, I suggest these can be employed as ways in which to be in the world more broadly.

### 5.2.2 Relational Ethics in the Digital Vā

If we come to understand that *vā* can be used as a way to describe the social world of Moana people in diaspora as experienced through their relationships with each other and with their homelands, then perhaps new digital mobilities mean that this social world also extends to the online environment, as evidenced in the expanding literature on the digitisation of *vā* (Vaka'uta, 2012; Tielu, 2016; Simati-Kumar, 2016; Po'e, 2017; Muliaumaseali'i, 2017; Damm, 2020; Enari & Matapo, 2020; Refiti et al., 2021; Thomsen et al., 2021). Considering Moana internet use through the concept of *vā* highlights the bend in the literature that suggests Moana internet use is focused on modes of connectivity that obliterate distance and enable kinships to be maintained (Salesa, 2017; Lopesi, 2018c). This is confirmed by Po'e, who found that “the practice of *teu le va* is a prime example of how Samoans are using Facebook as a tool to continue pre-existing Samoan behaviours” (2017, p. 94). In a sense, Moana internet use then extends the Moana social world to encompass a *digital vā*, a paradigm that includes “Earth, ocean, heavens, cyberspace” (Damm, 2020, p. 20). In a recent study on the social world of Tongan mothers and daughters in Melbourne, Anthropologist Makiko Nishitani included communication technologies as a part of the Tongan social field (2020). For Nishitani, the social field is visualised as “superimposed layers of tracing paper that depict different kinds of kin and kin-like relationships, with one sheet each, for example, for kinship, church, and friends lists on social media” (2020, p. 18).

Thomsen et al. looked at the way Twitter can be understood as *digital vā* specific to a group of emerging Moana researchers in New Zealand and the United States (in press). They found that Twitter acted as a kind of public commons in which Moana users connected because of shared experiences and subsequently built communities both online and in their professional lives, which had material and tangible impacts *away from keyboard* (Jurgenson,

2011). Thus, “while community was being built on shared genealogical and intellectual connections, experiences of marginality also mattered, including an acknowledgement of colonisation, which facilitated the urgency to establish and *teu* or *tauhi* relationships in the digital *vā*” (Thomsen et al., in press). The relational ethic was apparent through the reciprocal nature of the relationships built in the *digital vā*.

While the internet as a technology of American industrialisation and militarisation can be considered a *double-edged sword* for Moana peoples (Lopesi, 2018) as it reproduces the colonial system and structures already present in the world online (Risam, 2018), Moana people are able to find ways to operate online with relational ethics. In a 2018 report by the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, *Pacific Aotearoa Lalaga Fou*, Moana communities “commented on the value of culture in an increasingly globalised world” (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, p. 17). Participants suggested that “while elements of globalisation sometimes undermine cultural diversity, the modern world provides opportunities to invest in culture as an asset that benefits the communities to whom it belongs” (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2018, p. 17). The importance of the online community feels especially pertinent with the grounding of physical travel in light of Covid-19; the digital *vā* has received renewed focus as the role of the internet and social media spaces has gained importance (Enari & Matapo, 2020; Refiti et al., 2021). Léuli Eshrāghi, in our *talanoa*, emphasises the importance of the online as well, commenting that access to homelands is restricted to the online environment for the indefinite future, with not much clarity around when that might change.

### 5.2.3 Relational Ethics in the Global Vā

Relational ethics understood through the spiritual and genealogical relations of *vā tapuia* extend to demonstrate an inherent sense of mobility. Customarily, in the village setting, when groups of people went away a *tāpua'iga* would be put in place:

led by elders and chiefs, a period of worship would be undertaken until that group returned (Tofaeono, 2000, p. 30). On return, the travelling party would say “Malo le tapua’i,” meaning “Thank you for your prayers,” which are seen as having been essential to the successful outcome of the journey. Therefore, those remaining and those travelling enter into a kind of *magical contact* (Tuagalu, 2008, p. 117) with each other across geographical distance. In a contemporary setting, this kind of acknowledgement is perhaps most pronounced by the saying “Malo le faauli,” which means “Well done on the steering,” and is said by those travelling in a car. The driver then responds, “Malo le tapua’i” (Tofaeono, 2000, p. 30). In this example, we see how *vā* is a relational ethic that is tied to mobility.

Similarly, geographer Sa’iliemanu Lilomaiaava-Doktor demonstrates the way Indigenous notions of travel, or *malaga*, and *vā* are intertwined (2009, p. 1). For Lilomaiaava-Doktor, *vā* as a social space “engages the power within and between spaces and places arrayed in opposition to each other.” This highlights a cultural understanding of “‘migration’ as a culturally informed, historically grounded response to modernity and globalization” (2009, p. 1). This is echoed by Aanoalii Rowena Fuluifaga’s concept of *Oceanic vā*, which describes “the connection of New Zealand and Sāmoa in terms of distance” (2017, p. 45). The term borrows from Hau’ofa’s Oceania and offers an alternative term to “transnational,” with Fuluifaga’s research focusing more specifically on the relationship between diaspora and homeland, the “negotiated identities” within each of those, and the *vā* as a way of connecting the two (2017, p. 45). Nishitani identifies that the way in which social worlds are created does not match territorial boundaries and sits outside of notions of transnational and local (2020, p. 7). Because of the lack of emphasis placed on relative distance from within Indigenous Moana cultures, Nishitani used *vā* to understand Tongan social worlds (p. 7). Recognised as an ideal understanding of sociality, *vā* gives a way of explaining how Moana social worlds are delineated by kin regardless of their location, rather than by national

boundaries. Thus, the boundaries of *vā* depend on where networks reach (Nishitani, 2020, p. 9).

While Nishitani’s work focuses on social worlds that are built based on kinship and familial relations, the question is raised of how the relational ethic of *vā* plays out in global settings with non-Moana people. In Patrick Thomsen’s research in Korea and the United States, he draws on the *vā* and himself as a Sāmoan relational being to foreground his own position in the *vā* with non-Sāmoans (2019). Thomsen comments, “when ‘interviewing’ participants, I took the active position that considered informants as relational subjects in which I, the researcher self, was also constituted” (2019, p. 5). *Vā* in this setting is like Gerard Delanty’s *critical cosmopolitanism*, which engages in a mutual learning in which everyone is respected and no one culture is prioritised, involving a “critical evaluation whereby the interacting cultures undergo transformation and approach a fusion of horizons” (2012, p. 253).

The emphasis on *vā* as relational ethics within this research stems from the *talanoa* with artists, who acknowledged that their cosmopolitanism placed them in relation to Indigenous, Black and other communities of colour in Aotearoa and around the globe. Learning how to mediate these spaces through a relational ethic was a key concern for all the artists. This thinking is discussed further in the following pages.

### 5.3 Relational Geographies, Relational Spatiality

#### 5.3.1 Cultural Geographies and Performances

While at one time it was thought that you could understand a group of people by looking at a culture in a fixed place, more recently this has been challenged in ways that decentre the focus on place. In the context of this research, this has been done by defining Moana life through the idea of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*. This is significant in relation to a *digital native* generation of *Moana cosmopolitans* who are first, second and third generation diaspora, born in a time when cross-border

practices are not limited to the host and home binary of *transnationalism* (Levitt & Waters, 2002; Nishitani, 2020). This shift, in addition to the way in which Moana social worlds de-emphasise the nation state and prioritise *vā relations*, highlights the need for a conceptualisation of Moana social worlds. Epeli Hau'ofa famously criticised this “geographic deterministic view” that focuses on national boundaries, instead asserting the Indigenous Moana perception of relationality that moves beyond today’s national borders (1994, p. 151).

Drawn to the work of social geographers that explore other understandings of space that sit out of colonial cartography—a tool of the *colonial imaginary*, and the basis for dominant spatial understandings—how can prioritising Indigenous Moana understandings of space such as *vā* (and its relational ethic) offer another geographic understanding of the social world of the *Moana Cosmopolitan*? This section reviews the literature on social and racialised geographies to demonstrate the way in which Indigenous ontologies can offer their own cartographic understanding. *Vā* as relational ethic adds to these understandings of space as being multilayered and relational, enabling the use of an ancestral mode of relationality not only amongst Sāmoan and Moana groups but also with global Indigenous and racialised communities. This is of growing importance for the *Moana Cosmopolitan* and their global characteristic of life. Looking at other relational concepts can help to frame regional and global trans-Indigenous relationships encompassed within *Moana Cosmopolitanism*.

Kānaka Maoli geographer Renee Pualani Louis writes that maps are “symbolic abstractions of experienced spatial phenomena that assist in communicating solutions to problems of a relational or spatial nature” (2017, p. 19). Simply put, maps communicate spatial information compiled in a way that reflects the mapmaker’s perception of reality. Maps then become a shorthand for spatial phenomena or spatial processes presented in manageable portions through sociocultural lenses. In conceptualising a Kānaka Hawai’i cartography, Louis reveals a Kānaka

Hawai’i spatial reality built on Indigenous knowledge (2017). This cartography, Louis writes,

is a product of a Kānaka Hawai’i cartographic philosophy that recognizes the life essences and intelligences of all entities and processes; that nurtures intimate connections with these entities and processes, relating to them as familial beings according to standard forms of etiquette; and that cultivates metaphoric associations with each being, classifying them according to their characteristics, roles, and responsibilities (p. 165).

Cartography in Louis’ sense is not about representing space but rather about cartographic practices and performances that recognise forces of nature and other metaphysical elements. This cartographic understanding is based on a “compilation of intimate, interactive, and integrative processes that expresses Kānaka Hawai’i spatial realities through specific perspectives, protocols, and performances” (2017, p. xvii). Through a relational perspective, however, Louis is adamant that Kānaka Hawai’i and Western cartography are not in a binary relationship but are complementary traditions, in which other alternative cartographic traditions also have room for recognition. This bears similarities to Mignolo’s *decolonial option* (2011), used throughout this research, in which multiple theories are rescaled to exist simultaneously and without imposing on each other. Other Kānaka Māoli geographers, such as David A. Chang, have also developed spatial understandings centred on Indigenous knowledge: for Chang, *mele* and *mo’olelo* offer evidence of pre-colonial cartographic understandings for Kānaka Maoli (2017). Chang also contends that a Kānaka geographical understanding was based on a “geography of kinship” (2017, p. 186), in which they understood they had a “genealogical as well as spatial relationship to these and other places in the world—that is, they had ancestors and relations elsewhere in the world” (2017, p. 29). Social geographer Kali Fermanté argues that “re-placement” as the “reconnecting to Hawaiian ways of knowing and

being that are rooted in space” can be a powerful way to reconfigure one’s spatial relationship (2012).<sup>65</sup>

In Black studies, *Black geographies* offer an articulation of social geographies comparable to the aforementioned Kānaka Maoli geographies. The global dispersions of Africans through forced, induced and voluntary migrations have resulted in a global Black population. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods write that Black histories, bodies, and experiences “disrupt and underwrite human geographies” (2007, p. 4). They acknowledge that race and space are often misunderstood as “two themes in social theory that are fundamentally essentialized (race, specifically non-whiteness, is an ongoing signifier for bodily difference; space just is)” (p. 7). Rather than complex analytical systems, McKittrick and Woods suggest that *Black geographies* require “an interdisciplinary understanding of space and place-making that enmeshes, rather than separates, different theoretical trajectories and spatial concerns” (p. 7). McKittrick and Woods develop an argument that describes the way that Black subjects and their geopolitical concerns are essentialised as being elsewhere, which leads to geographies of exclusion that, under the *colonial imaginary*, is the mapping of power relations and those rejected. Thus, the *Black geographies* within these structures chart that

situated knowledge of these communities and their contributions to both real and imagined human geographies are significant political acts and expressions. Black geographies disclose how the racialized production of space is made possible in the explicit demarcations of the spaces of *les damnes* as invisible/forgettable at the same time as the invisible/forgettable is producing space (McKittrick & Woods, 2007, p 4).

Significant in this theorising of *Black*

*geographies* is the claim these geographic concepts are acts of place claiming. These place claims sit outside of dominant modes of conquest, as spatial understandings that are not territorially bound and therefore acknowledge a desire to not further implicate Indigenous peoples. This does not mean that this kind of spatial understanding enables Black people to be free from the *colonial imaginary*, but that it can trouble that spatial understanding and make room for alternative ways of imagining (McKittrick & Woods, 2007, p. 5).

Oceanic metaphors are not restricted to Moana conceptualisations of space; they have also been prominent in Black studies. However, it must be noted that, while Moana conceptions of an ocean spatiality draw on an Indigeneity to the Pacific Ocean, Black ocean conceptualisation emphasises the Atlantic Ocean, or the middle passage of the transatlantic slave trade as a geography of the political histories of the disappeared (McKittrick & Woods, 2007, p .4). This is significant to note, as it is also the intellectual legacy of *roots* and *routes* used in this thesis, which draws from Paul Gilroy’s concept of the *Black Atlantic* (1993). These are two very different oceanic genealogies.<sup>66</sup> Tiffany Lethabo King lists some of this Black oceanic legacy:

Hard to escape, the ocean and its legacy has crested again and again in Hortense Spillers’s notion of the “oceanic,” Édouard Glissant’s “archipelagic thought,” Paul Gilroy’s “Black Atlantic,” Kamau Brathwaite’s “tidalectics,” Antonio Benítez-Rojo’s “rhythm,” and Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley’s “Black Atlantic, queer Atlantic.” (2019, p. 5)

Similar to the use by Moana scholars, the ocean metaphors in this instance refer to a “space of connection, transit, passage and flow”, as well as functioning as a complex seascape and ecology within Black diaspora studies “that ruptures normative

<sup>65</sup>. Social cartography is an interesting growing area. One forthcoming publication worth noting here is Candace Fujikane’s *Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Future: Kanaka Maoli and Critical Settler Cartographies in Hawai’i* (2021).

<sup>66</sup>. The intersection between Pacific and Black oceanic crossovers is an exciting area receiving growing attention.



thought and European discourse” (King, 2019, p. 5). King acknowledges that scholars of Black diaspora studies “have mobilized oceanic and water metaphors to theorise Black life, aesthetics, and decolonial politics as breaks with continental” European discourse (King, 2019, p. 5).

### 5.3.2 Relational Geographies

More recently, and as discussed in *Imagining Four*, Tiffany Lethabo King has offered *shoals* as a way to conceptualise relational space specifically between Black and Native Americans (2019). In oceanography, a shoal is a natural submerged ridge, bank, or bar that consists of, or is covered by, sand or other unconsolidated material. Therefore, a shoal is neither land nor ocean. It pulls together two of the key spatial understandings established in Black and Native thought to reorient relationships to both “land and water as connected systems in a decolonial spatial practice, exposing the historical and ongoing violence that separated the land and the ocean—and, more important, Indigenous people—from the water is of utmost importance” (2019, p. 94). The *shoal* creates ruptures that exceed the symbols and metaphors in current thinking about Blackness and Indigeneity, offering a place where “utterances, performances, and statements of Black abolition and Native decolonization” can meet (2019, p. 43). Thus, a *shoal* is a material, constructed and imagined ecotonal space of becoming. It offers a way to conceptualise *otherwise worlds* of relationality (King et al., 2020). In a similar vein, Chang acknowledges that building relationality between Kānaka and Native Americans can similarly be seen as Indigenous people autonomously remaking their geography, evading the imposed boundaries of colonialism to build and maintain the connections between them (2017, p. 184).

Literary scholar Chadwick Allen’s *trans-Indigeneity* enables a comparative relationality across and between multiple Indigenous peoples (2010). Turning to the prefix *trans-*, Allen is interested in finding language that enables him “not to displace

the necessary, invigorating study of specific traditions and contexts but rather to complement these by augmenting and expanding broader, globally Indigenous fields of inquiry” (2010, p. xiv). Allen offers *trans-Indigeneity* as something that “could propel the growth of a still-emerging field toward still-unexplored possibilities” (2010, p. xv). Diaz suggests *trans-Indigeneity* can help us imagine new ways of being Indigenous (2019). Diaz continues, stating that it enables “wide lateral reach across time and space, albeit in ways that do not lose familiar and signature indigenous belongings and accountabilities to place, to site, and cultural specificity” (2019, p. 2). This enables *Moana Cosmopolitans*, as an example, to be in relationship with other equally deep and moving Indigenous peoples and traditions from elsewhere (Diaz, 2019, p. 3). More recently, scholar Kēhaulani Vaughn has utilised a similar frame of *trans-Indigeneity* to ask similar questions about diasporic Hawaiians’ relationality to Hawaiians in Hawai’i, as well to the Indigenous peoples whose lands they live on in America, looking for ways of being and relating outside of settler-colonial frameworks (2020).

*Shoals* and *trans-Indigeneity* are examples of global spatial and relational worlds in which Indigenous and racialised groups come together through a relational ethic in acts of solidarity that sit outside of settler colonialism. This opens “a world in which many worlds can co-exist” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 463). This can also be understood through the metaphor of seas and oceans. Diaz (2019) draws a connection between *roots* being seas that are particular waves and swells at work individually or in tandem or threesome, shifting winds, cloud coverage, mist and rain conditions that require deep knowledge and an *oceanic literacy* (Ingersoll, 2016). Through baseline knowledge established in familiar seas, good navigators can discern where they are at all points out in the open ocean (Diaz, 2019). By knowing the localities of each leg, good navigators can know into whose homes they have entered and are passing through (Diaz, 2019). There is a political potential, then, that grounding *cosmopolitanism* in the

dynamics of historical and geographic transformations can remake the world's geography in emancipatory ways (Harvey, 2000, p. 560)— political potential that *Moana Cosmopolitanism* is situated as part of.

#### 5.4 Vā Moana: A Relational Geography

Thinking with the aforementioned work of social geographers who actively contend with cartography as an institution of the *colonial imaginary*, it becomes imperative within *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* to also contend with the *colonial imaginary's* cartographic limitations, asserting a cosmopolitan spatial understanding of a Moana social world. The emphasis on relationality in a Moana worldview as expressed through the concept of *vā* demonstrates the way in which relationality plays a key role in determining a Moana social world, over factors like geographical distance and national borders. Thus, *vā* offers a relational and spatial framework embedded in Indigenous knowledge through which we can imagine a Moana relational geography, or what I am calling here *Vā Moana*. Following on from the discussion on the imaginary, an understanding of a Moana social world that is global and relational is vital to understanding *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* and, subsequently, contemporary Moana art. The Moana social world is no longer restricted to just host and home, but rather the whole world. Therefore, cosmopolitan worlds predicated on *vā relations* become the imagination through which *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* are formed. In the following sections, this concept of *Vā Moana* as a Moana social world is summarised, while discussing the new sets of relations within *Vā Moana*, which make its articulation necessary.

*Vā Moana* is a phrase I first heard through the *Vā Moana – Pacific Spaces* research cluster at AUT, of which this PhD project is a part. Initially, the cluster was called Pacific Spaces, but in 2018 *Vā Moana* was added as a translation of Pacific spaces. In this thesis, there is a marked difference in the way I am using those two words together, although *Vā Moana* as a

relational geography is a kind of ocean space. In the following sections, I will discuss the conceptualisation of *Vā Moana* as the social world of the *Moana Cosmopolitan*, and the way *vā* as a relational ethic highlights the web of relations that make up *Moana Cosmopolitanism*. Understanding the social world of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* is imperative to this research, as it influences *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* formed in relation to homelands, the diasporic home, other Moana people, global Indigenous communities and global communities or colour.

##### 5.4.1 Where in the World

*Vā Moana*, or the Moana social world, is predicated on the *vā relations* of *Moana Cosmopolitans*. It is as large or as small as one's own networks. Being based on relationality and not one's physical or geographic location, *Vā Moana*—like *Moana Cosmopolitanism*—is based on the ordinary experience of the world as crossing borders, whether they be physical, figurative or digital (Agier, 2016). For a *digital native* generation of *Moana Cosmopolitans*, and especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, this social world encompassed the online space as well. This is because, as discussed in the previous section, the relational ethic of *vā relations* has been extended to a *digital vā*.

##### 5.4.2 Invisible Way of Working

*Vā relations*, as emphasised throughout this chapter, acknowledge a genealogical and ancestral relational ethic, which provides a way of being in the world. In *talanoa* with the artists, a relational ethic of *vā relations* was a clear part of their mode of working, however invisible it was, often described instead as care, kindness or *manaakitanga*, rather than a visible material for making art. This invisible nature of the relational ethic is important to note here, as it speaks back to the inherent notion of *vā relations* in a Moana ontology, something that just is rather than needing to be explained.

In *talanoa* with the artists, there was an acknowledgement of a feeling of cringe around the notion *vā* as it has been used and articulated within contemporary art. The introduction to *vā* the concept for most of these artists—as well as myself—was either during art school or in the beginnings of their art careers, where it was optical material for making. “I first heard it when I came into art school. I didn’t know what it was,” John Veā tells me. Veā was familiar with *vā* making up a part of words in *lea faka-Tonga* such as *vaha* or *va’a*—*va’a* being a branch of the family, and *vaha* the space between you and someone else. However, learning these phrases within everyday life made the use of the concept *vā* within art jarring, because in its everyday Tongan use it was a part of something bigger, not a thing in and of itself. For Veā, his dislike of the word in contemporary art comes from feeling that the word has been diluted for art’s sake. Veā acknowledges, however, that because of the work done with concepts like *vā* before now “we get to play all these ideas in a different way, would you say more respectful way or more conscious way.” Ioana Gordon-Smith acknowledges similar feelings:

I came across the term *vā* when I was reading Leanne Clayton’s thesis...she was talking about *vā* quite a bit, referencing Albert Wendt and some other writers. And she was talking about pattern, which was really specific as a space of *vā*.

At that time there was this generation who were using the word *vā* quite a bit. And the way that they were using *vā* was almost like it was this space up for grabs, like it was this space of negotiation where you could put anything in it. It was almost as if the *vā* opened out a means of expressing a dual cultural identity or something like that. And I remember coming home and asking my mom what *vā* meant, and she just looked at me, and was like “what do you mean between.” Like for her it was just a preposition.

Gordon-Smith has become aware of its use within family settings, in which it is used “often to encode or remind us of a particular type of relationship. So it doesn’t imply an equal status per se but it is a reminder that your *vā* to your aunty has a specific behavioural encoding in it.” This shift for Gordon-Smith has enabled her to see *vā* as being “re-imbued with the possibility of being a channel for connecting with people.” How does this relationship work however in something outside of a family setting, like an art community, in which participation can be part-time or temporary. Gordon-Smith comments, “its purpose is to put you in a place within a collective structure, so that the collective structure functions. I suppose in some ways I’m like, well, what does it mean to theorise *vā* when it’s abstracted from the sense of a collective or interdependence.” Gordon-Smith says, “talking about care, talking about relationships, talking about *vā*, particularly when we’re talking about people who are both peers and friends, it’s so strange to have to find a way to create and justify a methodology of basic humanity.”

#### 5.4.3 New Sets of Relations

One thing that was quite clear in the *talanoa* was the way in which these artists prioritised relationships with adjacent communities, attempting to bypass the *colonial imaginary* entirely. Ioana Gordon-Smith commented that she prioritises a non-Pālagi voice that tries to “ignore the White gaze completely” without realising it, until she’s in situations where the colonial voice still seems important, “Whereas I’ve just kind of stopped listening” she concludes. Léuli Eshrāghi acknowledges this, stating that, “a Moana imaginary is linked to the network that we unconsciously or consciously interact with and are a product of.” Eshrāghi continues: “We work in constellation...we’re where we are by design.”

Being a part of globally circulating worlds takes Moana people out of the Moana–Pālagi binary, and puts people into closer relation to other transnational,

trans-Indigenous and global communities of colour. This cosmopolitan character of the Moana social world creates an increased circulation of ideas and a *context collapse* (Ugavule, 2020). *Cosmopolitanism* as used within literature around democracy highlights the way in which a cosmopolitan politic can offer a way to hold the tensions of difference. This emphasis on cosmopolitanism as a way to hold and work through difference offers a useful framework for thinking about the *vā relations Moana Cosmopolitans* find themselves in. Unlike some over-simplistic cosmopolitan literature on multiculturalism that imagines large cities becoming melting pots of many cultures and equates mobility to loss of one's cultural identity, understanding the Moana social world as *Vā Moana*—using the framework of *vā relations* and a relational ethic—enables *Moana Cosmopolitans* to hold on to their own cultural specificity while also being part of larger global communities.

*Vā Moana*, then, is a social world in which Moana people renegotiate their identities based on a “search for meaning, nuance and metaphor to find substance and establish” the “context in our dialogue with our ancestors, with ourselves and with other cultures” (Efi, 2018, p. 91). In the diaspora, that also includes a recognition “that change and pluralism are part of life,” as “a living culture cannot be sustained by ritual or measure that is divorced from the contemporary context” (Efi, 2018, p. 91). *Vā Moana* requires, then, joint navigation toward a global ethic that enables synthesis in different, sometimes conflicting or contradictory, Moana references (Efi, 2018, p.129).

Fetaui Iosefo (2016) makes a comparative argument between Wendt's *vā* and Homi Bhabha's (1994) *third space*. Iosefo writes that “*Vā* and third space refer to the between spaces, both are not focussed solely on the physical aspects of space but more so the unseen space where negotiation takes place.” These between spaces, Iosefo contends, are sites where identity can be shaped. In the case of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, these identities include those within the network or constellation, as described

by Eshrāghi. *Vā* in Iosefo's sense offers a space for imagining new worlds or ways forward together. Similarly, for photographer Talia Smith the concept of *vā* offers “a safe space for us to go and create our identity or figure out who we are without worrying about being right or wrong or too Black or too white, without all of these Westernised concepts.” Smith conceptualising *vā* within her photography practice resulted in the realisation that there is no one way to be of the Moana. She comments, “[the *vā*] is the place we can kind of go and be like, it's okay that it's all fucked up and you're not going to have all the answers and your ancestors are all there to guide you as much as they can, and I just think there's something really beautiful about that, that you can just kind of exist.”

What is important to note, however, is that the *vā relations* within *Vā Moana* need constant renegotiation as shifting ways of being in relation with people. They are not idealised relationships in which everything runs smoothly, but very real attempts at tending to new, old and severed relationships formed and re-formed within this Moana social world. Often these relations also have to contend with colonially mediated ideas of racism, patriarchy and capitalism. Eshrāghi discussed the enduring legacy of the *colonial imaginary* in all its forms in these kinds of social worlds. They tell me:

I think one of the big problems in conceptual and actual, new articulations of a moana imaginary and cosmopolitanism is that there are colonial borders, and states, through which Aboriginal studies in Australia and Aboriginal peoples and creative practice are siphoned off from Aoteaora, from Papua New Guinea from West Papua, and these ancient relational recurring regular voyages and connections are cut in the same way that I imagined that the Ainu on both sides of the Russian and the Japanese borders would be feeling.

The way we speak in Australia and New Zealand and our diasporas is very different to

the way people speak on the American side. And the closeness that we currently have to Aboriginal peoples to Māori peoples and other peoples in the region, isn't a given for how they [US Pacific diaspora] relate to Native American peoples.

locally, globally and virtually to mediate its place in the world.

The impact of Black culture, literature and art on *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* is something that *Moana Cosmopolitans* find themselves in a particular relationship to. This has to do largely with the historical influence and appropriation of Black culture into Pacific culture in the New Zealand diaspora; the increased global flows continue the relationship in various ways. Having *vā relations* between Moana and Black folx becomes imperative if Moana people do not want to continue the violence of Black appropriation, which continues to happen with the hyper-consumption of Black culture globally. A part of *vā relations* in this setting is acknowledging the whakapapa of things such as the language of accountability, intersectionality and *intergenerational trauma*, which comes from Black scholarly legacies. While some artists are still working out what their responsibility is, there is a clear sense that people are aware of acting in solidarity rather than in exploitative ways. Natasha Matila-Smith comments, “maybe we should be making reparations to them as well, for having such a huge global influence.”

## 5.5 Conclusion

*Vā Moana* as the social world of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* highlights the web of relations that make up one's world—webs which exist beyond national borders or physical boundaries. The need to imagine a social world beyond the *colonial imaginary's institutions* of cartography and nation states is imperative to understanding *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. *Vā Moana* in this sense is the relational social world through which Moana Cosmopolitans imagine, and part of the imaginary of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*. This social world, then, is one that is built on the relational ethic of *vā relations* expressed



## Imagining 5.

# IYKYK and the Joy of Making Louisa Afoa's *Wallpapers*(2015–2020)



**Figure 20.** Afoa, L. (2018). *Blue clam* [Installation]. ST PAUL St Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://stpaulst.aut.ac.nz/all-exhibitions/between-you-and-me>

### Introduction

In 2011, I was dropped off outside of Auckland University of Technology's WM building at the crack of dawn to get on a bus for that year's Tautai tertiary road trip to Wellington. I did not know AUT at that stage, so it was all a bit new. I was in my second year at Elam,

feeling nervous about the whole thing. I was not too sure what would be expected of me Pacific-wise or art-wise but it felt like a good thing to be doing. It was on that trip that I met Louisa Afoa and, honestly, I couldn't believe my luck. My very small and insular art-school world opened up. I found my people and Louisa was my people. The road trip was an annual programme Tautai ran at the time, which took a group of students from the then five art schools across Auckland to Wellington, to attend an art exhibition of Moana artists of note.

While that was the central impetus, the trip also included a tour of Te Papa's Pacific Collection and a trip out to Pātaka, as well the students' personal highlight of drinks in the hostel on the final night, topped off with a somewhat seedy eight-hour bus ride home to Auckland the next day.

Siliga David Setoga was our bus driver and Vaimaila Urale kept us in line. After our drive down, we arrived in Wellington by the evening for the opening of Graham Fletcher's solo exhibition *Lounge Room Tribalism* in the now-defunct Dean Gallery at City Gallery Wellington, a dedicated space of Māori and Pacific art at the time. After Louisa's and my time together on that trip, a friendship developed that would see years of collaboration to come, including participation by both of us in the Tautai tertiary exhibition the following year, *This must be the place* (2012). During that exhibition, we also co-founded the now archived arts criticism (a term I use loosely in this context) website *#500words*, which ran from 2012 until 2016. Most recently, this working friendship continued in the exhibitions *Layover* (2019) and *Transits and Returns* (2019–2020), in which Afoa worked with BC Collective, contributing a wallpaper to both installations—a central component of the works.

The prehistory of these two wallpapers can be traced back to 2015, to an exhibition at Papakura Art Gallery Afoa had with another artist, Anita Jacobsen, called *Local Sound*. In *Local Sound*, Afoa's work for the first time responded to a big life event—the death of her dad. The exhibition included a moving-image work called *Marist Old Boys*, which had footage taken from a car driving through suburban South Auckland while a man's voice tells a story. The man is her dad's friend. He tells of how he and Afoa's dad started the Marist Sāmoan rugby team together before it became Ardmore Marist, a story Afoa had never heard before her dad's funeral. Thinking about the different facets of one's life, Afoa created a wallpaper that could hold various stories like this one through motifs, without revealing the actual stories to audiences. The wallpaper mimicked the aesthetic of the 1950s wallpaper that

was in Afoa's aunty's house, the aunty who'd sponsored Afoa's dad to migrate to Aotearoa and also the first house the family lived in. The wallpaper included motifs from the original wallpaper as well as motifs personal to her and her dad, such as taro leaves and road work signs.

Over the course of this thesis, I have been listening, looking, reading, wrapping and tying the elements together for this ula lole of Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries. The two research questions that have required me to think with artworks made between 2012 and 2020 to build a conceptualisation of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and an emerging theory of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* are:

How is the *imaginary* configured in *Moana Cosmopolitan* thought? and

How do *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* impact the presentation of transnational Moana subjectivities in exhibitions and artworks, contributing toward an emerging theory of Moana art?

At this stage in the thesis, we consider the final lole in this ula, the final element to be wrapped into the others through this research process of *su'ifefiloi*. Not only was Afoa in the exhibition *This must be the place* with me, the opening imagining of the thesis, but the wallpapers also speak to a particular politic central to *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*—*creative sovereignty* (Garneau, 2018) or, as I describe it, *mau*. Afoa's wallpapers offer a mode of making that can bring joy rather than reproduce trauma. This conscious shift in making, which doesn't extract from the artist for the sake of audiences but rather enables Afoa to retain power, is an example of *creative sovereignty* or *mau*.

Louisa Afoa is a Sāmoan Pākehā artist who lives and works in Papakura, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Afoa completed her Bachelor of Visual Arts at Auckland University of Technology in 2012 and went on to earn her Honours in 2016. Afoa's interdisciplinary approach to making responds to her own surroundings as a way of commenting on broader social issues, while also giving insight into the lives of the communities that she

belongs to. She has exhibited extensively nationally as well as abroad. In addition to co-founding #500words, Afoa was previously the co-director of the artist-run space RM Gallery, has experience in arts education and administration, and today works as a high-school art teacher.

## Representations and Re-presentations of Brown Trauma

Louisa Afoa: I come from a really big family and a very stoic family, where we never grew up saying I love you to each other or hugging or anything like that. So, you know, there's a really big generational shift where we make sure we tell our nieces and nephews that we love them all the time, when they go to school we're like "I love you, have a great trip," with lots of warm embraces. Because even though I knew we were loved through actions, it was a really different world. So because of that upbringing, it is really hard to talk about trauma or how I really feel about things, because it's such an island thing to, like, smile through it all and have a front, because you always want to show people that your family's okay, that you're doing okay, because representation is important. So art making for me was definitely therapeutic in a way, to just dump all my emotions in this artwork and be like, thanks guys. Thanks for listening.

Lana Lopesi: I don't know many people who have gone through so much in such short and intensive periods of time as you. But I feel like sometimes it's that real heavy stuff like grieving and you're like, okay I'm giving it to you in artwork or I had this racist interaction with someone in the swimming pool here's the

artwork version.

Louisa Afoa: And sometimes it all kind of fell into place at the right time just because it was so responsive, and I was living in that space—art was literally the only way that I could deal with it.

It's really funny because when I went to go do my honours year, my actual project was gonna be about young people in galleries.<sup>67</sup>

The above is an excerpt from a *talanoa* with Louisa Afoa, in which Afoa discussed the way in which art has been a mode for processing lived experiences. Afoa's practice over the past decade has been well known for addressing heavy topics such as representation, state housing, institutional racism, microaggressions and grieving for loved ones, all told from her personal position and in the media of moving image, photography and vinyl wall works. As an artist, much of Afoa's practice responds to what is happening in her personal life and beyond. She tells me that when she was in art school doing documentary photography she took portraits of her nephew and little cousin, and the studio class response during the critique was that they looked like mug shots. Thus, it was early that Afoa learned the lesson of representation; that what were portraits of her loved ones to her, were mugshots to her peers. Afoa comments:

It was in that space that it really, really dawned on me how important representation is, and how all of these images are so loaded and that I have to really be careful about how I show my family, and how I present them to the world, because people already see them a certain type of way. People are already going to have these premeditated ideas about who they are, where they come from.

Sāmoan photographer Edith Amituanai

**67.** In our *talanoa*, Afoa revealed the particularities of her own *intergenerational trauma*, which I have not disclosed within this thesis.

acknowledges a similar issue in her own work, working with communities who are Brown, and usually low on the socio-economic ladder—her communities (Lopesi, 2018a). For Amituanai, however, these are not things that she layers her work with, but rather the way her work becomes layered by art audiences, influenced by the mainstream-media deficiency narrative that looms heavy over Moana experience. For Amituanai, when power is given to those from these neighbourhoods to represent themselves “new narratives will come to life” (Lopesi, 2018a, p. 17).

For Afoa, there’s a sense that within gallery spaces Moana artists need to be in control of their own representation, to ensure their work can offer more nuance and complexity. She would never want her artwork to be used by someone to make a derogatory point about Moana experience: “That’s the worst fear, right, to have your work used for fucking evil.” Concerns around representation in the gallery space perhaps stem from the way in which *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* have been framed by institutions and galleries previously, through tokenistic gestures, essentialism and to fill diversity quotas. Maile Arvin acknowledges that the risk of artists and artworks being co-opted is “an unavoidable fact of life for Indigenous people, and for many other marginalized communities” (2019, p. 197). However, Arvin contends that counter-representation should still be created, something that artists are uniquely positioned to reflect on critically and playfully (p. 197).

In addition to representation, Afoa expresses that re-presentation of Moana trauma in the gallery setting is something that she is sensitive to. Being present to the traumas one holds and not wanting to present that continuously for art audiences bears a similarity to concerns discussed by both Ahilapalapa Rands and Emily Parr. From these talanoa, it has been made clear galleries seem to have an insatiable appetite for Moana trauma and wounds to be continuously re-presented. In addition, this is a mode of art making that was encouraged in these artists at art school.

For Afoa, this realisation occurred when noticing

that artworks that dealt with some of her more personal trauma gained the most traction. This led to questions about how re-presenting these traumas could lead to the idea that trauma was the artist’s only narrative. Afoa comments, “I don’t think that any of the galleries that I did the work for were like yum yum yum give me all your trauma, but it’s definitely something you are mindful of because...that’s the work that suddenly gets a lot, a lot of traction.” Afoa’s work *Untitled* (2016), exhibited in the Tautai tertiary exhibition *Influx* at ST PAUL St gallery curated by Ane Tonga, was one such work. She tells me, “You don’t really know if they’re just interested because it’s such a sad story. And at the time, because I was making all of that work [about trauma], it just felt like I was giving up so much of myself. It did feel like I was giving everyone an opportunity to capitalise off the trauma. And I don’t think that was the case, but you do really start to question yourself.”

These concerns around representation and the re-presentation of trauma drove Afoa back to the wallpaper form she first played with in 2015. In an interview from 2017 for the exhibition *I’ll see you at Orion*, in which the second iteration of the wallpaper was exhibited, Afoa commented, “I’ve been thinking lately about how much you tell, how much of yourself you’re willing to give. The emotional labour is too real” (Murphy, 2017). In talanoa, Afoa commented that she wanted to create a work that was not overtly traumatic but could also hold the depth of her stories. The wallpaper form offered this for Afoa. The re-presentation of her own traumas became a form of imagination in which Afoa found another mode of practice, a new language and materiality that not only brought the artist joy but also allowed her to make in a way that she had control over the presentation of her and her family’s stories.





**Figure 21.** Afoa, L. (2017). *Orion* [Wallpaper]. Corban Estate Arts Centre, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://ceac.org.nz/exhibitions/ill-see-you-at-orion>



**Figure 22.** Afoa, L. (2017). *Orion* [Wallpaper]. Corban Estate Arts Centre, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://ceac.org.nz/exhibitions/ill-see-you-at-orion>

## Wallpapers

Afoa's wallpapers have developed in both aesthetic and function since that first one in 2015 for the *Local Sound* exhibition. Made to honour her late dad, that first wallpaper, titled *Orion* (2015), offered a device in which personal stories could be hidden in plain sight. Taro leaves and road work signs alongside the clouds and hot air balloons of the original reference wallpaper were amongst the motifs used to honour her dad's memory. While each motif holds specific stories for Afoa, her dad and her family, the specifics of those stories are not for us to know. This sits in direct contrast to Afoa's moving-image works such as *23 Years*

(2013), *Orion* (2014) and the vinyl work *Untitled* (2018), which reveal Afoa's and her family's lived experiences with state housing, death and racism.

As mentioned, the exhibition *Local Sound* marked the first time Afoa dealt with significant life events in her work, which saw a shift away from a lens-based documentary practice she had been developing in art school. The wallpaper form allowed Afoa to deal with large life events, to both honour and grieve the life of her dad in a way of making that also brought the artist herself joy. However, being the first wallpaper Afoa made, she was not happy with the way it looked, telling me that the motifs needed to be larger to achieve her original vision. Two years later, an exhibition





**Figure 23.** Afoa, L. (2019). *Untitled [Wallpaper]*. Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland, New Zealand. <https://artspace-aotearoa.nz/exhibitions/layover>

opportunity at Corban Estate Arts Centre (Corban's) provided Afoa with the chance to revisit the wallpaper. Afoa says, "The first wallpaper didn't feel as successful to me as it could have been. And so, of course, in the back of my mind as a maker, [was] wanting to perfect the install of the work."

That exhibition, *I'll see you at Orion* (2017), was not only a chance to perfect the wallpaper, but also occurred during her honours year studies, when Afoa was making work about living in Torbay, and the associated racist and fatphobic microaggressions Afoa was receiving. The resulting works were heavy, as the artist was processing her trauma in real time. With the Corban's opportunity, Afoa "wanted to do something a bit different." For Afoa, art offers a way to process what is happening to her at any given time: "Those works were for myself needing to talk about the things that were happening specifically to me, and I'm a lot more open about works when it comes to me and my experiences." But when she talks about shared familial experiences, she is more protective and conscious of how family members are represented in artworks and

in gallery spaces, because she feels a responsibility to keep them safe.

That first wallpaper from *Local Sound* paid homage to her first family house, her aunt's house and its 1940s-style wallpaper. Thus, *I'll see you at Orion* offered a way for Afoa to honour her aunty specifically. In addition to Afoa's close connection to her home, Afoa's aunty sponsored her dad to come from Sāmoa to New Zealand. With the exhibition opportunity coming around not long after her aunty had died, Corban's was a space to honour her aunty in a way that felt safe, loving and comforting, which included revisiting the wallpaper. The wallpaper, also titled *Orion* (2017), was pink—Afoa's aunty's favourite colour—with some of the *Local Sound* motifs remaining while others were added. Together the motifs held stories about that family home and growing up with her aunty.

Afoa's two most recent wallpapers were made in collaboration with BC Collective for two exhibitions, *Layover* (2019) and *Transits and Returns* (2019–2020), both *Untitled* and part of the *Kai as Koha* installation. These wallpapers mark a conceptual shift, as the

wallpapers for *Local Sound* and *I'll see you at Orion* hold the stories of specific people. For the *Kai as Koha* installations, however, there was an open brief, and in many ways the wallpapers hold collective stories and references. These two wallpapers were part of an installation that mimicked a dining room and the motifs Afoa used were generally relatable rather than being secretly coded. For these two iterations, Afoa was able to weave other people into the work through various motifs. Through *talanoa* with BC Collective, Afoa learned about references important to the group that sat outside of her own experience, such as Bluebird Flour, which Afoa was told is the flour of choice “specifically for making Native American fry bread.” For Afoa, this connected to the local Bluebird chip brand, where Afoa’s brother worked for a period of time. It is these kinds of stories and references that the wallpapers are able to hold. In the six months between the two *Kai as Koha* installations, Afoa was even able to add in a motif for my dad, who at the Layover opening, told Afoa it was almost perfect except that it was just missing a Lion Red logo. A logo that he was proud to see in the *Transits and Returns* addition.

I ask Afoa if these wallpapers are a kind of

language and she comments that it is more like DNA: “I remember describing it to someone as if I’m just trying to show parts of my DNA in visual form. And so, of course, that’s always changing with new experiences and new people.”

### A Politic of Joy

Joy as a form of resistance has a firm place within Black resistance discourses. Audre Lorde’s oft-quoted sentiment, which connects care to resistance, contents with this issue writing, “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare” (2017, p. 70). A significant form of self-care, I would suggest, is the experience of joy. This is well demonstrated in Alice Walker’s 1997 novel, *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, in which the main character discovers that “resistance is the secret of joy” (p. 281). Importantly, however, joy as used in this sense is not a joy entangled with the *colonial imaginary*, as the colonial imaginary did not allow colonised and racialised people to experience a full range of life. Rather, joy is something that was not given, and so cannot be taken away (Lu & Steele, 2019). Joy in this



**68.** On Instagram this is demonstrated on accounts such as @blackjoymixtape, @theblackjoyproject, @blackqueerjoy and @blackjoyparade. On Twitter demonstrations of Black joy occur mostly through hashtags such as #blackjoy

**Figure 24.** Afoa, L. (2019). *Untitled [Wallpaper]*. Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada. <https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/exhibitions/transits-and-returns>



instance is of another *imaginary* all together.

More recently, with the racial uprisings across the United States, activists have emphasised the significance of Black joy as a form of resistance, specifically on Instagram and Twitter.<sup>68</sup> Online expressions of Black joy challenge the mainstream media's fixation of Black death and "assert Black people as fully human, capable of experiencing and expressing a full, dynamic range of emotion; and capture, share, and circulate expressions of Black life without concern for the white gaze" (Lu & Steele, 2019, p. 829). Social media, as discussed in relation to Luke Willis Thompson's work in *Imagining 2*, typically circulates images of Black death. Therefore, social media interventions of Black joy "interject expressions of Black life and joy" on the very platforms that "continually circulate depictions of Black death" (Lu & Steele, 2019, p. 830). Thus, joy used in this way is a subversive intervention, which demonstrates Black people with a full range of emotion (Lu & Steele, 2019). Joy as resistance, then, enables people to be "free from the burdens of white supremacy, beholden to the need and desire to prove their humanity" (Lu & Steele, 2019, p. 834).

While there are no formalised movements of Pacific or Moana joy, the desire to find a joy in one's art practice was something that came through in the *talanoa* for this research. Perhaps, as described in the previous discussion in relation to *intergenerational trauma* entering the vernacular of contemporary Moana artists through social media, so too has joy as resistance. In the context of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, we can understand this politics of joy through the concept of *mau*, as discussed below, in which an artist has *creative sovereignty* (Garneau, 2018) over their work, resisting their depictions as per the *colonial imaginary*, imagining something otherwise.

## Finding a Mau: A Sense of Creative Sovereignty

I am not an identity artist just because I am a Black artist with multiple selves.

I am not grappling with notions of identity and representation in my art. I'm grappling with safety and futurity. We are beyond asking should we be in the room. We are in the room. We are also dying at a rapid pace and need a sustainable future.

We need more people, we need better environments, we need places to hide, we need Utopian demands, we need culture that loves us.

I am not asking who I am. I'm a Black woman and expansive in my Blackness and my queerness as Blackness and queerness are always already expansive. None of this is as simple as "identity and representation" outside of the colonial gaze. I reject the colonial gaze as the primary gaze. I am outside of it in the land of NOPE.

— E. Jane, *NOPE (a manifesto)*, 2016

This work *NOPE (a manifesto)* is made by Black artist E. Jane. The lines "I am not grappling with notions of identity and representation in my art. I'm grappling with safety and futurity" speak to similar concerns seen in the artworks and expressed by the artists in this research. With that notion of safety comes a mode of practising in which the artist holds a sense of power or finds a mode of practice that centres themselves as the maker, rather than, as E. Jane says, "tends to the colonial gaze." For E. Jane, this mode of creative sovereignty is called the "land of NOPE"; in the context of the *Moana Cosmopolitan* artist, I wonder if this mode could be understood as a sense of *mau*.

G. B. Milner's Sāmoan dictionary (1992) defines *mau* as to keep or retain; to grip tight, and to hold fast or stick firmly. Its use, however, is probably most

famously recognised in the Mau Movement, Sāmoa's independence movement, which spanned the early-to-mid-twentieth century—*mau* here acting as a form of tino rangatiratanga. More recently, *mau* has been used increasingly within an art context. In early 2020 at *Talanoa Mau*, a symposium curated by Salā Lemi Ponifasio—founding director of performance group MAU—for the New Zealand Festival of the Arts, Wellington, Ponifasio described *mau* as sovereignty. My interpretation of Ponifasio's use of *mau* in this 2020 arts context, however, is not about a particular kind of universal or agreed-upon sovereignty but rather sovereignty over one's own ideas, one's own thinking and one's own positionality. It seems to mean control over oneself, one's art and one's own *imaginary*. Rather than faltering in the face of larger popular or societal demands on one's creative force, *mau* in this usage is *creative sovereignty* (Garneau, 2018). In addition, in a Vā Moana – Pacific Spaces panel at the 2020 GAX Aotearoa symposium titled *Ngā Tai o te Ao: Global Tides*—presented by the Asian/Pacific/American Institute at NYU in collaboration with the School of Art and Design at the Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makaurau (AUT University) and Vā Moana Research Cluster—Tuputau Lelaulu presented the notion of Mau Moana as a design process (2020). This process would explore the way in which the regeneration of *mau* “can be utilised to alleviate the systemic and environmental challenges facing Moana communities” (Lelaulu, 2020).

The use of *mau* in this way, to describe the artists' control over their own work and ideas, articulates the politic inherent in *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. The difficulty in articulating a politic of *mau* is that it fractures any simplistic framing of a shared political quality. In addition, *mau* is not always legible as political. Rather, given the persistence and pervasive nature of the *colonial imaginary* in the role of art institutions as well as art schools, it is clear that Moana artists just existing within these contexts is political. Furthermore, practising in sovereign ways is political.

#### *Mau or creative sovereignty in Moana*

*Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* comes from the creative capacity of *radical imagination*. It can look like a *future imaginary* as seen in Ahilapalapa Rands' work *Lift Off*, it can be writing back to the archive in *Moana Calling Me Home*, the *imagining* of Indigenous social worlds in *The Commute*, *Layover* and *Transist and Returns*, or it can be about making in a way that brings one joy.

Natasha Matila-Smith in *talanoa* comments that there is an institutional projection placed onto Moana artists that places a pressure on them in some instances to make certain kinds of work. Therefore, for *digital native Moana Cosmopolitan* artists who came through art school very aware of these histories, their *mau* is in a mode of self-determined practice, making on their own terms. This, for Matila-Smith, is a way of being unburdened of external influences that make artists feel guilty about not carrying on traditions. She continues: “the way the system is it makes us complicit sometimes.”

For artists who are dealing with external pressures, making art for the sake of joy or in a way that imagines liberatory futures becomes an incredibly radical act. Because of the politics of Moana identities in Aotearoa, making something beautiful for the sake of joy is political for the way in which it contributes to liberatory futures outside of the *colonial imaginary*. In the case of Afoa's wallpapers, the joy has a dual purpose of also holding secrets in plain sight.

#### IYKYK<sup>69</sup>

This concept of *mau* comes through clearly in Afoa's work in two ways. The first being the way that the wallpapers hold secrets in plain sight. This gives Afoa an ability to privilege an audience that in some instances is familial, and in other instances is cultural. It is a mode of presentation that relies on the notion of *iykyk*. Afoa says, “what I enjoy about them is the idea that they can hold secrets. And I like that they can

69. IYKYK is an internet abbreviation for if you know you know.

hold stories that I don't have to tell other people, and I know that they exist." This mode of making art in which one holds back information for general audiences and privileges specific ones (sometimes as specific as only the artist's family) enables the artist to hold power. In terms of issues of representation as discussed earlier, this offers a strategy for artists to contend with issues of representation within gallery spaces.

For example, in the two wallpapers, *Orion* (2015) and *Orion* (2017) for *Local Sound* and *I'll see you at Orion*, the orange cone symbolises Afoa's dad's lifelong work as a labourer, which included all kinds of backbreaking jobs that were performed so that the family wouldn't go without. Afoa tells me that the thought of her "dad coming over from Sāmoa thinking that he is going to be in this place where he can provide all of this, and then almost having to revert back to what he did on the islands just to keep us afloat, it just makes me want to cry." It is these kinds of stories that Afoa tells me are important to honour her dad's memory but the details of which not everyone needs to know. For many Moana audiences, however, that road cone will represent similar familial stories of sacrifice and hard work. Each of the motifs holds space for these kinds of personal stories, yet the specific details remain with the artist and the selected audience who is privy to them.

In saying that, wider audiences can connect to the works too, through the universal nature of the 1940s-style wallpaper. In an interview for *I'll see you at Orion*, Afoa tells us that audiences still have access to the work through the visual aspect allowing them to take from it what they will, but where Afoa's line of refusal is drawn is in giving them any further information. As she comments, "I just don't want to give them anything more and I feel like I don't have to, because it's not for them" (Murphy, 2017, para. 12).

Similarly, *mau* operates in Afoa's work through the desire to make beautiful art that brings her joy. This is a refusal to continue to give art audiences the artist's experiences of trauma, and instead finding a mode of practice that can hold her stories without depleting

herself. Being in conversations with curators selecting work, in which Afoa felt as though she was weighing up her trauma works, and therefore her various traumas, against each other, it came a point where she thought "this is fucking sick." It is not that Afoa regrets any of those works that she made, but that that mode of practice can not be the only way for Afoa to work. Instead, joy as a mode of art practice not only subverts the colonial gaze but is oppositional to the way artists are trained to make art in school.

For artists who feel as if their trauma becomes something that art galleries are interested in, making work that is visually beautiful becomes a point of resistance, offering a sense of *mau*. It becomes political in a way that it averts the colonial gaze and prioritises the interests of the artist. Afoa comments, "I just wanted something that was visually beautiful. I don't know if it is beautiful, but to me it is." After all of her works made to deal directly with her traumas, "I just couldn't stand the thought of doing something so fucking dire in that gallery space. So specifically when the iterations started to turn pinks and greens and purples, it was like, I just want something to feel happy for a change."

## Moana Contemporary Art and *Mau*

The idea of making art for joy, as seen in Afoa's wallpapers, can be located within a broader group of contemporary Moana artists also making in this way. This is a marked shift in the overdetermined sense that contemporary Moana art is reserved to tell stories only about marginal Moana lives and to ask questions of identity. In this section, I want to draw attention to the work of Natasha Matila-Smith, Moana Fresh and Sione Monu, who all speak about a sense of making for joy as a position of *mau* in which the modes of that joy are heterogeneous.

In *talanoa* with Natasha Matila-Smith, she described a desire to make work that had a sense of fun, asking, "Where's the fun in art now? We don't have to be depressed all the time. Jesus. I mean, even



though my work is about being depressed. It's fun, you know." Matila-Smith's work is often framed as a refusal of contemporary Moana art aesthetics. In some part Matila-Smith acknowledges this; however, she also asserts that "I can't make things that I don't know [about]." She continues, "I'm not alternative to Pacific art, I am Pacific art. But I'm marketed as someone that is doing something different, but it's not really..." Matila-Smith's recent works, such as *I Know Everyone's Miserable But How Does That Help Me* (2019) and *If I die, please delete my Soundcloud* (2019), focus on ideas of 'online intimacies,' as dubbed by Huni Mancini (2019). For Matila-Smith, there is a sense that the online has become a part of her practice, and her work then becomes a refusal of giving up her online identity, or, as she comments, "a refusal to age." Her works deal mainly with ideas of loneliness and intimacy through a tumblr-esque language of celebrity crushes. The underlying sense of humour through self-deprecation offers a unique contribution to the confessional style in art that is both an act of care and oversharing.

On a recent *Native Stories* podcast, Ahilapalapa Rands spoke about a collaborative project with Vaimaila Urale called Moana Fresh as the kind of work that brings the artist so much joy (October 19, 2020). Moana Fresh came after Rands moved back to Auckland after a period of making in London—the heart of the empire—as discussed in *Imagining 2*. The project is essentially a shop, which also functions somewhat in the way that a dealer gallery might, selling and advocating for artists on their behalf, and which has enjoyed extreme success in its first operating year. In the podcast, Rands notes that artists do not always have someone to advocate on their behalf, which is something Rands argues that can make someone's career sustainable. For artists, knowing how extractive and unfriendly the arts sector can be, Moana Fresh offers something different. But clearly in this mandate is the notion that to care for other people you also need to take care of yourself. Arguably for Rands, this care comes from engaging in projects that bring about joy.

Australian-born Tongan artist Sione Monu

is currently based in Auckland. Monu's works, in particular their sculptural works of various shapes (clouds, diamonds, masks) adorned with plastic flowers and beads, are joyful to look at in and of themselves. Within a Moana art frame, Monu's work is somewhat difficult to pin down—in part because of its joyous and playful nature. The works tend to subvert an expectation of authentic "Indigenous feelings" (Arvin, 2019, p. 198) and present an artist's interest in the material as an expression of Monu's queer diasporic experience. Subverting the expected expressions of queer Moana artists, Monu presents work that is fun; un beholden to the *colonial imaginary*, Monu demonstrates a full artistic and emotional range.

## Conclusion

It can be easy for art audiences to overlook artworks that are beautiful and comforting as apolitical, and perhaps in some regard they are. However, with the significant weight of expectations and burdens felt by a *digital native* generation of contemporary Moana artists, these kinds of works are actually incredibly political and they require artists to have a sense of *mau*. Making in a way that refuses the ideological expectations of the *colonial imaginary*, and questions art institutions' complicity in the *colonial imaginary*, is a difficult task (Arvin, 2019, p. 199).

Within the systems and structures of the *colonial imaginary* and its thirst for Brown trauma, the ability to step outside, regain the power and make art that not only gives the artist joy but is replenishing, is the ultimate political act. This is vital work, and deconstructs the colonial logic that possesses even Moana creative output. Thus, Moana artists making art in ways in which "other relationships and different gazes might be possible" (Arvin, 2019, pp. 198–199) creates *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* in which Moana lives are made and remade in ways that are *creatively sovereign*.

# Fa'amaumauga

**Tuesday, 12 January 2021**

Countries around the world have been recording some of their highest Covid numbers, leading to calls for no New Year's Eve celebrations. Meanwhile we partied like any other year. All of the usual festivals went ahead, with the only change being the lack of international guests. Summer is hot this year, sure to be another long and enduring one. Hopefully with lots of rain as well, to keep the droughts at bay. The world has felt small, in pixelated yet intimate ways. The past 10 months has weirdly enabled me to Zoom into the homes of people like Angela Davis and Fred Moten, I gave a lecture to a master's programme at Central Saint Martins in London who Zoomed into my home, we ran reading groups across continents. We had unprecedented access to each other. Yet, thinking about New Zealand's unique experience of Covid-19, topped off by a normal New Year, can't help but make me feel distant from the rest of globe, from those who have been in a variation of lockdown since March 2020.

There are lots of new year, new start feelings hanging in the air, as there naturally are at this time. Even those who don't celebrate the Gregorian New Year are not immune from the general atmosphere of summer holidays and resetting. There's a lot of hope that this year will be better than last, that things will change, something will shift. But there are even more memes urging caution heading into 2021, because who could have imagined last year would be disruptive to the world's New Year resolutions sent into the ether on 1 January 2020? When the pro-Trump Capitol Hill riot occurred on January 6 and some places went into further lockdowns because of the new, more contagious, Covid strain, these cautious memes proved themselves right.

I've been thinking about glitches. A glitch is an interruption in a system, it is what happens when a system isn't working properly or is broken. But

glitches are also constantly fixed, as systems become optimised, streamlined, perfected, meaning that a glitch is constantly rebuilding or reshaping itself in light of new system upgrades finding new weak points.

What if 2020 was itself a glitch in the world order? And what if that world order was the colonial imaginary? When Biden won, Trump's disciples were not ready for their White supremacist world order to be again renounced and pushed underground. Although I think people forgot that the world order is White supremacist in the first place.

There was a hope that 2020 was a glitch in the flow of events, which became the infamous little beach ball the spins and hangs in the air when something is buffering. Only it hung above the world as global leaders tried to reoptimise their nations to return to regular services. It was in many ways a break in the system, which if we let it can enable other things to break through. But still it seems there is a lot more work to do. Being a glitch in the colonial imaginary is, I guess, to act in a way that defies the imaginary's colonial logics. And what if, just as we can turn the colonial imaginary to be used to our own advantage, 2020 and the start of 2021 can be turned and used in the same way. Surely, with all the global upheaval, we have a responsibility to do that kind of work, to be both radical and optimistic about systemic change and new ways of being and seeing, rather than letting it all settle back into the same status quo.

Being a glitch means behaving in a way that opposes the expectations placed onto you, it means working against the system, finding space for yourself within it. Existing in a way that is opposed to how you're expected to is the ultimate act of sovereignty or self-determination. For Indigenous and racialised people in the colonial imaginary, just existing is in opposition to that expectation. But what if we pushed

*that existing further, and it was about thriving?*

*It kind of blows my mind that contemporary Moana art is still having to contend with the impositions of the colonial imaginary, but I guess that's the power of something that has assured itself as history rather than imagined. Sometimes I wonder, too, to what extent the power of the colonial imaginary is just in our minds and is given its power because we give it attention, we breathe life into it. Which of course is not to fictionalise what we know are real, imposed and material barriers that stem from colonisation or the reality of Capitol Hill. But what if we just shifted where we focused our attention, could that be a glitch in the system? Would that lead to greater creative sovereignty for contemporary Moana artists?*

*I don't think that there is yet a shared sense of creative sovereignty, especially under the colonial imaginary. But I don't think the reproduction of Brown trauma in a way that serves audiences but depletes artists is quite it, because that sits within expectations. Creative sovereignty for the Moana artist and the communities they belong to comes from a mode of practising in which the artist holds a sense of power OR finds a mode of practice that centres themselves as the maker rather than one that tends to the gaze of others. The best thing is that this sense of creative sovereignty has no real legible form. In a way, that feels like the ultimate glitch, the ultimate way of not-working. It looks like speculative futures, illegibility and a sense of joy; it can look like exchanges that centre Indigenous modes of kinship. It's a creative sovereignty that makes room for other points of view, other creative sovereignties.*

*Being a glitch is to fight for the joyous, the beautiful, the imaginative, and the speculative as political because these are things we weren't afforded in the colonial imaginary. Because these qualities might not otherwise be interpreted through a politic of sovereignty. When you think of all it takes to get to the space in which a Moana artist can produce in a way that builds them up and doesn't deplete them, I'm wondering if that's the ultimate example of creative sovereignty. Because you're not expected to work in ways in which you have control, or a voice, or equal footing. Recognising that feels emancipatory.*

# Chapter 6.

## Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries

### 6.1 Introduction

Over the course of this thesis, art made between 2012 and 2020 has been layered with theory, Moana art history and *talanoa*, to build the concepts of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and work toward an emerging theory of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. This chapter summarises the particular *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary* of the artists discussed throughout the imaginings, by identifying key themes and shared concerns.

As discussed earlier, *decolonial* and *diasporic imaginaries* continue to require the constant reproduction of one's identity, in quests for more liberatory futures (Perez, 1990). A part of this imagining of Moana life is the acceptance of its cosmopolitan character. Accepting *Moana Cosmopolitanism* as a lived experience impacts how one imagines oneself. Cosmopolitanism and imaginary theory as used in *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* both rely on the decolonial interventions made into these concepts, which fracture the grand narratives of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and universal imaginaries, resulting in local and heterogeneous options. *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, therefore, are local and decolonial options to think through the ways in which Moana people, part of global worlds today, imagine their subjectivities, their cultures and their place in the world. This, I argue, becomes an important way to understand the productive and creative force behind Moana art making and the driving factors for a *digital native* generation of

artists.

Coming into this research, the focus was not on the generational shifts that occur within contemporary Moana art. The focus was specifically on a *digital native* generation of Moana artists and uncovering the generational shifts that underpin the particular aesthetics, politics and positionalities of their art. To ask these questions of their art is to ask more broadly what makes this generation different from the ones before and the ones after. It would be difficult to think through the characteristics of any given *imaginary* without thinking first through the characteristics of the person doing the imagining.

The artists focused on in this research are establishing their careers and currently in their late 20s to mid-30s. They are all university-trained artists, some with postgraduate qualifications and PhDs. Many have had large international exhibitions as artists and/or curators, many are very familiar with the biennial and triennial international art circuit. These are artists who travel fairly frequently and, as well as participating in local Moana art communities, participate in international Moana, Indigenous and BIPOC art communities and collectives. They are artists who follow two successive generations of Moana artists practising in Aotearoa, and who grew up alongside the rise and increased accessibility of the internet. Most importantly, and the distinction I am making, is that these are artists who are too young to have been included in the landmark exhibition of contemporary Moana art *Home AKL* (2012) at Auckland Art Gallery

Toi o Tāmaki. Thus, they are also artists too young to have yet been written into the archive of contemporary Moana art.

This chapter revisits previous discussions dispersed throughout the imaginings, bringing them together to introduce the characteristics of the *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* as (1) being decolonial; (2) being concerned with *deep time*; (3) existing within a relational geography or *Vā Moana*; (4) grounded in positions of *mau* and (5) ultimately having remix quality or *su'ifefiloi*. These characteristics of a *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary* specific to these artists, were developed through talanoa with the artists featured in this thesis, close analysis of their artworks or imaginings, and through my own *su'ifefiloi* or remixing of different theories, traditions and art histories, to make something new.

## 6.2 Characteristics of a Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary

### 6.2.1 Decolonial

Decolonial positions and interventions are integral to *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. Throughout this thesis, decolonial interventions have been necessary in thinking through concepts, namely in relation to the *imaginary* and *cosmopolitanism*. Thus, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* move out of the impositions of the *colonial imaginary*.

While regionally the Moana sits across the spectrum of legal recognition from settler colony to independent nation-state, the colonisation of the *imaginary* has been significant across the board. Remembering the cosmopolitan character of the Moana requires a way of envisioning the region beyond the entrapment of the region and its people on small islands as in the *colonial imaginary*.

A decolonial approach requires engaging with the weight of the *colonial imaginary*, while also envisioning a new Moana futurity. Léuli Eshrāghi comments, “as much as we go away from these colonial centres, we also can’t...we have a responsibility to connect with all

of our histories that are embodied and manifested in these ancestral belongings that were stolen or traded.” Emily Parr is conscious of colonial ideologies that require dismantling in complicated ways. In part, this requires holding on to the complexity of one’s stories, Parr comments:

as part of decolonisation it’s important to know our stories, and the breadth, complexities and nuances of those stories. I think that being reductive about the mechanisms of colonial capitalism isn’t helpful for the decolonial project, because it encompasses so many different expressions and so many different kinds of people.

For Ioana Gordon-Smith, there has been a complete repositioning away from a European canon talking about the Moana. The Western gaze is something that she is trying to ignore completely within her work, commenting, “I’ve just kind of stopped listening.” For her, the prioritising of Moana and other voices of colour “decreases the reliance on White approval, to be real blunt.”

Moreover, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* simultaneously reject the stronghold of the *colonial imaginary* while imagining new possibilities. For Léuli Eshrāghi, the work of artists has “permanently expanded the Moana imaginary” in decolonial ways.

### 6.2.2 Deep Time

The place of *deep time*, through acknowledgements of familial, artistic and intellectual ancestries and legacies, both past and into the future, was of key importance to the artists in talanoa and comes through in a variety of ways in their artworks. *Deep time* in this thesis borrows from Diaz and Hanlon, as an Indigenously ordered notion of time encompassing Indigenous pasts and Indigenous futurity (Diaz, 2011; Hanlon, 2017).

### *Deep Time: Acknowledging an Art History*

In *talanoa*, every artist acknowledged themselves in a lineage of Moana art history. Louisa Afoa places



herself as “a third-generation or third wave” artist. She continues, “We all know, those giants that came before us...for myself at school, Janet Lilo and Edith Amituanai, were my idols.” Ioana Gordon-Smith comments, “my ability to work has always been contingent upon a Pacific arts community.” She continues, “I could not do curating and I could not do writing, if there weren’t Pacific artists in the first place who needed writers and curators. I don’t exist without the Pacific arts first; I couldn’t have progressed without them pre-existing before me.” Natasha Matila-Smith comments, “Everyone’s generation fades into the next one somehow. For instance, the [Pacific] Sisters...they made it possible for Brown women to have space.”

With this acknowledgement also comes artists distinguishing themselves from the art before them. John Veā acknowledged artists in previous generations were ‘finding home’ here, whereas he already positions himself as ‘being home.’ Veā acknowledges a privilege in that position “rather than a sense of being in limbo.” Similarly, Cora-Allan Wickliffe comments that she “sees us as having moved on from that space of learning our place” and on to how to better add to and evaluate that space which was established by artists of previous generations.

### ***Deep Time: Intergenerational Trauma***

One of the unexpected characteristics of notions of time that came up in talanoa was that of *intergenerational trauma*. Talia Smith acknowledges this when discussing her grandparents, commenting, “they both were part of the assimilation movement, they wanted their future children to have better lives and to have better lives was to be a New Zealander, and to be a Kiwi and to be white. So I think we can’t help but have elements of trauma or at least have to reckon with [that history] at some point in what you’re making because the journey that they took to get to where they did and to where you came into being is pretty fraught.”

Specifically, in talanoa, there was a noticeable shift from wanting to deal with trauma through art as ‘trauma porn’ for gallery audiences, to wanting to

heal. Eshrāghi commented, “It’s not enough to just despair.” Ahilapalapa Rands comments that the “re-presentation of our wounds over and over again to the people that wounded us” bothers her. Afoa comments, “when you’re making works that are about the trauma of Pacific people and family, galleries just seem to love it. And then you really question—maybe I should stop making these works because I don’t want this to be my only narrative.” She continues, “I don’t think that any of the galleries that I did the work for were like yum yum yum give me all your trauma, but it’s definitely something you are mindful of because that’s the work that suddenly gets a lot, a lot of traction.”

Rands comments:

People are much more interested in hearing you build a practice on your distance from your language than they are to be like she’s off learning her language...it’s geared to keep us in that space of just re-presenting it. And that just makes me feel a bit yuck at this point, like we’ve done a lot of that work now...to process in that way, sweet, but to stay there feels a bit like we’re self-fetishising.

While Rands feels quite present to her family’s own particular *intergenerational trauma*, she is adamant that it is not an art material to work with. Rather, Afoa, Rands, Smith, Eshrāghi and Parr all see their artworks as authoring their own alternative stories. In light of the acknowledgement of *intergenerational trauma*, there is a desire for their *imaginaries* to not be fixated on trauma itself but rather to provide alternative subjectivities, which provides a kind of personal healing for the artist.

### **6.2.3 Vā Moana**

*Vā Moana* as conceptualised within this thesis is the social world both imagined through *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, and an influencing factor of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. Within *Vā Moana*, it is not the geographic boundaries or borders that make up one’s world but rather their social and kinship networks

predicated on *vā relations*. These webs and the *vā relations* formed within them shape the way *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* are formed in relation to homelands, the diasporic home, other Moana people, global Indigenous communities and global communities of colour. Léuli Eshrāghi comments that “a Moana imaginary is linked to the network that we unconsciously or consciously interact with and are a product of.”

### ***Vā within Moana Communities***

Leali'ifano Albert Refiti quotes Albert Wendt in a 2012 essay on contemporary Moana art writing: “*vā* tells us that ‘we do not completely possess who we are’ because ‘our bodies belong to the ancestors.’ This is a powerful tool as it allows our work to be connected to the divine and to the work of others” (2012, p. 12). *Vā* within Moana communities offers a cultural concept of relating to each other, a kind of relational ethic that binds all of our work together. Interestingly, for Natasha Matila-Smith *vā* acts as a notion of care.

Roughly three-quarters of the way through the research, the Covid-19 pandemic hit, with the webs and *vā relations* of *Vā Moana* shifting as our relationships, for the most part, were maintained mostly online. While this online element of maintaining *vā relations* is something growing in prominence over the last 10 or so years, Covid-19 shifted this in unexpected ways. In isolation, the internet, as Léuli Eshrāghi shared, “enables my mom to feel less alone, and still connected to me and my brothers and my dad, and for us not to feel so far away from everybody.” For *Moana Cosmopolitans*, currently, the internet can also be the only way to access homelands and home cultures. It also increases our connection to global Indigenous communities and global communities of colour, as time shifts us from being within our own communities physically, to online communities.

### ***Vā with Moana and Tangata Whenua***

*Vā relations* between *Moana Cosmopolitans* and Tangata Whenua was a noticeable consideration for

the artists in talanoa, many of whom were genuinely grappling with how, as Moana people, to be in good relation to Māori. This relationship to Māori was emphasised by Ahilapalapa Rands, who commented, “it’s very important that we have language and a way to articulate how we’ve come to be in Aotearoa. And I think that is a piece of work that we need to figure out and then do a lot of remedial education, because I think it’s easy to romanticise that we’re cousins, but we’re still uninvited guests and we don’t have the language to understand and articulate who we are on this particular land.”

For *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, there is a particular kind of relation that needs considering. Rands continues, “a particularity you’re talking about with generations before came to this place and we stayed at this place and now we’re here in this place, and we’re of this place we’ve been influenced by the whenua, by the cultures, by the people, by drinking the water, by being sheltered by these mountains, it’s completely formed who we are.”

### ***Vā with Moana and Black Culture***

*Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* over time have been undeniably influenced by *Black Imaginaries* out of the United States. From the influences of music and fashion seen in the *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary* of an urban gos culture to the influences of Black scholarship globally, as seen in this very thesis, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* are deeply entangled with Black culture. Therefore, there was similarly a concern with ways to be in good relation to Black culture, a particular relationship that was emphasised because of the racial uprisings in America over 2020.

For Natasha Matila-Smith, the influences from Black culture have come through theory and particular ideas, commenting that we “can’t pretend like we just came up with it, out of nowhere.” Matila-Smith continues, “I’m still figuring out what responsibility we have as non-Black people of colour not living in America...maybe we should be making reparations to them as well, for having such a huge global influence.”

Ioana Gordon-Smith comments, “Black literature often talks about the stuff that I’m interested in.... I find that it talks about feminism and beauty in ways that really intrigue me, often because I don’t find those conversations within Pacific writing. So *Thick* [by Tressie McMillan Cottom] was really important, because I can’t find a Pacific equivalent of what it means to deal with those issues.”

Ahilapalapa Rands acknowledges that online communities of colour have helped her get “literate in race politics.” Ultimately these spaces gave Rands a “language of how to articulate my experience and how to understand other people’s experience.” These things, Rands comments, filtered down into her practice and personhood. “[I]t’s really political to just unapologetically be who you are if who you are is in resistance to all that dominant shit.”

#### 6.2.4 Mau

At the closing of Talanoa Mau—a symposium held in early 2020 at the New Zealand Festival of the Arts—Salā Lemi Ponifasio described *mau* as a form of tino rangatiratanga, sovereignty. *Mau* in this sense is likened to David Garneau’s (2018) concept of *creative sovereignty*. Thus, *mau* is the artist’s control over their own work and ideas, the politic inherent in *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*.

#### *Mau: Outside Expectations*

*Mau* within *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* speaks to artists’ control over the way one imagines. This is of significance because of the external expectations felt by Moana artists. Léuli Eshrāghi commented that not only are Indigenous artists “expected to be fully at peace and comfortable living across two entirely different semiotic intellectual worlds,” but also that success in the global art market infers that one is probably not that well-loved in one’s home communities and visa versa. Eshrāghi concurs that this tension is an impossible ask, which is expected of racialised peoples and other minority groups.

A part of this expectation, too, is a feeling that institutions project a particular type of political voice onto Moana artists. Natasha Matila-Smith tells me, “I feel like a lot of people feel like they have to make certain artwork to get into the institution. And they do. They do have to.” For Matila-Smith, however, the expectations come predominantly from outside of the Moana arts. She says, “I’m not alternative to Pacific art, I am Pacific art. But I’m marketed as someone that is doing something different, but it’s not really.” She continues, “I would feel sorry for us and future generations only because external influences are making us feel guilty about not carrying on traditions.”

Similarly, Talia Smith was always conscious of performing her Moana subjectivity for others, actively choosing to not make work about her identity until 2019. She commented that “people of our generation are scared of getting trapped in this whole identity art. Because for some reason we’re told that it’s a bad thing, which is ridiculous because everyone’s work is identity work because we put ourselves in it.” This resistance came from the pressure felt to perform culture in a way “that you think these institutions want you to perform, because we are told that institutions are where we want to be.” For Smith, the concern was around wanting to make sure she had a sense of *mau* over when and how she wanted to make art, and not be influenced by outside forces or popular trends.

#### *Mau: Futurity as Political*

Gordon-Smith has found that the politics of world making can be difficult to declare because what her sense of *mau* is advocating for is “dreaming, and being quirky and being weird and being everything that you could be if you didn’t have to defend yourself against lots of things first....” For Gordon-Smith the articulation of *mau* positions dreaming, imagining and futurity as decolonising politics, and in contrast to the en-vogue activist tendencies.

The ability to build worlds and to dream is something found in the literature reviewed on the *decolonial imaginary* and is incredibly political,

because access and agency over one's imagination can be difficult under the *colonial imaginary*. The politics of this kind of mau places one outside of the colonised-coloniser binary, outside of expectations, and is emancipatory as a framework for imagining. Rands comments, "there's so many cool things you can do.... I think if you are in the arts, you have a responsibility to be thinking about that stuff and then trying to gear your practice toward that in some way, you know."

### ***Mau: Everything is Political***

Within the context of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, mau is intended to be an emancipatory characteristic. This characteristic is not about a homogenous politic but rather a mau over one's own mau, and a decolonial fracturing of any perception that *Moana Cosmopolitans* have a single politic.

When I asked Ioana Gordon-Smith, who was also at Talanoa Mau, if she resonated with the notion of her work having a mau, she commented, "I feel like my politics are definitely not of the moment, or it's not in favour because it's not an antagonistic politics, it's not confrontational politics. It's a politics that almost skips past that and it's just kind of like, well what do we want?" Therefore, this political position or mau is something encompassed within *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. Gordon-Smith continues:

I really like this mau idea, it's quite an instinctual thing so you never really have to justify yourself in opposition to something, you just do it. It's very embodied.... I think maybe like seven years ago, people within the Pacific Arts community were really defining themselves along the spectrum of what contemporary Indigenous experience is, and there never really felt like there was room for all of that.

And I find it difficult because I want to work with all those positions. They're all valid, they're all interesting. They're all now.

### **6.2.5 Su'ifefiloi**

Within contemporary Moana art, it is clear that there is no single approach to *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. Not only that, the artists I had talanoa with felt comfortable using whatever media, concepts, theories or methods that were available to them in ways that remix and combine existing things to make something new. This is a process of *su'ifefiloi* (Ellis, 1998; Figiel, 2006; Refiti, 2014; Tielu, 2016; Fuluifaga, 2017), a methodology that combines diverse things to create something new.

*Su'ifefiloi* is the chosen research methodology for this thesis because of the way it enables this research to synthesise assorted data and methods across multiple discipline areas, in ways that are flexible yet not compromising. Through the talanoa and on closer analysis of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, it is clear that *su'ifefiloi* is itself a characteristic of the *imaginary* of these artists. Rather than smoothing over disparate elements, theories and thoughts, the place in which they join together, or the string of the ula, becomes a very important element. Artists enjoy being able to choose from a wide range of tools, knowledges and technologies available to them, which enable a sense of play key to their art-making.

## **6.3 Conclusion**

For *Moana Cosmopolitans*, their imaginary is required to deal with colonial residues, while being "a new kind of intellectual work and political education" (Gibson, 2003, p. 21). *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*—as with all decolonial imaginaries—engages in its own social conditions, while also simultaneously building new worlds. Moana scholars, thinkers and artists have been engaging in this practice of building new worlds for a long time, providing a decolonial genealogy of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* that today's artists benefit from. Acknowledging this legacy, this chapter articulates a *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary* particular to a digital native generation of Moana artists in Aotearoa, as a

specific *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary* more broadly. Building on the concept of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, this articulation of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* is the start of working toward an emerging theory of contemporary Moana art.



# Chapter 7.

## I'u o Manatu<sup>70</sup>

### 7.1 Reflections

We are in a very particular moment of time in which global mobility has been impacted dramatically and racial tensions here in Aotearoa, and in the United States specifically, have been heightened. In a somewhat ironic way, the rapid, global spread of Covid-19 has demonstrated just how interconnected our global worlds are. However, even with global mobility impacted—as planes were grounded and borders closed—the cosmopolitan character of Moana life is still present. If anything, the increased use of internet technologies has enabled more cosmopolitan relations and collaborations to take form. With fewer people circling the globe and more people on the internet, the world felt a little smaller than it ever has. Within the increased proximity Covid-19 provided global peoples through the internet, it also exacerbated pre-existing, unresolved global issues including, but not limited to, racism, White supremacy and anti-Blackness.

The emerging theory of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* developed in this thesis originated within this heightened political climate. In the early stages of this research, I did not know how or whether the work was political. However, the context of 2020 (and the start of 2021) has been the backdrop for this work and, within this context, it has felt like the ultimate political act for racialised peoples to imagine futures.

This imagining needs a method of contending with the *colonial imaginary*, while also emancipating oneself from it, because positive articulations of Moana life are not from the *colonial imaginary*. Yet, the *colonial imaginary* and its upholding of White supremacy is not a thing of the past.

Furthermore, this research focuses on topics and issues that are still emerging. These include both the current political and health conditions globally, but also the artists featured within this thesis. To theorise something that is currently in process is not a typical art historical approach. Moreover, I as a researcher am also in that process, in that these artists, artworks and art moments also belong to me. These are peers, collaborators and friends. This inside point of view has been vital for this research—with time and distance, there is no doubt it would be different.

In that sense, the notion of futurity is vital to this work. *Imaginaries* have an implicit sense of futurity in that they focus on the constant reproduction of new identities and subjectivities. Thus, embedding these artists and their voices into this research enables the imagining of new *imaginaries* and new Moana subjectivities. On reflection, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* is most useful as an emergent theory that makes way for future theories.

### 7.2 Future Research Ala

<sup>70</sup>. I'u o manatu roughly translates to concluding thoughts or conclusion.

Working toward a theory of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* is an ongoing and rhizomatic project. The methodology of *su'ifefiloi* already anticipates the remaking of this work, with elements able to be untied and reused for new purposes. In that light, this research offers other research pathways, or *ala*, for future researchers.

The full impacts of Covid-19 on contemporary Moana art are yet to be known. Covid-19 has provided a backdrop to this work; however, this research has intentionally focused on work made in the conditions before the pandemic. In that sense, it presents a *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary* specific to the pre-Covid era. The presentation of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* post-Covid, as well as the impacts of Covid on contemporary Moana art more broadly, is an *ala* for future research. In particular, the role of the internet in both *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and Moana art production and exhibition practices under Covid-19 is an area of promise for further consideration.

Focusing on a *digital native* generation and art made between 2012 and 2020, I uncovered a very particular *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary*. There is further potential in applying the concept of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* to other generations of Moana art making. This may reveal histories of movement and mobility in alternative ways, as well as other configurations of the *imaginary* in *Moana Cosmopolitan* thought.

Perhaps another research *ala* could be the application of a *Moana Cosmopolitan* lens to museological practice and collections. This kind of reparative approach to museum collections could offer an interesting curatorial framework to think through Moana ancestors and ancestral belongings within a cosmopolitan context. It would be interesting to know what this approach may reveal about histories of globality within another Moana time. Furthermore, I wonder how *Moana Cosmopolitanism* can be applied to other material culture and art forms, including theatre, film, music, literature and fashion.

Outside of an art context, *Moana Cosmopolitan*

*Imaginaries* offers great potential to be remade and reshaped through the critical conversations of a wider Moana community. As an identity marker and descriptor of a lived experience, there will be many conceptual reconstructions that can be applied. These reconstructions could strengthen the notion and enable future research to take it in its own direction.

At this stage of the thesis, I again wonder about the use of the word Moana and its inherent poly-centrism. Moana has been the best language option for use during the process of undertaking this research, yet I feel very aware of the way in which it makes Moana people from outside of Polynesia feel excluded, as the word Moana is not found in non-Polynesian language groups. While that exclusion is not intentional, it is something this research has had to face by choosing that term. In processes of decolonisation, we can only use what we have to make our way toward something better. Using the term Moana in preference to colonising language, such as the Pacific, is a part of that process. Perhaps in future moves toward decolonisation, more language options will develop that will displace the word Moana in favour of something else.

It was not until the end of the research that I became fully aware of the gendered aspect of the work—most of the artists and curators featured being women or femme-identifying. While a gendered bias is implicit in my worldview (as discussed through my own positioning as well as the methodology and methods choices), I was not able to fully examine or contend with the gendered element the research has brought up. This is a clear limitation of the work and presents an avenue for future research.

### 7.3 Toward a Theory of Moana Art

To date, very few monographs from New Zealand dedicated to either Moana arts as a whole or to Moana artists individually exist, and what is written tends to be either dispersed across a range of platforms or

focused on singular events or exhibitions. There is an important catalogue of existing Moana publications, as well as those forthcoming. The books *Te Moemoea no Iotefa, The Dream of Joseph: A Celebration of Pacific Art and Taonga* (1990); *Speaking in Colour* (1997); *Pacific Art Niu Sila* (2002); *The Frangipani is Dead: Contemporary Pacific Art in New Zealand, 1985–2000* (2008); *Tangata o le Moana: New Zealand and the People of the Pacific* (2012); *Art in Oceania: A New History* (2012); *Tatau: A Cultural History of Sāmoan Tattooing* (2018); *Oceania* (2018) and *Crafting Aotearoa* (2019) as well as journals, such as *Spectrum*, *Reading Room*, *The Contemporary Pacific*, *Journal of Pacific Studies* and *Artlink* have been foundational texts for many Moana arts readers.<sup>71</sup> Further publications are also in progress, including an upcoming survey of Tongan arts by Hūfanga Okusitino Māhina and Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai.

Within the above collection, there is a determined evaluation of Moana art history on its own terms. Some contend directly with the Eurocentrism of the Western art canon; others bypass it completely. Regardless of approach however, it is clear that much of this writing is undertaken by a few individual historians and curators (Gordon-Smith & Lopesi, 2019).

This thesis has never been intended as a comprehensive history of contemporary Moana art in Aotearoa. Rather, it relies on the aforementioned catalogue of art historians who have historicised contemporary Moana art to date. Yet there has always been the lingering question for me whether (or not) my research has included enough of the aforementioned art history. Similarly, the decision to focus on a very select number of artists and artworks limits the research somewhat. This limitation is two fold: only a small number of artists and artworks directly shaped the theorising on *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* and, subsequently, *Moana Cosmopolitanism* has only been demonstrated through those artists and artworks.

To conceptualise *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and theorise *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* within the scope of this thesis, I necessarily had to make decisions about inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, rather than attempting to include a wide range, to which I might have been unable to do justice, I decided to be specific. Yet I do wonder how the work would be different if I had decided otherwise.

When beginning this research there was a sense that for this specific generation of Moana people, their lived experience was not yet reflected in either the literature on Moana lives or Moana art. This sentiment was shared with the artists in talanoa. Furthermore, this thesis has ended up theorising not only something that I myself am a part of, but also a moment of time, a moment of art, that we are in currently. In the absence of existing scholarship that the artists feel articulates their lived experience, this thesis does some of that work, thinking through the concept of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* to understand a *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary*. In a way, this thesis attempts to kill two birds with one stone. On the one hand, a *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary* is the framework through which we can consider the driving factors of how *Moana Cosmopolitans* imagine and therefore analyse their art making. On the other, it is a productive force through which *Moana Cosmopolitanism* takes form in art and other articulations of culture.

It seems easy to make the connection that cosmopolitanism, for contemporary Moana artists, exists largely due to participation in a global market. Contemporary Moana artists practising and exhibiting in the world's art centres such as London, New York or Venice is an increasingly common phenomenon. Yet the cosmopolitan character of Moana life, or *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, this research contends, is no longer reserved for an elite traveller. While *Moana Cosmopolitanism* does encompass the elite traveller, it also encompasses the everyday reality of crossing

<sup>71</sup> From 2020–2021 Creative New Zealand is producing the Pacific Arts Legacy Project, which I have had the privilege of

editing. The project is different to the usual historical overview, and publishes stories from the artists themselves.

borders through internet technologies, increased accessibility of air travel (when we are not under current restrictions), and histories and legacies of Moana participation in global worlds. Today's world is by nature cosmopolitan. As this thesis argues, *Moana Cosmopolitanism* has always existed, albeit in different forms at different times.

Shifting away from deficiency and displacement narratives of diaspora to concepts of cosmopolitanism enables contemporary Moana artists to configure histories of mobility and globality in different and more generative ways within their *imaginary*. Therefore, this research sought to answer the questions:

How is the *imaginary* configured in *Moana Cosmopolitan* thought?

How do *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* impact the presentation of transnational Moana subjectivities in exhibitions and artworks, contributing toward an emerging theory of Moana art?

*Imaginaries* are the creative force that produces the social fabric of any given society. Within Aotearoa New Zealand, the pervasive nature of the *colonial imaginary* and its systems, structures and tools of power still looms heavy over the lives of Indigenous and racialised groups of people. For diasporic peoples, diasporic identities require constant reproduction through decolonial imaginings of self. A *decolonial imaginary* is that which contends with the *colonial imaginary* while simultaneously building something new.

*Moana Cosmopolitanism* in and of itself is a decolonial, diasporic *Moana imaginary* in the same way that Wendt's and Hau'ofa's conceptions of Oceania are *imaginaries* that produce new ways of seeing and being in the world. Thus, there is a need to understand *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* as co-constitutive. Imagining yourself within *Moana Cosmopolitanism* or as a *Moana Cosmopolitan* influences the subsequent imagining of your subjectivity, and so it keeps going, as new ways of imagining oneself keep coming to fruition, in different

places and in different times.

In *talanoa* with a *digital native* generation of artists and art workers, namely Louisa Afoa, Ahilapalapa Rands, Ioana Gordon-Smith, Talia Smith, Natasha Matila-Smith, Léuli Eshrāghi, John Veā, Emily Parr and Cora-Allan Wickliffe, it became clear that the *imaginary* within *Moana Cosmopolitanism* configures in a way that is relational. The relational element means that one's *imaginary* is informed in relation to other people, and factors external to the person doing the imagining. Thus, one's social world becomes the *imaginary* for one's own *imaginary* to be formed. In the context of *Moana Cosmopolitanism*, the *imaginary* configures in relation to the *colonial imaginary*, other *Moana imaginaries*, global Indigenous communities and global communities of colour. This relationality requires a relational ethic that can be understood through the Sāmoan concept of *vā relations*, in which one's social world is tethered to others, requiring an ethical relationality in which people are in good relation to one another. The significance of *vā relations* within *Moana Cosmopolitanism* shifts *Moana Cosmopolitans* beyond national borders and boundaries and into a relational social world, which in this research is described as *Vā Moana*. Moreover, one's social world is as expansive as one's networks predicated on kinship and relations spread physically and virtually.

The majority of this thesis has layered theory, concepts, *critical autoethnography*, *talanoa* and close reading of artworks to build a conceptualisation of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* and the emerging theory of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. In the previous chapter, Chapter 6, these layers were brought together to articulate the way in which *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* present a transnational Moana subjectivity in exhibitions, texts and artworks. To answer this question, I have identified five key qualities of the *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary* as produced by a *digital native* generation of artists and their art made between 2012 and 2020. These five characteristics are:

- (1) being *decolonial*;
- (2) being concerned with *deep time*;

- (3) existing within a relational geography or *Vā Moana*;
- (4) grounded in positions of *mau*; and
- (5) ultimately having remix quality or *su'ifefiloi*.

As discussed, imagining oneself and one's subjectivity outside of the pervasive *colonial imaginary* makes imaginings within a *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary* implicitly *decolonial*. Perhaps this implicit decolonial nature bears similarities to Jim Vivieaere's comments on *Bottled Ocean*, in which he did not have a decolonising agenda, yet all the work operated in a decolonial way (Brunt, 2010, p. 85). Emily Parr's *Moana Calling Me Home* (2019–2020) is a prime example of the way a transnational Moana subjectivity presents the decolonial within artworks. Art, in this example, offers a way for *Moana Cosmopolitan* artists to tackle the colonial impositions that artists are still having to contend with by creating new narratives to speak back to the archive.

Concerns with *deep time* present in a number of ways in a *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginary*. First, through an acute awareness of the legacy of contemporary Moana art, and the responsibility, and at times pressure, that legacy has on emerging artists. Second, as discussed in relation to Ahilapalapa Rands' *Lift Off* (2018), *deep time* presents through the simultaneous imagining of new futures, while also breaking cycles of *intergenerational trauma*. *Intergenerational trauma* was a significant consideration for many of the artists featured in this thesis. There was a sense that one needed to look back into familial traumas to move forward into healed futures.

While a relational social world or *Vā Moana* is the space in which *Moana Cosmopolitanism* exists, it is simultaneously present within *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*. Moving outside of colonial cartographic understandings of the world, the legacy of Oceania continues to be developed within exhibition settings. For the exhibitions *The Commute* (2018), *Layover* (2019), and *Transits and Returns* (2019–2020) the concept of the *Great Ocean* was used as a way of

articulating a *Vā Moana*, or an ocean space, predicated on Indigenous kinship rather than colonially mediated relations.

All of these characteristics so far are examples of artists having their own *mau* or *creative sovereignty*. Jim Vivieaere's three-legged race, which pulls the contemporary Moana artists in many directions, across different pressures, is still felt by artists. Namely, there's a sense that art schools discipline students into making a particular kind of Moana art, which is additionally sought after by art galleries and is art that reproduces trauma. Being able to realise those pressures and move beyond them to practice art in a way that replenishes one as an artist (rather than give in to the demands of art institutions) requires an artist to stand in their *mau*. A sense of *mau* comes across strongly in the wallpaper works (2015–2020) of Louisa Afoa, in which, after making art based on the artist's trauma, she decided to find a mode of making that brought her joy.

Finally, the last characteristic is also the methodology of this thesis, which speaks to the method, medium and aesthetic of *su'ifefiloi* or having a remix quality. In each of the artworks and exhibitions discussed within this thesis, the artists used a variety of disparate elements, theoretical groundings, and positionalities that were strung together to create something new—their art. Ultimately, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* present a transnational Moana subjectivity in a plethora of ways, unable to be easily pinned down and articulated: the presentation of Moana subjectivities is the ultimate *su'ifefiloi*.

*Su'ifefiloi* as the final element of *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries* is perhaps appropriate within this research, a *su'ifefiloi* of its own. It is not a complete *ula lole* ready to be sealed and gifted; rather this thesis is the extension of a found *ula lole* of already existing *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*, left unfinished for new *future imaginaries* to be added. Breaking from the traditions of the thesis format, this study sought to work toward an emerging theory of Moana art and life through the methodology of



*su'ife'floi*, which enabled the creation and combination of autonomous parts. This included maintaining the integrity of artists' voices and perspectives as important additions to the contemporary archive.

Legacies of *Moana Cosmopolitanism* exist into the future and into the past. Reconnecting Moana life to its cosmopolitan legacy offers exciting potentials for understanding the contributions of our contemporary Moana artists today, yesterday and tomorrow. This thesis *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries: Toward an Emerging Theory of Moana Art* is a humble addition of a few more *lole*.

# Glossary

## Sāmoan

Definitions from Milner, G. B. (1992). *Samoaan Dictionary: Samoan–English–Samoan*. Pasifika Press.

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| a'ano                 | — flesh  |
| afakasi               | — halfcaste  |
| ala                   | — path, road   |
| aufaipese             | — choir  |
| fa'aaloalo            | — respect  |
| fa'amaumauga          | — written records  |
| fa'atonuga            | — command, order, instructions                           |
| fa'i palagi           | — foreign banana   |
| Faiga o Su'isu'iga    | — method of stitching                                    |
| fofō                  | — Sāmoan massage   |
| gafa                  | — lineage, geneology                                     |
| ipu tī                | — cup of tea   |
| lavalava              | — clothes  |
| malaga                | — journey, trip  |
| malo le faauli        | — thanks for the steering                                |
| malo le tapua'i       | — thanks for the prayers                                 |
| mana                  | — power  |
| mau                   | — keep, retain   |
| Pālagi                | — European, European ways                                |
| pitonu'u              | — sub-village  |
| pua                   | — gardenia   |
| sā                    | — sacred   |
| Sā                    | — extended kin group                                     |
| solu                  | — tread on, trample on                                   |
| su'ifefiloi           | — to sew a mixture                                       |
| tapu                  | — be forbidden   |
| tāpua'iga             | — act of worship   |
| tatau                 | — tattoo   |
| teu le vā             | — tend to the space between                              |
| tūlaga                | — position, location                                     |
| Tūlaga o Sa'ili'iliga | — position of the researcher                             |
| ula fugala'au         | — flower garland   |
| ula lolo              | — lolly garland  |
| vā                    | — distance, space (between two places, things or people) |
| vāapiapi              | — interval between two things                            |
| vāfealoa'i            | — rules of behaviour                                     |
| vālatalata            | — (be) close, near (to each other)                       |
| vā tapuia             | — sacred space   |

## Māori

Definitions from *Te Aka Online Māori Dictionary*.

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| hapū                | — sub-tribes   |
| iwi                 | — tribes   |
| kaupapa             | — topic, policy, matter for discussion   |
| kaupapa Māori       | — a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society |
| mana                | — prestige, authority, power, influence, spiritual power   |
| manaakitanga        | — hospitality, kindness, generosity  |
| pepeha              | — formulaic expression, saying of the ancestors  |
| tangata whenua      | — people born of the land, Indigenous Māori  |
| tino rangatiratanga | — self-determination   |
| tupuna wāhine       | — women ancestors  |
| whakapapa           | — genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent  |
| whānau              | — extended family  |
| whenua              | — country, land, nation, state   |

## Tongan

|          |                          |
|----------|--------------------------|
| lalava   | — lashing                |
| tauhi vā | — to care for or nurture |
| vaha     | — between                |
| va'a     | — branch                 |

## Hawaiian

Definitions from *Wehewehe Wikiwiki*

|              |                               |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| ipu          | — bottle gourd                |
| Kānaka Maoli | — Indigenous Hawaiian person  |
| kīkī         | — to spray                    |
| Kū           | — Ancient Hawaiian god of war |
| pule         | — prayer                      |
| kumu hula    | — hula teacher                |
| Moananuiākea | — Pacific Ocean               |

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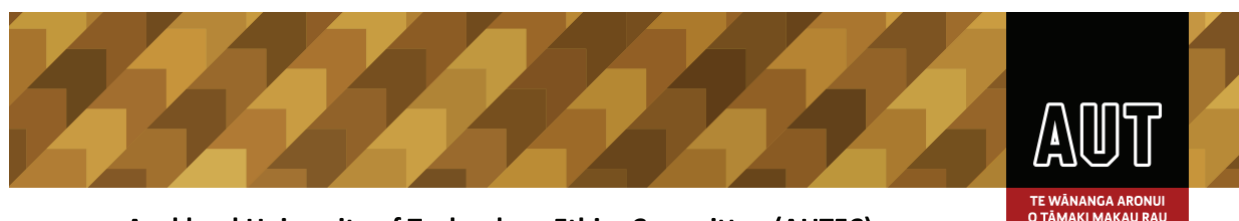
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# Appendix 1: Ethics Approval



## Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTC)

Auckland University of Technology  
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ  
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316  
E: [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)  
[www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics](http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics)

2 April 2020

Albert Refiti  
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Albert

### Ethics Application: 20/83 Making waves: Moana cosmopolitanisms in contemporary art

Thank you for submitting your application for ethical review. We are pleased to advise that the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTC) approved your ethics application at their meeting on 23 March 2020, subject to the following conditions:

1. Provision of an assurance that the data and Consent Forms will be accessible by both the Primary Researcher and the Applicant and will be stored separately on AUT premises. The location at which the Consent Forms will be stored needs to be specified. AUTC recommends that they are stored in the office of the Secondary Supervisor to ensure they are separate to the data;
2. Inclusion in the Information Sheet of the total time participants are required to give to the research, accounting for the talanoa/interviews, the revision of transcripts and potential review of chapter drafts;
3. Inclusion in the Consent Form of a tick box where the participant can agree or not to being named in the research, and of the standard withdrawal statement using the template available on the Research Ethics website at <http://aut.ac.nz/researchethics>;
4. Inclusion in the Information Sheet of the standard wording around withdrawal as given in the Information Sheet exemplar available on the Research Ethics website at <http://aut.ac.nz/researchethics>;
5. Revision of the fourth point in the Researcher Safety Protocol to ensure that any intervention to assist the researcher happens as soon as possible in the simplest manner.

Please provide us with a response to the points raised in these conditions, indicating either how you have satisfied these points or proposing an alternative approach. AUTC also requires copies of any altered documents, such as Information Sheets, surveys etc. You are not required to resubmit the application form again. Any changes to responses in the form required by the committee in their conditions may be included in a supporting memorandum.

Please note that the Committee is always willing to discuss with applicants the points that have been made. There may be information that has not been made available to the Committee, or aspects of the research may not have been fully understood.

Once your response is received and confirmed as satisfying the Committee's points, you will be notified of the full approval of your ethics application. Full approval is not effective until all the conditions have been met. Data collection may not commence until full approval has been confirmed. If these conditions are not met within six months, your application may be closed and a new application will be required if you wish to continue with this research.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, we ask that you use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz).

We look forward to hearing from you,

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTC Secretariat  
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: [iana.lopesi@aut.ac.nz](mailto:iana.lopesi@aut.ac.nz)



## Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology  
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E: [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)  
[www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics](http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics)

16 April 2020

Albert Refiti  
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Albert

Re Ethics Application: **20/83 Making waves: Moana cosmopolitanisms in contemporary art**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 15 April 2023.

### Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Please use the complete full withdrawal statement on the Consent Forms (I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible).

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

### Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz). The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat  
**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: [iana.lopesi@aut.ac.nz](mailto:iana.lopesi@aut.ac.nz)

# Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet



TE WĀNANGA ARONUI  
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

## Participant Information Sheet

### Date Information Sheet Produced:

22 January 2020

### Project Title

Making Waves: Moana Cosmopolitanisms in Contemporary Art

### Invitation

Talofa i lou Afioga/Susuga [Insert Title or Honorific, Name etc.]

I am writing to you to give you an overview of the research project *Making Waves: Moana Cosmopolitanisms in Contemporary Art*.

This research investigates how Moana cosmopolitans *imagine* (Appadurai, 1996) *Vā Moana*, and how Moana cosmopolitans' *imagining* of a transnational Moana subjectivity in exhibitions, texts, artworks impacts the presentation of *Vā Moana*.

The online environment is becoming increasingly significant for diasporic people whose identity is shaped outside of traditional territory. Collapsing space, and offering a new kind of *vā or relational space*, the online environment through social media supports (in addition to increasing affordability of air travel) the production of distinct cultural identities in *deterritorial neighbourhoods* (Appadurai, 1996), that being neighbourhoods of people who form community groups but are no longer bound to territory. The notion of artists not bound to territory or the *Radical* (Bourriard, 2009) has a well-established place within contemporary art, and increasingly more Moana artists are participating in this global contemporary art market. Thus the emergence of distinctive identities in the diaspora as imagined in contemporary art highlights the importance of theorising contemporary Moana art alongside Moana ways of thinking through recognisably Moana (Pacific) thinking about space (and space-time).

The enquiry of *Making Waves: Moana Cosmopolitanisms in Contemporary Art* is very much open to your experiences and views on being an artist/arts worker in the Moana diaspora and what you have to say will to a large extent shape the project and the findings. I would like to invite you to participate through talanoa and/or interview. Your participation is, of course, entirely voluntary.

### How was I chosen to be part of this research?

From our discussions so far, it has become apparent that you are an artist/art worker who has made significant contributions to contemporary art in Aotearoa New Zealand/other location, and self-identify as having Pacific ethnicity. Because of your contribution to and experiences with Contemporary art, I would like to discuss the questions stipulated in the attached document *Indicative Questions* with you.

### How do I participate in this research?

We may invite you to participate in a talanoa session.

If you agree to participate in a talanoa, the format of talanoa sessions will be proposed to you a week ahead of meeting. However, I suggest it will be approximately 60 minutes to 90 minutes in length. Once you receive the proposed format, you are able to suggest changes, further topics for discussion and raise any concerns. I am very happy to accommodate various cultural protocols appropriate to you.

The interview would be divided into two parts, the first would be you responding the questions proposed ahead of time, followed by a second portion of time following up in more detail and clarifying points made in the first portion of the session.

Both the talanoa and interview sessions will be audio recorded and you will be named in the research. It is possible to turn off the audio recording devices during the discussion if you wish. Once the talanoa or interview has been transcribed, you will have the opportunity to approve the transcription via telephone calls or emails and make



clarifications where appropriate. You may also be asked for a second talanoa or interview which would also be between 60 to 90 minutes in length.

The total time participants are required to give this research is between 2.5 hours to 4 hours (inclusive of up to two talanoa, revision of transcripts and approval of any published material in which you are quoted).

While this research is for the purpose of a PhD qualification, I would like to be able to use approved material from the talanoa or interview in academic publications and conference presentations. The raw data, that is, the audio files and word-by-word transcripts, will be destroyed after six years.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

#### **What are the benefits?**

Given the international interest in contemporary Moana art, the need for rigorous scholarship from a Moana world view is urgent. Currently, contemporary Moana art is often discussed from a Western perspective within international art criticism and art historical contexts, separate from Moana epistemologies and ontologies. As a consequence, the art historical archive fails to contextualise contemporary Moana art culturally. Thus with the emergence of distinctive identities in the diaspora, the importance of theorising contemporary Moana art alongside Moana ways of thinking is now evident. Participants benefit from the inclusion of their lived experiences and ways of thinking within a permanent and scholarly text. The wider community also benefits from the inclusion of these often over-looked perspectives within an archivally sound object.

This work also has potential benefits for the broader discussion of diasporic identity, which has been significantly shifted and changed by an always fluctuating and evolving Internet. To date, there has not been much Moana theorising of a digital native subjectivity. This research thus has benefits to the wider community in offering a new framework for understanding today's lived experiences.

As for the student researcher, the project offers her the opportunity to complete her qualification to a high standard by including voices from her community, in an area with significant gaps.

#### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

Should you feel any discomfort at any stage of a talanoa or interview session, we can stop the recording immediately and then discuss how best to proceed. Similarly if you later decide that you no longer wish to a named participate within this research, you can opt out.

#### **How will my privacy be protected?**

If you agree to participate, you will be named in the research so that your knowledge and experiences can be attributed to you, as indicated on the consent form. During this research, I will discuss the content of the talanoa or interview session with my supervision team (Leali'ifano Albert Refiti, Layne Waerea and Tina Engels-Schwarzpaul). You have the right to withdraw formally from the project at any time without giving a reason, and the right to request all information traceable to you to be withheld from subsequent publications.

#### **What are the costs of participating in this research?**

Apart from your time, there will be no cost involved. For the talanoa and interviews, we will meet at a place that is convenient to you. For your time, humbly offer a koha of \$100 cash.

#### **What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

Your participation is a matter of your own choice. Should you have further questions before you can make a decision, please contact myself, details below. Please advise your availability within the next two weeks.

#### **How do I agree to participate in this research?**

You will be given a Participant Consent Form to sign, as soon as you have advised your availability. This form states in simple terms the conditions for your involvement.

#### **Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

You will receive a transcript of the talanoa or interview for approval. This will include the opportunity to specify which information contained in the transcript has to remain confidential. You will be informed of any publication or presentation which includes your contribution to the research, including receiving a copy of the final PhD thesis.

#### **What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project or for more information please contact myself Lana Lopesi +64226498637 or [lanalopesi@aut.ac.nz](mailto:lanalopesi@aut.ac.nz)

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTC, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), +64 9 921 9999 extn: 6038.

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 16 April 2020, AUTC Reference number 20/83**

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

# Appendix 3: Consent Form



TE WĀNANGA ARONUI  
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

## Consent Form

Project title: ***Making Waves: Moana Cosmopolitanisms in Contemporary Art***

Principal Investigators: **Lana Lopesi**

- 
- ☐ I have understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated or as explained by the principal investigator.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions which have been answered by the principal investigator.
- ☐ I agree that notes can be taken during the talanoa and that the event will also be audio recorded.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I consent to being named in this research.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I wish to receive a draft of the interviews and other written material generated in the talanoa or interview so I am able to remove, review, amend and approve what has been recorded (please tick one):
- Yes ☐ No ☐
- ☐ I understand that transcripts will be stored for 6 years in a secure place and then destroyed.

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Date:

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 16 April 2020, AUTEK Reference number 20/83**

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*