

TAUTAI

CONTEMPORARY PACIFIC ARTS TRUST

JUNE 2011

siliga david setoga "i'm got to be good for you"



Under the Influence 2008



Playing Happy Fatties 2009



(In)fluenza

Well known for his ability to translate our daily banter into the latest fashion statements, multimedia artist Siliga David Setoga has tirelessly worked to raise our political consciousness since the turn of the millennium. Born and raised in the central suburbs of Mount Eden and Grey Lynn, son of a Minister and devout Christian mother his works often articulate a sense of connectedness to a Samoa located within the living rooms and urban environment of Auckland. An entrepreneur and provocateur the popularity and success of his t-shirt line *Popohardwear* has become a feature of our urban landscape and for Siliga, a Trojan horse of sorts. Appropriating and reworking commercial brands he infuses his critical commentary into his t-shirt designs and inserts his political agenda within the peregrinations of everyday life. Donning one of

Siliga's t-shirts is more than a fashion statement or an outward expression of identity, it is an affirmation of a growing critical Pacific voice. In July his website www.popohardwear.com will go live to meet the demands of eager Pacific customers worldwide that align themselves with the messages and politics of Siliga's urban apparel.

Translating his commercial practise into the gallery Siliga has extended the idiom of t-shirt screen printing to new heights. The installation *Say and Display 2007* part of the Urban Pacific exhibition was comprised of a range of customised t-shirts installed on a display stand. Reworking commercial brands such as *FreshUp* whose advertising campaigns featured iconic Kiwi's such as Marc Ellis is cleverly decentred and punctured with a more critical juxtaposition. Using broken English in his play on the popular

marketing campaign of the beverage, 'Freshy, I'm got to be good for' suggests a differing image of New Zealand one that is steeped in the harsh legacies of migration. Reclaiming derogatory terms such as 'freshy' as a part of asserting pride and identity is only the tip of the ice-berg. Siliga's t-shirts inform a wider practise that is not based around simple reversals but the creation of a complex politics of identity and representation where economics, suburbia, and urban life converge.

In 2008 he was part of the pivotal show *Contemporary Samoa* held at Pataka Gallery which celebrated the work of artists who position their practise and identities in the liminal space between New Zealand and Samoa. Siliga's contribution *(In)fluenza* an installation of white fruit boxes explored the more fraught relationship between New Zealand



and Samoa. With the prefix 'influ' Siliga infects the Apple and Pear Marketing Board logo that promotes the export of NZ pip fruit. This simple interjection renders visible a history of exchange between the two ports of Samoa and New Zealand. Borrowing heavily from the vernacular of commercial exporting the work alludes to the outbreak of Spanish Influenza another export of New Zealand. The fruit boxes also refer to the term 'fresh off the boat' a phrase used to describe the arrival of fresh fruit and colloquially used as a derogatory label for Pacific migrants. Creating a heavily layered work, Siliga explores the myriad of exchanges between Samoa and New Zealand and its ongoing ramifications in the present.

His first solo exhibition *No Sense Making Cents 2009* at Fresh Gallery Otara saw his political voice inverted to address cultural practises. Part of a generation of New Zealand born Pacific people his works reflect the formative role of 'place' in the experiences of growing up 'brown' and Samoan in Auckland. In the installation *Under the Influence 2008* he draws on the Godfather trilogy (his favourite films) by appropriating the iconic image of a closed fist. Encased within the grip of the closed fist is a silhouette of Samoa which draws parallels between the power structures of the mafia family and the prevailing power of the aiga lead by the matai (chiefs). Suspended from this fist are strands of sennit rope bound to a silhouette of New Zealand. Using the symbolism of sennit rope and its ubiquitous application in the Pacific, he reflects upon his parent's unyielding ties to the homeland of Samoa. In an artist statement he commented on this work:

"Our home was like lil' Apia in a Palagi street in Mt Eden Central Auckland. Our home meant exactly that, not mum and dad's home but, OUR home as in mums family OUR and dads family OUR that means all of OURS (no such thing as mine). A wedding in Samoa, OUR wedding, a funeral in Samoa, OUR funeral, family problems in Samoa or village disagreement OUR problem. "That's the Fa'a Samoa son, OUR way"

Siliga's comments reflect a nuanced connection to the homeland and directly challenges cultural principles such as *usita'i* (unchallenged and unquestioned obedience) which is enforced within the home and extended to other cultural spaces. Questioning his immediate environment and commenting on fa'a-Samoa he uses the metaphor of a 'puppet on a string' to speak of his own negotiation of culture in the pursuit of a locally rooted identity.

Highlighting the current climate of church politics which pivots around competition and wealth is an on-going series of screen printed canvas works that take on the premise of church tithing announcements. Inspired by the 'Dear Jesus' bill boards which provoke contemplation (and perhaps guilt) he combines this with the humoristic yet rhetorical vernacular of Tui beer bill boards. Rhetorical statements such as "Dear God, If Jesus doesn't have a bank account then where is our money going?", "Dear God, If I can't afford to pay my tithe, then do I have to wait outside" and "Thank God... Jesus heals because Church is making me sick" are challenges to the spiritual postulation of financial tithing. Confronting viewers with his statements the works evoke for some a momentary reflection and for others, an admission of thoughts that have crossed their minds once or twice before perhaps whilst sitting in the pews of their churches.

Extending his critical commentary at the excesses of culture is a body of work formulated around light boxes. Exhibited first at his solo show in 2009 they were redeveloped and exhibited as part of the exhibition *Urban Kainga* at the City Gallery in 2010. Playing on the metaphor of light and the notion of enlightenment this body of work addresses

serious issues facing Pacific communities in Aotearoa. Reminiscent of the glare of TV screens that form the centrepiece of many Pacific living rooms, the work draws on this familiar spatial orientation to centre issues often masked by the more celebratory images of Pacific culture. In the light box entitled *Playing Happy Fatties 2009* a family gathers around a Sunday lunch of KFC in all its high cholesterol finger-licking goodness. Addressing the ongoing influence of fast food joints he exposes the inherent health risks of our beloved KFC. Other lightboxes feature a range of advertisements such as Aotea Finance and Peter the familiar 'brown' face of Avanti Finance to highlight the predatory nature of some finance companies that prey on vulnerable Pacific families. Loading his lightboxes with charged imagery he enlightens his audience with the socio-economic realities of Pacific communities.

Far from being a bystander Siliga is deeply embroiled in the politics of his work in a process he describes as "working from within". His success as an artist and businessman has been driven by a deep sense of cultural responsibility. Creating synergy between his commercial and artistic practise his broad range of works embody the true essence of public art. By appropriating and reworking stereotypes such as the 'freshy', the 'bunga' and the 'factory worker' Siliga reflects the complex social, political and cultural histories that inform the realities of Pacific people in Aotearoa.

Often adopting the garb of a factory worker as his public armour Siliga 'walks the talk' and has used his multifaceted practise to centre (and amplify) the voices of Pacific people.

Faka'apa'apa atu,
Nina Tonga



It Is It Self (2009), digital print on acrylic light box

tautai news

Happy Matariki

Tautai Fresh Horizons

As you will see in more detail in the newsletter, we held workshops in Invercargill and Dunedin in April. This was the first time a Tautai activity has ventured so far south and we were very warmly welcomed in both cities. There was great community support and generous hospitality from both Otago University and the Otago Polytec who provided venues. Further news from Invercargill is that the one act play begun during the workshop, honed when Victor returned for a further four days, will be presented live on stage on 1 July 2011. This is a wonderful achievement for all involved.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held on Saturday 30 July. Mark this in your social calendar now as there won't be much formal business.

Professional Development

There have been two more of the targeted professional development sessions with Tim Walker recently. This format has proven to be very effective for the artists participating and the small groups have meant that it is possible to tailor the session. Tautai will continue with these during the year.

Curatorial Proposal

Applications were invited from curators who wished to curate a group exhibition at Artstation in March 2012. The proposal received from Angela Tiatia was selected to be submitted to Artstation for their consideration.

Jim Vivieaere

As you will all know, Jim passed away on 3 June after a short illness. Ron Brownson has written a heartfelt tribute on behalf of Tautai which is included in this newsletter. We would also like to acknowledge and remember Jim for his contribution to Tautai including as a board member and co-chair for a period. His interest in art and artists was unwavering, his ideas sometimes challenging and he was never one to accept the status quo without discussion. Tautai is pleased to be supporting an artist led initiative to gather memorabilia about Jim which will then be made in to four books, three of those for Jim's family and one to be held in the Tautai archive.

ia manuia

Christina, Nooroa, Marlaina, Louise - Team Tautai

gallery



Auratica Fantastica curated by Andrea Low and Graham Fletcher in the Window, University of Auckland



John Vea, Maila Urale, Seilala Sini, Tracey Williams, Christina and Colin Jeffery with Sheyne Tuffery at the opening of his exhibition The Ancient Mariners at the Papakura Art Gallery



Luke Willis Thompson, Mau Muaiava and Ane Tonga at a Professional Development session with Tim Walker



Tiffany Singh *Einstein Was a Buddhist* mixed media work. Stealing the Senses - Govett Brewster 2011

fresh horizons invercargill

The first ever Fresh Horizons to be held in Invercargill took place on the 18th-20th April. Hosted by Otago University Southland Campus and organised by Pauline Smith and Lisa Tou who as well as having day jobs as teachers are also the driving force of Murihuku Maori and Pasifika Cultural Trust. Twenty six

students took part in the stone sculpture, printmaking and writing workshops. Master carver Johnny Penisula was delighted to be able to introduce the wonders of stone to some of his hometown youth, and we were fortunate to also have Chris Charteris there as well. Dunedin based printmaker Bridget Inder had her students

enthralled at the possibilities of printmaking and Victor Rodger's group produced the outline of a one act play that has since been read on radio and will be presented in public in early July. The local community was hugely supportive of the workshop which culminated in a very well supported 'show of work' on the last day.



Master carver Johnny Penisula showing how its done



Bridget Inder passing on the secrets of the press



Victor Rodger with budding writers

fresh horizons dunedin

It was also the first ever Fresh Horizons in Dunedin and took place on the 27th-29th April at the Otago Polytech in the wonderful art department. Organised by the indefatigable Pip Laufiso and with support of the Kokiri Trust.

Thirty students gave up their holiday time to spend three days with printmaker Bridget Inder who was back in her familiar territory with big presses at Otago Polytec. Bridget was joined by Tusiata Avia poet, performer,

writer who captured the trust and elicited heart felt words from her students. And Matthew Salapu aka Anonymouz produced his usual magic and guided his group into turning out some wonderful sounds that can be heard on our website. We were also delighted to have Tere Moeroa assisting; Tere had attended a Fresh Horizons in Christchurch in 2003 and also assisting was Hiliako Iaheto of Koile who went on to win Tagata Pasifika Best Pacific Language Award at the Pacific Music Awards.



Printmaking tutor Bridget Inder with students



Poet Tusiata Avia with the writers group



Matthew Salapu aka Anonymouz mixing the track

Patron: Fatu Feu'u

Board of Trustees: Gina Cole (Chair), Caroline Vercoe, Cerisse Palalagi, Colin Jeffery, Graham Fletcher, Janet Lilo, Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai, Ron Brownson, Siliga David Setoga

Tautai Office: Christina Jeffery (Manager), Nooroa Tapuni and Marlaina Key (Creative|Support) Louise Tu'u (Fresh Horizons Program)

jim vivieaere

12 september 1947 – 3 june 2011



Photographed by Vinesh Kumaran at the Curating Pacific Art Forum 2010

On Sunday 12 June 2011, the Fale Pasifika at the University of Auckland became the venue for a truly heart-rending and beautiful funeral service to honour the life of Jim Vivieaere. Hundreds of people gathered to remember and respect this exceptional New Zealander.

Jim himself was involved with all aspects of planning towards this gathering. The intimacy and palpable valedictory nature of this event actually conveyed the reality of Jim's presence. His love for his family and friends, his respect for the lives of others, his cherishing of talent and his incisive mentoring - all became themes which were spoken of in a heartened testimony. So many of the qualities and emotions that we loved and admired about Jim were present in this memorable occasion.

When all gathered sung together 'I can see clearly now the rain has gone' the hau tonga that had been steadily gusting just dropped down to a quiet breeze. The sun emerged suddenly with quite some heat to it and brightly lit the fale's sculpture of atafa, the frigate birds, which Jim had installed. With that song's

expression of ever-lasting hope, we all felt Jim's company and his loss at the very same moment.

With Jim's sudden passing, we have lost a wonderfully generous and hugely talented artist whose influence will certainly be on going. As an artist, a curator, mentor, arts advisor, cook and teacher, Jim was one unique and beautiful person. Not surprisingly, it took his passing for everyone to realise, at the forefront of their feeling and inside their heart's own thinking, how central Jim has been to contemporary art in New Zealand and the Pacific.

Pele Walker was one of the many speakers to warmly share how much Jim has given to us all during his remarkable life. She spoke on behalf of the arts community and for Creative New Zealand, who Jim had assisted for many years as an exceptional mentor and incisive arts assessor.

Pele noted something that it is essential to know about Jim Vivieaere saying that he 'is a pivotal figure in New Zealand's contemporary arts community and in the Pacific arts community, he has been even more so. Jim was instrumental in raising the profile and recognition of Pacific Island artists in New Zealand and overseas. He was a mentor, a role model, a friend to many.'

In 2006, Creative New Zealand's Pacific Arts Committee awarded the Senior Pacific Artist Award to Jim. The award stated that this was 'to recognise his contribution, his achievements and his standing as a senior artist and an international curator.' This reflects the fact that over many years he has exhibited and taught internationally, and has always sought to profile the achievement of contemporary Pacific artists to the entire world.

Jim was one of the earliest recipients of the Mōet et Chandon fellowships. Yet, as an artist, he never put himself first and this gave his artwork a wonderfully insightful and oxygenated shimmer. There was always a sense that Jim's art was part of one on-going project that looked at how contemporary art could both reflect the

Pacific and question it at the very same moment. This ability to both celebrate and review his own art became a signature of Jim's art production. For many years, his art maintained an on-going conversation about what oceans mean to us as inhabitants of the Pacific. As a Cook Islander brought up away from his own family and heritage, he understood diaspora and globalism more viscerally than most artists ever need to understand, let alone inhabit as a rationale both for their art and their identity.

I was lucky enough to be able to talk with Jim about an installation that he was always planning but which, unfortunately, he was not able to realise during his lifetime. This installation was going to be like an autobiography of voyaging across water to many cities, over many years and which encountered numerous people. Perhaps one day Jim's vision of the 'oceans in us' will become manifested by the fulfilment of his art project.

To me, Jim was a brilliant curator, simply and intuitively. One of the best curators that I have ever known or are ever likely to know. His astounding curatorial work with Bottled Ocean in 1994 changed how we saw Pacific art and artists. The effects of that exhibition are still living among us and will continue to do so. I was privileged to work along side Jim in the presentation of this groundbreaking exhibition at the Auckland Art Gallery and his instinctive and intuitive design for the presentation of Bottled Ocean remains one of the most important local innovations in the presentation of contemporary art in a public museum.

Jim was an old soul. A seer, a harbinger and a pivotal catalyst for the entire art community. It was no shock to see the outpouring of grief at the funeral. Everyone present realised that they had lost a rare and astonishing friend.

E te rangatira Jim. Na te nui ou, nga te rongou, I heke ai te roimata. Moe mai I to moenga roa. Na o hoa mahi o Tautai Trust.

Ron Brownson
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

events & exhibitions

july | august | september 2011

4 June – 24 July. *In My Own Time.*

Lonnie Hutchinson. Mangere Arts Centre-Nga Tohu o Uenuku, Auckland South

11 June 2011 – June 2012.

Collecting Contemporary – New Acquisitions.
Includes Shigeyuki Kihara. Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, Wellington

17 June – 9 July. *Papa Atawhai.*

To Cherish the Land. Includes Janet Lilo, Sopolimalama Filipe Tohi, Visiesio Siasau. Nathan Homestead, Manurewa.

18 June – 28 August. *Presence: New Acquisitions and Works from the collection.* Includes Shigeyuki Kihara. Govett Brewster, New Plymouth

22 June – 30 July. *Current.* A Whitespace exhibition being shown at the October Gallery London. Includes Sopolimalama Filipe Tohi and Andy Leleisi'uao

23 June – 7 August. *Another Universe.*

Includes Niki Hastings McFall at Calder & Lawson Gallery, Academy of Performing Arts, University of Waikato, Hamilton

9 July – 4 September. *Rapid Change.*

Includes Elisapeta Heta at Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts, Manukau South

1 – 29 July. *Lounge Room Tribalism.*

Graham Fletcher. City Gallery, Wellington

14 July – 7 August. *Kainga Tuuturu.*

Wylan Tupaea-Petero, Nathan Homestead Gallery, Manurewa

16 July – 2 October. *Crystal City.*

Includes Tiffany Singh at The Dowse, Lower Hutt

19 July – 26 August. Chris Charteris at FHE

Project Gallery, Kitchener Street, Auckland

21 July – 12 August. *Finding Neitherland.*

Curator Graham Fletcher. Tautai annual Tertiary Exhibition at St Paul St Gallery, Auckland Central

23 July – 27 August. *Dis-discovery.* Includes

Shigeyuki Kihara. Goulburn Regional Gallery, NSW, Australia

27 July – 13 August. *The Sole Project.*

Ase Vakatawa, Bobby Ioramo, Nathan Suniula at Artstation Toi Tu Gallery, Ponsonby

29 – 31 July. *NZ Art Show.*

Includes Ellie Faamauri-Firisua at TSB Bank Arena, Wellington

30 July. 6-7pm. *Keneti Muaiava.*

Pacific Dance Artist in Residence showing. Metro Theatre, Mangere East

4 – 7 August. *Auckland Art Fair.*

Viaduct Event Centre, Auckland

6 August – 6 November. *Oceania.* Includes

Shigeyuki Kihara. City Gallery, Wellington

6 September – 22 October. *Sopolimalama Filipe*

Tohi – Survey exhibition. Mangere Arts Centre – Nga Tohu o Uenuku, Auckland South

8 September – 1 October. *Foreign Objects.*

Angela Tiatia at Fresh Gallery Otara, Auckland South

watch the Tautai Website and the Pacific Arts Diary
for news of upcoming events and exhibitions

www.tautai.org

The Annual General Meeting of members will be held on Saturday 30 July 2011.
The time and place will be advised closer to that date.