

Fehokotaki

St Paul St Gallery Two

ST PAUL ST



Curated by 'Uhila Kanongata'a Nai

Manu Ha'apai Vaeatangitau
David Leone Vaea

'Ahotā'e'iloa Toetu'u
Vula To'ofohē

'Aloisia Ngata
'Uhila Kanongata'a Nai

The title of this exhibition belongs to the Tongan phrase "fehokotaki 'i ha vaha'a taimi 'i ha feitu'u kehekehe," and responds to the shifting spaces and multi-layered concepts of time specific to Moana peoples across our region. A loose interpretation of the phrase might speak to the ways diasporic Moana peoples pursue and maintain connections (fehokotaki) to their ancestral homelands while travelling across varied landscapes (feitu'u kehekehe) and between complex linkages of time (vaha'a taimi) and history. Using this phrase as our foundation, Fehokotaki features six artists whose work questions how indigenous Moana practitioners connect over time and different relationships to the notions of 'homeland' and tradition.

This exhibition is presented by Vā Moana, and in partnership with St Paul St Gallery, Auckland University of Technology. Vā Moana is an international research platform that engages indigenous Pacific and Western thought to study Pacific notions of space, thinking through contemporary and customary Pacific understandings of the world by examining indigenous Moana modes of producing space, objects, ritual, and performance.

Manuha'apai Vaeatangitau

'Tupu'anga o Leiti' is inspired by classical antiquity, and offers an imagined mythological conception of the fakaleiti. Despite our lacking presence in Tongan mythology there are many allusions to our existence through way of gender-bending deities and spirits. By depicting figures such as Hikule'o and Felehuhuni as the metaphysical origin of leiti, I am attempting to reinstate our existence as being a fixture of Tongan culture. 'Tupu'anga o Leiti' ultimately is a response to the imaginations of which we occupy, that of our colonizers who have disappeared and disavowed the androgyne globally, erasing us from our own cultural canons.

Manuha'apai Vaeatangitau is an interdisciplinary artist residing in Tāmaki Makaurau. Their practice ranges in medium, working primarily with illustration, performance, and poetry. The subject of much of their work concerns explorations of the Tongan 'third gender' or 'fakaleiti', how they have existed historically and how they have persisted into modernity. Recent work/exhibitions include: 'Kindred: A Leiti Chronicle,' Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, (2022); 'Leiti', Mangere Art Centre (2021);

'Tupu'anga o Leiti', Moana Fresh (2021); 'The Manu and Coco Podcast' (2020); 'Untitled', Lieu Journal Issue 2: Departure (2019).

Details:

Tupu'anga 'o Leiti, 2021
1000mm x 1930mm
Suede material

'Ahotā'e'iloa Toetu'u

'This artwork titled 'Ko Lofia' was inspired by the Tongan volcanic eruption on the 15th of January 2022. Lofia was a Ha'apai of volcanos. After the eruption stories of Lofia came back to life again just like volcano which was dormant for many years. Patterns of volcanos designed on 20th century ngatu tells us that similar eruptions were common to Tongans in the past. In the centre of the painting is an image of a Tongan deity to represent Lofia and other images which I have used are a combination of traditional and modern figurative images to record that horrific event.

Tofua mo Kao are two islands situated in the Ha'apai Islands. When the eruption happened in Tonga I was thinking about these two islands as they were quite active in recent history and very well known to Tongans and European visitors. This inspired me to paint this work together because in some way they relate.

I have seen in the ngatu of patterns of a triangle shaped motif with two curves which look like volcanoes and I've created these two kupesi to represent Tofua and Kao.

Details:

Left painting

Ko Lofia, 2022

1000mm x 1500mm

Acrylic on canvas

Right painting

Ko Tofua mo Kao, 2020

1000mm x 1500mm

Acrylic on canvas

'Aloisia Ngata

'Koau Eni, Tulou' is a digital print collection that is inspired and motivated by my family's heritage in agriculture and the manufacturing and service industry. Therefore, this collection is both a reflection and response to being a descendant of my ancestors.

'Koau Eni, Tulou' was manifested through a series of watercolour paintings that were used to digitally create fabric prints. These watercolour painting were printed onto two different fabric prints, silk and hemp that gives different genre of time which represent my ancestors. Each print has their own story and is intended to be used in a streetwear collection made up of classic workwear garments.

This practise celebrates and communicates the historical path that my ancestors travelled and how it inspired my textile design aesthetic for colour, clothing and creativity.

'Aloisia Ngata is a textile designer whose practice consists of digital textile making, considering focusing on digital and needle felting. Ngata's interests are centered around story telling by way of amalgamating traditional Tongan and contemporary textile making methods. Ngata is currently looking at the traditional practice of koloa which is understood as a collection of traditional crafts. The idea of adapting into the diaspora by exploring traditional practices using contemporary material. With material that are

available to her current space and not does she only focus of material shifts, but the language used in material, processes and in stories. Ngata graduated with her Bachelor from School of Art and Design in Textile studies, and now currently completing her Master's degree in the Visual Arts program.

Details:

Koau Eni, Tulou, 2020

500mm x 1000mm

Silk and Hemp

David Leone Vaea

Ngatu is one of Tonga's most traditional arts and craft that is still practiced by Tongan women to this day; currently in homeland and in diaspora. Part of the process and making ngatu is the 'kupesi', which uses natural materials to create a variety of motifs. 'Leiti,' is an interpretation to reflect modern adaptations of material while maintaining traditional aesthetics. Connecting to the past and the present and creating new replicas of recognisable practices.

David Leone Vaea is a Tongan-New Zealand artist. He was born and raised mainly in Auckland. He explores being Pasifika and queer and drawing from memory, ethnic culture and lived experiences. He creates these through different mediums like photoshop, jewellery, cutting out from paper/wood, collages and weaving.

Details:

Leiti, 2022

300mm x 300mm, series of 25

MDF, spray paint, nails and strings

Vula To'ofuhe

'Fuakava' is a speculative investigation of architectural drawing from an Oceanic perspective. It is a journey that consists of unravelling, and re-weaving existing ideologies together, where Oceanic thought shifts beyond the confines of the traditional lineal perception and into an endless cyclic motion.

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As the foundation for Oceanic thought to prosper, 'Fuakava' is primarily influenced by the art of tapa. Similar to its making process, 'Fuakava' is a product of the collective. Over the course of one month artists, architects, lecturers, musicians, and friends were invited to share their thoughts pertaining to an 'Oceanic Worldview' - those of which the answers were either shared amongst others over a bowl of Kava, or kept hidden by the authors. Such thoughts were translated into (mostly) drawings where it became clear that an 'Oceanic Worldview' was an amalgamation of innumerable stories woven together by descendants of the greater Moana, as well as those whom live on her shores. Images depicting ideas around the Fale, the Kava ceremony, and the Vaka were inextricably linked to the human form where each Humu (diamond shape) evoke familiar sentiments to ceremony, to duty, and to the perpetuation of a practice.

Vula To'ofoho is an emerging artist whose practice stemmed from her own Tongan upbringing. Her practice was later refined throughout her education journey as she studied Architecture at the University of Auckland. Her work focuses on the collective rather the individual as a means of creating art. To'ofoho is currently teaching architecture at AUT with the prospect of future PhD study.

Details:

Fuakava, 2021

1840mm x 4870mm

Calico cotton fabric, black and red permanent marker alter 5 points

Fala 12 (12 feet)

'Uhila Kanongata'a Nai

'Ofo'ofa 'a Kui, the love of a grandmother,' talks about the concepts of connection and relationship with each of these kupesi that was passed down from her grandmother. Understanding

what these kupesi are and their story reminds her of the labour that goes into making each one. Her Nena's love for traditional crafts shows her the importance of knowing the roots of these kupesi. As she unpacks each kupesi, it shows the multi-layers of knowledge, labour, and hard work embedded within each kupesi. These kupesi on display are remembered not only the memories between her Nena and herself but also the histories, stories of the Tongan culture and the love that our ancestors have shown and passed the kupesi to the next generation.

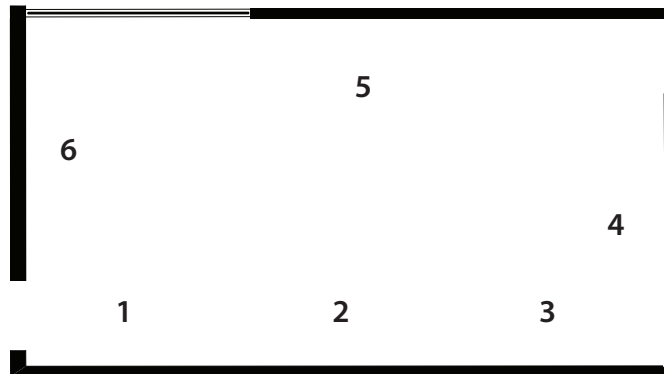
Uhila Kanongata'a Nai a Tongan New Zealand-born artist who emigrated to Tonga with her Nena (Grandmother), 'Ana Va'inga Pautā, in 1999. She lived there until the end of 2011, when she immigrated back to New Zealand. She was 13. Nai grew up watching her Nena making Tongan traditional crafts, especially the crafts of nimamea'a koka'anga in the small village of Pelehake on the East-Side of Tonga. Nai's practice has been focused on the process and methods of ngatu and kupesi making and seeking a way to generate a new space that has a potential to allow the work to speak on its own terms without having to fit within the contemporary Western art framework. Recently, Nai has been focusing on the craft of kupesi, specifically looking to study their individual characteristic and knowing their stories as a single form and the idea of placing them to their original context.

Nai is currently enrolled in the PhD programme of the School of Art and Design, Auckland University of Technology. She has been awarded the BC Collective Indigenous award; Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki Award for high achievement; AUT Research Masters Scholarship; Vā Moana Pacific Spatial Postgraduate. Recent exhibitions: Matrilineal, La'ui fakatata tupu'a mo hono mahu'inga tukufakaholo, Depot Artspace, (2022), Liuaki, ST PAUL St Gallery (2022); The Private Letter Becomes Public: The 1620 Collection at Window Gallery (2021);

Details:

'Ofo'ofa 'a Kui: The love of a grandmother
2500mm x 3600mm
Pepa koka'anga, black and brown charcoal

Gallery Two



List of Works:

1. Manuha'apai Vaeatangitau. *Tupu'anga 'o Leiti*, 2021, 1000mm x 1930mm. Suede material

2. 'Ahotā'e'iloa Toetu'u. Left painting: *Ko Lofia*, 2022. 1000mm x 1500mm. Acrylic on canvas

Right painting: *Ko Tofua mo Kao*, 2020. 1000mm x 1500mm. Acrylic on canvas

3. 'Aloisia Ngata. *Koau Eni, Tulou*, 2020. 500mm x 1000mm. Silk and Hemp

4. David Leone Vaea. *Leiti*, 2022. 300mm x 300mm, series of 25
MDF, spray paint, nails and strings

5. Vula To'ofuhe. *Fuakava*, 2021. 1840mm x 4870mm. Calico cotton fabric, black and red permanent marker alter 5 points, Fala 12 (12 feet)

6. 'Uhila Kanongata'a Nai. *'Ofō'ofa 'a Kui: The love of a grandmother*. 2500mm x 3600mm
Pepa koka'anga, black and brown charcoal

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