

# ĀTĀVĀ: Tātatau'ata "Marking-symmetry-in-images"

St Paul St Gallery Two, 9 – 29 June, 2022  
A Vā Moana Film Screening

Sione Faletau; Sione Monū; Emily Parr; Talia Smith; Jade Townsend.

## **Sione Faletau, *Kupesi Ta – Tuki*, 2022, 4m 30s**

The artworks that I have created is from the extracted audio wave spectrum of found audio recordings of women creating tapa through the act of ta, and men creating kava through the action of tuki. I thought of these gendered spaces of men and women - The culture of women in Tongan culture and the culture of men in Tongan culture are two separate entities but intertwined and so connected. Both complement each other in many complex ways. The materials surrounding these gendered spaces are constructed by both men and women and in some capacity have cross overs to each other's worlds. The vā and relationship they have to each other is connected through fatongia (obligations and responsibilities). When they are together in sync, it creates a sense of unity and equilibrium.

Kupesi translates to patterns  
Ta translates to beat, hit, or strike  
Tuki translates to beat or punch

Sione Faletau is a multidisciplinary artist born in Auckland with Tongan heritage – he has links to the village of Taunga, Vava'u and Lakepa, Tongatapu. Utilising art as a vehicle to explore his Tongan heritage led him to do his Doctoral research on Tongan masculinity from an indigenous perspective. As of late, his interest has been in creating kupesi (patterns) from extracted audio waveforms from songs, audio recording and field recording of environments. The audio waveforms give him a material that can be manipulated into kupesi. This innovative way of creating has opened a new language and a different way of seeing kupesi in the contemporary realm.

## **Sione Tuivailala Monū, *Returning Traces: Our ancestors left us clues*, 2020, 16m 51s**

Sione Tuivailala Monū short films are an extension of their video-based Instagram practice. Filmed and edited on an iPhone they present a personal encounter with everyday dilemmas and social realities to explore identity, family and Pasifika queer experience in the diaspora. Featuring themselves and their surroundings and often cast with their friends and family, Monū's films slide between performative and documentary modes to recall a variety of genres, from home movies and video diaries to satires and soaps. In Monū's work 'Returning Traces: our ancestors left us clue' they track the reverse migration of their family filming across Australia, Aotearoa and Tonga exploring migration, connection and belonging.

Sione Monū is an artist of the Tongan diaspora. He lives between Canberra Australia and Auckland who works across the mediums of photography, moving-image, fashion and adornment, performance and drawing exploring identity, family and Pasifika queer experience in the diaspora. Recent exhibitions include: *Spheres: An Online Video Project*, 2020; Christchurch Art Gallery, *Kahoa Kakala*, Fresh Gallery Otara and Objectspace, 2017; *Statuesque Anarchy*, Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Wellington, 2017; *Pouliuli*, Westspace, Melbourne, 2017; *Making Space*, Centre of Contemporary Art Toi Moroki, Christchurch, 2017; *GG Talk That Talk*, Fresh Gallery Otara, 2016.

## **Emily Parr, *Through the time spiral: Te Muri II*, 2022.**

*Through the time spiral: Te Muri II* revisits camping trips my family made to a small bay on the Mahurangi Peninsula during the early 1900s. During the summer holidays, my great-great-grandparents and their many children travelled north from Tāmaki Makaurau. They were joined by 'āiga visiting from Sāmoa, girls in their care from the Islands (including Princess Sālote), and other families who share similar stories of cultural multiplicity and mobility. These trips manifest their expansive web of relations across the Moana, which they continued to nurture after migrating to Aotearoa. By revisiting the site, I can connect with my ancestors through the time spiral.

In the work, I sit near my great-great-grandmother, Louisa Kronfeld. My brother, D'arcy, is beside our nana, Tui; our great-grandfather, Samuel Kronfeld; and Sam's brother-in-law, Otto Wolfgramm. My father, David, stands with his great-grandfather, Gustav Kronfeld.

Emily Parr (Ngāi Te Rangi, Moana, Pākehā) is an artist living in Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa (Auckland, New Zealand). Her moving-image practice weaves through time and space, exploring systems of relation emerging from Te Moananui-a-Kiwa. Emily's recent Master's research on settler-indigenous relationships traverses oceans and centuries, seeking stories in archives and waters on haereinga to her ancestral homelands of Tauranga Moana, Sāmoa and Tonga. Her doctoral research considers the responsibilities she has inherited through her ancestral legacies and, in particular, to her family's collection of taonga and measina held by museums.

Emily is a member of Accompany, an artists' collective who walk and work alongside community organisations and social movements through making art.

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Talia Smith, *Blue Moon*, 2022, 4m 31s

When my grandfather passed away my mother and her siblings stood at the gravesite and sang the song Blue Moon. Their parents would sing this song when they were children and although not able to fully get through it, I will always remember the lines Blue moon, you saw me standing alone, without a dream in my heart.

This new video work features found family footage of my grandfather, when my parents visited family in Samoa and when my family went to Rarotonga for the first time to see family the year I turned sixteen. The footage is shaky, the hand of the person (most likely my father) holding the camera is unstable as the camera takes the viewer through the family home in Rarotonga. My grandfather laughs and dances silently to a slowed down backing track as do the dancers I saw at the hotel in Raro. The video is layered and almost folds back upon itself revealing and concealing faces and people that are no longer alive and moments that have long passed.

There may be markers of time in the videos but blue moon as a work attempts to flatten time, to show the slipperiness of the medium of the camera and honour family, history and that perhaps the moon saw it all along and we are not alone.

Talia Smith is an artist and curator from Aotearoa New Zealand and now based in Sydney, Australia. She is of Cook Island, Samoan and Pakeha heritage. Her photographic, moving image and curatorial practices explore themes of time, memory, ruin and familial histories with a particular focus on the reclamation of the colonial tool of the camera. She has exhibited widely in Aotearoa and Australia as well as at artist run spaces in Germany and New York. In 2022 she had her first institutional solo show at MAMA Albury NSW titled *'Don't be bashful, wear the flower behind your ear'*. In 2021 she completed her Masters of Fine Arts (research) at UNSW in Sydney.

**Jade Townsend, *Te Moananui-a-Kiwa*, 2021, rimu, beach mat and paint,**  
**Text credit: Emily and Objectspace**

This moving-image piece was filmed by Emily Parr to usher visitors to the new website of Vā Moana with Jade Townsend's work, *Te Moananui-a-Kiwa*. In early 2021, *Te Moananui-a-Kiwa* was held in the threshold of Objectspace (a site's landing page is much like a threshold).

The installation at Objectspace focused on natural materials and inorganic debris commonly found along shorelines throughout *Te Moananui-a-Kiwa*, offering a way to consider how movement across the great ocean is constantly connecting us.

During a visit to contemporary jewellery artist

Neke Moa's studio in Ōtaki, Townsend was inspired by their matangongore (opal top) shell collection gathered from local beaches. The distinctive highly patterned shells, not common on Aotearoa's coasts, epitomise how sea currents are relentlessly shifting and items are always in a state of transfer. For Townsend, materials gathered through scouring the edges of the ocean have the ability to draw in the physical expanse of the moana and are a reminder of the permanence of introduced materials to this ecosystem.

In *Te Moananui-a-Kiwa*, Townsend uses an everyday beach mat to investigate these ideas. Through paint and physical intervention, the mat is transformed to emulate the distinctive pattern of the matangongore shell's surface. By un-weaving the structure of the synthetic fibres, Townsend works the mat to more closely resemble organic matter, creating an opportunity to reflect on the bonding force of this body of water and our collective responsibility to consider how foreign materials impact this fragile environment.

Jade Townsend (Ngāti Kahungunu) is a visual artist and storyteller working at the intersection of her Māori, Pākehā and British heritage.

She describes it as a *"non-fixed duality that ebbs and flows with contradictory cultural forces every day. My wairua connects to many seemingly disparate fields and I reinterpret that through materiality."*

She was born and raised in Whanganui before moving to Liverpool, United Kingdom where she lived as a teenager. Townsend's exposure to a wide range of accents, dialects, regional slang, folktales and pūrākau made her aware of the limitations of translation and cultural hybridity as a completely transparent process. For Townsend, her cultural identity forms in the non-translatable, the left-over and residual aspects of herself for which there is no interpretative counterpoint in relation to the other.

Townsend is currently showing site-specific murals as part of the *Chinese Zodiac Trail* in Te Whanganui a Tara and has a collaborative exhibition called *Ā muri atu / In the future* with Emiko Sheehan at RAMP gallery in Kirikiriroa. Townsend recently brought together a group of artists in the project *Hauhake* and led a wānanga at Objectspace as part of the *Caravannex On Tour* artist in residence series. She has previously been awarded residencies at Slade School of Art, London and Red Gate Gallery, Beijing. Townsend has exhibited globally across museum, gallery and concept store spaces. Jade holds a BA Hons Fine Art Painting from Manchester Metropolitan University.

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Hūfanga-He-Ako-Moe-Lotu Dr'Ōkusitino Māhina  
Professor of Tongan Philosophy, Historical Anthropology, and Aesthetics  
Vava'u Academy for Critical Inquiry and Applied Research  
Vava'u Lahi, Kingdom of Tonga

## Tufunga Material Artist-Curator:

'Uhila Tu'ipulotu Kanongata'a Nai (Tongan)

## Tufunga Material Artists:

Jade Townsend (Ngāti Kahungunu; Maori, Pakeha and British)

Dr Sione Faletau (Tongan)

Sione Tu'ivailala Monū (Tongan)

Talia Smith (Cook Island, Samoan and Pākehā)

Emily Parr (Ngāi Te Rangī, Sāmoan, Tongan, Pākehā)

The faka'ali'ali'aati "art exhibition"<sup>1</sup> 'ĀTĀVĀ is a collection of beautiful yet useful works of tufunga performance art in tātatau'ata "marking-symmetry-in-images." By way of dissection, the constitutive words of the Tongan title "ĀTĀVĀ: Tātatau'ata," viz., 'ā; 'atā / 'ata; tā; vā; and tatau mean "wake"<sup>2</sup> "image;"<sup>3</sup> "time;" "space;" and "symmetry"<sup>4</sup> respectively. These are tā-vā "temporal-spatial" entities, identities, or tendencies taking place in both tā moe vā "time and space," on the 'ata-ki-loto "abstract level," and fuo moe uho, "form and content," on the 'ata-ki-tu'a "concrete level."

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1 From an Indigenous Tongan (and Moanan Oceanian) tāvāist philosophical view, both faka'ali'ali "exhibition" and fokotu'utu'u "curation" are synonymous as forms of tufunga "material arts" – which actively though critically engage in the tā-vā "time-space," fuo-uho "form-content" arrangement of artworks by way of fakafuo "temporal / formal-definition" and fakauho "spatial / substantial-composition" as inseparable yet indispensable hoā / soā pairs / dualities / binaries in reality, as in nature, mind, and society.

2 Or "awake" temporally-marking a state of 'ilo'i / ongo'i "consciousness" / "awareness" of both 'atamai "mind" (in the 'uto "brain") and ongo "feelings" (in the fatu / mafu "heart") as tā-vā, fuo-uho "temporal / formal-substantial / spatial entities" through "reflective thinking" and "emotive feelings."

3 Or "spacious" as in an 'atā "open space" or vavā "outer space," e.g., 'ātea "open sky;" see also "mirror:" "reflection;" "picture;" "shadow;" and "impression."

4 Or "image;" "mirror;" "reflection;" "picture;" or "impression" as in 'ata "image;" cf. the Tongan (or Moanan Oceanian) material art of tufunga tātatau tattooing as fakafelavai "intersection" (or fakahoko "connection" and fakamāvae "separation" of kōhi / tohi (/ 'tā) "lines" (/ "times") and vā "spaces" by means of kili kula "red skin" and vaito'hi 'uli "black ink" (or tufunga lalava kafa-sennit-lashing through kafa kula "red kafa-sennit" and kafa 'uli "black kafa-sennit" and nimamea'a koka'anga "bark-cloth-making: by means of koka kula "red koka-sap / dye" and tongo 'uli "black tongo-sap / dye").



A special tala / lea "language" within a tala / lea "language,"<sup>5</sup> these 'ata "images" tell / speak / mark by way of fakafelavai "intersecting" (or fakahoko "connecting" and fakamāvae "separating") koho / tohi "lines"<sup>6</sup> and vā "spaces" as inseparable hoa / soa "pairs" of equal and opposite dualities / binaries<sup>7</sup>) fakafuo "temporally-marked" and fakauho "spatially-composed"<sup>8</sup> through tatau "symmetry," potupotutatau "harmony," and mālie / faka'ofa'ofa "beauty" as loto "intrinsic" qualities. This results in māfana "warmth," vela "fieriness," and tauelangi "climatic elation"<sup>9</sup> as tu'a "extrinsic" qualities.<sup>10</sup>

From a Tongan (and Moanan Oceanian) Tā-Vā "Time-Space" Philosophy of Reality, tā moe vā "time and space" are considered the common vaka "vessels" of existence. By extension, tā moe vā "time and space" are taken as me'a "matter" and me'a "matter" as ivi "energy" in constant motion. Moreover, ivi "energy" cannot be created nor destroyed but it only heka-mo-hifo "embark-on-and-disembark-from" one vaka "medium" to another<sup>11</sup> – as in the use of maama "light" and ongo "sound" in the production of the 'ata "images" through fakafuo "temporal-definition" and fakauho "spatial composition."

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5 See the performance (and material) arts of both faiva ta'anga "poetry" and faiva lea (tufunga lea) "oratory" as a special tala / lea "language" within a tala / lea "language" – marked by the intensification of tā moe fuo "time and form" and reconstitution of vā moe uho "space and content."

6 That is, that koho / tohi "lines" are a form of tā "times;" mathematically yet philosophically, a mata "eye" and / or ava "hole," i.e., "point," is the fakafelavai intersection (or fakahoko connection and fakamāvae separation) of two or more koho / tohi "lines;" a koho / tohi line is a collection of mata "eyes" and / or ava "holes," i.e., "points;" and vā

7 That is, indivisible but uieivable hoatatau / hoamālie "equal" and hoakehekehe / hoatamaki "opposite" hoa / soa "pairs" / "dualities" / "binaries."

8 That is, that from an Indigenous Tongan (and Moanan Oceanian) tāvāist philosophical view, tā "time" is a verb (or action-led) and fakafuo temporal-definer of vā "space" which is, in turn, a noun (or object-led) and fakauho spatial-composer of tā "time," both in inseparable and indispensable ways.

9 That is, as ivi "energy"-like, afi "fire"-type states of affairs.

10 Both the respective loto "internal or intrinsic" and tu'a "external or extrinsic" qualities of Tongan 'aati "art" (and litilesā "literature") are concerned with mālie / faka'ofa'ofa "beauty / quality" and 'aonga / ngāue "utility / functionality" of Tongan 'aati "art" (and litilesā "literature") as a hoa / soa "coexistence," with the former taking the lead over the latter, in that logical order of precedence. That is, the more mālie / faka'ofa'ofa "beautiful," the more 'aonga / ngāue "useful" and, conversely, the more 'aonga / ngāue "useful," the more mālie / faka'ofa'ofa "beautiful;" also see the realist / tāvāist philosophical view, viz., "what art is," i.e., art work; "what art is for," i.e., art use; and "what art is by means of," i.e., art history – where the former one precedes the latter two, in that logical order of precedence.

11 By comparison, the scientific view involving the Law of Thermodynamics says, that energy cannot be created nor destroyed but it can only be transformed from one fuo "form" (and uho "content," my tāvāist philosophical emphasis) to another, as in the transformation from afi "fire" / vela "heat" to maama "light" to ongo "sound."