

About the Artists

The 11th Festival of Pacific Arts, “Culture in Harmony with Nature,” was hosted by Solomon Islands in July 2012. For two weeks, the purpose-built festival village, exhibition spaces, performance venues, and four satellite villages were filled with song, dance, and celebration. Solomon Islanders from throughout the archipelago traveled to Honiara to participate and witness the breadth of arts from across the region. The hosts showed exceptional hospitality while also enjoying each moment of the festivities.

The festival showcased canoe building and navigation, carving, culinary arts, fashion, film, fire walking, floral arts, healing, photography, pottery, tapa making, tattooing, weaving, painting, sculpture, and mixed-media installations. Visual arts were everywhere—throughout the festival grounds, at the public market, and in local shops—but the premier exhibition was in the Solomon Islands National Art Gallery. The curators, Brian Afia and Laura Linda Keyaumi, opted for salon-style presentation, grouping artworks by country with the exception of works by Solomon Islands artists, which were spread throughout the exhibition rooms. Sculptures and mixed-media installations were surrounded by constant streams of both visitors and artists provoked to consider and challenge the range of art.

The works included in this issue are by no means representative of the entire exhibition—the diversity of work shown there affirmed that there is no “Pacific” style. The imagery, techniques, and stories were as diverse, colorful, and complex as Oceania itself. From the celebration of diversity, there was unity. The artworks featured throughout this issue are a sampling of the talented and dedicated community of artists in Solomon Islands and elsewhere in the region who were part of a lively artistic exchange fueled by the festival. This selection is a reminder of the continuous surge of creativity in Oceania and the need for more frequent gatherings and exhibitions.

KATHERINE HIGGINS

The art featured in this issue can be viewed in full color in the online version of The Contemporary Pacific via Project MUSE.



Atua Gupu, by Terry Tegae'a (Solomon Islands). 2012.

Vasa (wood), oil paint, and polish. 1 meter high.

Terry Tegae'a named this sculpture after the spirit worshipped by the people of Rennell and Bellona before they go bird hunting. Terry's technical ability and artistic vision, informed by local customs and legends, permit the quiet nobility of *Atua Gupu* to emerge from the wood. He balances customary references and modernist styling in a naturalistic and nuanced anthropomorphic form with clean lines and intricate finishing. Throughout the exhibition rooms at the Solomon Islands National Art Gallery, sculptures by Terry and other artists from Ao Matangi Artcraft and Carving Company attest to the sophistication of carving in Solomon Islands.



Wat Moa? (What More?),

by Alisa Vavataga (Fiji and Solomon Islands). 2012.

Acrylic on canvas. 900 mm x 600 mm.

Dressed in Malaita shell money—representing her culture as well as the bride price paid by her husband—the bride asks herself, “I am married, so where am I going from here?” Alisa Vavataga wants viewers, especially Melanesian men, to look at this painting and see what the woman is feeling, to understand her expression of muted exasperation for the subservient life that awaits her, and ultimately to find understanding and respect for women as full partners to men.



Le monde de mes aïeux (The World of My Forefathers),
by Ilie Tyaou Poindipenda (New Caledonia). 2013.

Installation painting with acrylic and spray paint on wall.
Approximately 1500 mm x 1800 mm.

Représentation de la Nouvelle-Calédonie (Representation of New Caledonia),
by Ilie Tyaou Poindipenda (New Caledonia). 2013.

Mural on the exterior of the Solomon Islands National Art Gallery, spray paint.
Dimensions variable.

For his first exhibition outside of New Caledonia, Ilie Tyaou Poindipenda traveled with paint rather than a finished artwork and created two murals during the festival. The spirits of his ancestors inspire and emerge from these murals. Faces like those of his grandfather are constant reminders of history and the roots of his Kanaky culture.



Untitled, by Brian Feni (Solomon Islands). 2013.
Acrylic on canvas. 300 mm x 400 mm.

In this painting, Brian Feni portrays the importance of passing on the ways of Malaita and Solomon Islands life and culture by telling stories. He imparts genealogical and cultural knowledge through art. Brian uses painting to address hardships and challenges faced in life, and, rather than stepping away, he faces them straight on.



Tropic Bird Dance, by Tracey Yager (Norfolk Island). 2012.

Acrylic and carving on recycled roof shingles. 420 mm × 550 mm.

The inspiration for this piece by Tracey Yager comes from the decades-old roof shingles, collected from the Kingston area on Norfolk Island when historic convict buildings there were reroofed. The worn, grey area of the shingles has been exposed to the elements and, in the artwork, represents the ocean. The hand-carved patterns speak of the wind and the waves—a wild setting for the tropic bird dance.



The Legend of Hachani and the Stingrays,
by Joseph D Guerrero Jr (Guåhan). 2011.

Ifilwood (Merbau), lime, giant clamshell, inlaid spondylus,
and stingray tail. Approximately 635 mm x 406 mm.

Like many of Joseph Guerrero's artworks, this mixed-media piece derives from his original, contemporary interpretation of a Chamoru legend. He was inspired by a dream of an ancestral woman called Hachani, whose name comes from Hacha (one) and ani (day). The sculpture depicts Hachani playing with stingrays in a ceremonial way of self-satisfaction for identity, thus symbolizing the female principle of being fertile for the next 4,000 years.



Save the Sinking Art & Culture, by Joe Nalo (Papua New Guinea). 2012.

Watercolor on paper. 420 mm x 279 mm.

Collection of the Solomon Islands National Museum and Art Gallery.

Joe Nalo, who was among Papua New Guinea's first contemporary artists and went on to teach others at the National Arts School, shared exquisite watercolors and several acrylic paintings in the visual arts exhibition at the Solomon Islands National Art Gallery. Joe has exhibited internationally since 1975, in many cases representing Papua New Guinea with works that tell customary stories and legends with bold colors and lyrical designs. Describing this painting, he said, "Many of the Pacific countries are suffering from climate change and are literally sinking. This picture of the masks depicts Islander art and cultural heritage in the underwater landscape."



Ceremony, by Lyndy Delian (Australia). 2012.

Sandblasted and engraved hot blown glass with engraved glass drops.
Approximately 450 mm x 400 mm.

Lyndy Delian is a Wathaurong woman who traces her heritage to Blacks Town near Dunolly in Western Victoria, Australia. Her artwork expresses the relationships between land, water, sky, plants, animals, family, and culture. In this work, she etches the pathways and intersections of important genealogical and spiritual relationships into the turtle shell. By carving into the glass, she helps old customs become new rituals.



Duka/Spirits in the Flame, by Brad Pugeva (Solomon Islands). 2013.

Acrylic on canvas. 1150 mm x 1150 mm.

Brad Pugeva is from Bellona, a Polynesian island south of Guadalcanal. His paintings refer to legends such as this one with Duka spirits from Temotu Province, where statues of these Santa Cruz deities were set on fire by missionaries. By portraying the majestic forms undamaged by the fiery background, Brad revives the strength of the Duka spirits.