

About the Artist: Michel Tuffery

Michel Tuffery was born in 1966 in Wellington, New Zealand, of Samoan, Cook Islander, and Tahitian descent. His current practice as a multimedia artist may only hint at his training as a printmaker at the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic (1986–1989). His first exhibition, a series of black and white and color reduction woodcuts on tapa and paper, was held at the Tautai Gallery/Maota Samoa in Auckland in 1988.



Michel's vision has been shaped by his research into the histories in Polynesia and his personal encounters with the Islands and their peoples. Silk screens and lithographs reveal his empathy with the indelible patterns and symbols of *siapo* (bark cloth) and *tatau* (tattoo). Painted canvases, real and imagined narratives, are rendered like storyboards of finely pitched scenarios and cleverly drawn caricatures.

His adeptness in working tinplate into remote-controlled sea turtles and suspended shoals of tropical fish was preempted by his *Povi* (Bull) made from flattened and riveted corned beef cans for the "Bottled Ocean" exhibition at City Gallery Wellington (1993). For the opening of the Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre in Noumea (1998) and the "Paradise Now?" exhibition at the Asia Society Museum in New York City (2004), *Povi* became mechanized, mobile, and animated by low-tech explosives—a trigger for group ritual and spontaneous performances.

Michel's current work is grounded in urban communities, local and international. He manages large-scale installations, premeditated and collaborative. He engages technicians and other art practitioners to realize his concepts, be they fields of stenciled color, walls of acoustic sound bites, or cinematic special effects. But his everyday concerns are simple, defined by his family, his home, and his environment.

In 2008 Michel was made a member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the Queen's Honours List for services to the arts. For more information, please view his Web site: <http://www.micheltuffery.co.nz>

JIM VIVIEAERE

Cook Islands artist and freelance curator

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



Nui Lichen Moth, by Michel Tuffery. 2009.
Color reduction woodblock on embossed
cream pescia paper, 760 x 560 mm.
Limited edition of 20.



Ula Tivaevae, by Michel Tuffery. 2010.
Color reduction multi-woodblock embossed print,
650 x 500 mm. Limited edition of 22.



Povi Christeke, by Michel Tuffery. 1999.
Pacific brand lithograph corned beef tins, Christmas tree lights,
wooden frame, 1760 x 3110 x 1100 mm. Collection of the
Christchurch Art Gallery, New Zealand.



Cookie in the Cook Islands,
by Michel Tuffery. 2008.
Acrylic on canvas, 500 x 760 mm.
Collection of the British Museum.



Bula Figure 13 Series Tasi, by Michel Tuffery.
2008. Cast aluminum, 265 x 140 x 60 mm.



O le La, by Michel Tuffery. 1999.

Upeti block (tapa printing block), carved MDF wood,
acrylic paint, shellac, polyurethane, 1350 x 1200 x 80 mm.
Collection of the Royal New Zealand Police College.