

## Book and Media Reviews

---

*The Contemporary Pacific*, Volume 24, Number 2, 433-466  
© 2012 by University of Hawai'i Press

world salute the production of *The Orator* with loud applause. The task is complete and it is clear that Tusi Tamasese's casting in the deep sea has yielded a successful catch. Just as Pili's legendary fishing returned with plenty for all who meditated and prayed, Tusi has similarly fished in the deep ocean of filmmaking. The catch is thus displayed (a Samoan saying) and the globe can appreciate its idiosyncratic beauty, revealing complexities, and pricelessness.

Taulelei's mythical prediction that everything would turn out well is an appropriate metaphor with which to rain praises about *The Orator*. Word about this son of Sāmoa's filmmaking achievements has spread via the newspapers, television, the Internet, and various other media and publications. It is a jewel and precious ornament of which the Samoan people are proud, particularly since it is rare that such a depiction of their customs, as well as their natural surroundings appears on a big international screen. *The Orator* is a fine mat unpacked for public display, thus revealing the intricacies of Sāmoa's core beliefs and values. Contemporary views, critique, and research will follow, but this film will stand as a valuable resource for studying and teaching Samoan language and culture at secondary and tertiary institutions.

*The Orator* is a vibrant work. Congratulations for a job well done!

MYRA MCFARLAND-TAUTAU  
AND GALUMALEMANA AFELETI  
HUNKIN  
*Victoria University of Wellington*

\* \* \*

*Pacific Island Artists: Navigating the Global Art World*, edited by Karen Stevenson. Oakland, CA: Masalai Press, 2011. ISBN 978-0-9714127-7-4; x + 203 pages, full color illustrations, notes, bibliography. Paper, US\$69.95.

*Pacific Island Artists: Navigating the Global Art World* is a volume that aims to contextualize and address issues associated with contemporary Pacific art. Karen Stevenson's introduction notes that the impetus of the collection arose from sessions at the Association for Social Anthropologists in Oceania's (ASAO) conferences and developed over a number of years with input from Robert Welsh and Vilsoni Hereniko. Although some of the fifteen chapters are directly derived from the ASAO sessions, Stevenson invited other contributors including artists, a commercial gallerist, and curators to interject distinctive perspectives.

The range of prominent contributors will attract a wide audience interested in the anthropological, art historical, and commercial aspects of contemporary art in the Pacific Islands and diaspora. The collection offers a broad introduction to contemporary Pacific art for a general audience, and a number of the chapters will be of interest to an academic audience. However, several of the essays require readers to have some historical, political, and cultural background in order to appreciate topics as varied as Anna-Karina Hermkens's analysis of gender relations and barkcloth in New Guinea and Elaine Monds's account of locating, exhibiting, and selling Melanesian art in a commercial gallery on Vancouver Island.

The collection is concerned with issues such as authenticity, which is addressed in the majority of chapters, perhaps most successfully by the final five chapters written by artists who seem to respond to the academic writing of the preceding chapters. For instance, Rosanna Raymond writes: “To read about yourself labeled as hybrid and having your authenticity questioned by people outside of your community left me feeling disempowered” (153). Although Stevenson introduces the central concern of authenticity, the volume would have benefited from thematic grouping of the chapters to create a sense of dialogue among the authors.

It is refreshing to have a collection of essays focused on contemporary art from Melanesia and Micronesia that also includes Aboriginal art in Australia, Pacific art outside of the region, and reflections from indigenous artists working in diasporic communities (Rosanna Raymond, Shigeyuki Kihara, Ake Lianga, and Konousi Aisake). Haidy Geismar provides a compelling launching point with an essay that draws from research in Vanuatu to distinguish the ways that ni-Vanuatu artists mediate authenticity and indigenous identity for constructive and analytic effect (10). Geismar’s description of an empowered and resilient artist community in Port Vila—particularly the Nawita artist collective, which includes both male and female members—is countered by Hermkens’s examination of contemporary barkcloth production in Papua New Guinea and West Papua, where barkcloth production has been transformed from being the customary responsibility of women to emerging

as a male-dominated contemporary arts industry. Hermkens traces changes that have affected use and control of barkcloth, which was customarily understood as “intertwined with women’s bodies, their knowledge, status, and their identity” (39). By considering past uses and recent commercialization of barkcloth, Hermkens demonstrates how “tensions between traditional and commercial values . . . have implications for gender relations” (35).

Pamela Rosi, one of the organizers of the ASAO sessions that prompted the collection, examines Larry Santana’s art and career to provide insight into ways that contemporary artists in Papua New Guinea have developed symbols and narratives of national consciousness and identity. The focus on Santana is a welcome shift that allows readers a closer examination of the artist’s struggles, successes, and prospects, both locally and internationally.

Marion Struck-Garbe also examines issues around national consciousness in Papua New Guinea, focusing on women’s struggles to gain recognition and respect as contemporary artists. She asserts that while male artists often follow trends, women “tend to experiment more with materials” (134). This is an example of one of the collection’s strengths: a particular attention to women artists. However, Struck-Garbe’s essay raises more questions than answers. When they read it in tandem with the other chapters on Papua New Guinean art, readers will begin to realize the complicated dynamics of negotiating arts industries in the Pacific.

Similarly, the chapters by Judy

Flores and Vince Reyes about the development of a Chamorro arts movement in Guam offer differing but complementary perspectives. Flores presents a general introduction to Chamorro crafts and visual arts while Reyes provides new insights from the perspective of a practitioner, teacher, and prominent proponent of Chamorro cultural dance. Reyes's succinct essay resembles a cultural arts survey and offers a potential model for those interested in reconnecting with and promoting cultural dance in communities where interest has waned.

The essays, reflections, and interviews by artists and practitioners that make up the final chapters are unique and insightful contributions that reflect on and respond to the professional challenges that artists in the Pacific Islands confront. The late Jim Vivieaere's interview with his friend and colleague Shigeyuki Kihara is a reminder of what so many adored and respected about Vivieaere as an artist, curator, and pivotal figure in the Pacific arts community. The dialogue delves into Kihara's background, inspiration, and strategies and reminds readers that Pacific artists are inspired by and engaged with global art communities in addition to local and regional associations.

Overall, the large format feels like a textbook with the advantage of more space for the numerous color images, which include a balance of well-known and unfamiliar art works. Although I was distracted by typographical errors, editorial inconsistencies, and even inaccuracies, the collection pulls together a wide variety of information and perspectives on

subjects that deserve even more consideration.

KATHERINE HIGGINS

*University of Hawai'i, Mānoa*

\* \* \*

*New Caledonia Twenty Years On: 1988–2008*, edited by Jean-Marc Regnault and Viviane Fayaud. Paris: Société Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer, 2011. ISBN 978-285-970-0461; 251 pages, photos, index, notes. Paper, €20.00. [Revised and extended English version of the 2008 French edition, *La Nouvelle-Calédonie: vingt années de concorde, 1988–2008*.]

*La France à l'opposé d'elle-même: essais d'histoire politique de l'Océanie*, volume 1, by Jean-Marc Regnault. Papeete: Les Editions de Tahiti, 2006. ISBN-10: 2-907776-31-2; ISBN-13: 978-2-907776-31-8; 228 pages, notes, tables, maps. Paper, CFP 2900; €24.00.

Jean-Marc Regnault has been a prolific historian at the University of French Polynesia since 1984. He also helps to organize conferences and edit their proceedings, including a 2003 collection on the era of President François Mitterrand in the Pacific and a forthcoming collection from the March 2011 conference in Noumea on comparative political statutes in Oceania. This review focuses on (1) the English edition of proceedings from a conference held in Paris in 2008 that addressed the twentieth anniversary of the 1988 Matignon-Oudinot Accords and the tenth anniversary of the 1998 Noumea Accord and (2) a collection