

*Red Wave: Space, Process, and Creativity at the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture*, by Katherine Higgins. Suva, Fiji: IPS Publications, The University of the South Pacific, 2008. ISBN 978-982-02-0392-1; 104 pages, color illustrations, photographs. US\$30.00.

In 1997, academic and visionary Epli Hau'ofa established the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture. It is based on the campus of the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. The most prominent creative presence at the center is Red Wave. The title of this book "directly derived from the name of the artist group at the centre, the Red Wave Collective, which in turn comes from the Fijian *biau kula* or Tongan *peau kula* for tidal wave, literally red wave" (2). For more than a decade the artists of Red Wave have been creating art reflecting a particular stance toward space, process, and creativity in Oceania.

The author, Katherine Higgins, is a graduate of the Center for Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. This book emerges from her MA portfolio project and from time she spent as a visiting artist at the Oceania Centre. It captures some key moments and perspectives relating to art and cultural production in Fiji and Oceania.

The opening chapter, "A Space for Creativity," gives a short background on Hau'ofa and outlines the conceptual underpinnings of the Oceania Centre. The next chapter, "Oceanic Art," is also conceptual in tone and draws attention to the different histories and trajectories of contemporary art production in the Pacific

region. In this brief treatment, Higgins writes about Red Wave emerging from environments and concerns different from the "Pacific contemporary art" that is linked mostly with Aotearoa and Papua New Guinea. She argues for more specificity in the way scholars write about and categorize Oceanic arts. The third chapter, "An Oceanic Arts Movement," outlines the history and development of the Oceania Centre and further explores its distinct creative objectives. Higgins highlights the expansion of the center's programs to include dance and musical composition, production, and performance. The fourth chapter, "Voices of Red Wave," explores the creative processes at work in Red Wave through the words and art of its members. The artists voice their views on several themes relating to culture, politics, spirituality, and identity. The next chapter, "A Growing Wave of Certainty," briefly assesses what the experiences of the Red Wave Collective and the Oceania Centre can offer other arts and cultural centers in the region. It argues that the Oceania Centre is a successful and transferable model and speculates on future developments.

The final section of the book, "Introducing the Artists," signals the future in a catalogue of profiles and images documenting the artists and their work at this point in time. This section is a valuable conclusion that is part history, part catalogue, and part marketing tool. It is well illustrated; includes artist portraits, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers; and will surely play a role in promoting Red Wave to a wider audience. In fact, the book as a whole is richly produced

with full-color plates and extended captions. The titles, dates, and measurements of works are well documented in a separate illustrations list.

Higgins writes a flowing narrative that is a pleasure to read. The use of artists' interviews echoes a focus on self-expression that the center itself promotes. The interview material is engaging and generally well edited. Unfortunately, there is one instance of double use of interview material (which leaps out in a text of this length) and some other unnecessary repetition in the essays. However, it is worth noting the energy required to create a publication of this type. Good quality interviews are no shortcut. It takes time to establish relationships with interviewees, and they are time consuming to process. Higgins has done well in this regard, and the quality of her rapport with interviewees is evident. She indicates her intention to "bring the artists front and centre, supported by scholarship but not overwritten by it" (5). She wants to balance academic analysis and the artists' voices. This is a strength of the book but also a weakness. In the essays, external reflections and analysis would have strengthened her overall account. While the project is about the artists and their perspectives, the local and regional relevance of the Oceania Centre and Red Wave can be usefully measured and accounted for beyond the words of those closest to it. The views of exhibition reviewers and other commentators would have brought a wider appreciation of Red Wave's regional and international impact to the page.

Nevertheless, the book offers insight into one of the most significant

indigenous creative art projects in recent decades. Higgins is careful to differentiate between the coexisting art histories within the region and the divergent trajectories of development they are embarked on. Her discussion is brief but important. On the one hand, she highlights Pacific arts projects elsewhere, acknowledging Georgina and Ulli Beier's work with Papua New Guinea artists in the late 1960s and early 1970s and its influence on Hau'ofa decades later. On the other hand, she distances Red Wave from developments in Aotearoa and among artists of the Samoan diaspora (although artists John Pule [1998 and 2006], Sophia Tekela Smith [1998], and Filipe Tohi [2007] visited or resided at the center temporarily), arguing "their circumstances differ from those of Fiji" (12). I agree with Higgins. The Oceania Centre is a bright light that has drawn visitors to it, but it is overwhelmingly a product of those who have stayed and engaged long term with its intentions and surroundings.

This book offers an intriguing glimpse of a pioneering arts and cultural center that begs a deeper study. The outline of the center's history could be expanded with more detail. I would like to have seen a chronology of key milestones: a list or appendixes of Red Wave's local and international exhibitions, for example, those held in Hawai'i and Sydney (2000) and in London (2006). A list of past artists and individual exhibition histories could have added value to the collection of stories and made the most of this publishing opportunity. But this is a wish list from a reviewer engaged with researching such histories.

Higgins has produced an attractive and important documentation that the artists of Red Wave and the Oceania Centre can be proud of. Congratulations to the author and the artists and to the Institute for Pacific Studies for seizing the moment and getting this book into print. When researchers and writers look back on the region and consider the multicultural art histories of Fiji and the Pacific, the Oceania Centre's place will be secure. For sure, the center's successes are visible in the artworks and ephemera of its projects and exhibitions, but this book captures the context, voices, and memories of these times so they may be heard and seen in the future. This small history is a building block for larger histories yet to be written.

This publication is reviewed after the passing of Epli Hau'ofa in January 2009. It is a time when people are freshly reflecting on Hau'ofa and his many contributions to our understanding of the islands and peoples of Oceania. Higgins has produced a book that marks that time, but also is a product of her time with Hau'ofa, the artists, and the spirit of Red Wave.

SEAN MALLON  
*Museum of New Zealand  
 Te Papa Tongarewa*

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*Le spectacle de la culture: Globalisation et traditionalismes en Océanie*, by Alain Babadzan. *Connaissance des hommes* series. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009. ISBN 978-2-296-07760-7, 286 pages, maps, notes, bibliography. €26.00.

There has been some questioning recently of the familiar divisional

categories—Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia—with many deciding that the first two have outlived their usefulness, and most not even commenting on the third.

But no one doubts another division in Oceania, and that is the gulf between Franconesia and Anglonesia. One can sniff, of course, that this is a remnant of colonial rivalry. It is, however, firmly entrenched in modern educational systems and politico-economic alliances, not to mention transport systems and scholarship.

Exceptions have been those French researchers who have worked in anglophone places, such as Papua New Guinea and Sāmoa, and those Anglophones who have made their careers in francophone islands, such as French Polynesia or New Caledonia. Otherwise, what is produced in the respective “-nesias” remains terra incognita.

Alain Babadzan is well known for his many publications on the Australs and Tahiti; this collection of seven chapters tries to bring Anglophonie to Francophonie in a series of insightful reviews and commentaries for his readers.

The first chapter is the longest at fifty-eight pages and was originally published in English in 1988. It sets the tone with a quote from Guy Debord's *La société du spectacle* (1967): “all that was directly lived is distant in a representation” (15). Chapter 1 looks at the developing culturalist symbolism of “The Pacific (and other) Way” (15), public performance in festivals, and the growth of self-conscious elites struggling to establish both personal and national identities in a postcolonial (or neo-