

Bodies of Water: Fluidity and Indigenous Curatorial Praxis

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Abstract This philosophical recentring of Indigenous identity and relationship to water and the sea has been the driving motivation behind a number of recent international contemporary art exhibitions that have featured Indigenous artists and curators in the years during and since the COVID-19 pandemic. This essay reflects on the curatorial frameworks of these exhibitions and unpacks some of the geopolitical pressures informing and, at times, compromising Indigenous participation in these events and discussions.

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1 Introduction

Kō wai koe? Nō wai koe?

Kō wai koe. Nō wai koe.

(Who are you? Who do you come from?)

You are water. You come from water).

Māori people commonly refer to our communities as Tāngata Whenua, People (of the) Land, but our bodies and words are water. The word *wai* literally means *who* and *water*, so when we ask who you are, we are also stating that you are water. This conceptualisation of life and identity is intrinsically connected to the cyclic system of water, evidenced in cosmological narratives of the precipitation from the sky father Ranginui flowing down to fertilise Papatūānuku mother earth and replenish Tangaroa in the seas. Each of these ancestral bodies are connected through water, and through water our bodies are formed and sustained.

This message was delivered by Sir Peter Sharples, then Minister of Māori Affairs, during the 2012 Indigenous Peoples' Water Forum at the University of Otago in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand. Sharples explains this relationship in relation to the birth of a child: *Tuatahi kō te wai, tuarua whānau mai te tamaiti, ka puta kō te whenua* (Water flows first, then the child, followed by the earth) (Sharples 2009). The word 'earth' (*whenua*) has a double meaning, referring also to the child's placenta that is planted in the soils of Papatūānuku after birth. Again, the cosmological narratives of our place within this complex system of *wai* and *whenua* are reinforced with ontological observations of a child birthed between falling waters and earth.

Identity informed by connections to water is a common theme shared by Indigenous peoples across the Moana (Pacific Ocean). Sāmoan poet and writer Albert Tūaoepe Wendt spoke to the idea of an "Ocean in Us" in 1976, being a person defined by the sea as a 'Pacific Islander', socio-politically and culturally rooted in a specific part of the ocean that feeds the imagination and nourishes the spirit (cf. Wendt 1976). Referencing Wendt's pivotal essay "Towards a New Oceania", Sāmoan art historian Dr Peter Brunt states "He [Wendt] was not referring to the Oceania of history books, museums and excavation sites, but rather to an Oceania in us, a subjective proposition addressed to the consciousness of modern Pacific Islanders" (Brunt 2010, 83). This idea was championed by Tongan-Fijian writer and anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa who encouraged a broader relational understanding of the ocean as an extension of our body, connecting communities across the sea, rather than separating island nations (Hau'ofa 1994). Taking this idea a step further, Tongan Philosopher and Critical Anthropologist Hūfanga-He-Ako-Moe-Lotu Professor Dr 'Ōkūsitino Māhina reminds us that we are not just connected



Figure 1 Rebecca Belmore, *Body of Water*. 2019.
In *Naadohbi: To Draw Water* at Winnipeg Art Gallery-Qaumajuq

or defined by the ocean, we *are* Tāngata Moana, People (of the) Sea (Māhina 2010). This idea was most eloquently expressed by I-Kiribati and African American scholar, poet and activist Teresia Teaiwa when she wrote of our genealogical connections to the sea, observed through the salt that seeps from our pores (Teaiwa 2017).

This philosophical recentring of our identity and relationship to water and the sea has been the driving motivation behind a number of recent international contemporary art exhibitions that have featured Indigenous artists and curators in the years during and since the COVID pandemic. This essay reflects on the curatorial frameworks of these exhibitions and unpacks some of the geopolitical pressures informing and, at times, compromising Indigenous participation in these events and discussions.

2 Naadohpii: To Draw Water

A river is a body of water.
It has a foot,
an elbow,
a mouth.
It runs.
It lies in a bed.
It can make you good.
It has a head.
It remembers everything.¹

On the 13 September 2007 the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the General Assembly with a majority of 144 states in favour, and only 4 votes against. The Declaration is the most potent and comprehensive international agreement recognising the rights of Indigenous peoples, establishing a framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous peoples around the world. The nations that voted against the Declaration were Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States (cf. United Nations Declaration On The Rights Of Indigenous Peoples 2007).

The countries that voted against the Declaration have since reversed their position, and a 2021 exhibition has brought together a group of artists from each of these four nations to create an international dialogue on Indigenous water rights. The exhibition, *Naadohpii: To Draw Water*, was gifted its name from Elder Dr Mary Courchene from Sagkeeng First Nation Treaty 1 Territory in Canada, and refers to the process of drawing, seeking or gathering water in the Anishinaabemowin language. I was fortunate to be part of the all-Indigenous curatorial team with Anishinaabe artist and curator Jaimie Isaac, Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Australian Curator Kimberley Moulton, and Sāmoan New Zealand curator Ioana Gordon-Smith. Beginning at Winnipeg Art Gallery-Qaumajuq (WAGQ) in Canada during the first Winnipeg Indigenous Triennial in 2021, the exhibition went on to tour to Victoria Museum in 2022 Melbourne, Australia and Pātaka Art+Museum in Porirua, Aotearoa New Zealand in 2023.

From the outset, the curatorial team set out to develop the exhibition on the philosophy of a global Indigenous axis of solidarity, to collectively champion each of the four curators and twenty-eight Indigenous artists represented in the exhibition, utilising a place-based Indigenous-led framework to create a forum for multicultural

¹ The poem “The First Water” by Natalie Diaz was displayed on a billboard banner at the entrance of Pātaka Art+Museum in Aotearoa, New Zealand, in 2023.



Figure 2
Nova Paul, *Ko te ripo*,
Two-Channel Moving Image
Installation, 2018

empowerment. Learning from the principles of Indigenous cultural, political and environmental resurgence described by Mississauga Nishnaabeg writer, musician and scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, the fluid curatorial process that was followed in the development of *Naadohbii* allowed for a respectful trans-Indigenous approach to understand the different socio-spatial conditions and practices that inform Indigenous ways of being across our various territories (Betasamosake Simpson 2017).

Artworks by artists such as Nova Paul (Māori, Ngāpuhi) demonstrate the ability of artists to do more than raise awareness of historical injustices, but to take the next step and hold governments and corporations to account. In Paul's *Ko te ripo* (2018) two-channel moving image installation viewers are provided with an opportunity to hear an unedited transcript of court proceedings held by Paul's Māori *whānau* (family) and community in Aotearoa New Zealand for claims to Indigenous rights over freshwater springs and streams on their lands. On one screen we see footage of the artist walking through the disputed Waipao springs at the centre of the court case, and in the second screen we see Paul's cousin, oral historian Dinah Paul, sitting at the foot of their ancestral *maunga* (mountain) Whatitiri reading evidence presented during their court claim to the Waitangi Tribunal.

The political messaging of *Naadohbii* is not confined to the gallery but is also embodied on a series of giant billboard-sized banners by Anishiinaabe performance artist Maria Hupfield. A banner artwork entitled *The First Water* was placed on the exterior of the WAGQ and at both venues in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Asking the question 'what separates a body from water' the artwork shows a documentary image of the artist ringing water from her hair during a

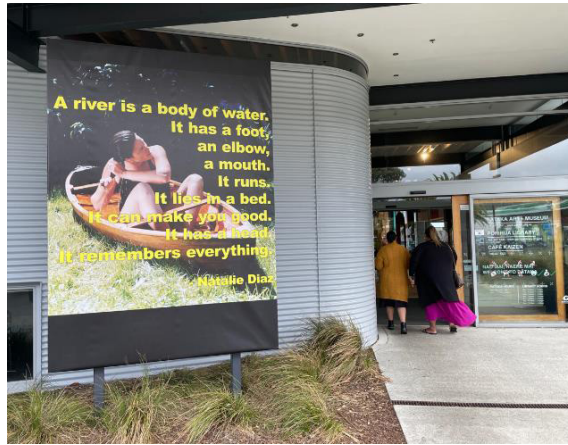


Figure 3
Maria Hupfield (with poem
by Natalie Diaz), *The First Water*.
Billboard banner at the entrance
to Pātaka Art+Museum in Aotearoa,
New Zealand, 2023.
© Author

performance on a canoe on land. In bright yellow text overlaid on top of this image is a portion of a poem by Mojave and Akimel O’odham poet Natalie Diaz that conceptualizes a river as a body with a head and a mouth, a foot and a bed. In the same way that a the river sustains and carries our bodies in a canoe, the river itself is carried and sustained within our bodies. As a later portion of Diaz’s poems beautifully articulates, “No matter what language you speak, no matter the color of your skin. We carry the river, its body of water, in our body”.

3 The 2022 Hawai’i Triennale: E Ho’omau no Moananuiākea

Water is not only a body that connects communities and island nations, it is a body that also connects continents and superpowers on either side of the Pacific Rim. Indigenous peoples across the Moana find themselves today increasingly caught in a geopolitical power struggle between the superpowers of North America, Asia and Europe. International art programmes, foreign aid and investment that inject economic stimulus into the Pacific have necessarily become a political tool of ‘cheque-book diplomacy’ asserting economic ties and occupation of locations in the Pacific.

The theme of cultural and economic investment in the Pacific as a tool of neo-colonial expansion and occupation was explored in the 2022 Hawai’i Triennial *The Pacific Century - E Ho’omau no Moananuiākea*. Here the island archipelago, and 50th State of the



Figure 4 Yuki Kihara, サ – モアのうた (*Sāmoa no ʻūta*), *A Song About Sāmoa* (2019). Installation view piece installation; siapo, textiles, beads, shells, plastic; kimonos 1750 × 1330 × 150 mm each. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries Dunedin, Aotearoa New Zealand

USA, becomes the epicentre for discussions about international relations between Asia and North America. Reflecting on the positionality of the exhibition framework and its location in Hawai‘i, Indigenous Hawai‘ian co-curator Drew Kahu‘āina Broderick reflects in conversation with the Triennial curatorial team of Dr Melissa Chiu and Dr Miwako Tezuka that various artists and art audiences may understand the idea of the “Pacific Century” differently depending on the time and place of their engagement with this space. The bilingual title of the exhibition, he suggests, asks audiences to question ‘whose Pacific’ and ‘which century’ are we referring to? For reference, in ʻōlelo Hawai‘ian the title *E Ho‘omau no Moananuiākea* refers to the Great Ocean of Kea, the eponymous ancestor attributed to the discovery and settlement of a great number of islands throughout the Pacific (Hawai‘i Triennial 2022). Whereas the English language title of the exhibition is related by co-curator Melissa Chiu to a 2011 essay and speech made by then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in which Clinton “weaponizes” the phrase “America’s Pacific Century” (Katze-man 2022). This conceptual duality and subversive word play brings to mind the words of the late Hawai‘ian author, educator, poet and activist Haunani-Kay Trask who called Moana communities to action to fight for Indigenous sovereignty, challenging colonial perceptions of the Pacific with the often-quoted question of ‘What do you mean We, White Man?’ (Trask 1999, 180).

The forked tongue nature of the Triennial’s title and thematic premise address the enduring and worrying persistence of imperialism which continues to loom over the Moana like an ominous nuclear-powered

rain cloud. Pointing to the economic and military force of external superpowers, and by extension highlighting the tenuous hold that Indigenous Hawaiʻian and other Moana peoples exert over their ancestral homelands, it is a timely reminder that subversive neo-colonial structures of power continue to evolve and manoeuvre course to build and maintain cultural, economic and military supremacy.

Moana artists and curators engaging in these types of transnational programmes and discussions are necessarily faced with the responsibility of identifying the various actors and agendas at play, from institutional agendas and corporate sponsorship to more subversive political undercurrents influencing the broader outcomes of the events and programmes. The question of participation, whether it be to raise awareness or to provide critical analysis of the structures of power, is one that can divide opinions among Indigenous arts communities, especially given the increasing global awareness and reluctance to be seen to be complicit-by-participation of supporting an unethical or neo-colonialist agendas.

As Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith advocates in her research on decolonial methodologies, non-Indigenous writers and curators must be taken to task for the way that they promote and inscribe their dominant world views onto Indigenous art, culture and communities (Tuhiwai Smith 2022). Choices made for how Indigenous art and culture should be conceptualized, critiqued and discussed are best articulated by voices from within the communities that most holistically understand the histories and contemporary dynamics informing and influencing the culture. As Broderick's curatorial reflections demonstrate, rather than positioning ideas of the Pacific in relation to Asia and Euro-American international perspectives on history and contemporary art discourse, Moana artists, curators and scholars are increasingly recentring our understanding of the Moana and Moana art practices in relation to our values, perspectives and positionalities here in the Pacific.

4 Pan-Austro-Nesia: Taiwan and the Global South

A similarly complex set of geopolitical conditions informed the 2021 exhibition 泛·南·島 *Pan-Austro-Nesian (PAN)* at the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts in Taiwan (KMFA). I was fortunate to be one of the co-curators invited to work on this project, observing the thought processes of Kaohsiung Director Yulin Lee, with curatorial input from co-curator Dr Zara Stanhope (Director of Govett-Brewster Art Gallery & Len Lye Centre in Aotearoa New Zealand) and the curatorial team at the KMFA.

Director Lee cites the location of the KMFA in the South of Taiwan and the institution's established history of developing exhibitions

analysing Indigenous Taiwanese connections to the South Pacific as the rationale for the KMFA's recurrent focus on Oceanic art practices.²

With *PAN* the KMFA expanded this focus from the South Pacific to reposition the museum in alignment with the broader Global South. In an interview with KMFA curator Lily Hsu, Director Lee states:

We all know how widely the Austronesian peoples spread out, from Taiwan the northernmost, New Zealand the southernmost, Africa the westernmost to Easter Island of [and] South America the easternmost. If viewed from this angle, the 'Austronesian' concept might not include the Indigenous peoples of Southeast Asia or Australia. However, if we take the perspectives of colonialism or contemporary globalization, different Indigenous communities from around the world, and even including the southern island political entities in comparison to the northern continental political powers, all share similar dilemmas concerning their own economic, political, or cultural sovereignties. (Lee 2022)

The dilemma of sovereignty mentioned in this context plays out against a backdrop of immense political tension between China and Taiwan. Taiwan has been occupied by various nations over the centuries, including waves of Indigenous settlement and migration before the arrival of the Portuguese and successive waves of colonisation from Spain, the Dutch, China, Japan, and then China again in 1949, when the Republic of China (ROC) government retreated to the island at the end of the Chinese Civil War. As the global influence of China has grown, Taiwan has become increasingly politically isolated, losing many of their former allies, as nations around the world have formally acknowledged diplomatic relations with China. These conditions make it difficult to separate the stated aims of the *PAN* project to engage with the Global South from the broader diplomatic interests of Taiwan, which are strengthened through the development of cultural relationships with countries in the South Pacific.

These long and complicated colonial histories present multifaceted challenges to decolonial practices within Taiwanese arts and cultural institutions. Collections of Indigenous art in public galleries and museums have long been associated with displays of imperialism, legitimising the occupation of the new regime through carefully curated collections of treasures acquired through the process of colonisation. Indigenous art in this context becomes a tool for diplomatic relations and assertions of the unique cultural identity of the nation.

² *The Great Journey* exhibition included a number of Tāngata Moana artists from Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific, including Lisa Reihana, Shane Cotton, Virginia King, Greg Semu and Michel Tuffery.

Indigenous artists and curators who chose to participate in such contemporary Indigenous art exhibitions are forced to contend with these histories, lending their cultural capital to the institutions delivering the projects, legitimising the agenda and in the process becoming accomplices in the outcomes delivered, whether positive or otherwise.

The curatorial framework for *PAN* sought to deal with these complex dynamics through a thematic approach to the issues, dividing the exhibition into three discrete groupings of *Known to Unknown*, *Dark Island* and *Circle of Life* – groupings that spoke to creative practices as well as chronological periods of time, from Indigenous navigation and exploration, imperialism and colonisation, and the contemporary conditions of today. Artworks within the exhibition were subsequently placed within a conceptual mosaic, dealing with a myriad of themes across time and space in the Asia-Pacific region.

Japanese Sāmoan *fa'afafine* artist Yuki Kihara's contribution to *PAN* is emblematic of the types of artworks and nuanced discussions that took place, presenting a richly complex contemplation on Asia-Pacific trans-nationalism, gender identity politics and emerging environmental crises of the Anthropocene. Kihara grew up with her family in Japan before moving to Sāmoa as a child and eventually Aotearoa New Zealand where she undertook formal studies in art and fashion. Initially focusing on the colonial gaze and gender identity politics in the Pacific, her return to Sāmoa in recent years has broadened her research interests to include marine ecology and the impact of climate change on ocean habitats around the islands of Sāmoa.

Kihara's installation in *PAN*, entitled *サーモアのうた (Sāmoa no uta) A Song About Sāmoa*, combines textiles with customary printmaking and painterly practices from Japan and Sāmoa.

The installation takes the form of five Japanese furisode kimono, a style of kimono that is customarily worn by young unmarried woman. Made of siapo (Sāmoan bark cloth), these works are an evocation of the artist's trans-national heritage and *fa'afafine* gender identity. [...] Adorned across this suite of kimono are printed images of tropical beach scenes, painting an idyllic picture of Sāmoa as a thriving paradise, subverted by the inclusion of litter and other forms of detritus introduced by people. The beauty of the works belie a tale of devastation that has just started to unravel, as unprecedented levels of pollution and carbon emissions from the industrial superpowers of the world increasingly impinge on the viable existence of ocean life, and by extension the livelihood of Oceanic peoples. (Friend 2023, 141-2)

A Song About Sāmoa reminds us that the world is seeing the first climate refugees emigrating from low lying nations such as Sāmoa, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and

Vanuatu. While this devastation is having immediate impacts on Kihara's island homelands in Sāmoa, references to her Japanese heritage and damage to the ocean environment remind us of the devastation caused by the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant which has leaked radioactive materials into the ocean following the 2011 tsunami in Japan (Friend 2021, 52).

Kihara went on to represent Aotearoa New Zealand at the 59th Venice Biennale of Art in 2022, presenting an immersive installation of photography of Sāmoan landscapes and patterned imagery. The wall-to-wall aesthetic of touristic island imagery and patterned fabric enveloped visitors in the colours and visual culture of Sāmoa. Rethinking the paintings of nineteenth century French Impressionist painter Paul Gauguin, Kihara reconstructs Gauguin's paintings with staged photographs of *fa'afafine*, positing a hypothesis that Gauguin's subjects were often not necessarily young women but likely *fa'afafine* posed in the manner of women. Here the artist's thoughts on transcultural and transgender Moana identity politics are paired with decolonial strategies for the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of being.

5 Decolonising the Pacific: Indigenising Moana Curatorial Praxis

This is not an ocean, this is a rented house
This is not a hand,
this is a library
This is not the sky, this is a grandfather clock
This is not a child, this is a mirror.³

In 2009 the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Art invited Aotearoa New Zealand Rarotonga artist and curator Jim Vivieaere to co-curate an exhibition entitled *The Great Journey: In Pursuit of the Ancestral Realm*. Seeking to locate Taiwan culturally and geographically within the Island realms of Oceania, Vivieaere's contribution to *The Great Journey* and the legacy of his curatorial practice became an important touchstone in my thinking around the PAN project and the artists proposed for this exhibition.⁴

The idea of 'Islandness' within contemporary art had been a problematic subject that Vivieaere had sought to resolve for many years

³ This poem by Jim Vivieaere was written on a wall panel of his "Multimedia moving image artwork" in the exhibition *Le Folauga* at the Auckland War Memorial Museum in 2007.

⁴ Section 5 of the article was written by reusing portions of text from a publication by the same Author (Friend 2021, 52-71).

prior to *The Great Journey*. Vivieaere's groundbreaking 1994 exhibition *Bottled Ocean* at City Gallery Wellington left an indelible mark on the art history of Aotearoa New Zealand, marking an important moment of change in the outdated anthropological consideration of Oceanic art and artists at that time. As Dr Peter Brunt writes in the 2012 publication *Art in Oceania*, '*Bottled Ocean* made the "arrival" of contemporary Pacific art in the elite galleries of the New Zealand art world a problem to be reflected upon, rather than simply a triumph to celebrate. Having been invited to survey the work of Pacific migrants, Vivieaere turned the exhibition into something of an installation, a work of art in its own right...' (Brunt, Thomas 2012; Brunt 2010).

As an artist-curator, Vivieaere had a unique perspective and ability to reframe curatorial practice as an extension of his own art practice. Vivieaere's master stroke in *Bottled Ocean* was the placement of artworks behind a clear acrylic screen, bottling the exhibition within a giant museum vitrine. Freeing Pacific cultures from the vitrines of archaeology and anthropology become a lifelong endeavour, and a legacy that would free new generations of South Pacific Moana artists and curators to explore new currents in contemporary practice.

The Great Journey provided an opportunity for Vivieaere, and the community of artists that travelled alongside him, to traverse beyond the parochial Western-centric horizons of Aotearoa New Zealand contemporary art discourse, to reconsider and reconnect 'Pacific art' in relation to broader Austronesia histories of Oceanic art and culture. The six artists that travelled with Vivieaere were Shane Cotton, Virginia King, Lisa Reihana, Greg Semu, Michel Tuffery and Daniel Waswas. They were joined by eleven Taiwanese artists from four Indigenous nations of Taiwan, including the Atayal, Amis, Paiwan and Sediq nations.

KMFA Curator and Head of Research Mei-Chen Tseng shared in her 2009 preliminary catalogue for *The Great Journey*, "The art and culture of Taiwan and the South Pacific bear witness to the migration and development of Austronesian peoples throughout the Pacific. The linkages between Taiwan and the South Pacific extends to the ecological environment, language, myths and legends, houses, tools and lifestyles. In the context of contemporary art, the Austronesian peoples can draw on their extensive pedigrees. And even in the midst of modern civilization, they can still rely on clearly defined cultural roots" (Zeplin 2010, 35).

These histories of migration and exchange between the Indigenous nations of Taiwan and the many island nations of the Pacific reach back in time many thousands of years prior to the arrival and settlement of European colonies in the Asia-Pacific region. *The Great Journey* exhibition provided an opportunity for these communities and cultural narratives to be centred in contemporary art discourse of the Asia-Pacific region. This geographical recentring aligned with



Figure 5 *Bottled Ocean*, installation shot. City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi, 1994

Vivieaere's ongoing project for cultural recentring which had been so potently communicated with *Bottled Ocean*. *Bottled Ocean* visually demonstrated the othering of Pacific art and people in Aotearoa New Zealand, encased within the vitrine of Western museology. As Albert Wendy had articulated previously, the cultural label and perception of what a 'Pacific Islander' was in the 1970s was something other to the cultural label and idea of what a New Zealander was at that time, and this prevalent attitude continued to persist into the 1990s and 2000s during *Bottled Ocean* and *The Great Journey*.

I was 13 years old when *Bottled Ocean* opened, unaware of the art historical negotiations taking place. When *The Great Journey* opened in Taiwan in 2009, I had just been appointed Curator Māori-Pacific at City Gallery Wellington in Aotearoa New Zealand. Vivieaere's legacy at the institution was palpable. I felt swept up in the torrent of information and critical discourse that Jim and his peers had navigated many years before. For me, Jim was Kupe. The great Oceanic navigator who sailed to Aotearoa New Zealand from Rarotonga and Aitutaki a thousand years ago, carving pathways in the sea and sky, traversing turbulent waters, confronting titans, claiming new terrain (Friend 2021, 52).

Though Vivieaere, Hau'ofa and Teaiwa are no longer with us, having sailed beyond daylight in return to the ancestral realm, I see new generations of Moana artists and scholars on the horizon, with their paddles in the water, rising on the wake of elders gone before. Many of my peers, and younger generations of Pacific Island artists

and curators, have expressed a strong desire to completely reject the term 'Pacific' and 'Oceania' in favour of self-determined Indigenous language terms. Most audibly, Canada-based artist and scholar Dr Léuli Eshrāghi advocates for the term 'Moana' or 'Moananui' as more culturally and linguistically appropriate words to describe Oceania and the island nations of the Pacific. In his 2015 essay "We Are Born of the Fanua: Moananui Arts Practice in Australia" Eshrāghi explains, "Moananui ā kea in 'Ōlelo Hawai'i denotes the great ocean linked to [the] ancestor Kea. Te Moananui a Kiwa in reo Māori denotes the great ocean linked to [the] ancestor Kiwa" (Eshrāghi 2015, 65). As a term, he explains "Moananui a Kiwa or Moananui ā kea encompasses vast worlds of atoll and volcanic archipelagos, all connected through millennial vā of customary exchange, from Timor, Kaho'olawe and Pora Pora to Viti Levu, Te Ika a Māui and Rekohu. Thousands of peoples maintain Moananui geocultural, sociopolitical and spiritual practices in every part of this expansive ocean, and far beyond it through international diaspora" (65).

As a contribution to decolonising research methodologies championed by scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Tongan scholar and philosopher Tēvita O. Ka'ili builds on the *tā-vā* theory of reality and relations developed by 'Okusitino Māhina. Defining *tā* as 'the beating of space' and *vā* as the 'relational space between two marks in time', Ka'ili offers the Tauhi Vā theory as a methodology for creating and maintaining trans-Indigenous socio-spatial relations across the Moana, enacted through the performance of servant leadership. Ka'ili offers four guiding principles for the performance of social duties: *hohoko* (genealogy), *vā'ifaiva* (socio-spatial responsibility), *talatalanoa* (conversation), and *fokifokihī* (taking time to see all sides of a concept) (Ka'ili 2017). By understanding time and space as vectors that determine our positionality, we can mark our time in space by the steps, actions and interactions we create.

A poetic interpretation of this methodology can be seen in a poem by Jim Vivieaere. Two years before *The Great Journey*, Vivieaere presented a multimedia moving image artwork in an exhibition titled *Le Folauga* at the Auckland War Memorial Museum. In the title of the artwork Vivieaere wrote the words, "This is not the sky, this is a grandfather clock". I think about this line at times, when I look up at the sky, or when I am peering down on the ocean from a window seat on a plane, and I try to slow time in my mind.

In conclusion, the poetic inference in this line evokes genealogical connections to the sky father, but also makes reference to philosophies of time and space as temporal and relational markers of our positionality between the realms of earth, sea, sky and time. These are philosophies rooted in the Moana. The time we live in is marked by our actions and measured by the beating of our hearts. Though our ancestors would not recognise the world we live in today, the

ocean remembers them, and so too does the earth and sky. And it will remember our actions between the earth and sky too, for better or worse.

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