

SPEAR

the bi-monthly newsletter for
South Pacific Education Advanced Research

www.auckland.ac.nz/spear

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Developing Pacific Research

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Letter from the Director

Kia Ora; Talofa lava; Fakalofa lahi atu; Halo olgeta; Malo e lelei; Alii; Ni sa bula; Hafadai; Taloha ni; Aloha mai e; Kia orana; Ia Orana, Kam na mauri; Kaselehliia; Yokwe; And warm greetings.

Welcome to the first issue of the SPEAR newsletter which coincides with the launch of our new website.

SPEAR (South Pacific Education Advanced Research) is a new initiative dedicated to support and develop prospective and current Pacific doctoral students at The University of Auckland. We also aim to develop strong networks between Pacific researchers both locally and internationally.

As a Pacific Art Historian I really value the stimulating dialogue and debate within the Pacific research community and it is hoped that SPEAR will offer a positive link for Pacific doctoral students to relevant staff, mentors, alumni and researchers.

Currently there are 54 Pacific students enrolled as doctoral students at The University of Auckland. Through our SPEAR newsletter we hope to keep you informed of any upcoming events, recent publications as well as developments in current research practice.

We also look forward to developing future SPEAR projects including a symposium, workshops and publishing opportunities – so watch this space!

Our focus for this issue is Developing Pacific Research. It profiles a range of exciting and innovative graduate and staff research and offers insights into the application of indigenous Pacific research methodologies.

We invite you to visit our website and welcome feedback and research stories. Do email our SPEAR coordinator Dr Graham Fletcher at g.fletcher@auckland.ac.nz.



I hope you enjoy this inaugural SPEAR newsletter!

Dr Caroline Vercoe

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Editors:
Caroline Vercoe
Graham Fletcher

Some Recent Publications

Books and Journals

Kahn M. 2011 (March). **Tahiti beyond the Postcard: Power, Place, and Everyday Life**. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 288 pages. ISBN: 978-0295991023 and 978-0295991016.

Lau G, Rycroft D, Sekules V (eds). 2011. Volume 1, Issue 1. **World Art**. Routledge. 149 pages. ISSN: 2150-0908 (electronic) 2150-0894 (paper). <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=g934094380>

Nicole R. c2011. **Disturbing History: Resistance in Early Colonial Fiji**. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu. 298 pages. ISBN: 9780824832919 and 0824832914.

Articles

Becker, A. E., Fay, K., Agnew-Blais, J., Guarnaccia, P. M., Striegel-Moore, R. H., & Gilman, S. E. (2011). **Development of a Measure of “Acculturation” for Ethnic Fijians: Methodologic and Conceptual Considerations for Application to Eating Disorders Research**. Transcultural Psychiatry, 47(4), 754-788.

SAHLINS, M. (2011). **What Kinship Is, Part 1**. The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 17(1), 2-19.

SOARES, P., RITO, T., TREJAUT, J., MORMINA, M., HILL, C., TINKLER-HUNDAL, E., et al. **Ancient Voyaging and Polynesian Origins**, (2011). American Journal of Human Genetics, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ajhg.2011.01.009>.

THOW, A. M., HEYWOOD, P., SCHULZ, J., QUESTED, C., JAN, S., & COLAGIURI, S. (2011). **Trade and the Nutrition Transition: Strengthening Policy for Health in the Pacific**. Ecology of Food and Nutrition, 50(1), 18-42.

Nina Tonga on her recent trip to New York



PhD candidate Nina Tonga outside the MOMA PS1 Art Gallery in Long Island, New York.

In February I travelled to New York to attend the 99th Annual College Arts Association (CAA) conference. My trip was made possible through a Tuakana Leadership Grant and conference support from the Pacific Arts Association. I was invited to present at the CAA conference as part of the Pacific Arts Association Affiliated session. Also attending the conference from the University of Auckland was Dr Caroline Vercoe Head of the Department of Art History and graduate student and artist Tyla Ta'ufu'ou.

Like navigating through the complex subways of New York the 99th CAA conference held multiple parallel sessions that offered every paper imaginable from Manga (a personal favourite) to Narcissism. A number of sessions featured highly acclaimed historians, artists and curators such as WJT Mitchell, Coco Fusco and Lowery Sims. Being in the same room with people I have only known as names on my book

shelf, left me star struck and with mild RSI as I madly scribbled down pages upon pages of notes.

The Pacific Arts Association Affiliated Session entitled 'Documenting Oceania after the 20th Century' chaired by Bernida Webb-Binder from

“Art however, never escapes you in New York; it is embedded in its very foundation”

Cornell University offered a global discussion of Pacific art and identity post

millennium. My contribution to the session *Ethnic Avatars: Pacific Artists Creating Digital Homelands* presented an aspect of my doctoral research. The paper offered a New Zealand-based Pacific focus discussing the work of West-Auckland artist Janet Lilo and her social networking based installation *Top 16*.

Fellow panelists included Julie Risser from the

University of St Thomas, Ursula Siataga from the University of Santa Cruz and Craig Perez from the University of California, Berkeley. Our panel formed a truly diverse round table of Pacific researchers each of the papers offered unique perspectives on Pacific art and identity. The PAA session was well received by an enthusiastic and dedicated audience.

When not enthralled in a conference session we were out taking in the sights and sounds of the city. Art however, never escapes you in New York; it is embedded in its very foundation. Murals, public sculptures and street art as well as the snow that artistically layered over the city constant reminders of the visual richness of the city. On the last day of the conference I made a trip to MoMA PS1 in Long Island to see the exhibition *The Talent Show* a group exhibition that offered a once in a lifetime opportunity to see works by artists like Andy Warhol, Adrienne Piper and Amie Segel.

Also featured at MoMA PS1 was Feng Mengbo's *Long March: Restart* (2008) an interactive video-game installation that features two walls lined with projections of a game modeled after the pop cult hit Mario Brothers. When playing the game you are lodged in an intermediary space between two wall-sized screens controlling the image and movement of the work. Having grown up pre-xbox and pre-

ps3 being immersed in Feng Mengbo's virtual installation was a culmination of nostalgia and fantasy, a perfect end to the trip.



Wall Mural Soho

Although our trip was only seven days and felt like a New York minute, it has been hugely influential in shaping my doctoral research. Being immersed in art in and out of the conference has inspired and furthered my research that has now gained a global perspective. As a networking opportunity, attending the 99th CAA conference was a huge success and I have since built a global advisory team that includes academics from as far abroad as Montreal and New York.

I would like to thank the Arts Equity committee for awarding me the Faculty of Arts Tuakana Leadership Grant Fund that enabled my travel to New York and the Pacific Arts Association for their conference support.

SPEAR: Profiles

Profiling Pacific Researchers

Profile: Pacific Doctoral Alumni



Dr Selina Tusitala Marsh

Dr Selina Tusitala Marsh is an Auckland-based Pasifika poet and scholar of Samoan, Tuvaluan, English, Scottish and French descent. In 2004, she completed her thesis entitled “Ancient banyans, flying foxes and white ginger: Five Pacific women writers” that investigated the little known works of five Pacific Island women poets ... In brief, Selina believes these poets were pioneers of Pacific literature and were influential in giving a voice to Pacific women and children as a means of empowerment in a largely male dominated post-colonial era—“Poetry was used as a political voice. These women were all quite remarkable boundary-breakers.”

“Poetry was used as a political voice. These women were all quite remarkable boundary-breakers”

Profile: Pacific Researcher



Dr Te Oti Rakena

Dr Te Oti Rakena is currently the Head of Vocal Studies (Classical) and Associate Dean (Equity) in the National Institute of Creative Institute at the University of Auckland. An established performer in the Opera and Music Theatre genres his published research centres on non-western vocal performance and studio pedagogy. He has presented internationally at BERA (2007), EERA (2007, 2008, 2009), and ISME Bologna (2008) and Performa (2009). He was recently invited to participate in the performance strand of the Brown University 2010 BIARI Institute, Toward a Global Humanities. He participated in the Ministry of Education Teaching and Learning Initiative two year research project “Success for All.”

Visit the SPEAR website for more detailed profiles www.auckland.ac.nz/spear

SPEAR: Profiles

Profiling Pacific Researchers

Profile: Pacific Doctoral Student



Andrea Low

Andrea Low is a PhD candidate in Ethnomusicology researching early twentieth century popular Hawaiian music. Andrea has a background in fine arts with an MFA from Elam as well as a BA in English also from the University of Auckland. Her work as a visual artist is held in public and private collections and she continues to practice as an artist and curator. Alongside artist Graham Fletcher Andrea is currently co-curating an installation for Window in the University of Auckland Library foyer. The exhibition is titled 'Auratica Fantastica' and brings together the work of over eighty contemporary artists and opens on the 5th April 2011. In April Andrea's ethnomusicology research will take her to Hawaii where she will meet with other scholars of early Hawaiian music. A focus of her research is the transmission of Hawaiian music to Australasia, Indonesia and India in the period 1910-1930.

Profile: Staff at The UoA



Judy Taligalu McFall-McCaffery

Talofa lava, Taloha ni, Malo e lelei, Mauri ora, Kia ora, Kia orana, Fakaalofa atu, Bula... warm greetings to you.

A part-time postgraduate student myself, I understand the challenges of the research process and I enjoy assisting you with search strategies to locate resources relevant to your research and learn about your research topic. The other part of my work I enjoy is the liaison, consultation and working with Pasifika staff and students university-wide and assisting students from other departments with research that has a Pacific component. I welcome your suggestions on ways how I can assist you better with a service that is user friendly, relevant, timely and suited to your needs.

Visit the SPEAR website for more detailed profiles www.auckland.ac.nz/spear

Dr Susan Carter

Pasifika Models for Research Writing

For some students their cultural identity is intrinsic to their research. A research thesis is a lengthy task, and it can be helpful to find motivation by imprinting the work with your own identity markers. Perhaps you can own your thesis more fully than you had thought, and such ownership is likely to help you enjoy the process of writing, to finish more quickly, and to impress your marker with your stylish methodology design. I begin here by talking about *Kaupapa Maori* as this is well established as a research methodology. However, there are also several Pacific Island models that have the potential to be used and developed.

The Kaupapa Maori model

Linda Tuhiwai Smith defines the organizational concept of *kaupapa* as “a plan, a philosophy, and a way to proceed. Embedded in the concept of *kaupapa* is a notion of acting strategically,” showing that “*Kaupapa Maori* has become a way of structuring assumptions, values, concepts, orientations and priorities in research” (Smith, 1999 A, 2). She notes that “Most discussion about *Kaupapa Maori* is also about critical theory, in particular the notions of critique, resistance, struggle, and emancipation,” citing G. H. Smith, who “argues that *Kaupapa Maori* is a local theoretical positioning, which is the modality through which the emancipatory goal of critical in specific historical, political, and social context, is practiced” (G. Smith, 1990, 3-4). Linda Tuhiwai Smith locates the way that *Kaupapa Maori* is politicized, so that the decision to choose it as a methodology is performative:

The problem is not just that positivist science is well established institutionally and theoretically, but that it has a connectedness at a common sense level with the rest of society, who, generally speaking, take for granted the hegemony of its methods and its leadership in the search for knowledge. As far as many people are concerned, research is positivist; it

cannot be anything else. *Kaupapa Maori* is a fledgling approach occurring within the limited community of Maori researchers. It exists within a minority culture that continues to be represented within antagonistic colonial discourses. It is a counter-hegemonic approach to Western forms of research and, as such, currently exists in the margins of Western research. (Smith, 1999 A, 6)

She declares “*Kaupapa Maori* is imbued with a strong anti-positivist stance” (Smith, 1999 A, 6).

Interpretative versus positivist

Martin Tolich provides a good discussion of positivist versus interpretative approaches: “Positivism sees social science as an organised method for combining deductive logic with precise empirical observations of individual behaviour in order to discover and confirm a set of probabilistic causal laws that can be used to predict general patterns of human activity. The interpretative approach is the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds” (Tolich, 2001, 7). There is a growing literature that suggests that positivism is inappropriate for much qualitative research, particularly around cultural issues.

Cultural practice and methodology

Smith points out that “in all community approaches *process*—that is methodology and method—is highly important. In many projects the process is far more important than the outcome. Processes are expected to be respectful, to enable people, to heal and to educate” (Smith, 1999 B, 127-8). If you feel that your research is most relevant in its relationship to your community, then perhaps you could consider one of the options already established by an academic.

To read more please visit the SPEAR website www.auckland.ac.nz/spear