

CONCEPTS OF *TĀ-VĀ* (TIME-SPACE) IN THE ART PRACTICE OF SAMOA-AOTEAROA ARTIST SHIGEYUKI KIHARA

Pamela Rosi
Independent Scholar

The meaning and kaupapa behind my work is derivative of an ancient Moana philosophy and beliefs and that's what makes it an art from the Moana . . . Art from the Moana is all about celebrating the community. . . . Shigeyuki Kihara, 2005.

My paper considers concepts of *tā-vā* (time-space theory of reality) in the interdisciplinary art practice of Pacific Islander Shigeyuki Kihara, whose art is internationally acclaimed for its beauty, social criticism, and Moana identity linked to ties of community. With creative examples, I explore how Kihara's constructions of *tā-vā* (a) reclaim Samoan histories and identities by subverting western fantasies of "dusky maidens" and a timeless South Seas Paradise; (b) challenge western binary norms of heterosexuality and gender from the traditional space (*vā*) she occupies as a *fa'afafine*; and (c) embody Samoan deities to honor Moana spirituality and epistemologies. I further discuss ways Kihara positions her *vā* as *fa'afafine* to maintain positive relations to her Samoan community and her international circle of artist colleagues through the Moana-Samoan practice of *teu le vā*—meaning caring for or beautifying social spaces now threatened by global forces commoditizing the arts and cultures of Oceania.

Introduction

IN HIS BOOK *The Interpretation of Cultures*, anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) theorized that "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance which he himself has spun" (5). For anthropologists (including myself) who

have been influenced by Geertz's ideas, cultural analysis is an interpretive endeavor seeking to understand the meanings of symbols, social relations, and connections to nature, which people conceptualize to structure their cosmologies and behavior. Although, as Geertz and others have noted, all cultures ontologically have ideas of time and space that enable people to conceptualize things diachronically and synchronically, these ideas are framed by indigenous epistemologies and their dynamics.

In Oceania, which the late Tongan anthropologist, writer, and poet Epeli Hau'ofa has called "Our Sea of Islands" (Hau'ofa 1993), Pacific Island societies have since the eighteenth century been severely impacted by western colonialism through forces of missionization, capitalism, institutional education, and militarism. Recent migration, urbanization, and globalism have brought further changes and conflicts to Pacific Island Societies. At the same time, societies and cultures of Oceania are resilient. Confronting western cultural hegemony, Pacific people have continued to honor and revitalize their traditions in their home islands as well as in new urban migrant communities in New Zealand, North America, and Europe.

Beginning in the 1960s, as a growing body of scholarship has documented, indigenous Pacific artists, writers, and scholars have contributed to a Moana (Oceania) cultural renaissance (see Adsett, Whiting, and Ihimaera 2001; Chiu 2004; Cochrane 2001; Cochrane Simons and Stevenson 1990; Hereniko and Wilson 1999; Herle et al. 2002; Kùchler and Were 2005; Mallon 2002; Mallon and Pereira 1997, 2002; Mason 2004; Stevenson 2008; Vercoe 2004). Collectively, their work engages ideas and practices of Pacific indigenous knowledge and spirituality, as well as distinctive concepts of identity to challenge dominant Western values—such as egocentrism and utilitarianism. Collaborating with several of his colleagues and former students, anthropologist-historian and accomplished poet Okusitino Māhina has recently contributed a new philosophical *tā-vā* (time-space) theory of reality to the understanding of Polynesian culture and art (Thomas 2010). Applied across nature, mind, and society, *tā-vā* theory holds that all things stand in eternal relations of exchange to one another, giving rise to order (symmetry) or conflict (asymmetry), depending on how mutual transactions are mediated or transformed (Māhina 2002, 2004, 2005; Māhina, Ka'ili, and Ka'ili 2005; Māhina and Potauaine 2010).

In contrast to general Western ideas of time and space, which are conceptualized as singular, individualistic, analytic, and linear, Pacific concepts of *tā* (time) and *vā* (space) are plural, collectivistic, circular, and aesthetic (Māhina and Potauaine 2010). As Māhina and other Oceania scholars have noted, peoples of the Moana believe "the past lies ahead of the future and

people walk forward into the past and backwards into the future” (also Hau’ofa 1993; Trask 1993; Wendt 1999). In the present, where the past and future engage dialectically, there is continuous conflict seeking mediation to create balance. Unlike Western epistemologies that render reality in three dimensions, the tā-vā theory of reality is four dimensional, since time and space intersect in indigenous thought and practice. Also, unlike Western ideas where space is considered a void, vā references relational space that maintains mutual social relations between persons or groups. As Tēvita Ka’ili (2007) has richly described, caring for and nurturing social relations of vā—termed *teu le vā* or *tausi le vā* in Samoan culture (see Refiti [2009] and Van der Ryn [this issue] for their spatial distinctions)—is guided by a code of conduct to “beautify” the social space. *Teu le vā*¹ is then a productive social and artistic process where aesthetic qualities and utility coexist (Ka’ili 2007: 1–39; Māhina and Potauaine 2010, 19). But whether creating artistic productions (*tufunga*, “material arts”; *faiva*, “performance arts”; or fine arts, known in Tonga as “*Nimamea’a*”—meaning “fine hands” in western discourse), or maintaining social relations, Pacific Islanders organize tā and vā in patterned ways designed to produce harmony in situations prone to conflict and/or asymmetry. From this tā-vā perspective, art is a productive process where conditions of chaos or asymmetry are transformed into a state of order and beauty (Māhina 2002; Māhina and Potauaine 2010). As Māhina argues, the symmetrical intersection of time in space gives rise to beautiful artistic creations and harmonious social spaces (Māhina 2004; Ka’ili 2005, 5).

Given the critical role of Pacific arts today in revitalizing Moana cultures at the dynamic intersection of local and globalizing art worlds—including reasserting indigenous concepts of time and space—my paper focuses on the multimedia and performance art practice of Pacific Islander artist Shigeyuki Kihara, who resides in Auckland, Aotearoa-New Zealand. I have selected Kihara’s multimedia and performance art because it has received international acclaim for its beauty, nuanced social criticism, and assertion of Moana identity and heritage. In 2003, Kihara was the winner of Creative Arts New Zealand’s Emerging Pacific Artist Award; in 2008, she became the first Pacific artist to have a solo exhibition, entitled *Living Photographs*, at the Metropolitan Museum in New York; in 2009, she received Creative New Zealand Pacific Innovation and Excellence award. In 2012, she received two further honors: the New Generation Award from Arts Foundation New Zealand, and the Paramount Award from the Wallace Art Awards. The latter was for her video work entitled “*Galau afi: Waves of Fire*”—a lament inspired by the 2009 tsunami in Samoa.

Selecting examples from her fashion work (*Graffiti Dress, Adorn to Excess*); her mixed media prints (*Black Sunday*); her photographic series (*Faleaitu: House of Spirits, Vavau: Tales from Ancient Samoa, Fa'afafine: In a Manner of a Woman*), and her performance art (*Taualuga: The Last Dance* and *Talanoa: Walk the Talk*), I explore how Kihara's constructions of *tā* (time) and *vā* (space) direct her to (a) reclaim Samoan histories and creation stories by subverting hegemonic western fantasies of "dusky maidens" and a timeless South Seas Paradise that denies change and agency to Pacific Islanders; (b) challenge western binary norms of heterosexuality and gender from the *vā* (social space) she occupies in her community as a *fa'afafine*—broadly describing those who are Samoan and "queer," which in Kihara's case identifies her as a male to female transgender and in New Zealand is categorized as deviant; (c) pose as Samoan male and female deities to honor Moana spirituality and genealogies, including the principle that in Moana societies the past lies in front of the present and the future; (d) create works of beauty marked by the aesthetics of not only symmetry and balance, but also dramatic light. Because items (a) to (c) are all concerned with "intersecting" or "conflicting" tendencies at the interface of the subject matters under the productive process—as in the art works above that form the substance of artistic and literary commentaries of the author—they coincide with both the general and specific (epistemological) tenets of the *tā-vā* theory.

In her wider art practice as an art activist and curator, Kihara further positions her transgender space (*vā*) to maintain good social relations (*teu le vā* and/or *tausi le vā*) with her Samoan community in New Zealand and at home in the Islands. As a curator, she has also extended concepts of *teu le vā* to establish relations of community with Third Gender Pacific Islander artists living in Australia and the Pacific. In 2009–10, her work with establishing good community relations has come through organizing a series of cross-cultural art performances entitled *Talanoa: Walk the Talk*, commissioned by the Fourth Auckland Triennial (NZ), Auckland City Council (NZ), Campbelltown Arts Centre (Australia), 4a Center for Contemporary Asian Art, and other organizations in Australia interested in multicultural exchanges to create community dialogue and good will.

To establish a context for interpreting Kihara's art, I begin with a short description of her life. I then discuss her work chronologically to point out that, despite changes in its media, form, or content, common themes that reclaim Moana concepts of time-space, Moana histories and spirituality, and indigenous concepts of her *vā* as *fa'afafine* resurface throughout her work. In addition, conflicts in the personal life of the artist are projected onto the

artist's works, which are then dealt with as conflicts that are internal to them and mediated in the creative process.

Shigeyuki Kihara—A Short Biography

The late Cook Islander–Maori artist and curator Jim Vivieaere has suggested that Kihara's propensity to cross borders in her life and art to create liminal social spaces—the space in between—stems from her childhood experiences (Vivieaere 2005). Her parents are of different ethnic heritage—her father is Japanese and her mother is Samoan—and she mediated between the values of both cultures. In childhood, she also moved regularly when her father's job sent the family to live in Japan, Indonesia, and Samoa. Early in life, she also became aware of her liminal gender. When she returned to live in Samoa as a teenager, her *vā* as a *fa'afafine* was publicly recognized in high school, when she was assigned traditional female tasks (Kihara, pers. comm.).

In 1989, Kihara made another transition when she was sent to an all boys boarding school in New Zealand. After graduation, because she was always creative and interested in expressing gender and cultural identity through clothing, she enrolled to study fashion at Wellington Polytechnic (now amalgamated with Massey University). Here, in the national capital, she was exposed to a young urbanized Pacific Islander street culture, which stimulated her interest in the semiotics of style. Urban Pacific culture—referring to the experience of Pacific Islander migrants—was attracted by two things: melding the boundaries between art and fashion and promoting Pacific pride and heritage to challenge New Zealand's white establishment and its dominant values. As Urban Pacific culture caught on in the late 1980s, a few cutting-edge fashion magazines began to feature new “Pasifika” fashion, drawing attention to its aesthetics and fashion activism. After graduating from Massey, Kihara began to produce and art direct fashion editorials for these publications. In doing this, she acquired technical expertise for staging high fashion shoots (dramatic lighting, elaborate costuming), which later became aesthetic components of her own photographic work. Doing research for fashion features also stimulated Kihara's interest in studying nineteenth century photographs of Pacific Islanders, whose poses seemingly mirrored the ideas western photographers had of native peoples and their society. Resistance to this exotic timeless “gaze” became, as discussed next, a focus in all her art that she wished to redress.

Kihara's flair for aesthetically powerful innovative imagery linking traditional and contemporary motifs has drawn wide recognition for her creative

talents as a Pacific artist. Her student “Graffiti Dress” and the T-shirts of her first exhibition *Teuanoa’i: Adorn to Access* were acquired in 2000 by New Zealand’s National Museum Te Papa Tongarewa. In 2003, she was the recipient of Creative New Zealand’s Arts Council’s Emergent Young Artist Award; she was the recipient of Creative New Zealand’s Arts Council’s Contemporary Pacific Artist award in 2009; and, in 2008, she became the first Pacific Artist to have a retrospective exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York). It included images I now discuss regarding concepts of time and space in her work.

Early Fashion Images: *Graffiti Dress*, *Adorn to Access*, *Pulp Magazine*

Kihara’s earliest fashion work (*Graffiti Dress*, *Adorn to Access*, and features in *Pulp Magazine*) reflect the dislocation, humor, and frustration felt by young Pacific Islander migrants who arrived in New Zealand and had to negotiate between the socio-cultural traditions of their islands and the urban Pacific subculture they encountered in Wellington or Auckland (Colchester 2003, 167–190). Kihara entitled the “Graffiti Dress,” which she made during her time as a fashion student, *Bombacific 1995*. The dress is now in the collection of New Zealand’s National Museum Te Papa Tongarewa, and it mediates this important space of cultural negotiation in a design pattern combining solid colors, geometric shapes, curving and intersecting lines, and graffiti imagery. A description of the garment is posted at Arts Online Te Hāpori O Ngā Toi (courtesy of the Museum of NZ Te Papa Tongarewa No FED010561):

This is a long tight-fitting dress made from Dupont Lycra. It has a green yoke, long red sleeves and a high backed rolled collar. The rest of the bodice is black with a grill-like effect, created by joining geometric shapes with silver overlapped seams. At the waist is a broad silver band with black horizontal lines. The skirt has three horizontal bands of white, covered in black graffiti, which are separated by two sloping (curving) black bands (2).

As recorded by Te Papa on information provided by Kihara, the design of the garment represents the social space of a younger generation of Pacific Islanders living in New Zealand and negotiating between two worlds—their traditional islands and their new contemporary urban environment—and how to relate to them both. Stylistically, the dress emulates a traditional *mu’umu’u* which, as Kihara has discussed, was introduced by colonial missionaries to cover the “savage” native female body (Leota-Ete,

Kihara, and Raymond 2002). In the islands, the mu‘umu‘u or *puletasi* (a tighter fitting mu‘umu‘u) was made of natural cotton. Kihara has, however, created her dress in lycra (an industrial stretch fabric) and decorated it with graffiti motifs and areas of transparency to show the body underneath. The skirt, with its black bands curving round the body and patchwork of colored shapes, including vibrant red sleeves, signifies the mixing and blending of cultures of Pacific Islands people in New Zealand’s urban spaces; the graffiti (an American influence) signal overtones of rebelliousness. The transparent patches in mid-section of the dress reference the precolonial body and, as noted by Kihara, signal that colonialism has not succeeded in repressing Pacific women’s sexuality or ideals of beauty through covering the body and conceptualizing it as something to be feared (Kihara, pers. comm.; Leota-Ete, Kihara, and Raymond 2002, 91). In the conflicting tensions of the present, “Graffiti Dress” reasserts traditional ideas of the body beautiful while at the same time referencing that a Pacific aesthetic has never been static but adapts and transforms in time and space.

In her gallery exhibition installation *Teuanoa’i: Adorn to Excess* (2000), Kihara again uses the semiotics of clothing to reference Pacific urban street culture and to show how young Pacific Islanders are expressing their ethnic identities by wearing western styled garments, but modified to express indigenous meanings relevant to contemporary Pacific lives. In this case, 28 T-shirts were stamped with bastardized corporate logos of international and local companies. For example, Kentucky Fried Chicken was parodied to KKK; FAB detergent became FOB; and The Warehouse morphed to The Whorehouse. For the exhibition, the T-shirts, dyed in traditional colors of black or red, were hung symmetrically spaced in two rows along three gallery walls. In the center of the back wall, other T-shirts were packed into a frozen case, intended to simulate supermarket consumption and the exploitation of Third World Labor (NZ Herald 2001; Colchester 2003, 186).

Because of infringement of copyright laws, the exhibition caused an uproar, and three T-shirts were withdrawn as the companies threatened litigation. But, as Kihara commented, she achieved her message with the design and display of the work:

. . . The re-appropriated logos subvert the system of power, which governs the lives of indigenous Pacific Peoples today. The work also reflects the pride, angst, and frustration amongst Pacific Island youth living in an urban environment, which is what I was when I first started them back in 1996 (Kihara, pers. comm.).

In voicing pride in Pacific values of community being undermined by exploitative consumerism and labor practices, young people are informed by wearing these T-shirts to look to the past to guide them into an uncertain future. In this respect *Tuanoa'i* speaks to traditional Moana concepts of time and space while at the same time protesting the asymmetrical social relations which Pacific Islanders experience in urban New Zealand.

Pulp Magazine—Savage Nobility

To promote her art and Pacific design, Kihara began working for *Pulp* and other avant-garde magazines, which in the late 1990s were making waves in the growing pop culture of young urban Maori and Pacific Islanders. At *Pulp*, she designed fashion features that parodied and subverted western stereotypes of Pacific Islanders and the enduring popular fantasies of the South Seas as “paradise” (Taouma 2005). A striking example is an eight-page fashion spread entitled *Savage Nobility*, where Kihara appears in the style of a living tableau labeled *A High Chief and His Subjects* (see Fig. 1). Shot in black and white, the figures are posed motionless against a blank backdrop: the chief and his attendants wear a mix of western and traditional clothing, while Kihara is dressed in a high necked black Victorian dress. This mixture of attire symbolizes the changes colonial rule has brought to Pacific Societies but which are erased by its romantic exotic fantasies of Pacific people living outside of history or being stuck in time and, thus, being, themselves, unchanging.

It is these histories and their cosmic depth in time and space that Kihara wants to reclaim through her art. The dress she is wearing is a black mourning dress and is intended to link the inherent tensions in Pacific color symbolism. Black symbolizes the many sorrows and deaths that Pacific People have suffered from Colonial rule. But when Kihara re-presents these sufferings, she empowers them and highlights her own resistance to western hegemony. As Potauaine and Māhina (2011) have critically examined, in another Moana society, Tonga, the colors *kula* (red) and *'uli* (black) oppose one another and are conceptualized across physical, psychological, and social realms, including gender. In Moana thinking and practice, *'uli* (black) is associated with the night, moon, darkness, death, ignorance, and being female. However *'uli* also references the earth and symbolizes attachments to the land maintained by the ancient order of chiefly titles and sacred genealogies. Black/blackness is therefore a multivocal symbol associated with both positive and negative concepts, which Kihara harnesses for her own nuanced layered meanings.

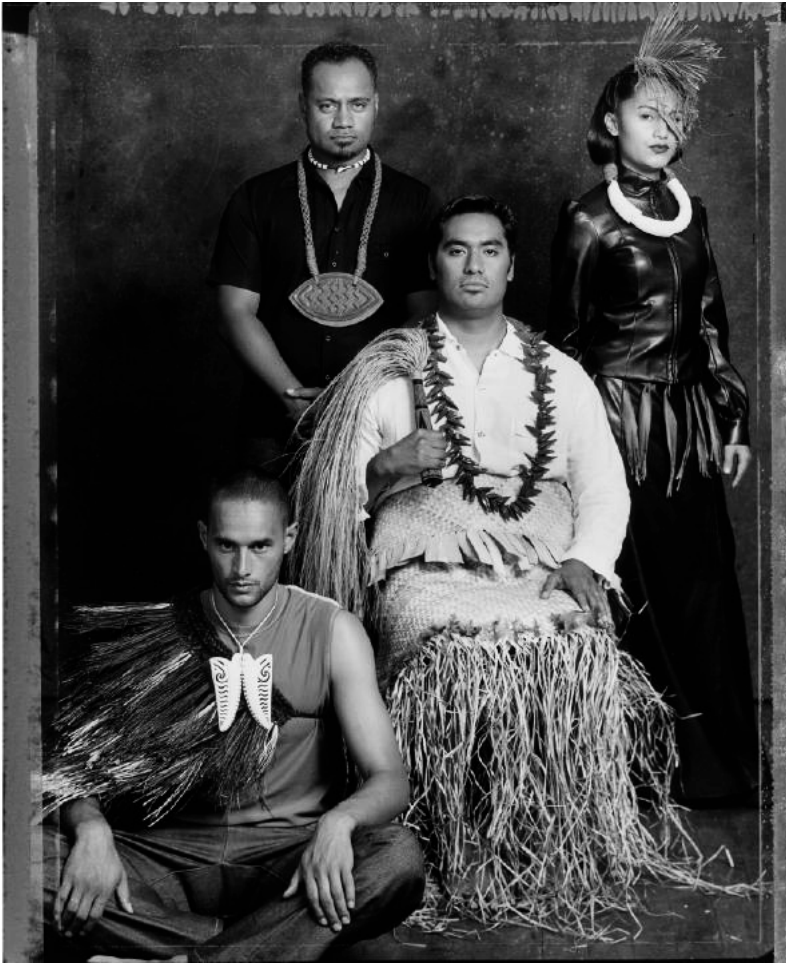


FIGURE 1. A High Chief and His Subjects. *Pulp* Magazine Fashion Editorial, 2001. Photographer Duncan Cole and Shigeyuki and Chris Lorimer Fashion Stylists.

Black Sunday

In 2001, Kihara presented her second solo exhibition, *Black Sunday*, which is a series of collaged prints reworked from ethnographic nineteenth century photographs and postcards of Pacific Islanders. Playing again with the



FIGURE 2. Gossip Session. Black Sunday Series. Mixed Media, C-print, 2001.

semiotics of the clothed/unclouted body, she adorns these noble natives with contemporary consumer goods (colored T-shirts, sunglasses, and bright lipstick) to intersect the past with the present in a style that is eye-catching and witty. Again, the intent is to reclaim Pacific history and pride in Moana values and heritage.

In *Gossip Session: See No Evil*, selected for Kihara's retrospective exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York (see Fig. 2), three bare-breasted village girls work beating tapa in rhythmic beats which measure time in space (Ka'ili 2008). Collaged to wear bright colored T-shirts, the girls are redressed to represent the continuing value of women's work in community wellbeing and caring for social relationships.

The regal woman photographed in *Tasi ai afe: One in a million* (also displayed at the Metropolitan exhibition) wears the ceremonial headdress of a *taupou*—the virgin daughter of a Samoan High Chief (see Fig. 3). Traditionally, as today, the *vā* of the *taupou* represents the honor of her village and her family; her status and dutiful behavior epitomize the beauty of harmonious social relations. Her portrait is, however, slashed by a series of bars. These vertical spaces symbolize the “immobilizing gaze of the colonial photographer,” which Kihara reclaims in rephotographing her image and infusing it with the vitality of color (Metropolitan Museum, press release, 2008).

But beyond reclamation, Kihara's image is also an example of indigenous photography as cultural resistance to the subjugating colonial gaze, which aimed to convince Europeans of their superiority and duty to “civilize”



FIGURE 3. **Tasi Ai Afe: One in a Million. Black Sunday Series. Mixed Media, C-print, 2001.**

primitive peoples. Colonial photography and resistance to its theoretical constructs are also the recent focus of analysis by Maxwell (2000) and Pinney and Peterson (2003), where, as Pinney argues, “photography has become a space for the inversion and critique of authorized Western models of travel, landscape, and selfhood” (13).

Another striking image from this series is the portrait of a young girl entitled *Distressed Maiden* (see Fig. 4). She wears a garland of flowers on her head and holds flowers against her breasts, while glancing warily at the camera.

As Kihara commented in an interview about her work selected for the Metropolitan exhibition, the *Black Sunday* prints were intended to raise issues about the authenticity, representation, and historicity of ethnographic colonial photography of Samoan people. More than redressing history, these issues were personal, since some of her deceased older relatives appear in these studio photographs of “dusky maidens.” As Kihara comments in Federico (2009):

By the time photography arrived in Samoa, Samoan people were already heavily indoctrinated into Christianity and, as a result, comfortable with the idea of wearing clothes. However, when Samoans went into the photography studio, the Western photographers asked people to take off their clothes and pose nude because it didn't fit into the photographers' fictitious idea of what a Samoan person should look like. . . . This raises issues about control and authority begging the question, “Who decides what is authentic?” (35).



FIGURE 4. Distressed Maiden. Black Sunday Series. Mixed Media, C-print, 2001.

In addition to reclaiming Samoan history in time and space, the Black Sunday series also challenges western stereotypes of Pacific Islanders and addresses social relationships with settler whites. As Kihara's statement above suggests, Pacific Islanders perceive the latter as asymmetrical and as having failed to establish harmonious exchanges integral to practicing the Moana art of *teu le vā*. Despite their critical content as images of resistance, the prints are, however, artistically composed, using principles of balance and symmetry and a palate of complementary colors. There is thus a degree of tension displayed between the composition of the image and its subject—the distressed maiden.

Moana Concepts of Time and Space and Spirituality

In her next exhibitions, *Faleaitu: House of Spirits*, 2003 and *Vavau: Tales from Ancient Samoa*, 2004, Kihara focuses her photographic self-portrait images on Moana concepts of time (*tā*) and space (*vā*), where she poses as portraits of Samoan Gods and Goddesses and important characters from sacred creation histories. With their dramatic lighting showing figures emerging from darkness, these images emulate the voluptuous style of the “Dusky Maiden”

genre of velvet paintings, made famous in New Zealand by Charles McPhee in the 1950s and 1960s. At the same time, as Kihara has noted, although these images use contemporary media and technology, their subjects are Moana cosmologies and legends of mythic time-space, where darkness symbolizes primal blackness, the earth, and *Pulotu*, the ancestral homeland and afterworld of Western Polynesia (Kihara, pers. comm.)

Faleaitu: House of Spirits

Faleaitu is inspired by traditional Samoan comedic theater where men—possessed by spirits—performed male, female, and transvestite roles to parody high status people or satire the vagaries of social life (Sinavaiana 1992a, 1992b; Mageo 2010). As a performance art form that engages humor, *Faleaitu* deals with conflicts in human thinking at the interface of normality and absurdity (Māhina 2008; Māhina, n.d.). Today, as traditionally, *Faleaitu* is attributed to a divine source and is intended to evoke laughter rather than convey public disrespect or anger. The gender bending associated with *Faleaitu* is hinted at in Kihara's dramatic portrait of Sina, entitled *Sina ma Tuna—Sina and her Eel* (see Fig. 5).

Here, she poses as Sina holding up the severed head of Tigilau, her ill fated loved lover, who has been transformed into an eel by her angry father. To remain together, Tigilau has instructed the grief-stricken Sina to cut off his head so he can return to life as the first coconut. This transformation mediates the relationship between life and death in a cyclic Moana concept of tā-vā (time-space), where life and death are dialectical aspects of the same reality. With blood dripping from her hand, Sina further negates all western fantasies of “dusky maidens” depicted in the velvet portraits of Charles McPhee.² An earlier humorous critique of McPhee's “Dusky Pacific Belle” painting was made by Sima Urale in her film *Velvet Dreams* (1997). As Kihara has noted, this film influenced her decision to redress McPhee's voluptuous imagery of young Pacific women by reappropriating his exoticizing gaze (pers. comm.)

A second portrait from the *Faleaitu* series explicitly represents Moana concepts of tā-vā (time-space) as a four-sided concept of reality, recently theorized by Hūfanga Okusitino Māhina and other Moana scholars. This portrait, entitled *Lalava Taupou: Ceremonial Maiden* (see Fig. 6), represents Nafanua, the Samoan Goddess of war.

Dramatically looming from the darkness, her head is shown adorned with an elaborate headdress made of sennit rope, twisted into a four pronged object whose sides are constructed from geometric relief designs formed by intersecting lines. Named *kupesi* in Tonga, these four-sided designs are



FIGURE 5. **Sina Ma Tuna: Sina and Her Eel.** *Faleaitu: House of Spirits Series*, 2003. Mixed Media, C-print. Photographer Sean Coyle.

found throughout Polynesia, where they are printed on tapa cloth, incised on sacred objects—such as ceremonial clubs—or tapped onto the human body as tattoos. The headdress worn by Nafanua in Kihara's portrait is the creation of internationally recognized and esteemed Tongan multimedia artist and sculptor Filipe Tohi. Trained as a master of the ancient Tongan art of *tufunga lalava* (sennit lashing), Tohi applies its mathematical formulae to produce work in wood, stone, or line which, as Okusitino has described, “can



FIGURE 6. **Lalava Taupou: Ceremonial Maiden.** *Faleaitu: House of Spirits Series*, 2003. Mixed Media, C-print. Photographer Sean Coyle.

be critically appreciated in the Tongan conception and praxis of tā and vā”—that is, a four-sided philosophical concept of time-space (Māhina 2002, 5).³

In Samoan history, Nafanua is a legendary figure of great importance. Called as a young woman from Pulotu, the spirit world where she resided, she disguised herself as a man to lead her people to fight their enemies. After winning a great battle that freed her village from bondage, Nafanua

established herself as powerful political leader and is reputed to have instituted the *fa'amatai* chiefly system that governs Samoa today. She also introduced the protocols of the *fono*, which include the ceremonial presentation of *kava* served by the ceremonial maiden. In naming Nafanua's portrait *Lalava Taupou*, Kihara is representing the importance of genealogy in Moana epistemology. Furthermore, Nafanua is a transformative figure. Under her rule the chaos of war was transformed into a state of peace, supported by the balanced structure of the *fa'amatai* chiefly system (see Refiti 2009 for further discussion). After Nafanua's death she was deified as goddess but, with the imposition of Christianity, her worship was officially overturned. However, as Kihara's portrait serves to remind, in a Moana conception of history, the past is a beacon for the future. In the *taupou's* sacred role of serving *kava* at ceremonial exchanges, initiated by Nafanua, she embodies the balanced hierarchy of social relations that maintain Samoan society in time and space.

Vavau: Tales From Ancient Samoa

Kihara's portraits in *Vavau* are inspired by Samoan *fagono* (creation stories), where, in elaborate costumes technically manipulated, she poses as male and female deities whose actions have created features of the Samoan landscape and customs of Samoan life. Similar to her earlier *Faleaitu* series, figures again emerge from darkness in a dramatic use of *chiaroscuro* (light and dark shading). Transformation, the importance of exchange, and Moana concepts of gender relations are concepts symbolized in the iconography of these portraits.

Maui—named for one of the portraits in the *Vavau* series entitled *Maui Ti'eti'e Talaga: How Maui Obtained Samoa's First Fire*—is a demigod and trickster who is the subject of numerous Pacific legends. He is said to have hooked up the South Island of New Zealand, to have slowed down the journey of the sun, and, as imaged by Kihara (see Fig. 7), stolen fire from the underworld after fighting with Mafui'e, the God of fire, to obtain it. Kihara shows Maui at the moment when he grasps a smoldering wooden stick whose light illuminates his face and torso. Bringing fire into the world allowed men to warm themselves and to transform raw produce into cooked food. However, fire is also a force of destruction and, in bringing it to the world, Maui disobeyed his father's command to keep its powerful forces contained deep underground.

Two other portraits from the *Vavau* series entitled *Le Loimate o Apaula—Tears of Apaula* (see Fig. 8) and *Taema ma Tilafaiga—Goddesses of Tatau* (see Fig. 9) encode the importance of transformation in *tā-vā* relationships linking humans to nature, or marking complementary gender relations and

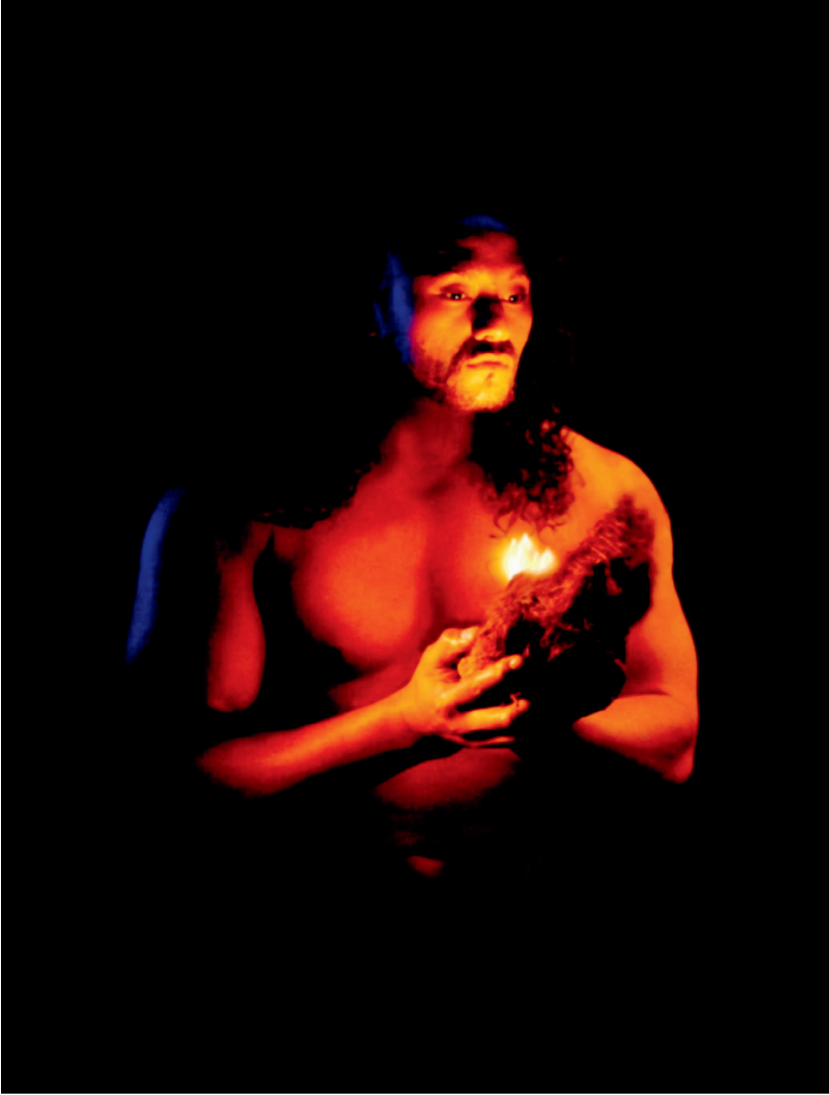


FIGURE 7. Maui Ti'eti'e Taluga: Maui and the First Fire of Samoa. *Vavau: Tales from Ancient Samoa Series*, 2004. Mixed Media, C-print. Photographer Sean Coyle.



FIGURE 8. *Le Loimate o Apaula: Tears of Apaula*. Vavau: Tales from Ancient Samoa Series, 2004. Mixed Media, C-print. Photographer Sean Coyle.

transitions in the human life cycle. Apaula, who is imaged in *Le Loimate o Apaula*, is the legend of a beautiful young Samoan maiden in love with the giant Vaea. Forbidden by her family to marry him, she was sent away to Fiji. Broken hearted, Vaea fell asleep while waiting and was transformed into a mountain. When Apaula returned to Samoa to search for her lover, she was unable to find him and began to grieve. Her sorrowful tears followed profusely and formed a stream which, today, still flows through the village of Mount Vaea (Kihara, pers. comm.).



FIGURE 9. Taema Ma Tilafaiga: Goddesses of Tatau. Vavau: Tales from Ancient Samoa, 2004. Mixed Media, C-print. Photographer Sean Coyle.

Depicting Apaula at the moment of her deep grief, Kihara's mournful portrait symbolizes the spiritual links existing between humans and features of the natural landscape where geography is marked by human attachments, sentiments, and historical events. As 'Okusitino Māhina has pointed out, the tā-vā Moana theory of reality applies across nature, mind, and society. *The Tears of Apaula* references this idea within a Samoan epistemological context.

The origins of tattoo, referenced in Kihara's portrait of the Goddesses of Tatau, is the subject of many legends dispersed across the Pacific. In Samoa and Tonga, it is associated with the myth of the twin sisters Tilafaiga and Taema. According to this narrative, the sisters swam with a basket of tools from Fiji to Samoa, singing along the way that women were the ones to

be tattooed. But after being diverted by a large clam, they mixed up the song words and, instead, chanted that tattoos be given to men (see Dianna Georgina's paper in this issue for a variant of this myth).

As Māhina has noted, the word *tatau* is related to the rhythmic movement and sound of striking. *Tatau* also means rightness of balance as Samoan tattoo designs (*pe'a* for men and *malu* for women) are symmetrical with patterns of intersecting straight lines and larger blocks of black for men. The *tatau* process of obtaining the *pe'a* is very painful and traditionally was given to youths as a rite of passage marking the transition to manhood. At the same time, because knowledge of *pe'a* was passed by women to men, this transference of knowledge symbolizes the separate but complementary spheres of gender relations existing between men and women in Samoan society (Kihara, pers. comm.).

Kihara's portrait of the Goddesses of *Tatau* innovates the traditional iconography of mythology where the sisters are depicted as young women, separated by a floating log while swimming. Kihara does not, however, depict the sisters with separated bodies but—in a veiled reference to her own sexual identity—images them as Siamese twins joined at the shoulder. Fusing their bodies here permits the sisters to turn their heads and see one another while chanting on their journey. As Kihara explained in discussing the portrait:

In order to find harmony and balance in the world, there must be a balance of male and female forces—and I have been looking for a visual metaphor or reference to understand this . . . how male and female can be found together in one body. . . . The new metaphor I have come up with to understand the balance of cosmology is the idea of Siamese twins where male and female energy is represented by two heads and one body. One body head is male the other female. Because they are Siamese twins and have two sets of thinking (male and female) they must work together. . . . They must have a conversation with one another. In the case of dominance each must be generous to the other, and they must balance whatever they do together. I found this twin metaphor with the Goddesses of *Tatau* where I pose showing them as Siamese twins. They are both female but, ideally, there must be male and female in one body for balance, but this does not necessarily mean to champion a heterosexual dynamic over others (Kihara, taped interview, 2006).⁴

This veiled reference to male and female forces melding in Moana *tā-vā* concepts of gender is the focus of Kihara's next major body of work entitled *Fa'afafine: In a Manner of a Woman*, to be discussed next.

Fa'afafine: In a Manner of a Woman: Melding Male–Female in the Space in Between

In her series *Fa'afafine: In a Manner of a Woman*, Kihara revisits themes of reclaiming histories for Pacific Islanders and subverting colonial voyeurism and exploitation of the Polynesian female body (Kihara 2005; Rosi 2007b). Her main focus in these haunting sepia-toned prints is, however, on challenging western assumptions that all gendered experience occurs within a binary of being male or female (Vivieaere 2005). The series comprises four individual photographs and a triptych. With the help of her technical team (all Kihara's photographic art is collaborative), several photographs have been manipulated, enabling her to pose as a man, a woman, a couple, and as a fa'afafine.

In contemporary Samoan society, fa'afafine is a term used to broadly describe those who are Samoan and “queer”—i.e., transgender, gay, intersexed, and lesbian persons. Traditionally, the term referenced born males who enacted a feminized identity by behaving like women, performing women's tasks, and, in contemporary life, often cross-dressing. Fa'afafine have been part of Samoan society since precolonial times. Although Christianity has complicated moral and social attitudes toward their lifestyles and sexuality, they have remained an integral aspect of Samoan life and artistic expression (Schmidt 2001, 2003). Like all other Samoan men and women, fa'afafine are expected to support their families and communities by contributing to social obligations and harmonious social relations. In her public statements, Kihara insists that her art is part of her community and this is what differentiates her from western artists:

. . . In a Western global art world, it's all about celebration of the individual, while art from the Moana is all about celebrating the community. What I think a lot of historians/anthropologists/sociologists fail to acknowledge is that the community also embraces what I do as well. So it's no use for me making artwork about the Moana and about Samoan culture if I don't talk about my community because that's what makes me different from another white artist. . . . In the Pacific, our house building, our canoe building, our song and dance, our club-fighting—everything we do is an art form basically. . . . In Samoan we have a term *faiva*: *fai* meaning to make or create, *vā*—its space . . . *faiva* meaning to create space. Now in order to celebrate and make things deep and meaningful in our lives, we must first acknowledge *faiva* . . . creating deep and meaningful spaces in our lives (taped interview, 2005).

Kihara's statement coincides with *tā-vā* theory, as the meaning of *faiva* in Tongan is also underpinned temporally and spatially (Māhina, pers. comm.).

Today, when the appearance of *fa'afafine* has become increasingly flamboyant with the popularity of beauty pageants and foreign tourism seeking the exotic, they are the subject of teasing and social criticism (Mageo 2001; also Besnier 2002, 2004 for criticism in Tonga). However, in Samoa as depicted in the film *Paradise Bent* (*Filmmakers Library* 1999), *fa'afafine* do not experience the homophobia that they encounter after migration to New Zealand or North America (Schmidt 2005). In her *Fa'afafine* Series, Kihara directs her imagery to protest Western gender discrimination and, simultaneously, to express pride in her Moana identity through her *vā* as a *fa'afafine*—the space in between (Rosi 2007a).

In *Ugali'i Samoa: Samoan Couple* (see Fig. 10), Kihara poses as a young Samoan man and woman whose solemn demeanor, elaborate traditional adornments, and bare torso and breasts embody “savage nobility”—but also gender duality. As evident by the decor, the photograph is taken in a studio. The couple do not, however, meet the photographer's gaze, but stare distantly away as if they were statues frozen in time.

This same quality of perfect remoteness is present in her portrait *My Samoan Girl*, who is posed sitting on a Victorian chair, and in her single portraits of a young Samoan man and a woman. Exhibition press releases and/or critical comments made by western art reviewers about these portraits described them as “beautiful” because of their balanced composition, careful detail, and physical attractiveness or pathos of their subjects.⁵ Yet the photos are also artificial and surreal because the photography is contrived to meet western tastes.⁶

But beyond Kihara's intention to redress the western gaze that has denied or manipulated Samoan history, something more provocative is occurring in the triptych photographs, entitled *Fa'afafine: In a Manner of a Woman*, where she poses as a reclining “South Seas Belle.” In the first image (see Fig. 11), she appears with bare breasts and wearing a grass skirt; in the second, the skirt removed, she appears to be a young nude female; in the third, a penis is revealed.

Three subtexts about gender intersect here: one plays on the shocked surprise felt by western sailors when dusky maidens, whose charms had attracted them, turned out to be “lads”⁷; the second is the challenge Kihara's *vā* as *fa'afafine* poses to binary division of western models of gendered sexuality, particularly the homophobia she confronts living in New Zealand or visiting Western countries; the third—seldom noted—is to differentiate *fa'afafine* sexuality from homosexuality, because in the West it is labeled in the same category and treated with the same attitudes of disrespect or derision.



FIGURE 10. *Ugali'i Samoa: Samoan Couple. Fa'afafine: In a Manner of a Woman Series, 2005. Mixed Media, C-print. Photographer Sean Coyle.*

Tā and Vā in Kihara's performance: *Tausaluga: The Last Dance*

Kihara has commented that her performance art complements her visual art. Working first with the cooperative Pasifika Divas, whose vibrant program was selected to open the 2000 Asia-Pacific Triennial in Brisbane, she collaborated with them to showcase fa'afafine styles from flamboyant drag



FIGURE 11. Fa'afafine: In a Manner of a Woman Series; Triptych 1, 2005. Mixed Media, C-print. Photographer Sean Coyle.

to measured expressive choreography. Since leaving the group, because she wanted to work as a solo performer, Kihara has focused on developing her innovative interpretation of *Taualuga* (Last Dance), fine tuning its choreography to reflect different venues and meanings. In 2006, her performance was created as a video work. *Taualuga* is a graceful measured dance led in traditional Samoa by the ceremonial village maiden (taupou), discussed earlier. Her slow dignified movements symbolize the Samoan ideals of respect and harmonious social order. In traditional performances, the taupou stands in a central position, moving with grace as her hand movements tell the story of her dance. On the periphery male dancers perform with rapid boisterous movements and gestures which contrast with the taupou's serenity. From the outside to the inside, the *tā-vā* of the dance represents a movement from chaos to order (see Georgina's paper in this issue for further analysis).

Kihara is inspired by the movements of the dance but reinterprets them to convey sadness, not celebration. She performs in a black crinoline Victorian gown, often in front of a screen that displays colonial images of Samoan life to record the impact of colonial rule. A beam of light, projected from below, then casts a moving shadow over her dancing



FIGURE 12. Tauluga: The Last Dance. Photograph Courtesy of Shigeyuki Kihara.

form as it changes pace and rhythms. This gives the illusion of two dancers moving together in time and space (see Fig. 12). The poignant beauty of Kihara's choreography alludes to key themes of her work: acknowledgement of the suffering of Samoans under colonialism to redress western notions of a people having no history; expressing Moana spirituality and cosmology as her performance is, as she had stated, based on a journey through Puluotu (the ancestral homeland and underworld), where she visits the future enshrouded in the past; and asserting her vā of a fa'afafine as a mediating transgendered space in the dynamic fabric of Samoan society with its strong commitment to upholding good relations of community.

. . . I depict how the past informs the present and by doing this will make the future right. This is different from the western idea of the past influencing the future. . . . If you relive experience then the group (Pacific Islanders) can navigate across La Vasa (the Ocean of life). Dancing in this costume is difficult. It's restrictive and hard to move. It's a challenge to do. But I wanted to convey this concept of restrictedness so that our history is acknowledged . . . then we can move on (Kihara 2007, taped conversation).⁸

Kihara's Art Practice as Teu Le Vā

As noted in an earlier statement by Kihara, artists in modern society are valued for their inspired individual creativity, creating art for its own sake. By contrast, artists in Moana societies are members of their communities, where their work contributes to maintaining valued social relationships. As Tēvita Ka'ili has discussed for Tongans, the concept of caring for social relations is named *tahui vā* and is based in genealogy with spatial connections—though it can also be extended more generally to friends or members of a church. Moreover, as he states, *tahui vā* is an art form because it decorates and beautifies the space of social relations.

In Kihara's art practice where she works as a social activist and curator and lives the space of a *fa'afafine*, the concept of nurturing socio-spatial ties—popularly referred to as *teu le vā* in Samoan (see earlier reference for differences between *teu le vā* and *tausi le vā*)—is equally important, since caring for social relationships helps her establish and maintain ties of community with Pacific artists living in New Zealand and others living in diaspora communities in the United States or the United Kingdom. These caring social relations are maintained by both formal and informal networks with Pacific artists of diverse heritage. For Kihara, the most important social institution encouraging *teu le vā* for Pacific artists in New Zealand is Tautai Contemporary Pacific Arts Trust, since its mission is to support relations among contemporary Pacific artists. Kihara has been very active in this organization, engaging extensively in its promotional activities and art events. For example, Tautai artists attend each other's exhibition openings and sponsor auctions of their work to raise funds to support a variety of causes—particularly for artists travelling abroad to attend exhibitions of their art. These activities also go on informally and mutually between artists who are friends. They may live together, share a studio with other artists, and depend on artist friends for hospitality to offer lodging and food. In London, the Maori Club *Ngati Ranana* invites visiting Pacific artists to attend club meetings and aids them in other ways during their stay. Visits abroad are expensive, and Kihara draws on nurturing relationships with friends and colleagues to host her whenever the opportunity arises.

When she was a member of Pasifika Divas and, presently, in her role as a curator, Kihara works to create supportive caring relations with the wider Third Gender Pacific community. For example, Pasifika Divas donated performance money to support organizations working to prevent AIDS and others seeking to legislate the rights of Third Gendered people facing discrimination in New Zealand. Of great importance here is the difficulty transgender people confront in finding employment, which leads many to

prostitution. In her role as a curator organizing exhibitions of artists identifying as “Gender minorities of Pacific Origin” (*Measina Fa’afafine* (2007) and *Hand in Hand* (2008)), Kihara has initiated caring social relationships with indigenous third gender and gay artists in Australia and the communities that support them. However, as a Samoan artist recently informed me, *teu le vā* is a complex process which is “a matter of everyone being in the right place at the right time, and this is complicated by hierarchical relations, particular situations, and events” (see also Refiti 2009). Tēvita Ka’ili (2005, 2007) has also indicated that, for Tongans, practicing *tahui vā* is not seamless but induces conflicts when those involved perceive that relations have not been cared for appropriately.

Beginning in 2009, Kihara extended her curatorial practice to explore the relationship of interethnic community through ongoing art performances she has entitled *Talanoa: Walk the Talk*. As described on her webpage (shigeyukihara.com), *talanoa* is a concept found in many indigenous cultures of the Pacific, but specifically in the islands of Samoa, where it refers to a process of “finding mutual ground based on exchange of ideas.” Commissioned by sponsors of art events in New Zealand and Australian cities with large multicultural populations, Kihara has reconceptualized the ancient Samoan concept of *talanoa* to bring diverse ethnic and religious grassroots communities together in an intercultural dialogue created through collaborative street performances of music and dance (www.pacificarts.org). For *Talanoa: Walk the Talk I and II*, Kihara engaged Auckland’s diverse ethnic communities. She organized a collaborative performance between the Chinese Dragon Dancers and the Scottish Highland Pipe Band; another between the Brazilian Samba Band and the Cook Island Drumming Group.

Talanoa: Walk the Talk III & IV took place in Sydney, sponsored by the Campbelltown Arts Center. These performances involved four communities paired into two groups: the Mukti Gupteshwar Mandir Society joined with the Samoa Congregational Church Minto; the RSL Club of Campbelltown Community Pipes and Drums performed with Wuruniri Music and Dance troop (see Fig. 13) (Pacificarts.org). However, before any of these performances took place, Kihara met with leaders of each community to establish good social relations by discussing and mediating matters of mutual social and cultural importance. *Talanoa*, as the process of exchanging ideas to find common ground, is thus an aspect of *teu le vā*, which works to nurture relational spaces linking persons or communities together. The performances of *Talanoa: Walk the Talk* are also filmed so that the work is documented and lives on. Kihara also uses the films to discuss the issues and outcomes they present for creating art that activates and serves to promote positive



FIGURE 13. *Talanoa: Walk the Talk IV (2009) Public Performance Featuring Ingleburn RSL., Campbelltown Community Pipes and Drums, Wuruniniri Music and Dance and Shigeyuki Kihara. Commissioned by Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney. Photographer Suzannah Wimberley.*

cross-cultural relations in multicultural communities fractured by mutual suspicion; religious intolerance; and race, gender, and cultural discrimination.

In many performance groups, younger members were born in New Zealand or Australia. Learning traditional dancing and music from their older relatives therefore helped them appreciate the preservation of traditional values and keeping their culture alive. *Talanoa* took the additional step of providing a platform for sharing cultural traditions with others.

In Pacific societies that have experienced colonialism and the hegemony of western values now intensified by globalization, Kihara's art and art activism are raising public awareness about redirecting concepts of traditional *Moana* knowledge, including concepts of time and space, for the well-being of modern societies. *Talanoa*, the art of talking to seek harmonious agreement, is an ancient *Moana* practice that Kihara hopes her recent and ongoing work will encourage others to follow. As she stated in a 2010 interview on ABC, Sydney (Kihara 2010), *Talanoa* brings cultures together using music and art:

. . . The word *talanoa* in Samoan culture is used to describe a process of dialogue between two conflicting groups, where they come together in dialogue in order to find mutual ground based on love, respect, peace, and harmony. And I think in the world today there is not enough *talanoa* between cultures, between genders, between sexualities, between religions, between countries, and between various geographical regions . . . So I sought to stage *Talanoa* as a possible microcosm to see how various religious and ethnic groups can come together to have a dialogue and find mutual ground manifested through performance and through art. . . . In the *Talanoa* performances I have staged so far, the groups stand and perform together . . . For many, this is the first time they've stepped outside of their own community and actually engaged with a performance group from another culture. That's where the true dialogue comes in the process of collaboration (22 January 2010).

Nevertheless, despite the critical acclaim that Kihara has received in directing *Talanoa* performances to bring ethnic urban communities together through music and art, she continues to develop other community projects to raise public consciousness about the hegemonic political and economic forces still eroding the cultural and spiritual values of Pacific arts sustained by practices of *teu le vā*. Her more recent work—commissioned by the Campbell Arts Center and 4a Center for Contemporary Asian Art for Sydney Festival 2012 and to commemorate the fiftieth year of Samoan Independence—is a performance and video installation entitled *Culture for Sale*. Managed collaboratively with the Samoan community in Sydney, the work raises questions about the relationship between performance, identity, and money in the commercialization of Samoan culture. To stage this concept, four Samoan dancers were instructed to remain motionless at the performance venue until people walking by dropped money into bowls as payment or inserted coins into slot machines to trigger short videos of each dancer performing (see Fig. 14).

As described on the artist's webpage (shigeyukikihara.com), *Culture for Sale* (subtitled a "*Post-Colonial Völkerschau*") is informed by a popular form of late twentieth century German theatrical entertainment where natives from German colonies—including groups of Samoan men, women, and children—traveled to Germany where they were exhibited in zoos as the "exotic" other.⁹ But in the wake of the fiftieth Anniversary of Samoa's Declaration of Independence, *Culture for Sale* (performance and documentary film) also raises questions about whether or not Samoa—as an increasingly popular



FIGURE 14. *Culture for Sale* (2012) Public Performance Commissioned by Campbelltown Arts Centre and 4a Centre for Contemporary Asian Art for Sydney Festival 2012. Photographer Susannah Wimberley.

exotic tourist destination—is not now becoming a postcolonial *völkerschau* where, as Kihara’s webpage states “culture is for sale, and where notions of ‘the other’ continue to resonate in the lives of Samoan people in the so-called ‘post-colonial’ era.” As internationally recognized contemporary Pacific Artist Michael Tuffery comments in the short *Culture for Sale* documentary, directed by Kihara:

. . . I see the perspective of where she (Kihara) is coming from . . . of trying to buy a culture. . . . As a Pacific Islander, I do understand that when tourists come they want an “Island” experience before going back to their ordinary lives being factory workers or accountants . . .” (Kihara 2012)

Today, as Samoa seeks to expand its tourist industry, Samoan arts and culture confront the danger of becoming consumer products to satisfy western tastes for the exotic. This is an idea that resonates through all Kihara’s art practice as a powerful theme of cultural resistance and assertion of Moana identity and knowledge.

Conclusions

Given the critical role of Pacific arts today in revitalizing indigenous cultures and epistemologies at the dynamic intersection of local and globalizing art worlds, this paper has critically reviewed the internationally recognized art practice of Shigeyuki Kihara, who identifies herself as a Moana artist of Samoan-Japanese heritage living in Aotearoa–New Zealand. Selecting examples from her material and performance art and recent curatorial practice, discussion focuses on how her work may be interpreted and informed by general and specific tenets of the recently developed tā-vā theory of reality working across nature, mind, and society. Given this agenda, the first section of the paper makes three arguments: first, by expressing indigenous concepts of tā-vā (time-space as a four-sided reality), Kihara opposes western ideas of time and space to reclaim Samoan history and subvert Western fantasies of “dusky Pacific maidens” and the South Seas as “paradise”; second, in asserting her traditional vā (social space) as a Samoan fa’afafine, she challenges western homophobia and binary norms of heterosexuality and affirms the role of third gender within the traditional fabric of Samoan society; third, in creating visual art and dance inspired by traditional creation stories and ritual performances, she honors ancient Moana spirituality and indigenous epistemologies, which conceptualize the ancestral past to lie ahead of the future in a cyclic unfolding of reality. Western art critics have described Kihara’s art as hauntingly beautiful, noting its symmetry, harmony, and pathos. But Kihara’s work also draws on traditions of Samoan comedic theater (*feleaitu*), urban pop culture, and velvet kitsch painting, giving it a suggestion of parody and over coding—traits associated with the persona of fa’afafine performances. As conceptualized by the tā-vā theory of reality, the present (where past and future intersect) is a zone fraught with conflicts. In consequence, Kihara’s contemporary art achieves aesthetic power when it successfully transforms chaotic conflict into the symmetry of balanced tensions.

The second half of the paper examines Kihara’s practice of the Samoan concept of *teu le vā*—meaning nurturing and beautifying the space of social relations. As discussed, she does this in two contexts: to secure mutually supportive relations of community with other Pacific artists and, in her recent curatorial project *Talanoa: Walk the Talk*, to facilitate relations of respect and cooperation in divided ethnic urban communities in New Zealand and Australia through dialogue and collaborative art performance. But as her latest community project, *Culture for Sale*, also communicates, Pacific arts and culture are increasingly threatened by hegemonic political and economic forces where they become little more than consumer products valued for money. This suggests that, today, contemporary Pacific artists, writers, and

performers are not only revitalizing ancient Moana concepts and practices but recycling/redirecting them into new productive arenas of action.¹⁰

NOTES

1. The spatial distinctions of *teu le vā* and *tausi le vā*, as discussed by Refiti (2009), are related to the circle of *fa'amatai* (the gathering of family chiefs in the circle of the *fono* council). These historical distinctions are elided by other authors, including Albert Wendt (1999) and Lilomaiaava-Doktor (2009), who use *teu le vā* as a general concept for nurturing, decorating, and beautifying social spaces. I follow this general meaning in discussing *teu le vā* as it relates to aspects of Shigeyuki's art practice in this paper.

2. Australian born Charles McPhee moved to Samoa in 1939. Shortly after, he went to live in Tahiti, where he learned the techniques of painting in oils on velvet from Edgar Leeteg—well known for his lush portraits of young Pacific women. McPhee also became successful, and his work was sold internationally. In the 1950s, other painters began to imitate and popularize McPhee's style, and velvet paintings came to be labeled kitsch or "Tiki art." McPhee died at aged 92 in 2002. His work continues to be prized by collectors.

3. Okusitino Māhina has worked collaboratively with Filipe Tohi and affirms that Tohi's work with *tufunga lalava* has been inspirational in developing the *tā-vā* four-sided theory of reality divided into nature, mind, and society (Māhina 2002). (See also Kolokesa Mahina-Tuai's paper in this issue for additional discussion of *tā-vā* philosophical concepts in Tohi's work.)

4. For further discussion of the use of the term *fa'afafine*, including another statement by Kihara see Wolf (2010: 23–24). The taped interview with Kihara was conducted at the opening of *Le Vasa: Sea Change* at the LGBT Community Center in San Francisco, where she exhibited paintings from the *Vavau* Series and performed *Tausaluga: Last Dance* (Rosi 2007c).

5. Virginia Webb, former research curator of the Art of African, Oceania, and North American at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and curator of *Shigeyuki Kihara: Living Portraits* (2008), describes the portraits as beautiful; Italian art critic Celeste Federico, writing in *Aesthetica* (2009: 32–35), also refers to the images as "haunting and beautiful." In 2004, Bartley Ness Gallery's press release for Kihara's exhibition *Vavau: Tales from Ancient Samoa* similarly calls the portraits "dark and hauntingly beautiful."

6. For further discussion of how Kihara's photographs incorporate several working practices of ethnographic photographers from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Wolf (2010).

7. Besnier (1996, 292) cites incidents. See also Murray (2002) and Wallace (2003) on early western accounts of sexual encounters with Pacific Islanders and observations recorded about sexual relations occurring between Pacific males.

8. *Tausaluga: The Last Dance* has been performed in venues that include: The Haus der Kulturen Der Welt, Berlin, Germany; the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, France; the Met-

ropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Kihara's most recent performance was on February 22, 2012, for the opening of the Te Papa Tongarewa art exhibition *Collecting Contemporary*. As noted by Te Papa, both Kihara's performance and video "respond to a series of historical photographs taken by New Zealand photographers including John Alfred Tattersall, Thomas Andrew and the Burton Brothers during the colonial administration of Samoa by New Zealand between 1914 till 1962." Furthermore, many of the photographs referenced by the artist are held in Te Papa's photography collection.

9. In 2011, Kihara travelled to Germany supported by the visitor's fund of the Goethe Institute, where she researched museum archives related to the German administration of Samoa from 1900 to 1914. This research included records and photographs pertaining to "Völkerschau" (human zoos).

10. In writing this paper, I thank Professors 'Okusitino Māhina, Tēvitā Ka'ili, and Ping-Ann Addo for their helpful criticisms and suggestions for clarifying my observations about tā-vā theory and Moana sacred histories. I am also very grateful to Shigeyuki Kihara (now Yuki Kihara) for taking time from her busy schedule to read the text and to give me permission to reproduce images of her multimedia and performance art work. Since I first met Kihara at the Association for Social Anthropologists in Oceania (ASAO) symposium "New Voyagers: Pacific Arts in a Global Art World" in Hawai'i in 2005, I have reviewed several exhibitions of her photographic images and attended four performances of *Tā-ualuga: The Last Dance*.

REFERENCES

- Adsett, Sandy, Gliff Whiting, and Witi Ihimaera, eds.
 2001 *Mataora: The living face of contemporary Maori art te waka toi*. Auckland: David Bateman, Ltd.
- Arts Online Te Hāpori O Ngā Toi
 2016 Graffiti dress "bombacific" 1996. Courtesy of Museum of NZ Te Papa Tongarewa No. FEO10561.
- Besnier, Niko
 1996 Polynesian gender liminality through time and space. In *Third sex third gender: Beyond sexual dimorphism in culture and history*, ed. Gilbert Herdt. New York: Zone Books.
 2002 Transgenderism, locality, and the Miss Galaxy beauty pageant in Tonga. *American Ethnologist* 29:534–566.
 2004 The social production of abjection: Desire and silencing among transgender Tongans. *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* 12:301–323.

Chiu, Melissa

- 2004 Introduction: Tikis, torches, and beachside barbecues. *Paradise Now?* 11–19. New York: Asia Society.

Cochrane, Susan

- 2001 *Beretara: Contemporary Pacific art*. Rushcutters Bay, NSW: Halstead Press.

Cochrane Simons, Susan, and Hugh Stevenson, eds.

- 1990 *Luk Luk Gen! Look again: Contemporary art from Papua New Guinea*. Townsville, Qld.: Perc Tucker Regional Gallery.

Colchester, Chloe

- 2003 T-shirts, translation and humor: On the nature of wearer-perceiver relationships in South Auckland. In *Clothing The Pacific*, ed. Chloe Colchester. New York: Berg.

Federico, Celeste

- 2009 Gender and identity: Samoa's narratives. *Aesthetica* 26:32–35.

Geertz, Clifford

- 1973 *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books

Hau'ofa, Epeli

- 1993 Our sea of islands. In *A New Oceania: Rediscovering our sea of islands*, ed. Eric Waddell, Vijay Naidu, and Epeli Hau'ofa. Suva: School of Social and Economic Development, Univ. of South Pacific.

Hereniko, Vilsoni, and Rob Wilson, eds.

- 1999 *Inside out: Literature, cultural politics, and identity in the new Pacific*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, Publishers, Inc.

Herle, Anita, Nick Stanley, Karen Stevenson, and Robert L. Welsch, eds.

- 2002 *Pacific art: Persistence, change and meaning*. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press.

Ka'ili, Tēvita O.

- 2005 Tauhi vā: Nurturing Tongan sociospatial ties in Maui and Beyond. *The Contemporary Pacific: A Journal of Island Affairs* 17 (1): 83–114.
- 2007 *Tauhi vā: Creating beauty through the art of sociospatial relations*. PhD thesis, Seattle, Univ. of Washington.

Kihara, Shigeyuki

- 2005 Taped interview with Sarah Robbins. *Pacifika Styles*. Cambridge: Univ. of Archaeology and Anthropology.
- 2010 Taped interview. ABC Sydney, 22 January. <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2010/01/23/2799081.htm>.

- 2012 Culture for sale. Video commissioned by the Campbell Town Center. <https://vimeo/40031800>.
- Küchler, Susan, and Graeme Were
 2005 *Pacific Pattern*. London: Thames & Hudson, Ltd.
- Leota-Ete, Jakki, Shigeyuki Kihara, and Rosanna Raymond
 2002 Body beautiful: New Zealand fashion—Pacific style. In *Pacific Art Niu Sila: The Pacific dimension of contemporary New Zealand arts*, ed. Sean Mallon and Pandora Fulimalo Pereira. Wellington: Te Papa Press.
- Lilomaiava-Doktor, Sa'iliemanu
 2009 Beyond “Migration”: Samoan population movement (*Malaga*) and the geography of social space (*Vā*). *The Contemporary Pacific* 21 (1): 1–34.
- Mageo, Jeanette
 2010 Race, gender, and foreign exchange in Samoan performing art. *Anthropological Forum* 30 (3): 269–289.
 2001 *Theorizing self in Samoa: Emotions, genders, and sexualities*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press.
- Māhina, Ōkositino
 2002 Tufuna Lalava: The Tongan art of lineal and spatial intersection. In *Filipe Tohi: Genealogy of lines: Hohoko e Tohitohiu*, ed. S. Rees. New Plymouth, NZ: Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.
 2004 Art as Tā-Vā, ‘time-space’ transformation. In *Researching the Pacific and indigenous people: Issues and perspectives*, ed. T. Baba, Ōkositino Māhina, and U. Nabobo-Baba. Auckland: Center for Pacific Studies, Univ. of Auckland.
 2005 Tatau, Potupotutatau and Malie: A realist reflection on the symmetry, harmony and beauty of Queen Salote’s poetry. In *Polynesian paradox: Essays in honor of Futa Helu*, ed. I. Campbell and E. Coxon. Suva: Inst. of Pacific Studies, Univ. of South Pacific.
 2008 *Faiva fakaoli*: The Tongan art of humour. *Pacific Studies* 31 (1): 31–54. n.d. Comedy and Tragedy in Myths, Poems and Proverbs: A Tā-Vā Time-Space Art and Literary Criticism.
- Māhina, Ōkustino, Tēvita O. Ka’ili, and A. Ka’ili
 2005 *Ko e Ngaahi ‘Ata mei he Hisitolia mo e Kalatua ‘o Tonga: Ke Tufunga ‘i ha Lea Tonga Fakaako*. Auckland: Center for Pacific Studies, Univ. of Auckland.
- Māhina, Ōkositino and Semisi F. Potauaine
 2010 TATAU: A Tā-Vā (Time-Space) Transformation. In *Tatau: Fenapasi ‘oe Fepaki: Tatau: Symmetry, Harmony, and Beauty*, ed. Ōkositino Māhina, Jocelyne Dudding, and Kolokesa Uafa Mahina-Tuai. Cambridge, UK: Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge Univ.

Mallon, Sean

2002 *Samoan art and artists: O Measina a Samoa*. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press.

Mallon, Sean, and Pandora Fulimalo Pereira, eds.

1997 *Speaking in color: Conversations with artists of Pacific Island heritage*. Wellington: Te Papa Press.

2002 *Pacific art Niu Sila: The Pacific dimension of contemporary New Zealand arts*. Wellington: Te Papa Press.

Mason, Ngahiraka

2004 When the Haka became Boogie. *Paradise Now?* 48–56. New York: Asia Society.

Maxwell, Anne

2000 *Colonial photography and exhibitions*. Leicester, UK: Leicester Univ. Press.

Metropolitan Museum of Art

2008 *Shigeyuki Kihara: Living Photographs*, October 7. Press Release.

Murray, Stephen, O.

2002 *Pacific homosexualities*. San Jose and New York: Writers Club Press.

New Zealand Herald

2001 Challenging the tyranny of the brand. 24 March. <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/index.cfm?ObjectID=178977>.

Pinney, Christopher, and Nicholas Peterson, eds.

2003 *Photography's other histories*. Durham and London: Duke Univ. Press.

Potauaine, Semisi F., and Okusitino Māhina

2011 *Kula mo e 'Uli: Red and black in Tongan thinking and practice*. In *Tonga: Its land, sea, and people*, ed. T. Steen and N. Drescher. Tonga: Vava'u Press.

Refiti, Albert L.

2009 Whiteness, smoothing and the origin of Samoan architecture. *Interstices: A Journal of Architecture and Related Arts, On Adam's House in the Pacific*. 10:9–19.

Rosi, Pamela

2007a Shigeyuki Kihara: Subverting dusky maidens and exotic tropes of Pacific Paradise. *ArtAsiaPacific*. 81:72–73.

2007b About the artist: Shigeyuki Kihara. *The Contemporary Pacific* 19 (1): vii.

2007c Review: *Le Vasa: Sea Change*. LGBT Community Center, San Francisco, 3 June–1 August, 2006. *Oceania Newsletter* 46, June. Nijmegen, The Netherlands: Radbound Univ.

Schmidt, Joanna

- 2001 Redefining Fa'afafine: Western discourses and the construction of transgenderism in Samoa. *Intersection: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context*. Issue 6, August.
- 2003 Paradise Lost? Social change and Fa'afafine in Samoa. *Current Sociology* 51 (3/4): 417–432.
- 2005 *Migrating genders: Westernization, migration and Samoan Fa'afafine*. PhD thesis, Univ. of Auckland, New Zealand.

Sinavaina, Caroline

- 1992a *Traditional comic theater in Samoa*. Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Hawai'i.
- 1992b Where the spirits laugh last: Comic theater in Samoa. In *Clowning as critical practice*, ed. W.E. Mitchell, 192–219. Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press.

Stevenson, Karen

- 2008 *The frangipani is dead: Contemporary Pacific Art in New Zealand*. Wellington: Huia Publishers.

Taouma, Lisa

- 2005 Doubleness of meaning': Pasifika clothing, camp and couture. In *The Art of Clothing: A Pacific Experience*, edited by Susanne Küchler and Graeme Were. London: UCL Press.

Thomas, Nicholas

- 2010 Preface. *Tatau: Fenapasi 'oe Fepaki: Tatau: Symmetry, harmony & beauty*, ed. 'Okusitino Māhina, Jocelyne Dudding, and Kolokesa Ufafa Mahina-Tuai. Cambridge: Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

Trask, Haunani-Kay

- 1993 *From a native daughter: Colonialism and sovereignty in Hawai'i*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press.

Urale, Sima

- 1997 *Velvet Dreams*. Documentary Film. TVNZ World of Art Series, produced by Vincent Burke.

Vercoe, Caroline

- 2004 The many faces of paradise. *Paradise Now?* New York: The Asia Gallery.

Vivieaere, Jim

- 2005 The self-effacement of Shigeyuki Kihara. Catalogue Essay for *Fa'afafine: In a Manner of a Woman*. Sidney, NSW: Sherman Galleries.

Wallace, Lee

- 2003 *Sexual encounters: Pacific texts, modern sexualities*. Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press.

Wendt, Albert

- 1999 Afterword: Tatauing the post-colonial body. In *Inside out: Literature, cultural politics and identity in the New Pacific*, ed. Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, 339–412. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Wolf, Erika

- 2010 Shigeyuki Kiahara's *fa'afafine; In a Manner of a Woman*: The photographic theater of cross-cultural encounter. *Pacific Arts* 10 (2): 23–33.