

Exhibiting Polynesia: past, present and future

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Abstracts

Arapata Hakiwai

Director, Mātauranga Māori, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa,
Wellington

Presenting and representing Māori at Te Papa

New Zealand museums have amassed large collections of Māori material culture and presented Māori culture in varying degrees of success. Māori people have encountered their *taonga* (cultural treasures) in museums from being passive observers to active participants. What are some of the challenges and opportunities going forward for both museums and Māori? What can museums do to make a difference for those cultures we seek to present and represent both now and into the future? Focusing largely on Te Papa's exhibition programme, I will explore how museums can better represent Māori as a contemporary culture by sharing, collaborating and working together.

Adrienne L. Kaeppler

Curator of Oceanic Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution

Exhibiting Cook's voyages in the Leverian Museum and Today

In late eighteenth-century London the Holophusicon/Leverian Museum, in Leicester Square and at Blackfriars Bridge, housed the largest and most diverse collection of materials collected on the voyages of Captain James Cook ever to be exhibited together. When the Leverian collection was sold at auction in 1806, there were some 140 purchasers and the history of many of the objects became "lost." The paper will recount the history of the Leverian collection and the exhibitions in which Leverian Cook-voyage objects - knowingly or unknowingly - have been a part.

Jeremy Coote

Joint Head of Collections, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

'...ed during Voyages of Capt C...: Displaying Cook-Voyage Collections in Oxford'

Soon after arriving back in London from the South Seas, Joseph Banks sent a selection of Tahitian and Maori artefacts to his old Oxford college. A few years later the Reinhold and George Forster sent some 200 'artificial curiosities' they had collected on Cook's second voyage to the Ashmolean Museum. Since the 1880s these two collections have been housed at the University of Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum, which also holds a few other pieces connected to Cook's voyages. In this paper I will review what is known about how this material was displayed from the 1770s to the 1970s, how it is displayed now, and my plans for its redisplay in 2010.

Noelle Kahanu

Project Manager, Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu

E Ku Ana Ka Paia: Finding Contemporary Relevance in an Ancient Prophecy

It is through difficulty and upheaval that we are transformed and made stronger. Such is the prophesy of Kapihe, who lived during the time of Kamehameha the Great. He foretold an overturning, which came to pass in 1819, with the fall of the traditional Hawaiian religious system and the arrival of American missionaries a year later. Today, this chant can be heard whenever large gatherings of Hawaiians occur. Today, it stands for the power of change and transformation, of unity in the face of adversity. This chant is but one lens through which we will be presenting Hawaiian culture and history in the newly renovated Hawaiian Hall in the Bernice P. Bishop Museum. This paper will provide a journey through Hawaiian Hall, where our purpose is to showcase our Hawaiian collections, thoroughly grounding that experience in native perspective, layered in meaning and authentic in voice.

Karen Kosasa

Director, Museum Studies Graduate Certificate Program, Department of American Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu

Pedagogical Challenges: Museum Studies, Colonialism, and the Politics of Representation in Hawai‘i

In 2002, the American Association of Museums urged museums to become spaces of civic engagement and diversity. Museum Studies students in Hawai‘i consider this appeal alongside fraught discussions about U.S. imperialism, the colonization of indigenous peoples in North America and Hawai‘i, and Hawaiian sovereignty initiatives. This paper describes curricular efforts to assist students in understanding the links between the political terrain *and* museum-related issues—contentious debates over the ownership of Hawaiian cultural resources, critiques of settler exhibition practices, and collaborative projects with indigenous communities.

Sean Mallon

Senior Curator, Department of Pacific Cultures, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington

Island Nation: collecting and exhibiting Pacific material cultures in a National Museum

For a long time New Zealand's impetus for appreciating Pacific peoples art and material culture has been its foreign-ness and distance: its exoticism. Today, it is Pacific people's cultural proximity and presence that rationalises their representation in New Zealand's art galleries and museums. Using the museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa as a case study, I explore what it means to represent Pacific peoples in a museum that represents a nation. What do we collect and how we do display Pacific material culture in this context? What are the curatorial challenges for Pacific collection curators in a new millennium?

Rosanna Raymond

Performance/installation/body adornment artist, poet and curator

Walnut and Coconuts- A hardcase study inside on the outside

The past two years has seen the Pacific emerge into the public eye in the UK through a series of major exhibitions and associated events that were spread across museums in the Southeast of England. I was involved in many of the openings and celebrations in various guises, as a curator, researcher, performer, artist, lecturer, workshop leader and member of the large and thriving UK-based Polynesian community groups Ngati Ranana and Beats of Polynesia. This presentation will focus on some of the issues and insights that I gained from working within this multitudinal position, as well as exploring the journeys taken by the artists, community members, curators and staff as we developed collaborative processes and new ways of working together negotiating the complex space between people and things, art and artefact which has had an impact on museum protocols as well as the present day representatives and their art practices.

Jenny Newell

Curator Oceania (Polynesia), British Museum

Performing Polynesia: exploring cultural performances in the museum

What is being conveyed to the public when a cultural group gives dance, music or craft performances in a museum environment? What do the performers bring and take away from the experience? Using historical examples and recent instances from the British Museum's public programs, this paper examines the implications of displays that allow a living connection between the viewer and the viewed.

Fuli Pereira

Curator of the Pacific Collections, Auckland Museum (Tamaki Paenga Hira), Auckland, New Zealand

Presentation, re-presentation and representation

As museums and art galleries moved to counter the 'enclosed', 'academic', 'ivory tower' labels they came burdened with in the 20th century - 'engagement', 'dialogue', 'relevance' became the 21st century call to arms. Education managers, collection managers, visitor services managers, live programmes managers, research managers, project managers, information systems' managers – are part of the new infrastructure built to answer the call. So how is the 'community' faring? Where are they in this milieu?

Tara Hiquily

Chargé des collections ethnographiques/ ethnographic collections manager, Musée de Tahiti et des îles

Un lien rompu ? l'évolution du rapport entre les Polynésiens et les objets de leur tupuna

L'année dernière a eu lieu au musée de Tahiti et des îles - Te Fare Manaha une exposition sur le destin des objets polynésiens. Le but de cette exposition a été d'informer la population sur les raisons et les conditions qui ont conduit ces objets jusqu'à nous: cachés, ou enterrés par les Polynésiens, offerts comme présents, échangés, vendus, détruits, volés, puis sauvés, préservés et aujourd'hui exposés. Ces objets sont perçus de nos jours par les Polynésiens selon des approches diverses. Il y a un mois, notre musée a organisé une rencontre avec les différents acteurs de la vie culturelle de Polynésie française pour un échange d'idées sur ce patrimoine hérité de nos ancêtres. Les propos qui ont été tenus furent intéressants et méritent d'être connus de la communauté internationale des personnes impliquées dans la culture polynésienne.

A broken link? The development of the relationship between Polynesians and the objects from their tupuna

Last year the Tahiti Museum held an exhibition about the providence of its Polynesian collections. The goal of this exhibition was to inform the public how all those objects have been surviving until today by telling their history from the day they were hidden, buried by Polynesians, offered as gifts, exchanged, sold, damaged, stolen, saved, preserved, and finally exhibited. Today, these objects are perceived in various ways. Last month the museum organized a meeting with various French Polynesians who shared their ideas and feelings about their ancestral heritage. Their accounts are interesting and should be known by the international community involved in Polynesian culture.

Amiria Salmond

Senior Curator for Anthropology, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

Art and the limits of translation: Pasifika Styles at the University of Cambridge

The *Pasifika Styles* project at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) in Cambridge (UK) comprised an exhibition, visiting artist programme and performing arts festival involving predominantly New Zealand-based contemporary artists, many of Maori and Pacific Island descent. This paper describes some of the challenges met in attempting to bring academic and artistic worlds into alignment on the project, focusing specifically on the issue of translation. The curators sought to enable the artists and their works to present themselves on their own terms, without intrusive scholarly mediation. Yet *Pasifika Styles* was also an exercise in communication – how was this to be achieved if not by translating the artists' words and works into terms more familiar to European audiences?

George Nuku
Artist

Plastic Maori – Exhibiting George Nuku

I aim to break my *korero* into 2 distinct parts. In the first part I will present an overview of my work as an artist who is continuing a tradition of innovation and growth that has been in effect for over 1000 years and position my work in institutions and within communities, both locally and globally, within the current practice of contemporary art and notions of Oceanic art. I would like to end this part of the presentation by shedding light on the materials and mediums I currently favour – transparent perspex and polystyrene foam and their fusion with stone, bone, wood and shell. In the second part of my *korero* I would like to open the dialogue out to consider some of the social aspects of the current exhibition (*Polynésie : art et divinités 1760-1860*) and its relationship with the Musée du quai Branly and the museum's wider intercourse as a French cultural institution with *te ao Maohi*.