Reading Room:
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Contents

Errata
Jan van der Ploeg's text in "Julian Dashper, 1960–2009 A Tribute," *Reading Room A Journal of Art and Culture*, issue 4 (2010) 26–27 should have appeared with the following reference Allan Smith, "Julian Dashper Outgoing Call Julian Dashper 1960–2009," obituary in *Art New Zealand*, no 132 (2010) 24–25

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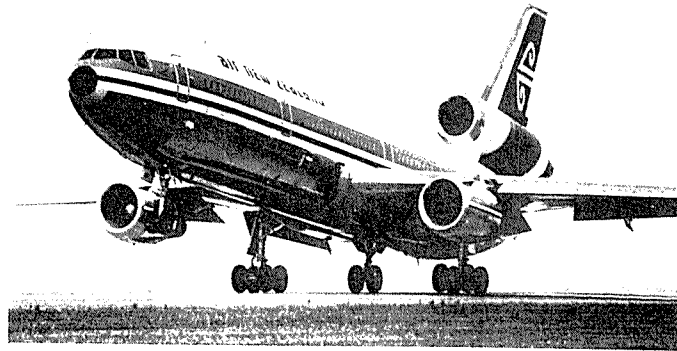Your international airline.

Together/Apart:
Regional Networks in a Global Age:
Imagining the Pacific in
New Zealand, 1976[1]

Christina Barton

The region, less encumbered by the various ideological or mythical mystifications that pervade the state, will be where history and analysis take place.[2]

Fig 1
Air New Zealand
advertisement
South Pacific Festival
of Arts Souvenir
Programme 1976
internal page
South Pacific Festival
of Arts

A post-nationalist New Zealand art history has yet to be written. If such a narrative did exist, one of its later chapters would focus on the 1970s, for amongst other things it is at this time that the spatial coordinates of local discourse were renegotiated. If a nationalist (and modernist) art history has constructed a narrative of New Zealand art based on the particularities of our insular condition which, as Terry Smith has argued, privileges painting as medium, landscape as subject and the expressive agency of the normative Western subject,[3] then the 1970s is the moment when the trajectories of cultural flow shift and art's meaning and purpose are redirected. Crucial to this process was a new awareness of and response to the geographical fact of our situation in the Pacific.

Historian James Belich has described the period of 1965 to 1988 as New Zealand's era of "decolonisation", when internal and external pressures forced the country to question the authority of the traditional values and beliefs upon which "British" New Zealand had depended. The country underwent rapid change, due to advances in communications, transport, mass media and information technologies, as well as to the rapid growth of capitalism and changes in the shape and direction of global geopolitics. We were able to be more connected as the jet age arrived (Fig. 1),[4] we got our first televisions,[5] the price of long distance telephone calls dropped dramatically, and information began to reach us more quickly. But we were also made to feel more vulnerable when the oil shocks of 1973 and 1976 struck, when Britain joined the Common Market,[6] and France and America tested nuclear weapons in the Pacific.[7] There was as well the widespread suspicion that globalisation was another term for Americanisation, with its military and economic dominance, crass commercialism and pervasive popular culture.

If external forces were threatening New Zealand's status as an independent island nation, new internal pressures were also undermining its coherence. These were brought to bear by a raft of emergent social groups – women, youth, gays, left-wing radicals, alternative life-stylers, and new non-European immigrants (especially from the Pacific). Above all, Māori, due to rapid population growth, urbanisation, and economic advancement, were beginning to enjoy greater visibility, develop an articulate argument for the restitution of their land, and undertake vigorous steps towards cultural revival.[8]

This essay examines two cultural events that took place in 1976 – the second South Pacific Festival of Arts and the First Pan Pacific Biennale – as occasions when our location in the Pacific came into focus, which can be thought of as responding to the pressures and opportunities afforded by our changing circumstances. Both events challenge nationalist agendas and participate in the reconfiguration of New Zealand's sense of its place in the world, yet each was largely invisible to the other. My argument is that a close scrutiny of these two events reveals deep incommensurabilities in the nature of our engagement with the Pacific, at the same time as it testifies to the emergence of a new regional consciousness. Caught in the technological, political and economic conditions of their historical moment, the structural similarities and mutual incompatibilities of these events "undermin[e] the imagined community of the settler nation state",[9] redirecting the one-way flow from centre to periphery to the charged interfaces of internal difference and the borderless circularities of region and globe. By offering critical alternatives to established practices, new artistic networks posed challenges to master narratives to which New Zealand had long been beholden. Both therefore offer strategic, regionally-situated responses to the hard facts of our contemporary global repositioning.

Kodacolor not local colour[10]

The First Pan Pacific Biennale was a short-lived yet prescient attempt to introduce the international biennale as an exhibition model into the New Zealand context.[11] The exhibition featured recent work by artists from nations of the Pacific Rim: Australia, America, Japan and New Zealand and was staged at the Auckland City Art Gallery between 20 March and 20 April 1976.[12] Organised by Exhibition Officer, John Maynard, the show was one of the earliest exhibitions to reflect and take advantage of the technological advances of the era, proving it possible to connect with other developed nations in spite of New Zealand's isolation. Maynard and his colleagues exploited the portability of reproductive media and the strategies of display associated with conceptual installation to pull the project together in a short timeframe on a minuscule budget. His decision to give the Biennale a regional focus signalled a refusal to engage in the rhetorics of either an expressive nationalism linked to Britain or an international formalism associated with New York. Implicit then was a refusal of the modernist model of cultural transmission that Terry Smith had portrayed in his essay, "The Provincialism Problem", published in *Artforum* in September 1974.

Subtitled *Colour Photography and its Derivatives*, the organisers' ambitions for this project were quite specific: to bring together artists using new colour reproductive technologies to showcase examples of "a substantial alternative movement" to what Maynard called "photographer's photography".[13] The show was thus devoted to artists using photography in reflexive and critical ways, who sought to defamiliarise the medium, challenge its transparency, test its psychological effects, and find new ways to exploit its material qualities. Twenty artists presented photo-text pieces, photo-sequences, video and film installation, electronic video, large-scale colour photographs, Polaroids, pinhole camera-works and holograms,[14] in ways that raised questions about the nature of perception and the mediating role of representation. This was often done with humour; the works' tone was mock-serious, quasi-scientific, interrogative, deadpan, even "trippy"; suggesting a deflationary intent. Consciously anti-expressive and anti-formalist, these works lacked the ambitions and markers of nationalist rhetoric, figuring instead an international mainstream that was, in different ways, shaped by local content.

Being drawn from the Pacific Rim did not mean that artists sought a regional identity to assert their independence. Quite the contrary, these artists tended to downplay the fact that they were based in Auckland, Melbourne, Tokyo or Los Angeles, even though they made work that drew in various ways on local perspectives, because they shared the larger concerns of what Smith has called a mobile "avant-garde" that was driven by counter-cultural commitments to resist the forces of global capitalism and work outside the culture of high modernism, from a variety of vantage points.[15]

Like other events of this kind, the Pan Pacific Biennale was a response to and product of globalisation, a necessary intervention on the part of a newly mobile and mobilised network of artists, critics and curators committed to reflecting critically upon their current situation. Such exhibitions were the contexts where the new art was nurtured, where conceptual practices, installation, performance, video, photography, film and sculpture were most comfortable, operating (at that stage) outside the market to "preserve the integrity of art in a materialist world"[16] and to "contain and master the electronic environment".[17] At the time, Catherine Millet saw biennale-type exhibitions as the consequence of political critique embodied in events around 1968. She believed they were the forums where an outmoded nationalism was averred, by contributors "eager to believe in the possibility of the full and entire internationalisation of art" who thought of art as "an element of universal communication".[18]

Artists participating in a contemporary show presenting "cutting-edge" practice, therefore, were a marked alternative to those who served as representatives of their native countries in exhibitions designed to define a painterly practice capable of expressing national character.[19] Indeed, the fact that these artists

refused photography's transparency, to emphasise the image and the object's existential qualities – what Stuart Morgan called "looking at" and "looking in" but not "looking through"[20] – further problematised art's relationship to its subjects. For none of the artists presupposed that a photograph was a transparent window or mirror to the real, a record of an expressive response to the subject, an aestheticisation of experience. This suggests a different relation to place and to the subject, less emotional investment and metaphorical distancing (through the production of landscape pictures), than a dispassionate effort to grasp the phenomenological facts of being, via the ministrations of the photographic.

For example, Melbourne-based artist Robert Rooney, admitting that he didn't "particularly like photographers' photography", bought himself a cheap preset instamatic camera to systematically document aspects of his everyday life in as prosaic a manner as possible.[21] A number of such works were included in the exhibition. *Holden Park I and II* are two series of shots of his car parked at various locations determined by placing a transparent overlay with dots over a street directory. This was an idiosyncratic means to record his social milieu without resorting to any kind of aesthetic or expressive evocation. Such work located the artist in the minute and mundane specifics of everyday life without seeking romantic investment in place. This wrested art away from the ambitions of nationalism, to situate practice in the realm of the particular, without linking it, via expressive manipulation, to an individual subject. The camera took the picture, the artist set it up without artistic ambitions, in parodic replication of scientific methodologies that had been used to map the country.

If Rooney emblematised a "coolness" particular to Melbourne-based conceptualism, Tsuneo Nakai brought a zen-like attention to the specificities of the photographic medium. He wrote:

> To treat film as raw material is not a matter of discovering the meaning of its existence only in order to quote plausible moments of things or landscapes, but rather to discover the existence inherent within it ... by means of the events and incarnated 'drama' generated by the application to the film-roll of emulsion exposed to light.[22]

Nakai did not use film as a means of documentation nor expression, but as "raw material" the meaning of which resided somewhere between the making and the viewing of the work. *Horizontal Line* (Fig. 2), the series of colour photographs he showed in Auckland, which all presented variations of an image of a hand in close-up held out to give the illusion of touching the horizon, denied the viewer the opportunity to become what he called "intoxicated" by the image, whereby seeing is confused with perception. He wanted the image to serve as a wake-up call, requiring us to "read the surface of things", the thing in question being the photograph itself.[23]

Fig. 2
Tsuneo Nakai
Horizontal Line 1976
colour photograph
Exhibition documentation
E H McCormick Research
Library
Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki

The Pan Pacific Biennale brought together a cohort of artists who shared an approach to photographic representation that was at odds with its instrumentalisation as mass-cultural entertainment, resistant to its alienation as artistic commodity, and wary of the photograph's realist or expressive claims. They all harked from developed nations around a specific territory and though their points of origin bore little relation to the Pacific *per se*, the gathering in Auckland offered a cogent alternative to a specifically American conception of the "Pacific Rim", which as Christopher Connery has persuasively argued, was a term coined by America in the wake of World War II and the Cold War. He claims it was "symptomatic of the particular crisis of self-imagining faced by the United States in that era",[24] when the Cold-War binary had lost its meaning, US expansion suffered its first downturn, and the successes of Asian economies threatened the idea that successful capitalism was a product of the West. The metaphor of the rim, according to Connery, kept the Old World and the Third World out and facilitated an idea of the flow of capital without origin or destination. He calls the idea of the Pacific Rim the "'spatial fix' for the perceived despatialising tendency of multi- or transnational capitalism".[25] In other words it functioned as a trope for capitalist universalism (an image that could be extended to incorporate the entire globe). In contrast, the Pan Pacific Biennale
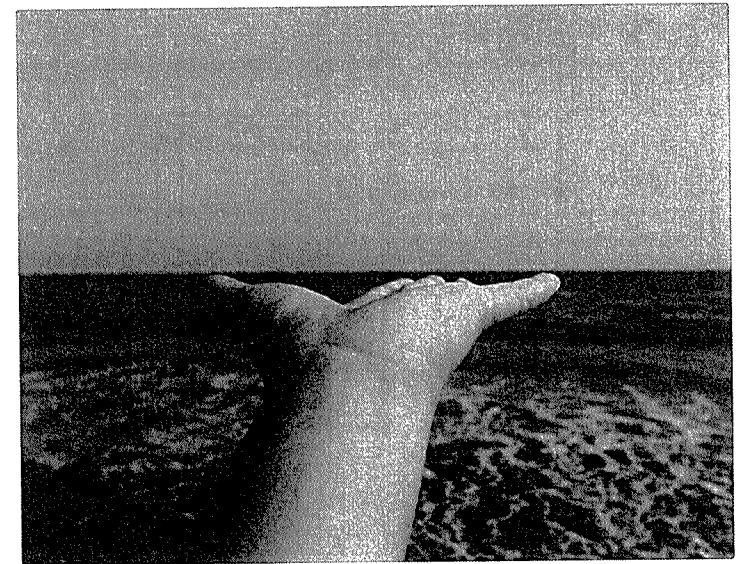
was a localised event, and its motives were to connect artists with each other in conscious defiance of nationalist identity politics by focussing on practices that undermined the aims of global capitalism and operated in critical relation to the claims of high modernism.[26]

The canoe is afloat[27]

The South Pacific[28] Festival of Arts was held in Rotorua over eight days, between 6 and 13 March 1976. This was the second of what would become a regular four-yearly event, with the first held in Fiji in 1972. An initiative of the South Pacific Commission, it was organised and managed in New Zealand by a committee made up of various government, local body, and Māori representatives, with an artistic and an administrative director (Dick Johnstone and Wishie Jaram) and was funded by the Departments of Internal, Foreign, and Māori Affairs, with additional funding from the Rotorua District Council and Te Arawa Trust Board. It saw 1,200 participants from 22 territories from throughout the Pacific[29] representing the peoples of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia, as well as later arrivals in the region, assemble to present traditional dance, music, arts and crafts.[30] This was a huge undertaking, not unlike a Commonwealth Games, with opening and closing ceremonies attended by heads of state, with a varied programme of 95 different components staged at indoor and outdoor venues throughout the city.[31] Unlike the Games however, this was not competitive; it was designed instead as a celebration of the diverse cultures of the Pacific.

Importantly it was held in Rotorua, which was described at the time as the "capital" of Māoridom, being home to the confederated tribes of Te Arawa, an acknowledged centre for Māori arts and crafts,[32] and New Zealand's most popular destination for cultural tourism. Here organisers were able to accommodate participants on marae in and around the city, providing traditional settings within which Pacific Island groups could meet informally with their Māori hosts. The event was therefore the first major occasion when Māori and Pacific Island peoples came together, in a significantly "Māori" space, to acknowledge common heritage and ancestry and yet to validate individual difference.[33]

The Festival's principal goals were to assist the preservation and encourage the revival of traditional art forms as a means to assert and define cultural identity in the wake of colonisation. This must be understood as a cultural manifestation serving political ends, a necessary attendant to Pacific Island moves towards independence or self-government,[34] but also a means to stem the effects of Pacific Island diaspora in the wake of economic change.[35]

Colonial history, however recent, was not the only prompt. There was also a strong feeling that new pressures brought to bear by advancing globalisation were threatening the Pacific. As the programme noted:

…strenuous efforts are needed to prevent these age-old arts from succumbing to the pervading sense of sameness that exists in much of our society, of being swamped by commercialism or cheapened to provide mere entertainment for tourists.[36]

Using an oceanic metaphor to address this situation, one Pacific Island commentator envisaged the Festival as ".. an anchor at sea" helping Pacific cultures "ride out the waves of change in modern Pacific life".[37]

Tradition may have been the anchor that would slow the drift to homogeneity threatened by global forces, but the Festival also proved that Pacific peoples were not and could not be immune to change. The arts that were revived and presented were not identical with those of pre-colonial times, they were, in many instances, reconstructed for the occasion, and techniques and forms were adapted for quite new ends.[38] In a positive light, this proved the durability of Pacific cultures despite the impact of colonisation, signalling the adaptive capabilities of Pacific peoples that had been a feature of their entire history. But more bleakly it could also be thought of as re-invention in the wake of loss, a starting from scratch in light of historical destruction. Either way, the Festival "reflect[ed] the contradictions of Pacific societies emerging from a colonial age"[39] to "stage authenticity"[40] as a political act, the consequences of which we are still working through today.

If artists included in the Pan Pacific Biennale were interested in finding a fresh and critical means to locate themselves using the indexical and reflexive mechanisms of photographic reproduction, they did so in the interests of a new freewheeling artistic agency in the deterritorialised spaces of contemporary art. In contrast, participants in the South Pacific Festival of Arts took advantage of new technologies and faster means of communication to conceptualise and assert an identity linked to a geographically precise location that was in the process of rapid expansion, but also threatened by external pressures.[41]

Faster and more regular shipping and air services and better communications underpinned the Festival, just as they facilitated the Biennale. And although new media were not on show, Festival organisers were highly successful in taking advantage of television, radio and newspaper coverage to further their interests. Furthermore, mobility, the catch-cry of globalisation, was commandeered by the Festival as its governing metaphor, laid claim to by Pacific Islanders as something specific to them, and knowingly used as a marketing tool. One might note here the relay of meanings that were generated by and operated between the Festival's graphics used to promote the event and the physical objects displayed there. In both, the traditional canoe played a crucial role, on the one hand as a stylised logo used in all promotional and press material featuring a carved prow set against a rising sun (Fig. 3), and, on the other, as a display of Pacific craft drawn from local museum collections.
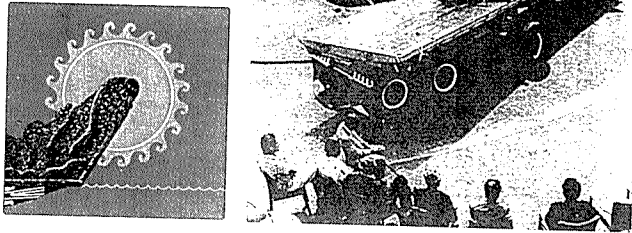
The centrepiece of this display was Te Awanui, a new canoe carved in 1973 by Tuti Tukaokao of Ngaiterangi (Fig. 4). Juxtaposed with historic craft, this vessel provided the physical link that proved the cultural continuity to which the Festival was dedicated. Carved from a single kauri log according to tradition, it was made with steel chisels (rather than stone implements) by a contemporary Māori artist. Trucked from Tauranga to Rotorua, this canoe was not utilitarian; its presentation in the Festival was entirely ceremonial. The canoe was symbolic, a three-dimensional corollary to the graphic sign used by the Festival, proving that tradition was to be revived via modernity and representation.[42] Divorced from actual usage, this traditional mode of Island transport served as a sign of and for cultural continuity and renewal, and as a vivid metaphor for the physical acts of travel entailed in this gathering of Pacific peoples.

Such a grasp of media as a tool of representation serves as an important reminder of the new nature of this moment and its difference from the performance of culture in a pre-colonial, pre-modern era. The recall to tradition was not posited as some nostalgic return to a real but distant past, but a strategic political gesture to stake out a new identity and to reconnect with the mana of their ancestors, and to do so via the technological and by means of representation, in an already mediated space of a tourist centre. Thus the Festival staged culture as a form of identity construction, investing objects and performances not with expressive potential but with collective meanings passed down by custom, and presenting these as both public spectacle for mass consumption and in private interactions designed to foster a separate community's knowledge and understanding.

It is fascinating to discover, therefore, that the Festival was the first context where Māori artist Cliff Whiting's 7.6 metre-long mural *Te Wehenga a Rangi raua*

Fig 3
South Pacific Festival
of Arts logo
*South Pacific Festival of
Arts Souvenir Programme*
1976
cover
South Pacific Festival of
Arts

Fig 4
Te Awanui, the canoe
carved by Tuti Tukaokao,
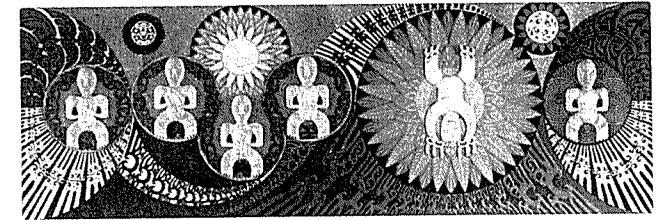arriving in Rotorua
Daily Post March 3, 1976,
page 3

Fig 5
Cliff Whiting
*Te Wehenga a Rangi raua
ko Papa* 1969-74
National Library of New
Zealand Te Puna
Mātauranga o Aotearoa

ko Papa (1969-74) was presented (Fig. 5). Here it functioned as the centrepiece in a presentation of art, music and poetry by members of Nga Puna Waihanga, an organisation of Māori artists and writers formed in 1972, who were invited participants in the event.[43] The mural depicts the separation of Rangi and Papa, the foundational story within Māori cosmology. According to Whiting, the work was relevant to the Festival because its theme was the "very beginning of Māoridom" a theme that could relate to all tribes and peoples of the South Pacific in their individual and collective search for origins.[44] What is significant however is that Whiting believed this to be the first major expression of a traditional story in new materials and forms. Here a traditional subject was treated outside its conventional context and free from practical or customary constraints (the girth of a tree, the needs of a decorated house), in a different scale and format utilising native timber and fibres combined with synthetic board and acrylic paint. Whiting importantly saw this not as Western art made by Māori but an adaptation and development of Māori art. It has since been called a manifesto for the new Māori art.[45]

The Festival, then, was an occasion to figure and reinforce difference. In their insistence on the tangibility of the past in the present and in their belief that objects were literally invested with living spirit, Pacific artists offered pointed resistance to the closures and reifications of Western formalism. They granted art a social function then still denied within the context of late modernism. The very proposition that traditional forms were the way forward put paid to the progressive logic of advancing modernisation. And the fact that art forms arose from and gained their meaning in relation to the specifics of place served as a critical alternative to the distancing devices of landscape representation and to the de-territorialising effects of globalisation. Context then was granted new importance in political and cultural terms, situating practices in both time and space as an alternative to nationalist idealisations.

Traditionally, art produced within a nationalist framework has relied on a conception of the individual as a centred, unitary, sovereign subject to give credence to art forms that are thought to be transparent expressions of that subject, who achieves self-knowing through the maintenance of distance between themselves and the world through the production of bounded, autonomous objects.[46] Alan Howard has argued that Oceanic peoples do not hold to Western conceptions of the "sovereign individual", rather their identities are formed through connections between people, whereby feelings are the product of social relations rather than "inner emotions".[47] Their sense of self is nurtured in small communities founded on kinship with intensive face-to-face relationships and a strong attachment to locality.[48] In these terms, the Festival set out to restore traditional forms to retrieve shared cultural knowledge and to reassert collective identities. The carver Tukaokao typically understood his task as not the pursuit of his own "artistic inclination" but doing "what his people expect[ed] of him". The waka, Te Awanui, is therefore not an artwork in a Western sense, but what Katarina Mataira called "a testament to the artist's social conscience".[49] The Festival therefore salvaged notions of selfhood that functioned productively *for* Pacific peoples.

Indeed, offering up alternative subjectivities was not only challenging to a Western sense of self, it also undermined the concept of the nation, which depends on the existence of individual, self-aware subjects as its model citizens. Perhaps underlying cultural differences were the reason why tensions sprang up between Pacific Island participants and the mainstream media, and why criticisms were levelled at the organisers' willingness to defer to the expectations of visitors seeking exotic displays of "otherness" rather than to facilitate genuine cultural exchange. But at a deeper, structural level, the Festival could be conceived – within an increasingly charged politico-cultural landscape – as the strategic co-relative to the realities facing resident Pacific Island communities.

By 1976 nearly 200,000 Pacific Islanders were living in New Zealand. Forming a visible minority in metropolitan centres, due to their distinctive dress, languages, customs, they formed ethnic communities where their distinctive cultures persisted. But with inadequate housing, crowded conditions, long hours for modest pay, lack of familiarity with European lifestyles and a commitment to supporting extended families still in the Islands, the pressures they faced often led to social dysfunction and the breakdown of traditional values. High crime statistics led to a white backlash, especially after 1973 in the wake of the economic downturn and increasing unemployment. The mainstream media encouraged anti-Islander feeling and many white New Zealanders felt threatened by their cultural difference.

The Festival was staged at the very moment when Pacific Island minorities were being targeted by the new conservative National Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Robert Muldoon, who brought in draconian new

policies to cut Island immigration.[50] He instigated the notorious "dawn raids" to extract "overstayers" from south Auckland and Porirua; an exercise based on a policy of scapegoating whereby Pacific Islanders were unduly singled out as violent and criminal as the economic situation deteriorated. Perhaps Muldoon's heavy-handed approach was as much a panicky reaction to the challenge these Island cultures posed to someone deeply committed to the idea of "one nation", as it was a response to the real or imagined crimes Pacific Island immigrants were committing. Indeed the dawn raids may be read in this context as a desperate effort to eject people who seemed to undermine the carefully tended figure of the ideal New Zealand family, whose nuclear state functioned metaphorically as a sign for the nation.[51]

Given the racial tensions that were immanent in New Zealand at this moment, it is extraordinary that the Festival was not marred by overt political dissent. Organisers may have gained the support of a Pakeha bureaucracy exactly because its focus was cultural not political, where participants presented the happy (and therefore safe) face of the Pacific. It is striking to note that Muldoon opened the Festival (Fig. 6) and declared his support, presenting himself as a benign figurehead who understood that the "conservation of the arts was essential for the stability of Island societies".[52] No doubt he thought he could

Fig 6
– Official party, including Prime Minister Robert Muldoon and Governor General Sir Denis Blundell at the opening ceremony. March 6, 1976
National Publicity Studios, Archives New Zealand AAQT 6420 cn9826

manipulate the occasion for his own ends, which included hammering home policies that would undermine the collective aims of the South Pacific Forum, staged in Rotorua simultaneously with the Festival, in the interests of Australia and New Zealand. In his terms, the Festival could be thought of as the cultural screen to the "real" negotiations taking place between Pacific leaders and their New Zealand host in the Forum meetings.

But such a view denies agency to Pacific people who were in charge of the event. Their grasp of the occasion's significance was by no means unsophisticated. Festival organisers were highly successful in taking advantage of new broadcast media to ensure maximum visibility. It could be argued that the exotic nature of the cultures on display was an attractive draw card for the New Zealand media and one reason for the excellent television, radio and newspaper coverage it received. But it was exactly in this arena that participants could make cultural mileage. At one extreme, reports of standoffs between media and participants over the filming and photographing of sacred items and performances signalled different attitudes to an understanding of cultural ownership and a resistance to the consumption of culture as media spectacle. At another, regular coverage on New Zealand television of events at the Festival led to a new, unimagined level of visibility for Pacific peoples and a tremendous boost to self-confidence. Photographs in the daily press may have provided visual grist for ideological interests, with their images of exotic Pacific Islanders mixing amiably with audiences in Rotorua; but the four-part *Encounter* documentary made by independent producer Graeme Hodgson did far more. By tracing various Island groups from their preparations at home to their performances in New Zealand (Fig. 7), the filmmakers were able to show the stark distinctions between Island and New Zealand life, providing a valuable sense of the vital contexts from which the performances derived and giving Pacific peoples an opportunity to explain their cultures themselves.

What I can do in the space around me[53]

Both the cultural producers of the Festival and of the Biennale denied nationalist sentiment and modernist expressivity. Pre-modern or post-humanist they worked outside the institutions of art, or in forms that were resistant to collection, collectively positing new (or old) notions of materiality and presenting themselves as products of and party to the workings of larger spatial and technical systems. There was in each a knowing negotiation of context and a realisation of the productive potential and problematics of representation. Yet aside from their temporal proximity and the fact they each treated the Pacific as their focus, they were utterly contrasting events. Each mapped an exclusive terrain: edge and centre, rim and basin, sea-ringed island and continental fringe; making the Pacific not one but two spaces, one conveyed by water, the other figuring light. Each dealt with the present by engaging different temporal directions: the Festival bringing together people from under-developed Island states challenged to deal with the modern world, who sought the way forward by re-presenting the past; the Biennale selecting artists eager to anticipate the future from advanced metropolitan societies.

The Festival provided a forum for non-European cultures to establish networks of their own using one of Māoridom's centres, Rotorua, as their base, to unsettle the monocultural bias of white New Zealand. The Biennale brought together a diverse range of artists whose purpose was not to express self or seek a national subject, but to connect with other artists and art communities tangential to traditional and established networks. Both events are therefore products of and participate in the progress of decolonisation that was at a critical juncture in the 1970s. Each proved to be a vital new context for indigenous and experimental artists to contribute critically to this process. They figure the nation, newly divorced from Britain, neither as a singular entity with a coherent national character, nor as a satellite to America, but multiple, de-centred, its boundaries irretrievably permeable, located somewhere (*in* the Pacific), but also mobilised as a point in networks of material and virtual exchange tangential to the one-way flow of dominant culture. In such a space the dynamics of cultural exchange and difference could and would play a larger role in determining New Zealand's identity as a nation of and in the Pacific.

1   This is a revised, amended and enlarged version of a paper delivered at the College Art Association Annual Conference, in Seattle, in February 2004.
2   Christopher Connery, "The Oceanic Feeling and the Regional Imaginary," in *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, ed. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 287.
3   Terry Smith, "Peripheries in Motion: Conceptualism and Conceptual Art in Australia and New Zealand," in *Global Conceptualisms: Points of Origin, 1950s–1980s* (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999), 87.
4   Air New Zealand (previously TEAL) was launched in 1965 and Mangere Airport, New Zealand's first international airport, opened in 1966. The age of mass jet travel was inaugurated with the arrival in 1973 of wide-bodied jet-propelled aeroplanes

5   Television arrived in New Zealand in 1960 with national broadcasts available by 1969, colour TV in 1973, and a second channel in 1975. By 1970, 77% of New Zealanders had a television. Ironically, given the fascination of colour as a new apparatus for heightened realism, in New Zealand in 1976 access to colour television was limited, both because of Muldoon's fiscal policies which required consumers to have 60% of the cash up front before they could buy a television and because of a power crisis that threatened to limit the operating hours of the newly launched second TV channel.
6   Britain entered the EEC in 1973, which forced New Zealand to seek new economic and political allegiances (our exports to Britain halved in the 1970s). Britain's position as a world leader was also in decline in this

period as many of its colonies sought and gained independence and Britain withdrew from strategic territories like the Middle East

7 The impact of the nuclear age was felt in New Zealand There was a strong anti-nuclear lobby protesting against American and French nuclear testing on islands like Bikini and Mururoa, and the presence of nuclear weapons and nuclear-powered vessels in the Pacific Then Prime Minister Norman Kirk sent a cabinet minister on a Greenpeace protest voyage to French Polynesia in 1972 This took New Zealand on a solitary path, hazarding relations with Western powers This position was softened during Muldoon's leadership, but strengthened considerably after the 1985 bombing of the Rainbow Warrior.

8 The scale and rapidity of Māori urbanisation is astounding In 1936 only 17% of Māori lived in urban centres, this rose to 26% in 1945, 62% in 1966, and then 83% by 1986

9 Rob Wilson, "Goodbye Paradise: Global/Localism in the American Pacific," in Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary, ed Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 313.

10 A phrase borrowed from commentary in the exhibition catalogue to the 10th Biennale of Paris. International Exhibition of Young Artists (Paris: Biennale de Paris, 1977)

11 Short-lived because there was no second Pan-Pacific Biennale, but prescient as it offered a biennale with a regional focus that was only taken up in the 1990s in the context of Queensland Art Gallery's Asia-Pacific Triennial

12 John Maynard was an energetic Australian who had come to the position at Auckland City Art Gallery from the directorship of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, a public, local body-funded gallery that opened in provincial New Plymouth in February 1970 Maynard had been involved in the development of the policies and programmes of that gallery, setting it up as an institution dedicated to contemporary practice, with a regionally focused acquisitions policy embracing the "Pacific Rim", an inbuilt deaccessioning policy to ensure the collection remained relevant, and a programme dedicated to contemporary practice, in particular new sculpture and photography. In Auckland he continued in this vein instigating a ground-breaking series of "Project Programmes" that enabled artists to make use of spaces in the gallery for a range of site-specific and temporal interventions and performances At this time Auckland City Art Gallery was running a "cutting edge" programme that is still unprecedented in the gallery's history For a brief period between 1974 and 1978 the gallery became a responsive and open forum where new art could be presented and debated

13 See printed introduction to slide documentation, First Pan Pacific Biennale (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1976), n.p.

14 Artists were from New Zealand: John Henry, Andrew Davie, Nick Spill, Boyd Webb (by then resident in England) and Adrian Hall (then based in Northern Ireland), Australia: Arthur and Corinne Cantrill, Robert Rooney, Francis Bennie and Michael Nicholson; the US (mainly West Coast): Lynda Benglis, John Baldessari, Robert Cumming, Selwyn Lissack and Michael Harvey, and Japan: Tsuneo Nakai, Keigo Yamamoto, Satoshi Saito, Tatsuo Kawaguchi and Nobuo Yamanaka

15 A point made by Terry Smith in Global Conceptualisms, 87

16 Gerald Forty, 10th Biennale of Paris. International Exhibition of Young Artist (Paris: Biennale de Paris, 1977). 19. This is echoed by Philip Linhares, in the catalogue to the Sydney Biennale staged only months after the event in Auckland: "As the world seems to grow smaller due to increasingly efficient transportation and communication

systems, there is a need for cultural exchange which, in the interest of goodwill and a new depth of human understanding, will someday take precedence over the exchange of goods and money" See Philip Linhares, "A California Communication," Second Biennale of Sydney (Sydney, N.S.W.: The Biennale, 1976), n.p

17 Russell Connor, 10th Biennale of Paris, 55

18 Catherine Millet, 10th Biennale of Paris, 21

19 We can contrast the Pan Pacific Biennale with earlier undertakings like Peter Tomory's Painting from the Pacific (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1961) where painters from West Coast America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand were selected on the basis of formal contiguities that Tomory argued demonstrated a shared response to the peculiarities of their environment the Pacific light in particular This show was undertaken in the interests of confirming national character rather than working against it

20 Stuart Morgan, "Global Strategy," in Boyd Webb (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1987), 15

21 Robert Rooney quoted by Robert Lindsay in Robert Rooney (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1978), n.p.

22 Tsuneo quoted in Solrun Hoaas, "Nakai Tsuneo: Interview and Translations from Nakai's Articles," Cantrills Filmnotes, nos 31-32 (Nov 1979): 44

23 Tsuneo Nakai, artist's statement, Pan Pacific Biennale catalogue (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1976), 18

24 Christopher L. Connery, "The Oceanic Feeling and the Regional Imaginary," in Global/Local ed Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, 284

25 Connery quoting David Harvey, 284

26 A point made by Terry Smith in Global Conceptualisms, 87

27 This phrase is used by Albert Wendt (who quotes Marjorie Crocombe of the Cook Islands and editor of the Mana Annual, one of the first journals of contemporary Pacific literature and art) to describe the revival of the arts of what he calls the "new Oceania" in his survey of contemporary Pacific art, "Contemporary Arts in Oceania Trying to Stay Alive in Paradise as an Artist," in Art and Artists of Oceania, ed Sidney M. Mead and Bernie Kernot (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1983), 209

28 Epeli Hau'ofa tells us the "South Pacific" as a descriptor came into use, like the "Pacific Rim" in the Cold War era, gaining its significance in relation to Western security interests in the Far East He argues that with the end of the Cold War this nomenclature was dropped and the notion of an Asia-Pacific region has since taken root In both cases he argues the existence and interests of Pacific peoples were not taken into account It is notable that the Festival in more recent times has been renamed the Pacific Festival of Arts in recognition of the problematic of that earlier terminology and in a conscious effort to resist, at the level of semiosis, the dangers facing Pacific peoples of falling into what Hau'ofa calls "the black hole of a gigantic pan-Pacific doughnut" (Hau'ofa, 393)

29 Participants representing 26 ethnic groups were from New Hebrides (Vanuatu), Solomon Islands, Cook Islands, New Zealand, Australia, New Caledonia, Hawaii, Guam, Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati), Tuvalu (formerly Ellice Island), Tahiti, Fiji, Western Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Tokelau, Wallis and Futuna Islands, Pitcairn Island, Easter Island, and Norfolk Island

30 Dance was a key form presented at the Festival, usually accompanied by songs and music made from a vast array of instruments including bamboo pipes, guitars, ukuleles, pianos, slit gongs, pan pipes, sitar, gamelan, skin drums, lager phones (bottle tops nailed to a stick), didgeridoos, etc. Arts and crafts consisted of tapa, weaving, coral sculpture, bark painting, carving, the techniques of which were demonstrated in programmed displays There was also puppet theatre (from Tahiti).

mime (New Guinea), story-telling, as well as demonstrations of games and pastimes (including cricket, ball games, javelin throwing, spinning of shell tops, animal tracking). There were various satellite events including a film programme, exhibitions and demonstrations of crafts and arts by artists and craftspeople and historical displays of Pacific artefacts (from the Auckland Museum and a UNESCO travelling exhibition: The Arts of Oceania), these last presented in conjunction with new works and live demonstrations to reinforce the suggestion that these were living traditions

31 These ranged from the Soundshell (an outdoor stage on the lakefront) and Sportsdrome, to churches, halls, theatres, the International Stadium (where opening and closing ceremonies were held) and even the concrete foundations of a never finished hospital in the grounds of the Government Gardens

32 These were fostered formally through the Māori Arts and Crafts Institute that had been established by Apirana Ngata in the 1920s to train students in the endangered art of carving, and informally through the well-developed tourist industry that had operated here since the nineteenth century, serving visitors seeking to experience the geothermal activity of the region

33 The timing of this event is significant, for it coincides with the period of most rapid change for Māori and Pacific Islanders as they moved in increasing numbers from rural homelands to urban centres and from the islands to New Zealand, seeking employment, education and the advantages of modern living, thus speeding the process of de-culturation the Festival sought to resist

34 Pacific Islands achieved self-government or independence in 1962 (Western Samoa), 1968 (Nauru), 1970 (Tonga and Fiji); 1975 (Papua New Guinea); 1978 (Tuvalu and the Solomon Islands); and 1979 (Kiribati)

35 New Zealand was a popular destination for Pacific Island emigrants, as it played a colonial role in the Pacific, both administering the dependencies of Niue, Cook Islands and Tokelau, and distributing aid of various kinds to Western Samoa and Tonga. Pacific Islanders from Niue, the Cook Islands and Tokelau all had automatic New Zealand citizenship, Western Samoans were able to enter New Zealand due to a quota system instituted after independence in 1962, and Tongans were allowed entry on short-term work permits. However, this was a recent phenomenon. Prior to the 1960s Pacific Islanders did not figure largely in population statistics (in 1956 they numbered only about 8,000). Then urbanisation and the development of new manufacturing industries saw New Zealand seek cheap unskilled labour Pacific Island immigration thus increased dramatically so that by 1976 they numbered 200,000, with 60% in Auckland and another substantial community in Porirua, near Wellington

36 South Pacific Festival of Arts Souvenir Programme (Rotorua: South Pacific Festival of Arts, 1976), 3

37 Hammer de Roburt of Nauru, Chairman of the South Pacific Forum, quoted in the Daily Post [Rotorua], March 17, 1976, 13 He was well placed to draw more political conclusions about the positive role of the Festival given that it coincided with a meeting of the South Pacific Forum in Rotorua at the same time. In his capacity as chairman he could therefore use the occasion to bring to the attention of more developed nations the desires of Pacific people for economic growth and stability

38 The nature of these adaptations and reinventions is too vast to canvas here, but some examples would include the use of steel tools in traditional carving, the creation of new forms using traditional techniques, the telling of new stories by traditional means (like the Aboriginal dancers from the Northern Territories whose dance related the passage of Japanese fighter planes over

Darwin during World War II) or in the case of the Cook Islands, the composition of dance and song specifically as a means to preserve knowledge of customary practice (in one case a dance demonstrating the preparation of a traditional foodstuff)

39 Geoff Chapple, "The South Pacific Festival of Arts," Art New Zealand, no 18 (Summer 1981) 18

40 A term used by Karen Stevenson in "Festivals, Identity and Performance Tahiti and the 6th Pacific Arts Festival," in Art and Performance in Oceania, ed Barry Craig et al (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 29

41 Epeli Hau'ofa describes the outcome of this process as the "new expanded Oceania", which he envisages as a criss-cross of social networks extending from Australia and New Zealand in the southwest to the US and Canada in the northeast, which was the result of the diasporic movement of Pacific peoples from their homes to various locations around the region. See Hau'ofa, "The Ocean in Us," The Contemporary Pacific 10, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 392

42 The liminal nature of this moment, in its figuring of the trauma prior to recovery, is spelt out by Geoff Chapple writing on the next Festival in Port Moresby in 1980 He recalls the fact that the canoe appeared in Rotorua only as a "graphic symbol", but in Papua New Guinea the event was opened with the arrival of a flotilla of canoes from various island destinations (including one that travelled more than 1,000 kilometres). See Geoff Chapple. Art New Zealand, 19.

43 Nga Puna Waihunga was formed to foster contemporary Māori arts by bringing urban-based Māori back to marae settings to get together, discuss issues and present works and thus to better ground their practices in their customary context as a properly collective enterprise

44 Whiting reported in the Daily Post [Rotorua], March 9, 1976, 1.

45 Robert Leonard, Stout Lecture, Victoria University of Wellington, September 4, 2002

46 Donald Preziosi's discussion of the role of the museum and its treatment and presentation of objects in order to "produce" the modern nation state is useful in relation to this point See Donald Preziosi, "The Art of Art History," in The Art of Art History: a Critical Anthology, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 507-25

47 Alan Howard, "Cultural Paradigms, History and the Search for Identity in Oceania," in Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific, ed Jocelyn Linnekin and Lin Poger (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 259-80

48 Ibid

49 See Katarina Mataira, Māori Artists of the South Pacific (Raglan: NZ Māori Artists and Writers, 1984), 39

50 In fact, 1976 was a critical year Due to Muldoon's immigration policies there was a dramatic downturn in immigration statistics: from 24,000 in the period 1971-1976 to 7,000 between 1976 and 1981

51 Reports in the media of overcrowding amongst Pacific Island families were often less concerned with the health risks to which they were exposed than to revealing their "failings" as homemakers, unable to make use of the appliances and improvements given them (for example journalists relished stories like the one where families lit fires in ovens to cook their food because they had no idea about electricity)

52 Muldoon's comments, made in his opening address to the Festival, were reported in the Daily Post [Rotorua], March 3, 1976

53 A phrase used by Tsuneo Nakai, one of the Japanese artists in the Pan Pacific Biennale. He stated: "I live in the countryside It's pretty far out. I don't film much in the city — mainly sky, grass and so on. What I can do in the space around me — what I can see nearby — that's what I use." See Solrun Hoaas, op cit., 44