

## Bridging histories, a Conversation between Hanahiva Rose & Ben Lignel

DECEMBER 21, 2021



*In January 2019, following the success of its jewellery-mentoring platform, HANDSHAKE Project launched a pilot craft writers' programme, running from January 2020 to December 2021, and selected curator Hanahiva Rose and writer Elle Loui August as its inaugural participants.*

*Originally designed to nurture the writing skills of craft and art professionals through a series of readings and assignments, the Handshake Writing program pivoted within six months of inception towards a coaching model. This was motivated by need – Hanahiva and Elle both came with projects that swallowed the entirety of their working hours – as much as opportunity: given the experience of both participants, it seemed that anchoring our interaction on ambitious, real-life projects was just as useful -and more rewarding- than following a syllabus. The participants were accomplished writers to begin with, and I mostly accompanied them on their ongoing development, and let the nature of their two projects shape our timetable, and exchanges. These consisted in written feedback on submitted papers and working drafts, one-on-one work sessions, triangular discussions around given texts. Though they leave almost no tangible traces, critical conversations were one of the most rewarding aspect of the program. The work of “thinking together” allowed connections to be made across world representations, and led to extensive sharing of reading references, that together constitute an imaginary library with three imaginary custodians and readers.*

*The following conversation was recorded a few weeks after the closing of Stars Start Falling, the exhibition dedicated to Teuane Tibbo that became the focus of Hanahiva Rose's work within the writing program. Our discussions, over the project concluding months, centered exhibition conventions, and how curators have challenged these conventions to contest the bias they carry, but also the role that text could play in providing polyphonic and divergent perspectives on this diasporic painter's work.*

*Many thanks to Simon Gennard at the Govett-Brewster for sharing images of Stars Start Falling with me, and to photographer Cheska Brown ([@cheska.brown](#)) and art director Tyrone Ohia ([@tyrone.ohia](#)) for so generously giving me permission to use their images of This is a Library, and the Stars Start Falling exhibition guide, respectively.*

- Ben Lignel

(This transcript has been very slightly edited for flow and clarity)

*Ben: My name is Ben Lignel. I'm currently sitting in my neighbor's living room in Montreuil, France, and having the pleasure to continue an ongoing conversation with art and craft curator and writer, Hanahiva Rose who will tell us in a minute where she's coming from. Hanahiva, please, accept my welcome to this 60-minute recording and my thanks for agreeing to share with our national and international audience some of your thoughts on the writing of craft. This podcast marks the end of a two-year writing program initiated in Aotearoa, New Zealand by Handshake. It's supported by Creative New Zealand. It will be co-published by Handshake and Critical Craft Forum, which is a Facebook-based conversation hub based in the United States.*

*This first conversation with Hanahiva will be followed by another, with writer Elle Louis August, who will speak about her methodology for researching the life and practice of New Zealand jeweler, Elena Gee. The overall topic of today's conversation is the relationship between the activities of curating and writing for you, Hanahiva. In the context of the show [Stars Start Falling](#), which you recently curated at the Govett-Brewster Gallery in New Plymouth. It opened in May and it closed in August 2021, and focused on the work of Samoan painter Teuane Tibbo, which you put in conversation with the contemporary works by Ani O'Neill, and Salome Tanuvasa.*

*I see this podcast as a means to share with the public of craft and arts writers the part that writing plays in a curatorial practice that is engaged with questions of diasporic identities in the Pacific, with historical and mythical time, with implicit and explicit creative genealogies. As you know, I'm very admiring of the thoughtfulness with which you tended to Tibbo's practice, and I see some benefits in sharing with students and peers the unique way you conducted the business of being a professional curator and writer. As I turn to you, Hanahiva, to introduce yourself, I also wanted to greet and acknowledge our future audience, the artists, curators, researchers will find this resource and let it become part of their knowledge base. I thank them for turning to us and I'm excited for them to hear about your work, Hanahiva.*

Hanahiva: Ko Pukekura tōku maunga, ko Ōtākou tōku awa, ko Ngāi Tahu tōku iwi, ko Te Ruahikihiki tōku hapū, ko Ōtākou tōku marae, ko Ellison tōku whānau, ko Hanahiva Lena Rose tōku ingoa. Thank you, Ben, for the lovely introduction. I'm really excited to continue the many conversations we've had over the course of this project, and hopefully, to share with people some of the ways that we've kind of bounced off each other and learnt from one another through this... You're someone who knows this project really well. And I am always delighted to hear what you think about it.

*Ben: Thanks for that. Thanks for these nice notes. I wanted to make a bit of space for you to start the conversation with the project itself. Stars Start Falling was your last project at the Govett-Brewster. I think you joined the Handshake writing program in January 2019 around the same time as you started working on the exhibition. You worked for it for about 18 months until it's the opening on the 22nd of May, and this project was meaningful to you in many ways. So, can you perhaps sketch for our listeners, how the project was developed and how you met it?*

Hanahiva: *Stars Start Falling* was... I mean, it was really a continuation of [another exhibition](#) I had made at a space called Enjoy here in Wellington in 2020 -the beginning of 2020- and that exhibition included the work of Teuane Tibbo in conversation with Salome Tanuvasa, Christina Pataialii, and Claudia Jowitt: three women painters of different Pacific backgrounds. I suppose they're emerging artists, they're in their 20s or early 30s. And, again, that project was also anchored by my ongoing interest in Teuane Tibbo's practice, and in a desire to think about what her influence is, or maybe what it could be. So, I felt that despite Teuane Tibbo's really significant place in our Pacific art history -she was one of the first exhibiting Pacific artists in New Zealand,

showing in contemporary art galleries and civic art galleries around New Zealand, and collected by a lot of our major institutions- that she hadn't kind of been closely looked at or looked at in ways which her practice, at least to me, seems to encourage.



I was interested in trying to think through what these younger generations of Pacific artists might think of her work and how they respond to it. So, *Stars Start Falling* took *This as a Library* as it's jumping-off point, into trying to dive a little deeper into that work. And because Enjoy is quite a small artist-run space here in Wellington, to try and approach Teuane's practice, but also Ani and Salome's, from the position of a collecting institution that is associated with a district council, and has a kind of complicated history in terms of its engagement with Pacific art. So, yeah. I wanted to bring them to New Plymouth and to see how that city responded to this work.



*Ben: Can you say a little bit more about the Govett-Brewster's history? In the back of my mind, there's Ruth Buchanan's project, which was presented shortly before yours, which really questioned the way that the collection of the institution was built. Teuane Tibbo's show certainly resonated with that.*

Hanahiva: It's interesting. Before developing *Stars Start Falling*, I had been asked to curate a collection exhibition for the Govett-Brewster...and to curate a collection exhibition pretty much straight after Ruth's exhibition, *The Scene in Which I Find Myself or Where Does My Body Belong?*, seems to me like a kind of impossible task. She had pulled out most of the collection.

And she had really tried to articulate the gaps in the collection, and made quite clear the voices, or the processes that define collection-building at an institution like that. So: the Govett-Brewster is a contemporary art gallery. It collects artworks made from the 1960s onwards, with a focus on New Zealand's contemporary art practices. But interestingly, it has a mandated commitment also to the art of the Pacific. And that was one of the things that Ruth pointed out in her exhibition: she made that lack quite clear by putting essentially all of the Pacific art, and this is New Zealand Pacific art generally, on display, and there are very few works by New Zealand Pacific artists in the collection.

So, instead of actually making a collection show, I tried to make an exhibition that, kind of following Ruth's lead, pointed out these absences. So that's where Ani O'Neill came into the exhibition: she is one of the Pacific artists who has most regularly shown at the Govett-Brewster. She has quite a strong exhibition history here. But, in their collection, she's represented by only one work, which is actually a kind of small piece of a larger quite significant work that is held at Auckland Art Gallery.

*Ben: So I just want to pause for a moment: can you tell listeners what is the difference between temporary exhibition and the collection in terms of commitment? And how bringing Ani O'Neill's work into a temporary exhibition may force or may invite the institution to rethink their investment in her work?*

Hanahiva: That's a really good question, and it's the kind of idea I was grappling with throughout making the show. It feels to me like our collecting histories and our exhibition histories tell quite different stories. Institutional collections talk about what we're willing to make an ongoing financial commitment to - and, you know, it is a commitment to caring for something, into perpetuity. As opposed to exhibitions, which we are kind of happy to welcome in, but also, welcome out of the building three months later. A place like the Govett-Brewster has often shown Pacific art - and usually, when it does, it will refer to its mandate to presenting Pacific art. But it is a lot shyer about making that commitment through acquisitions. And I think, you know, one of the things that Ruth's projects made quite clear was that institutions are their own machines, but at the same time they are also driven by quite specific personalities, a lot of the time or very, you know, highly defined procedures that have their own influence on these kinds of decisions.

*Ben: Let's, for a moment speak about Ruth Buchanan's exhibition guide. You know, I love the way that she has been working on language -as you have, I think, but very differently. And one of the things she did is to name sections of the exhibitions through one of the criteria that are sometimes used to describe work -like "female" or "leg"- in a sort of absurdist strategy. [Her point, I think, is] to remind the institution of the sort of tokenistic, but also problematic way, that things are being categorized. Another thing that she did is to list the extensive acquisition histories of the work that was on display: that, for me, was an eye-opener because it tended to how acquisitions are driven by human beings, and pointed to the sometimes very fragile connections being made that explain the presence of something, the gift of someone or the fact that something was bought, you know, in hindsight. And there is something there, which is really exciting and gives readers of that guide some access to the way that these collections are being built.*

*Your work on language is quite different, and I wouldn't say it's absurdist at all. Do you want to say a few words -and we still haven't really described the exhibition- but perhaps you can say a few words about what is the role of writing at the early stage of your project?*

Hanahiva: Yeah. I was kind of reflecting on this before our conversation...For me, writing is a way of thinking through things. It's a very different process to curation. When I was thinking about this, I was reluctant. I was trying to think about the words, and I was... you know, in some ways, I think this is what I didn't want to say: that curation is quite open-ended. It's highly collaborative. And it feels like it's done, at least to me, in community. Whereas the thing that can be the most difficult about writing is finding the space to bring other people's voices in and to provide a number of perspectives on a single thing. And this is a kind of strategy that we've talked a lot about [during the last two years of the program]. But, I mean, having said that, you know, I think writing is the place...I'm more comfortable in writing, and it is where I feel a lot clearer in the kinds of directions that I might take.

*Ben: Do you want to speak about the guide now?*

Hanahiva: Yeah, **we can talk about the guide.** That idea of writing being a way of working things through is especially true for the exhibition guide for *Stars Start Falling*, and that's for a few reasons. I think I love the guide for how I can see the conversations that I had with multiple people: with you, with Elle Loui and also with Tyrone Ohia who designed it kind of present in here, as well as the voices of the artists, and of writers and thinkers who have guided my practice. I think it's because of those conversations that it's taken the form that it has, which is quite fragmentary, and tries to approach the exhibition from a few angles, or through a few lenses. One of my favorite things about the guide is a photograph by a New Zealand photographer Mark Adams, which he took of Teuane Tibbo, and another New Zealand artist Tony Fomison, at her rest home and alongside the photograph is Mark's memory of taking it, which is, you know, personal and funny. I think it's that multiplicity, that trying to disrupt the idea that there is a single narrative to this exhibition, which we try to do with the guide.



*Ben: The guide for me was very compelling as well - it was surprising and compelling. Surprising, because since we've had so many conversations about the exhibition, I knew the depth and breadth of your thinking about Tibbo's practice, I knew you could have written a book, and probably more, about it. And so when I first received the guide, I felt, "God this is such a light or condensed version of what I know Hanahiva knows, and what she could tell about this." And then I realized as I was getting into it, how well you managed to combine, as you say, different voices*

*or different type of registers of language: some of it is about historical context, some of it's about anecdotal evidence. There's a lot about daily and family life, both in the practice of making things. Of course, in the anecdote of how Tibbo started painting, that vision that she had in connection with her daughter. So, the personal is present. There's a lot about the conditions of doing work, and different ways of interpreting the same work. And so you provide as you did for me, when I was discovering her work, a political history of her move from Samoa to Aotearoa New Zealand, of how she relocated, her history with her husband, the fact that she started painting from memory...all of these things. But then you added in the guide many other aspects, which prevents readers from [getting] one definitive statement, and allows them to work through with you some of the many ways one can approach the work.*

Hanahiva: Yeah, and the exhibition guide was given away free at the exhibition: there were no wall texts, there were no artwork labels. I was trying to kind of move away from a lot of the descriptive work that some artwork labels do, but at the same time to continue to give people the tools that they might need to interpret the work in their own ways. One of the things that felt useful about approaching the works thematically was that I hoped that it might show people that they could approach the work from multiple ways, that there wasn't necessarily a kind of definitive and correct way of understanding the works themselves, but also the connections between them in that space. I suppose the thing that would be most useful to them was really their own reactions.

*Ben: There's something which you described to me almost in political terms when you spoke to me about letting, and I'm quoting you, "multiple truths hang together" – which is what we are describing: the fact that the guide is open-ended and allows people to construct their version of history. Can you perhaps say a little bit more about this notion of letting multiple truths hang together? How does that sit with an institution?*

Hanahiva: Yeah, it's such a good question, how does it sit with an institution? Part of the reason that I think it's important to do that kind of work in an institution is to acknowledge the fact that, whether or not institutions acknowledge it, that is the type of work that they also do, you know: we're kind of cobbling things together a lot of the time and asking people to place them in a kind of linear construction of truth. But in the end, they all come from disparate sources, they will possibly all be subject to change. These different versions of truth will come back to Epeli Hau'ofa's text "Pasts to Remember" where he says that different versions of truth may be accepted for particular purposes and moments. I think that there is an enormous potential in that, and I find that idea exciting. I also think that it is the way that we encounter truth in institutions ... They perhaps just don't tend to acknowledge it that way.

*Ben: So, there's two things here: the way that some institutions historically have tended to fix meaning or to put work within linear histories, and then there is a very specific reference that you made to Tongan anthropologist, Epeli Hau'ofa. The text that you shared with me, "Pasts to Remember," is a text in which he suggests that the people of Oceania should be able to "define and construct our past in our own ways" as an alternative to the history written by settlers, and that means finding this history or constructing this history in the present, despite the lack of tangible documents. Thanks to you, I was able to make the link between Hau'Ofa and Saidiya Hartman's notion of critical fabulation, this idea that you may need to invent the past, your own past. Tell me how his work and those words influence the show and the way that you put it together?*

Hanahiva: "Pasts to Remember" is a really significant text for me, and it's one that I often come back to... yeah, that license to imagine, to redefine and reconstruct our histories in our own ways... And it's interesting to have first encountered that type of thinking and his work, but then to also

actually see it in other places, like Saidiya Hartman's. The most important thing for me, in that text, is the idea that our most significant source of history is in our oral history, those oral narratives which are inscribed on our landscapes. There's a few things to unpack there. The idea that the land has its own histories, that it knows its own histories, and that we kind of have to learn them is something that's really important to me, and it's something that comes up in *Stars Start Falling*. All of the artists in their own ways engage with landscapes, sometimes through memory, sometimes in kind of quite abstract ways, but they're all reaching somewhere. And they've all found a story and a place that they want to try and tell. And it's that sense of connection to place which I think defines Pacific art, really. And to me, the most important thing is that we can articulate those connections in our own ways: sometimes it is through memory, it's through distance, or it's through, you know, things we've only been told and never encountered. However we come to these places, our relationship with them is still our own.

*Ben: You're making an assumption here that the audience, the visitors to the museum will know that and understand that. And as a non-Pacific person, I don't know that I would. Do you think you can reliably expect from visitors that they will understand that a riffing on landscape is a riffing on history?*

Hanahiva: It's a good question. I don't know that you can expect that. I think somewhere like Taranaki has an incredibly fraught history: in terms of Māori-Pākehā relationships, which are deeply embedded in that landscape, and in the kind of acts of violence that have not only seen bloodshed on the landscape but seen the landscape divided up in violent ways as well.<sup>1</sup> There are a lot of people who, if not willing to express that quite so directly, have a kind of feeling, you know, "there's something." I do find Taranaki, in particular, to be somewhere where that disquieting sense of unease is really strong. In New Zealand, generally, it's a feeling that, again, might not be expressed so directly, but is kind of felt. And for people who haven't thought about those connections before and haven't encountered them in these ways, I think that artwork does the work. I think it can show that without it having to be laid out so explicitly.



*Ben: I think so as well. And perhaps now would be a good time talk about one of the very beautiful installation that you have in the show where you have two paintings by Teuane Tibbo's, placed at*

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<sup>1</sup> Taranaki iwi were subject to vast and violent land confiscation by the Crown throughout the mid-nineteenth century, eventually losing more than 1 million acres of land. The settlement of Parihaka was established in South Taranaki in the 1860s as a site of non-violent resistance to the Crown and refuge for all those affected by war and confiscation. In 1881, Parihaka was invaded by an armed constabulary who - in the face of passive resistance by its inhabitants, who greeted them with waiata and kai (song and food) - violently raided the community.

*the end of a corridor created by two hanging works by Salome Tanuvasa. There's something that's created there, from very different types of relationship to landscape. Can you describe that a bit better than I do and tell me what your thinking was there?*

Hanahiva: Yeah, I think the Govett-Brewster is a funny exhibition space. *Stars Start Falling* covered three galleries in the Govett-Brewster, but there are no dividing walls between them. So, it kind of feels like a very large gallery with a raised mezzanine level in the middle, so you're kind of walking through and up and down these spaces. What that means is that if you stand in this middle level -which is the one that you just described- you can actually see both ends of the exhibition, you can see through all of the galleries. And so it feels like a really productive place to make connections between artworks. That was one of the real pleasures of installing the exhibition and having Ani and Salome there: to kind of think about what relationships we wanted to pull out. I had a rough idea of where things would go. There are some things which, because of their size, had to go in particular places. But around that there was a lot of room to just shift things around. So, in that space, with Salome had six large hanging paintings on the walls to either side. On one wall were these works by Teuane Tibbo, which are often called her "village scenes", scenes of life in Samoa, and on the other side was a smaller work by Ani O'Neill called "Counterproductive." So, it was the only place where all of the artists came together..

*Ben: I only know the vista, the view where you can see both of Salome's hanging paintings, either side of what I described as a corridor, ending with Teuane Tibbo's village scenes at the end. What was great about this, is that it allowed me to think of maybe three different types of temporality. One of them was the mark making of Salome Tanuvasa: she has been painting these a short while before the exhibition, in a sort of performative process in the backyards of friends' places, where she's painting these in a sort of gestural, very active way. You could say that these paintings track the moment of their production. And then you have the two village scenes by Tibbo, describing both a mythical time and a cyclical time of forever return that is not located in history, but also make reference to history. And so we have three conflicting, or at least different, times in friction: a celebration of recent, performative actions; a representation of mythical past and references to history. And I thought it was an interesting way, going back to the beginning of the conversation, to think about Tibbo's potential influence on younger generations or how her work is activated by both the similarities and the differences that you find in the younger painters' work.*

Hanahiva: Yeah, yes. **Salome works** incredibly quickly, so those six paintings were made over a week. And they are really large: at the time that was the largest scale that she'd worked at. That required her to come up with new ways of actually making them. Some of them were made in her backyard, one was made in her friend's backyard, some of them were made hanging up from the curtain rail in her room. And when Salome makes, she's always responding to the conditions that she's making in. So it's often late at night once her children are asleep... I think when she made these works, it was the school holidays. So, she's got her kids around her and her parents around her as well. The thing that I love about Salome's work is trying to see those presences in them, but it's also being able to see the way that she might make one painting: she starts in one place and kind of moves to another, and you can see maybe a gesture or a color starting to come through. And in the next painting, she moves on to exploring that more fully. To see them all together is a real privilege because you get to see this kind of passing of time, the changing of places, the differences in the day or the night, or whatever it might be.

Teuane's paintings, as you say, come from quite a different place where those works, in particular, are painted from memories. Some seem to have aspects, perhaps of photographs, but it's quite hard to tell. Something that I'm quite interested in Teuane's work is the ways that it shows the passing of time, but it also often disrupts our impressions of what the passing of time

might look like. But in those works, you can see this move, I think: there's some people in *waka* - in canoes- and then in the next, there's a motorcycle going down a road. To live in Samoa at the turn of the 20th century was to be a part of an incredible upheaval, these huge shifts in the ways that people lived. And it's through her disregard for our conventional understandings of time, or time passing, or what truth looks like, or what history might be, that we can really start to understand what a kind of incredible shift that really was.



*Ben: You also wanted to challenge the way that she was perceived... going back to one of our early conversations, you said that you wanted people to see her through the lens of diasporic Pacific identity, but you didn't want that to be the sole focus. And it seems to me that the conversation that you instigated between her and the two younger artists is one of the ways in which you're both allowing a reading which is about her diasporic identity, but also making it more complex, bringing other things to it. Would you say that's a fair assessment?*

Hanahiva: Yeah, I mean, I think, to me, it feels very important to acknowledge each of the artists' individual histories. They all come from different places in the Pacific with their own stories of migration and different ways of coming to New Zealand, and they have built their own lives: there's only so much use in comparing them in that way, I think. There are ways of looking and ways of kind of being in the world that I think connect them: ways of understanding how we move through the landscape, for example, how we establish relationships with the landscape, how we move through time. But, yes, it's to maintain that specificity, to say "Ani O'Neill was a Cook Islander, and Teuane Tibbo was a Samoan." So while there are some connections -and actually Ani's grandmother knew Teuane: there are real connections- they can only take us so far. And I think it's in acknowledging that it's in sitting with the difference that we can start to have a really productive conversation. You know, I suppose it's something more like a comparative exercise, and we're looking for what connects us but also what makes us different, and how in that, we can start to describe some small corner of the incredible variety of Pacific life in New Zealand.

*Ben: In conversations with Ani and Salome, I assume you spoke about your questions about the influence that Teuane Tibbo's work may or may not have had on their work... How did they respond to that, and to the conversation that you put them in?*

Hanahiva: Like I said at the beginning, I had done an exhibition with Salome and Teuane before. And in that exhibition, Salome painted in direct response to Teuane's painting. So, we put Teuane's paintings out on the floor, and then Salome laid out her own canvas and made these paintings that were very much in response to Teuane's. *Stars Start Falling* followed a kind of different model where I knew that she was familiar with Teuane's work: I just invited her to be in the exhibition and to make work that responded to all of these things. And I will say that Salome

was equally excited to be in an exhibition with Ani as she was with Teuane. I don't think Ani's influence can be understated on the younger generations of Pacific artists.

So, to bring them all together like that was incredibly special. I don't think Ani knew that her family had known Teuane until I met with one of Teuane's granddaughters and mentioned that we were doing the show and that Ani was going to be in it as well. And she said, "I think that there's this connection and they all lived in Auckland." And so that was quite a special thing for us to find out.

*Ben: I wanted to speak a bit more about Ani O'Neill's work, which I discovered through the exhibition. In the guide, you mentioned her use of crochet and the fact that it's connected to a longer history of craft on the Cook Islands, and you put her practice in relation with the craft and art divide, and with question of capitalism and speculation. And so I'm sensing that you're thinking of craft, both in terms of cultural heirloom, in connection to the community that Ani comes from, but also as a critical tool. And I have a few questions about this. The first one is when you're thinking about showing craft or craft-adjacent practices, what sort of questions do you ask yourself as a curator? Which concepts or histories do you lean on?*

Hanahiva: That's such an interesting question, especially in relation to Ani's practice. In a lot of her work, she draws on different craft practices, different tools, different ways of making that she was taught by her Cook Islands grandmother. And so that includes crochet, it also includes quilting, [tivaevae](#). I'm not an expert on Cook Islands craft by any means, but those histories are especially interesting in the Cook Islands because those practices were first introduced by missionary wives who understood that while the men were kind of doing whatever they were doing, the best place to disseminate information, to gather information, and to essentially, I suppose, share the 'word of God' was actually in these communal women's groups, which were focused around different ways of making. They introduced needle and thread to the Cook Islands, and kind of taught them about quilting. And these Cook Islands women took that knowledge and made these quilts that are an absolutely incredible testament to and reflection of the natural environments of the Cook Islands. They are incredibly brightly colored...they're made in community and often kept in community as well, and only really disseminated as gifts.

So it's from that history that Ani is really working: she's quite interested in that relationship between [Pākehā](#) ways of making, this colonial influence, and what has turned into very much a Cook Islands indigenous art form of its own: how they took these tools and told their own stories with them.

And it's kind of always been part of her practice to bring those skills and ways of making into the art gallery. I suppose what I was gesturing to with that art/craft divide is that she really wanted to bring crochet into the art gallery. And that's why she calls these works paintings: to try and upend some of the associations we have about how much things are worth or what their value is, depending on which of these histories they seem to slide into. **So both *Counterproductive* and *Monopoly* are landscapes**, and they're paintings as well.



I suppose it is those histories that I was trying to lean into in this work, that's so complicated. Craft in the Pacific is a very complicated thing, and it often feels like the way to approach it is to try and kind of bridge a whole bunch of histories. But the thing that at the moment is the big teaching in New Zealand around the display of Māori and Pacific craft practices is how they're often framed as historical, when, in fact, they are being practiced *now*. Contemporary work is continuing to be made, these practices are continuing to develop. And, you know, yeah, they can sit alongside contemporary art and absolutely hold their own and tell their own stories.

*Ben: Thanks for that. I have, personally no doubt that craft can hold its own. And what I think is super interesting, what you just did, is that you brought into the conversations histories of making...of cultural influence...an anthropological interest in the way that community happens around a needle and thread, and how that is connected to gender division of labor, but also, you could say, to cultural manipulation or "influence" by pākehā people. So, suddenly, having started with crochet, we end up with a very fragmentary, but already super-rich vision of the complicated human relation that craft is embedded in or embeds in itself. And this is perhaps not the way that you would have spoken about a visual arts practice, because you probably would not have chosen to use histories of "conditions of making" as a lead into the practice.*

*And that's the question I was asking: what are the different tools that you need to use when you think about craft, which you wouldn't have learned in an art history class, or an art criticism class? In the course of our conversations, many times you brought into the conversation things that have very little to do with the way things look...and a lot to do with the way they're made or the context in which their making has been transformed by influences and more!*

*I'm asking you this, as we draw sort of to the end of our conversations because I wanted to hear you on what you think are the challenges and opportunities that are specific to speaking about craft?*

Hanahiva: You know, I suppose one of the things that's interesting about creating this genealogy between three painters -and however much I believe in these ideas of circularity, and that we engage with time in quite complicated ways- I am always aware that in this construction, Teuane Tibbo generally sits at what I do tend to describe as the beginning of Contemporary Pacific Art History in New Zealand. And because of that, it's difficult for me to draw relations for her that move backwards in that conception of time, as I'm able to do for Salome and Ani. And we kind of had some conversations, and they come up a little bit in the guide...about me trying to see other Pacific art practices or craft practices in Teuane's work, feeling that there is a kind of influence there because they are part of the way that she would have seen the world and seen things represented from her world. For example, this feeling that I have that you can see the brightness of *tivaevae* - those really solid forms- especially in her flower paintings; the really intense detail

of things like *tapa*, which often use these dotted forms that, again, come up in her paintings. The thing that I feel most excited and challenged by, in working with the craft -and Pacific craft, especially- is trying to push these connections upwards... to say, you know, could Teuane Tibbo sit in a history of craft making as well? How does Ani sit in that space? She uses these forms, but she also works in specific ways, and she draws on many other references as well. I suppose that's where the joy is for me.

*Ben: Are there types of text, or authors, that you go to when thinking about specifically that problem, to use your expression, how you "push these connections upward"?*

Hanahiva: I draw a lot on my background in Pacific Studies, you know, and that's where I encountered people like [Epeli Hau'ofa](#), [Albert Wendt](#), [Teresia Teaiwa](#), who celebrate the incredible variety of Pacific art and who also aren't art historians. And that's what I find particularly productive about their approach to art because they believe that it can tell us really important things about Pacific cultures. They're not necessarily doing a kind of visual analysis of the work. And so I've always kind of enjoyed being able to draw on their work, but also, you know, on art historical ways of looking and to try and bring them together.