



MOANA (PACIFIC) EXPRESSIONS OF DESIGN: SETTING THE CONDITIONS FOR INTERGENERATIONAL INQUIRIES THROUGH LEARNING AND CREATIVE PRACTICE

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Lottie (Charlotte, Salote) Harper-Siolo is currently finishing her Bachelor of Design with honours in Spatial Design. Varying interests and projects span regenerative farming, coastal vegetation, material culture, and virtual space. Her practice is driven by Pacific methodology, experiences in relation to her positionality, and relationship/care to place and people.

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Alex Te'o-Faumuina (Papa Puleia, Vaiee, and Satupaitea, Sāmoa) is a Concept Design major at Toi Rauwhāangi, Massey University. Alex seeks to capture and express unique ways of visual storytelling that reflect their positionality as a young Samoan of Porirua, Aotearoa.

Abstract: This article is a reflection on an attempt to create a space of flux through the concepts of positionality, vā and talanoa within the design academy. This was presented as an academic course, originally intended to address a gap in established learning, and to make space for intergenerational knowledge systems that were originally being shared outside of the studio (shared at the knee, through office hours, and in passing conversations). This sharing led to key questions regarding how we (re)craft our ways through our practices and what cultural conditions are needed to enable safe design and cultural production.

Five students enrolled in the course and are featured as co-authors in this article. They *whakapapa* as Tangata whenua (Māori, people of the land) or Tagata o le Moana (specifically Sāmoan). They are enrolled in a range of design disciplines such as spatial design, fashion design, and concept design. Classes were held once a week over a 12-week semester period. These in-person classes involved reflecting and re-presenting our positional contexts, a sharing and setting of kai, hikoi to gallery exhibitions featuring Māori and Pacific art practitioners at an institutional level and a community level, alongside the sharing of scholarship developed on the concepts of vā and talanoa, while coming back to ourselves and our familial, generational social settings.

Keywords: pacific; moana; design; positionality; talanoa; vā

*Tagata O le Moana**Sāmoan**Polynesian**Migrant living in Aotearoa, the land of Tangata Whenua**Home to Moana*

The text above features the concluding layers from a submission by co-author Harper-Siolo. Layers that demonstrate oceanic depths of ever-changing perspectives and intersections when we reflect on our identities as peoples of the Moana (Pacific Ocean) located in Aotearoa (New Zealand). This was part of their submission towards a course they completed at Ngā Pae Māhutonga (School of Design), Toi Rauwhāangi (College of Creative Arts, Massey University). In 2022, the Moana Methodologies was proposed as an opportunity (and a need) for taura (students) of Māori and Pacific gafa (lineage) to connect more deeply on scholarship and context related to three key concepts: positionality, talanoa, and vā. Five taura enrolled and are featured as co-authors of this article; two of whom whakapapa (lineage, genealogy) Māori and three who gafa (lineage, genealogy) to Sāmoa. Originally designed for Pacific taura, this academic course welcomed all taura of Te Moana-nui-a-kiwa (Pacific Ocean, Oceania). We present our positionalities in this article and hope to demonstrate the relevance of positionality in setting the conditions for intergeneration inquiries. The purpose for this academic course was propelled by the growing presence of Moana-centric identities (with lineage of the Pacific, including Aotearoa, New Zealand) in our creative practices, sometimes conscious and unconscious. There have been risks of tokenizing ourselves in creative practice, or worse, being critiqued through Eurocentric lenses despite the relevance and critical depth of our oceanic scholarship. The issue we are encountering regularly and seek to address: *How can we safely embed our cultures through our design practices without trampling on the mana (power, authority) of our ancestors, our communities and ourselves while enabling the (re)crafting of our ways through our practices?*

**But First, Who Are We? As Co-Authors, as Taura, as Kaiako
(Lecturer), as Peoples of Te Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa?**

Co-Author Taura Charlotte Harper-Siolo:

I identify as Tangata o le Moana and as an afakasi (Sāmoan and European heritage) Pālagi/Samoan. My connection to Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa is through my father's gafa to the village of Iva on the island of Savaii, Sāmoa. My mother's lineage is of

generational migration from England. My father and I were born and raised in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Aotearoa, making me a second diasporic Sāmoan.

Co-Author Taura Samuel Hāmuera Dunstall:

Ko Tongariro te maunga,
 Ko Taupō te moana,
 Ko Waikato te awa,
 Ko Te Arawa te waka,
 Ko Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Kahungunu ōku iwi,
 Ko Dunstall te whanau
 Ko Samuel/ Hāmuera tōku ingoa

Nō Te Arawa ōku tīpuna
 I tupu ake au i Taupō-nui-a-Tia
 Ko Tongariro te maunga e karanga mai ana
 Ko Waikato te awa e tāre mai ana
 Kei Te Whanganui-a-Tara ahau e noho ana
 Ko Samuel/Hāmuera tōku ingoa

I carry with me, my tīpuna, my ancestors. My creation story.
 I carry their mauri, life force and messages into my mahi.
 I whakapapa to the mountains and rivers that feed Te Manawa o Te Ika a Māui (the heart of the great fish of Māui), known to my people as Te Kōpua Kāpanapa o Taupō Nui-a-Tia (the deep glistening pool of Tia).
 “Hokia ki ngā maunga kia purea koe e ngā hau a Tāwhiri-mātea.”
 “Return to your mountains to be cleansed by the winds of Tāwhiri-mātea.”
 I speak to the sacredness of my own lands, but my tāringa are open and my whakaaro flows with respect to create alongside others. The whakatauki above speaks closely to my mahi.

Co-Author Taura Pelero Vaima’a:

Ou te mua’i fa’atālofa atu i le paia ma le mamalu o le ‘au faitau i leni su’esu’ega. Tālofa, tālofa, tālofa lava. O lo’u ingoa o Pelero Vaima’a ma ou te sau mai afiōaga o A’ufaga, Lēpa, Saluafata, Falealili, Malie, Leauva’a ma Sataoa i Upolu, Samoa. O nai o’u mātua peleina o le afioga ia Ta’elegalolo’u Mua’itofiga Misipele Vaima’a ma le faletua ia Agasa Peia Vaima’a. Ou te aoga i le iunivesete o Toi Rauwhārangī, Pukeahu i Ueligitone, Niu Sila. O le matou vasega lea o le Moana Methodologies sa fa’apea ona fa’atasi ai ma nisi o tamaiti Māoli ma le ‘au Pasefika. O se avanoa tāua ua mafai ona mātou feiloa’i fa’atasi, ina ia malamalama ai i nisi auala o le Moana e atina’e ai le mātou su’esu’ega ma le ola tāutua mo tātou tagata.

My family migrated to Aotearoa when I was two years old motivated by the desire to provide us (their children) with a better life and opportunities for education. Although we often visited Samoa for fa'alavelave (family events; weddings, funerals, birthdays, etc.) my sisters and I, as Pacific children in the diaspora, struggled to find our place. By activating Fa'a Sāmoa (Sāmoan way/culture and traditions) has helped preserve Sāmoan culture outside of our homeland. My parents ensured we grew up with a strong sense of identity and pride in our Sāmoan cultural heritage; therefore, we were involved in everything from lotu (church) to extracurricular Pacific groups at school.

Co-Author Taura Kristina Gibbs:

“Ekea kā tiritiri o te moana”

“Mō tātou, ā mō kā uri a muri ake nei”

Hoea mai te waka tapu o Tākitimu ki Aotearoa nei,
 Kia anga atu ki a Maukatere tōku maunga
 Ka titiro iho au ki te awa rere a Rakahuri
 Kia noho ruruhau au ki marae o te Tuahiwi, kei Te Waka a Maui, ki tōku whare Mahaanui.
 Kia mau au te korowai o Ngāi Tahu
 Kia tu rangatira au hei raukura mo ngā iwi o Te Atiawa me Ngāti Apa ki te ra to me Ngāi Tahu.

“He hōnore he kororia ki Te Atua

He maungārongo ki te whenua

He whakaaro pai ki ngā tāngata katoa”

Ko Waru Cairo O’Noema Huntley tōku atua Pōua

Ko Julie tōku Tāua

Ko Nikki tōku Hākui

Ko David tōku Hākoro

Ko Jordan tāku tuākana

Ko Dani tāku tuāhine

Ko āhau te pōtiki

Ko Kristina tāku

Nā reira te owaha ki a koutou katoa e huihui mai nei.

Mauri ora.

Co-Author Taura Alexander Te'o-Faumuina:

Talofa, o lo'u igoa o Alexander Te'o-faumuina
Ou te sau mai afioaga o Papa Puleia, Vaiee ma Satupaitea.

I wish to commence by extending my acknowledgements to the esteemed lineage that has preceded me, diligently shaping the very essence of who I am today. I come from the villages of Papa Puleia, Vaiee, and Satupaitea, I embrace my role as an original storyteller of narratives. These words that were imparted to me during my younger years have seamlessly evolved into the foundational framework of my current vocation as a conceptual artist. My art is deeply informed by a distinct purpose, with a worldview that sums up the experience of a young Samoan descendant from Porirua, full of pride, endeavouring to navigate the intricate contours of this modern world.

Co-Author Kaiako Sonya Elspeth Withers:

My position in this space with our co-author taura is from the back. I acknowledge their agency as growing Moana-centric designers, navigating institutional spaces to protect and enable their creative malaga (journey) of expressional practices.

I was born in Aotearoa, Taumarunui. My late father was Pākehā with gafa to Scotland, England, Germany, America, and Wales. He is the son of my Granma, Elspeth Withers who taught me how to sew, knit, and do embroidery. My mother was born in Sama'i, Faletai to my Nana Solema Pepe Tulituafulu Leuta Taito. My mother was sent to Kawerau when she first arrived in Aotearoa by herself. When I first met my Nana in Sāmoa, she taught me how to make food baskets out of a coconut palm. My Nana and Granma produced a close friendship over the phone—Granma Elspeth sending balls of acrylic yarn to Solema to fringe her laufala mats with and Solema sharing ideas for my White Sunday dresses for Granma Elspeth to construct. Their friendship and the encouragement of my family adorned my future with a career in design.

Intersecting *Pacific*

As co-authors, our positional contexts define our unique identities despite connecting under the umbrella term *Pacific*. We know too well that our Pacificness has been homogenized through the English language system, and how the body of water we descend from has been compartmentalized and explored by European voyagers. This is seen through how we participate in the English language system when we must settle for terms like *Pacific* and *Oceania*. These homogenous terms do not provide the depth of mana needed to illuminate the diversity and cultural breadth of island nations that are situated across Te Moana-nui-a-kiwa (Chitham et al., 2019). We attempt to use the term *Moana* throughout but acknowledge our agency in exercising the use of *Pacific*

to refer to our Pacificness in Aotearoa (New Zealand). We know that Pacific doesn't quite enable the many worlds and intersecting layers of generational movements activated through migratory diaspora. Throughout this article, we will use a range of terms that demonstrate resisting homogeneity of the Pacific.

In relation to homogenising practices, the core pedagogy that defines design education is underpinned by the Eurocentric double-diamond framework (see Design Council, 2023) and participation through critique (Hokanson, 2012). These have been replicated and applied globally; however, when thinking about design as a form of *tautua* (service) to our peoples, the universalness of these concepts fails to acknowledge our intergenerational sharing of knowledge systems through scholarship, colloquial settings, and organic modes of collective conceptualisation. Current social design practices are obsessed with formulating portable frameworks for engagements. Portability, however, has been argued to replicate a culture of nothingness, "cyclically fortifying a culture of nowhere and no one" (Akama et al., 2019, p. 62). Despite this, our positionality portrays an undercurrent of value that is constantly manifested through our practices. "Designers are not culturally or politically neutral. Our backgrounds matter because they have shaped the kinds of designers we have become, and our sociocultural values inevitably manifest through our designing" (Akama et al., 2019, p. 65). It made sense, therefore, to carve a space that attempted to disrupt the Eurocentric structures of the double diamond and critique practices, and ask the question: *What are our cultural conventions that enable the principles of place-based thinking, iteration, and ethical relational accountability towards genuine forms of design and cultural production?*

To address the critical questions outlined above, in this article we will unpack three key cultural concepts: positionality, *talanoa* (Moana-centric way of collectively talking through reflexivity and reciprocity), and *vā* (space between, relationality) that have been evident in our attempts to enable Moana-centric expressions of design. We reflect on these concepts through colloquial settings, theory, and their relationship to design practice. We present how we have engaged with literature and its contribution to a collectively conceptualized material *taonga* (treasure).

(Re)positioning

Figure 1

Positionality Wheel by Noel (2020) <https://lesleyannoel.wixsite.com/website>



Figure 1 illustrates the Positionality Wheel, a popular tool for exploring a spectrum of contexts related to a participant's positionality and making conscious contexts of exclusion. The intent for using this tool, is to enable disruption of bias towards seeding into problematic design outcomes. This tool was designed by Caribbean design educator Lesley-Ann Noel (2020). Originally designed for the education space, this tool has been widely used across multiple settings, organizations, group collaborations, and co-design practices (Noel & Paiva, 2021). While it presents a portable and applicable method for encouraging autonomous identification of bias, it lacks the ability to recognize existing place-based constructs of positionality. As co-authors, we engaged with this tool for our first class. Compared to larger classroom settings, where there are predominantly more students who identify as Pākehā (New Zealand, European), this tool has been useful for enabling a discussion in relationality

and exclusion. For those of us who identify as Tangata whenua and Tangata o le moana, we found this tool uncomfortable. There are a few conditions to our space that can unpack this. For example, everyone involved can identify as either tangata whenua or as tagata o le moana. Some of the contextual areas presented forms of disassociation such as class and some garnered confident forms of attention like ethnicity. Many agreed, and pointed out that, in Aotearoa, classism exists although not as dominantly as in societies of the global north. The area on ethnicity felt organic to talanoa because of how our cultural values had brought us together, presenting layers of relationality. Some felt confident in their whakapapa (genealogy in Te Reo Māori) and gafa (genealogy in Gagana Sāmoa), and some were reflexive, expressing their desire to unpack their displacement and increase their learning of their cultural identity and its relationship to creative practice. What was interesting to reflect upon, was how the positionality tool presented boundaries set by imperialism and colonisation, ideals linked to inequality, exclusion, sexism, ageism, nuclear family constructs, and so on. These connections to colonisation and imperialism and the associated power struggles demonstrated the effects of discomfort experienced by tauira in the course. In turn our attention to thinking about what kinds of outcomes would we enable if we activated positionality as rooted in aspirational and Moana-centric design thinking, we asked: *What would this look like if we began to get to know ourselves and each other on the foundations of our ancestors' aspirations and ways of being Indigenous and diasporic?*

Our histories and generational mapping demonstrate assemblages of continued relationships between tangata whenua and tagata o le moana, pre-colonisation and post 1840—the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in Aotearoa. This can be seen through the intersections of our language systems, cosmological narratives, and our economies of love (Salesa, 2017). Most significant are our intergenerational actions of radical love through intercommunal support, a kaupapa (purpose) that underpinned the movements of the Polynesian Panthers and their collaborations with Ngā Tamatoa (Aae, 2020). Prior to the Polynesian Panthers was the compassion shown by Sir Maui Pōmare (1875-1930), a prominent doctor and member of Parliament, who visited Tamasese Lealofi Aana III, a leader of the Mau movement who had been imprisoned and exiled to Mt. Eden in 1929. Of the visit, Pōmare (1987) wrote:

And so, I looked into the countenance of a Tama—an Ariki—a prince indeed. The lineal descent of kings whose genealogical lines reach back into the twilight of fable, and yet withal I looked and saw the face of a martyr—a patriot. He has given his all in the cause of his people—the emancipation of his race. I thought and asked myself this question. What have we—New Zealand—done? In our blind blundering party wrangling and political humbug, we put this man in gaol. That is what we have done. This man was deprived of liberty, hereditary titles,

degraded, deported, and imprisoned. Yet those titles will continue till the last drop of Tamasese blood ceases to flow. (p. 250)

This key event in history demonstrates the mana afforded to Ali'i Tamasese Lealofi Aana III by Pōmare. Anae describes it as "[a]n encounter where Indigenous historical narratives, status, respect and shared colonial experiences and the fight for sovereignty in their own lands merged in the unspoken sentiments of respect and *aroha* in the words '*la malosi Tamasese*'" (PMN News, 2021, 6:16). Our historic relationships demonstrate kinship and shared activism because of harm through colonisation and shared cultural values.

When thinking about the concept of positionality, we need to understand our relationship to place: Aotearoa. Through the emergence of co-design practices—practices that assume collective conceptualisation and that have become popular tools in the public sector for generating data on communities in deficit—we have seen an increased number of designers in Aotearoa unpacking their relationship to Te Tiriti O Waitangi. There are risks associated with co-design practices: white saviourism, neo-liberalism, and a lack of authentic impact for folks involved in the process who have come from the targeted (often marginalized) communities in need. Encouraging designers, particularly those who are Tangata Tiriti, enables a shift in power regarding how one might activate or serve from the back towards enabling tino rangatiratanga (agency and leadership of Māori) (Akama et al., 2019). There are, however, complexities involved with using the title Tangata Tiriti. For example, peoples of the Pacific who are in Aotearoa, or identify as part of the growing diaspora, come under Tangata Tiriti as well. Our historic and generational relationships to Tangata whenua, however, demonstrate value through relational Indigenous conventions and shared experiences of colonial harm; values and experiences that folks, who identify as Pākehā and as Tangata Tiriti, lack in lived relational experiences. Emalani Case, Hawaiian scholar and activist based in Aotearoa, laments these relationships and responsibilities further:

If our relationships do not begin with Aotearoa and with tangata whenua, in other words, we centre colonial structures and risk forgetting the relationships to place and people that transcend colonialism. Situating ourselves in relation to whenua and to tangata whenua first enables us to think critically about ourselves, our positionalities, and perhaps most importantly, about the responsibilities that come with those positionalities. (Rata et al., 2021, p. 62)

To add to our relationship to Aotearoa and its place in Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, people of the Pacific and Tangata whenua have diverse and existing socio-cultural conventions that enable customs and social behaviours to define place-based positionality. This might be through how one recites their Pepeha. For Māori, this is like

your birth certificate that locates your iwi (tribal affiliations), *awa* (river), *maunga* (mountain) and most of all your *whakapapa* (genealogy). For us co-authors, who identify as Sāmoan, we would unpack our positionality through our parents and where they were born in Sāmoa, the communities we have been brought up in: Porirua, EFK church, *aiga* connections, and relationships to people of *fa'a aloalo* (respect) in our circles. These lineages are hard to surface and are not enabled through the conventions or norms of the Positionality Wheel (Noel, 2020); therefore, it makes sense to practice our own ways of doing this whilst acknowledging space for intersectional differences.

Tala-talanoa

When reflecting on our own ways, one of the many ways that sings familiarity for activation is that of *talanoa*. Shared across different island nations there is an interlinked common and colloquial meaning to *talanoa*: to talk and to talk about something or nothing. Some of us co-authors have grown up listening to *talanoa* at the knee or observing oneself in *talanoa*. Upon reaching university, it only seems organic to practice *talanoa* on a level that embodies critique and consciousness. To oppose the universal form of critique in design education and assert a socio-cultural convention like *talanoa*, therefore, enabled a safe learning space to activate our classes. Our classes were only meant to be 2 hours long, once a week on Wednesdays for 12 weeks. We found ourselves, however, going over the 2 hours and, at times, inviting other members to join in on our *talanoa* who were not enrolled in the course, even providing island food like *sapasui* (chop suey), *luau* (cooked taro leaves), *pisupo* (corned beef) and rice, *suafa'i* (banana sago pudding) where possible. For some of our co-authors, it was their first time trying some of these dishes. These dishes helped support our *talanoa*, evoking memories for those accustomed to the dishes or illustrating our different ways of producing the dishes and how they had adapted through *aiga* (extended family), and generational change.

The concept of *talanoa* is not only reserved for colloquial settings. Pacific scholars have sought to establish *talanoa* as an enabling cultural convention of research in the field of Pacific scholarship. The research literature on *talanoa*, demonstrates its position as pacifically pluriversal: a result of its potentiality, interpretation, and articulation by a range of Pacific scholars. Vaoletti (2016) argues *talanoa* as a methodology that can enable "a personal encounter where people story their issues, their realities and aspirations" (p. 23). In the Sāmoan context, Vaoletti acknowledges *talanoa* as an, "ancient practice of multi-level and multi-layered critical discussions and free conversations." (p. 24). An alternative perspective is presented by Matapo and Enari (2021) who state that, "Talanoa can generate new understandings of Pacific personhood and subjectivity" (p. 80). Fa'avae, in Fa'avae et al. (2016), presents reflections on *talanoa* and their experiences as a novice researcher critiquing and

analysing talanoa through the conditions of facilitation and positionality of the researcher/facilitator, drawing our attention to how these conditions can impact authentic generation of knowledge and sense-making.

Whilst we are spoilt for literature regarding talanoa in research practice, as co-authors located in design practice, we found talanoa to be more enabling, accessible, relational, and reflexive in comparison to critique. Traditionally, critique is used to unpack a student's iterative work towards a conceptual outcome for a design brief. For our co-authors who identify as taurira, many have felt anxious when presenting their work within a class where they represent as the minority. It does not make sense to be critiqued by those who do not share Moana-centric positionalities, particularly when many of our taurira have been encouraged to present forms of the Moana through their creative practice. To contrast this, it also feels rude for folks who do not have a Moana positionality to assume they have an authority to provide critique on work that is not for or of them. This leaves too much risk to potentially trample on the mana of our creative practices, especially when our creative practices are not just an extension of us in isolation, but of the intergenerational rhythms of conceptualisation that has contributed to our creative outcomes. Another barrier to critique, is its sense of time. The constructs of time within an institution limit how much critique a student will receive from their lecturer. This can risk cutting away the potential layers needed to arrive at useful points for a student's iterative process. As mentioned earlier, the practice of talanoa decolonises and indigenises time—time is not the centre but rather circulates the iterative conversations through talanoa.

For the conditions of talanoa to activate in a design space over practices of critique, the ethnic positionality of participants should be Moana-centric. For the co-authors who identify as Māori, there were intersections of relationality through the concept of wānanga (to gather and discuss), such as creating a site of sacredness to enable collective, iterative, safe, and reciprocal layers of discussion. For those of us who identify as Sāmoan, engaging kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) enables other modes of interaction that are unspoken, such as indications of a participant's gaze during conversation from other members, propelling another member to interject and speak on behalf of them, enacting feagaiga (brother-sister covenant) between taurira. Activating talanoa for every class helped the co-authors grow their forms of relationality and speak "critically yet harmoniously" (Lagi-Maama Academy and Consultancy, 2021, p. 111), being comfortable enough to disagree with members, question or propose their own questions without feeling whakama (shame) or causing offense. The most significant experiences throughout practicing talanoa in our classes, was the way taurira were able to consciously recognize extensions of relationality to their personal and aiga contexts. The co-authors discussed going home and asking family members about what we were discussing, interested to hear their perspective, or even sharing what we had

talanoa about. Some went further, seeing the value in spending time with aiga to unpack their gafa, further iterating their positionality towards their creative practice.

To Teu the Vā

We have discussed the concept of positionality and talanoa; however, a concept of value that connects the malaga of both is that of vā. In this discussion, we participate through the ethical relational conditions of vā. In a Fa'a Sāmoan context, the concept of vā is naturally embedded through our conventions and conditions of upbringing. We are taught to look after our relationships through fa'a aloalo (respect and care), also referred to as teu le vā (to look after the vā). The structural context of academia, however, encourages a practice of objectivity. Like the question above, it felt unnatural to articulate vā objectively, particularly when we all live experientially through spectrums of vā. Lopesi (2021) juggled a similar conundrum in her essay, "The Vā Between my Thighs" when her father stated, "Yeah, I know what teu le vā means. But you can't just have vā on its own, it's a part of something. It connects with what is on either side" (p.129). Essentially, vā is always in connection to something and someone. For co-author Vaima'a, the spatial context of academia presents a practice for objectifying and critiquing ideas. The same is alluded to in Lopesi's essay when they are attempting to review the literature on vā in academia, art, and research practices. Like Lopesi, our co-authors have also acquired some insight through their first-year critical studies course which introduces Wendt's (1996) writing on vā through his seminal essay, "Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body." Wendt defines Vā as "the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things." (Wendt, 1996, Vā section, para. 1).

Whilst the practice of academia attempts to manifest the concept of vā through writing and, in turn, provides us co-authors with some direction, it should be made clear that these depictions are not entirely adequate to the lived experiences that we embody. The key areas of critique to make conscious in this space, are the socio-cultural conditions that activate and attach to vā. For example, are we trying to articulate the concept of vā within our course to reveal parameters and guides for engaging correctly? Instead, it made sense to centre and acknowledge our socio-cultural conditions that activate relationality through talanoa and positionality. Vā instead is the conduit to these concepts and to some degree, expresses the forms of relational ethics needed to malaga (journey) with each other, and the 'upega (net) of literature we engaged with in this course.

Being brought up through design education normalizes the practice of critique, not just with each other and our practices, but also with the literature of art and design models, readings, lectures, and so forth. These institutional conditions, however, become questionable when engaging with literature that is of, by, and for people of the Pacific. The socio-cultural conditions of *vā* come into play when we are in *talanoa* about a Pacific writer and their thoughts. Who are we to critique their work when we have not had the chance to *talanoa* with them? Instead, we take to unpacking their positionality; perhaps they are related to a distant cousin, or we have heard about their ideas and activism through extended *aiga* who speak highly of them. These are sacred commodities of relational value that come into play when the literature is on the other end of *vā*. Wendt's (1996) description of *vā* as unifying might be useful for the contextual conditions he was authoring towards post-colonialism and *tatau* but, for the conditions of our academic course, *vā* becomes the ethical conditions for engaging with the 'upega of pacific arts and practices, encouraging us to be critically harmonious in continuity (Lagi-Maama Academy and Consultancy, 2021). *Vā*, therefore, becomes the spatial journey between our activations of *talanoa* and the shape shifter of our positionalities.

Reflecting on the meaning of *va*, signalled the need to include the positionality of the people and places that afford the ethical conditions of *vā*, and the activation of *talanoa* to develop critical layers of sense-making and reflexiveness.

Navigating an 'Upega of Literature

We began this course with a range of formats to navigate the literature. The intent for presenting a range of literature was to reflect a range of accessible learning modes raised by *tauirā*. Traditionally, a series of readings would be presented through the classes; however, given some of our *tauirā* authors and our anxiety around writing, it made sense to present not just academic writing, but formats that are presented vocally and through moving image. The contextual intentions for the literature were to present a spectrum of ways the three concepts of *talanoa*, positionality, and *vā* would be presented, unpacked, and practiced. These were directly and indirectly explained in the literature gathered. This was curated for our *tauirā* authors to help widen our critical thinking throughout the course and in relationship to our creative practices. A key reading that helped mirror the gaps we experienced in the design space and helped activate an 'upega of literature was an essay produced by the late Sylvia Harris (1953-2011), a Black American designer who pioneered community driven social design practices. In her essay, "Searching for a Black Aesthetic in American Graphic Design: Sylvia Harris" (Harris & Heller, 2022), Harris presents marginalized experiences of Black designers in design education and the risks of assimilation and imitation for Black designers to survive in a space that is white dominated. Instead, she argues the need

for Black designers to have space to find rootedness in their culture. One way she activated this was through looking outside of design as a canon:

We must also look outside the Design disciplines to the performing arts and to fine arts movements, such as Afri-Cobra, which have based visual explorations on African and jazz rhythms. We can study these disciplines characteristic Black expression (improvisation, distortion, polyrhythms, exaggeration, call-and-response) that can be translated into graphic form. Black Design traditions must be pieced together from a variety of sources to make a complete canon of Black expression." (Harris & Heller, 2022, p. 28–29).

Harris' action towards looking to other disciplines indicates the need to illustrate how different worlds of culture within Black contexts can underpin and influence design expressions. For this course, we could have focused predominantly on existing design practitioners of Moana contexts; however, we know there is a wealth of Pacific scholarship, art, and engagements that have taken place globally. Therefore, it was important to refocus our lens to examine how our cultural wealth became an important expression of a Moana-centric design canon.

Our academic course took place in two parts. Weeks 1 to 6 focused on reading, listening, and talking. The remaining 6 weeks involved movement, engagement outside of the classroom through galleries and a conference setting. The most popular discussions raised in this course were those presenting inquiries related to positionality activated through talanoa and enacted relational ethics of *vā*. We discuss some of these below.

We listened to podcasts that unpacked the concept of diaspora. Season 2 Episode 1 of the Deep Pacific Podcast, which featured people from a range of cultural contexts living in diaspora, asked the question: *What does being diasporic Pasifika mean to me?* (Kalani, 2021). For our Māori co-authors, it had only occurred to them that Māori could live in diaspora after listening to one interviewee living in Australia who shared their yearning for their *tūrangawaewae* (a place you have kinship to through whakapapa and as *mana whenua*) abroad. The In*ter*is*land collective produced video recorded talanoa between creative participants of Aotearoa and Moana contexts via Zoom calls. Episode 4, titled "ReMoanafication—We End at the Beginning" (Davis et al., 2021) shows Jaimie Waititi, Ariana Davis, and Jessica Palalagi digitally traversing what they refer to as *timespace/place* by reclaiming narratives and exploring both individual and collective connections across the globe. But one text that brought the intersectional paths to the surface was an essay produced by the late Teresia Teaiwa (1968–2017) titled, "Because 'I Wuz Hia": A Message for Lulu, the Emerging Arkheion" that featured in the first issue of *Marinade*, a journal focused on Moana art in Aotearoa. The essay

was a response to a short film produced by queer Fijian Artist, Luisa Tora called, *Home Videos* (2013). Teaiwa (2022) opens with the following:

Lulu wants to create an archive. An archive of Māori and Pacific lesbians who live and love outside of central Auckland. Now. Lulu is thinking of the future. When Māori and Pacific communities in the future might want to know about all of their ancestors. When New Zealanders as a nation might be ready to acknowledge and embrace the historical contributions and experiences of all of their fellow citizens. Can we Trust google to do all our remembering for us? Can we Trust Archives New Zealand to do it? National Library of New Zealand? Auckland Museum? Te Papa? Lulu thinks not. (p. 34)

A range of anchor points enabled layers to our talanoa that helped extend our understanding of vā through the following points:

1. The potential to connect with a Pacific studies scholar who passed away in 2017 through a nonacademic essay (yet published in an academic journal).
2. The use of writing to reveal intersectional voices within an Aotearoa Pacific diaspora setting—this being "Lulu" and their takatāpui (Indigenous queer) context.
3. The positioning of theme and context. Whilst there are Pacific themes, this is set in Aotearoa, more specifically outside of central Auckland, one of the largest populations of Pacific Peoples in the southern hemisphere.
4. And, a critical questioning of Eurocentric conventions that hold histories. "*Can we trust google to do all our remembering for us?*" followed by mentions of institutional archives, pointing out the power dynamics of representation for Pacific peoples, and the lack of intersectional representation.

Navigating the literature and talking about those that garnered attention not only broadened our critical thinking but also how we make conscious our vā to authors, speakers, artists, and how the conventions of the literature influenced engagement. A comment was made regarding how the format of literature can enable the presence of mauri (life force) and the care we might enact through vā when generating critical discussion about their intentions and purpose.

During our last 6 weeks of the course, there were some key exhibitions we decided to visit. *Matarau* (Te Ao, 2022), *Tai Timu! Tai Pari! The tide ebbs, the tide flows* (Te Ao, 2022), *At thresholds* (Lawson, 2022), and *Making monomono: Ane's pani-style* (Pahulu & Yates, 2022). The exhibitions enabled our talanoa to unpack a range of positionalities that were not restricted to the artists themselves. We developed talanoa regarding how practice was positioned, how each artist brought their entire whakapapa with them, not

just through their bios but through aspects of the works. Although Te Whare Toi exhibitions were presented separately, a key theme that brought them together was the positioning of their Māori and Pacific cultural contexts. *Matarau* featured six Māori artists that embodied whakapapa as forms of art practice in response to socio-political narratives of Te Ao Māori. *Tai Timu! Tai Pari! The tide ebbs, the tide flows* presented films by the such as Janet Lilo (Tainui, Ngāpuhi, Sāmoa, Niue), Neihana Gordon–Stables (Ngāti Kurī), Jamie Berry (Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki, Rongowhakaata, Ngāti Porou, Ngā Puhi), Natasha Matila-Smith (Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Hine, Sāmoa, Pākehā), Layne Waerea (Te Arawa, Ngati Kahungunu), Ana Iti (Te Rarawa), Jeremy Leatinu'u (Ngāti Maniapoto, Sāmoa: Safune, Pu'apu'a, Vailoa, Fatusi, Safotu, Safotulafai), and Nova Paul (Ngāpuhi). Each artist spoke to their Indigenous positionality, critiquing their representation in film via issues of gender politics, environmentalism, language revival, and so on. *At Thresholds*, also featuring Māori and Pacific artists, went even further by attempting to reorientate the centre of positionality beyond our human parameters evoking a pluriverse of different life forms on land, under water, and of our relationships to them. Emily Parr's, *Flukeprint* (2021) evoked discussion among us, recognizing the ocean as a living archive for generational rhythm, mapping our histories across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa.

Whilst the exhibitions at Te Whare Toi (City gallery, Wellington, New Zealand) presented levels of endless discussions of artists who have gained space and time to critically unpack their practices through formal training, *Making monomono: Ane's pani-style* contrasted this. This exhibition was featured at Toi Pōneke Arts Centre (Wellington, New Zealand), a smaller and less loaded gallery space that is more community orientated and enables more access to a range of artists. The creative force behind this exhibition, Ane Nanasi Pahulu, is a renowned figure in the Tongan community for their innovative patchwork style of monomono pani (sewn quilts and bedspreads). Unlike the artists in the exhibitions at Te Whare Toi, Ane acquired her practice through other women in the community. The motivation for their craft was to serve church elders with warm blankets. The guiding values for their practice was to serve, 'a'ahi ki he kau vaivai (giving to those in need, that's your service). Over time, Ane's quilts have been acquired and gifted as koloa (treasures) for special occasions unique to Tongan diaspora in Aotearoa (Pahulu & Yates, 2022). Our taura co-authors were able to meet Ane in person during a lunchtime talk at Toi Poneke. We felt warmly welcomed, and almost at home with the surrounding Tongan music, and the presence of Ane's family. Looking back, many enjoyed connecting through Ane's work, one co-author sharing how the setting and artist felt familiar to the communities they are acquainted with, like they were seeing someone who shared the same level of respect and qualities as an elder in their family. These differences helped to draw our attention to how positionality can be shaped through the physical spaces we are brought up through and participate in.

To finish off, we attended the 2022 Pasifika Creative Arts Summit. The purpose for the summit was to feed back into a new strategy that would serve the Pacific Arts world in Aotearoa. A three-day event held at Te Papa Tongarewa Museum with various workshops, talanoa, and so on. We found ourselves listening to a plethora of views, some aspirational, and some harmful. The purpose for attending this summit was not to assert ourselves as people who could feed back into the strategy but open our eyes and ears to other Pasifika creatives that had travelled across Aotearoa to contribute. It was important for our taura co-authors to learn that Pacific peoples in creative practice are diverse, political, and radically committed to measuring their outcomes through collective impact. The summit tested our relational ethics, particularly on discussions some of us disagreed with, recognizing our movement towards trusted forms of reflexivity.

Ending at the Beginning

Towards the final week of our course, co-authors Harper-Siolo, Hemi, Vaima'a, Gibbs, and Te'o concluded with this:

Developing through 12 weeks of talanoa surrounding critical and creative discourse on Moana Methodologies, it was natural for a creative collective output to form. This has manifested as a series of prompts to engage in talanoa, breaking down hierarchical structures before they are brought into the space.

To us, talanoa is a space where we are open to express ourselves, and our ideas, free of judgement. Talanoa has been the main drive for our kāhui (group) in developing and understanding concepts of vā, talanoa, Indigenous research, discourse and knowledge systems, and Te Tiriti principles we uphold as we create, grow, and learn in an Aotearoa space. We, as a collective, agree that this can only truly be achieved when hierarchical structures are omitted from the space for which talanoa is to be held. We were able to achieve this in a space created for us as Māori and Pasifika (3rd year) creatives studying at Toi Rauwhārangī (College of Creative Arts), Pukeahu campus.

Vā was central in the development of this taonga (treasure), prompting the questions in accordance to situating our positionality within a collective setting. We interpret vā, or teu le vā as caring for the space between, not a space that separates but forms relationships and weaves us together. Vā, just as whakapapa and gafa, traverses time: past, past, present, and future. Vā cannot exist within the singular but requires the between.

Our taonga was created not to take place or dictate talanoa, but to shape our initial vā, interactions, and relationships. We want to create a safe space where vulnerability is not dangerous, where we can share our who and our why to

tautoko (support) and tautua our cultural journeys.

Figure 2.1

Taonga by Lottie Harper-Siolo, Samuel Hāmuera Hemi, Pelerosse Vaima’a, Kristina Gibbs. and Alex Te’o (2022)

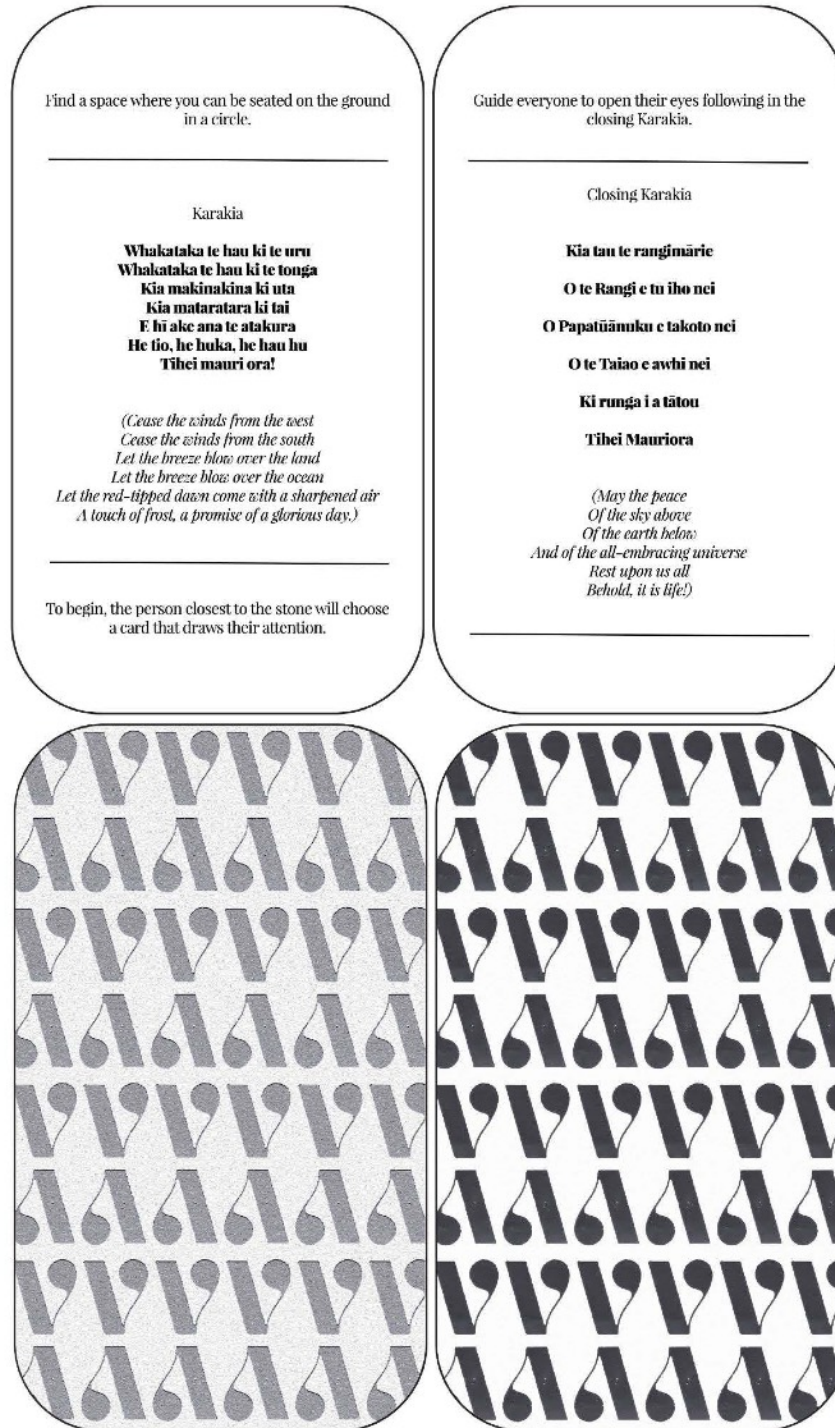


Figure 2.2

Taonga by Lottie Harper-Siolo, Samuel Hāmuera Hemi, Pelerosé Vaima'a, Kristina Gibbs, and Alex Te'o-Faumuina (2022)

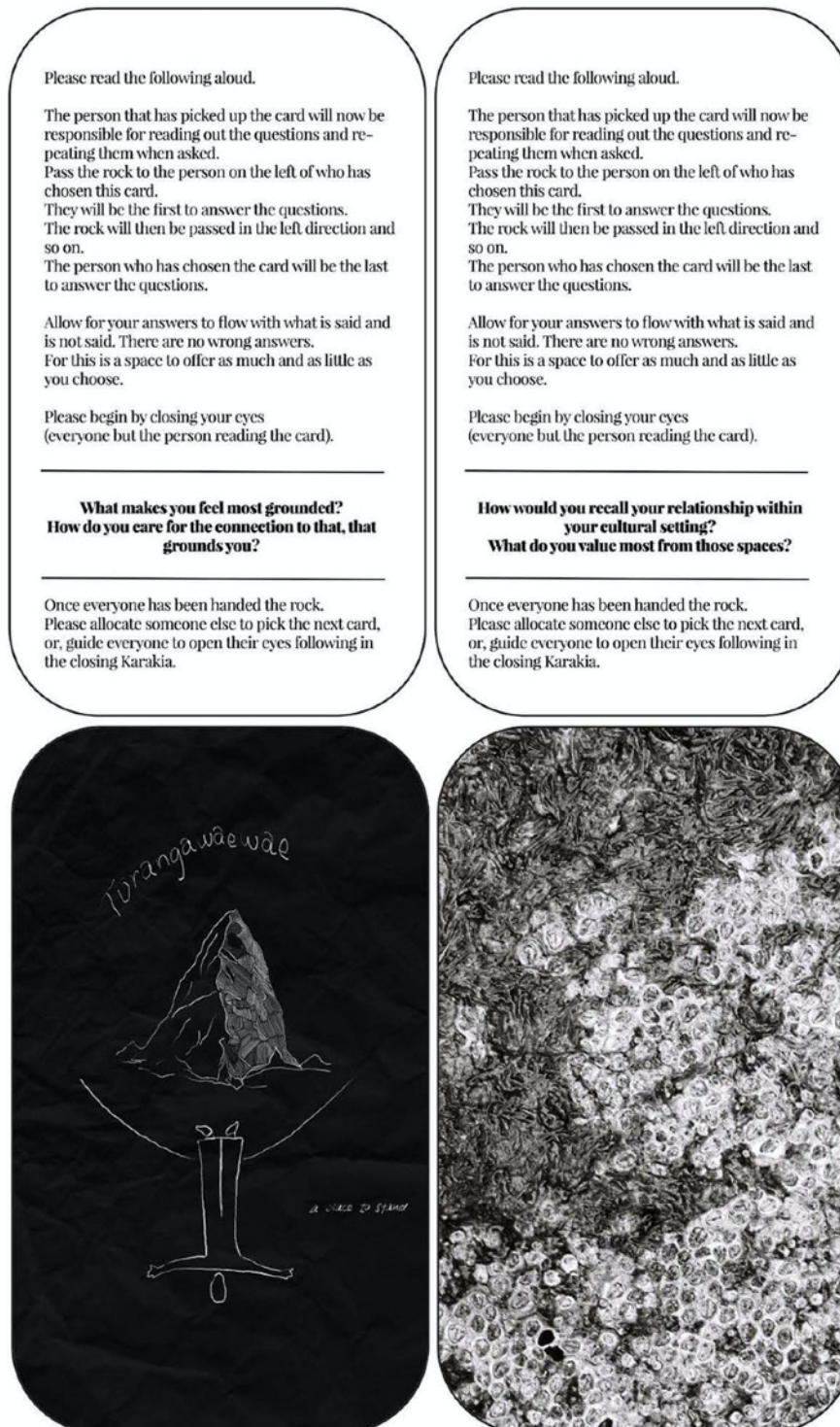
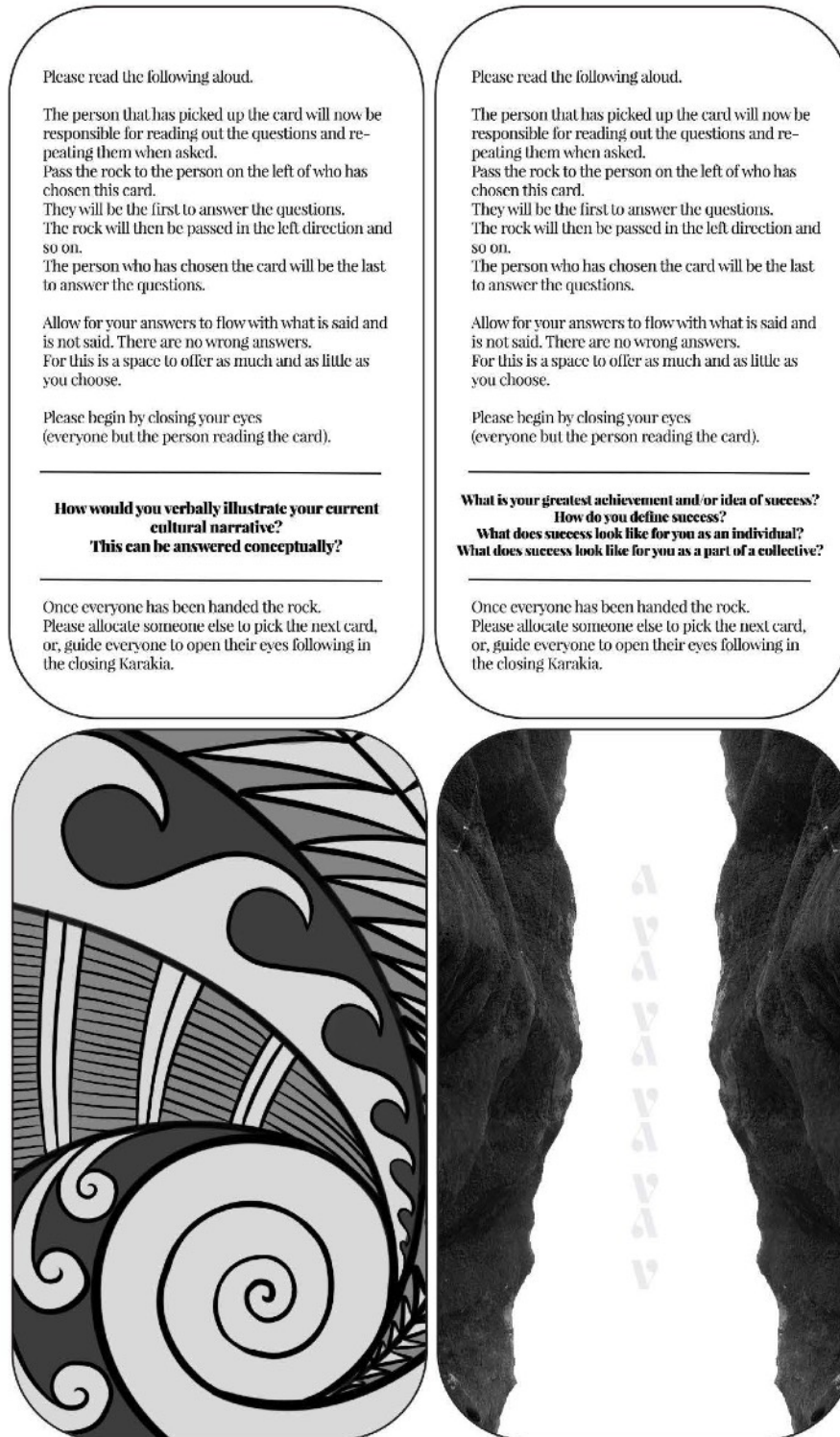


Figure 2.3

Taonga by Lottie Harper-Siolo, Samuel Hāmuera Hemi, Pelerosse Vaima'a, Kristina Gibbs, and Alex Te'o-Faumuina (2022)



The concluding kōrero (discussion) from our taura co-authors and the Taonga featured above are only ending at the beginning (Davis et al., 2021). It begins by opening with karakia (prayer), setting the cultural conditions and care. At the centre for people participating, a large pōhatu (rock) sits. Everyone can be seated around the pōhatu. Its presence is to help anchor and provide an organic material form for interacting with during the engagement of the taonga prompts. When a card is picked up by a member, it will feature some instructions for the person to facilitate, involving the passing of the pōhatu. The pōhatu provides a weight that involves everyone's energy and, as it is passed to participants on their turn when responding to the prompt, it gains warmth, mauri that can be felt and shared with the next person. The prompts are based on values that taura co-authors had identified as common discussions during their 12-week talanoa and were keen to enable this through others who could join. When the time is right, a karakia is provided to close at the end. Each card features imagery collectively designed by taura and in relation to the prompt featured.

Migrating Beyond the Academic Course of Moana Methodologies

Post generation of the first draft of this article, our taura co-authors felt compelled to share further reflections this academic course had on their creative practice.

Co-Author Taura Charlotte Harper-Siolo

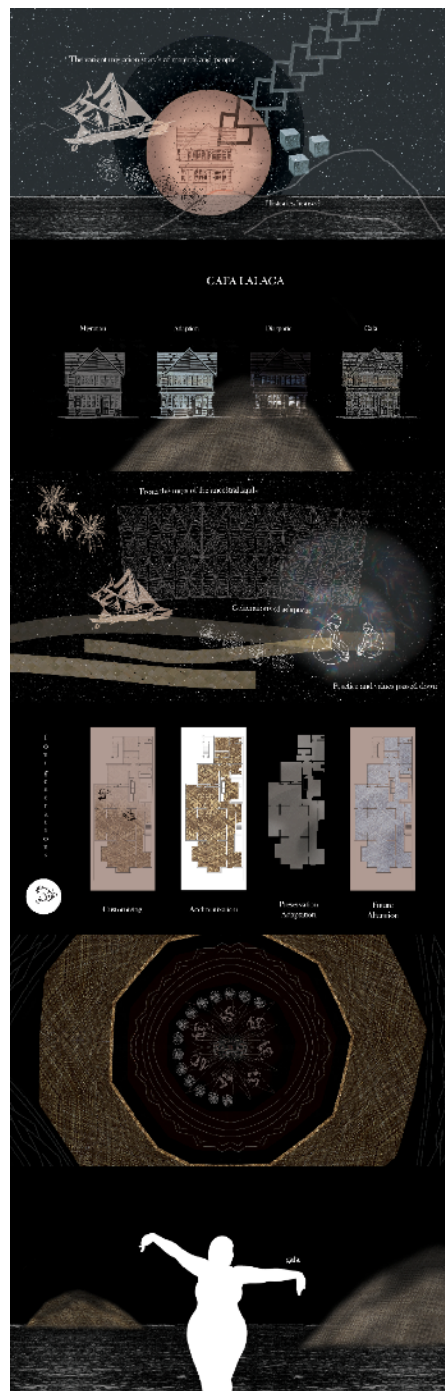
During my participation in the Moana Methodologies course, I wrote a reflective paper on what it means to me being Pasifika (diasporic Sāmoan in Aotearoa). I referred to being Pasifika as meaning not only being an individual but also part of a collective. For myself, acknowledging my heritage represents ties to the past, present, and future relationships of my bloodline and connections to others that can relate. Reflecting on the discourse explored within Moana Methodologies (vā, talanoa, relational ethics) enabled us to affirm methods that come naturally in the process of creative dialogue and relational exchange yet are too often not accepted in institutional spaces. Figure 3 features an example of my work that has been informed by the academic course Moana Methodologies.

Throughout my honors year of study, majoring in Spatial Design, I have been developing an experience that explores the migration stories of laufala (Pandanus mat) and its people. The design draws upon my personal experiences as a diasporic afakasi Samoan and those of my family. The narratives take place within a century-old colonial home that was once owned by my grandfather and father. Through this project, I aim to highlight events that occur on fala mats, which represent the stories material culture hold within Samoan communities. These mats play a crucial role in caring for the space

and hosting various events. They embody the intricate relationship between materials and people, migration stories, and how they connect the islands seated across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa. The art of lalaga (weaving), which involves weaving together tangible materials, also serves as a methodology that I am using to weave together talanoa, vā, and relational ethics. The cultivation of lalaga is a way to preserve Pacific practices and values while also caring for others within the community.

Figure 3

Generations of adaption [Digital visualization] by Charlotte Harper-Siolo (2023)



Co-Author Taura Samuel Hāmuera Dunstall**Figure 4**

Mātai Mana Motuhake [Digital visualization]



Note: Samuel Hāmuera Dunstall (2022). Finalist for 2022 Best Design Awards, Designers Institute of New Zealand.

The example work, *Mātai Mana Motuhake* uses whenua to whenua materials and is programmed around enabling the individual to rediscover the narratives of their homelands through waiata (song), storytelling and making. Designing primarily through a Te Ao Māori lens with understandings of the weft and weave of knowledge from across the Pacific allows kōrero to flow through my design process. While I work toward kaupapa (values) that uplifts me and upholds my own mana, the goal remains to gift back to my own iwi (tribal affiliation) my mātauranga (knowledge) and the gifts of knowledge I have been given through my time at university. My mahi (work) holds emphasis on mātauranga Māori and how it influences our use of contemporary technologies and understandings of material systems and spatial design. Using

Indigenous forms of knowledge sharing through kōrerorero, wānanga, and talanoa across Moana methodologies has enabled the conceptualisation of this thinking to deepen and draw links between the knowledge of our tīpuna (ancestors), across Te Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa and its place in our contemporary practice.

Co-Author Taura Pelero Vaima'a

Figure 5

Sefe le Manumea [Digital embroidery textiles] by Pelero Vaima'a (2023)



Figure 5 demonstrates my final samples from the Embroidered Textiles academic course elective I recently completed. As part of the brief, I had to investigate a threat to Te Taiao (nature) using digital embroidery. Naturally, I gravitated towards investigating the manumea or tooth-billed pigeon bird of Sāmoa. Through using the Moana methodologies of talanoa and vā, I was able to research the importance of manumea. They are the only living species from the dodo bird and are only found in Sāmoa. Manumea are threatened by predators such as rats, pigs, and hunters who shoot them by mistake when pigeon hunting. My project aimed to educate and bring awareness to the beautiful manumea who are on the brink of extinction. Through digital embroidery I was able to use techniques such as satin stitch, complex fill, pattern stitch, run, beam, and radial fill stitches to complete my final samples featured in Figure 5.

Co-Author Taura Kristina Gibbs

Throughout my time at Massey university as a wāhine Māori, even within a large room of people it was easy to feel excluded from a concept and style of education that was often innately Pākeha. Prior to entering this space, I had not encountered a space within the university institution that allowed me the simple yet pivotal tools of time, space, empathy, and trust to truly allow inspiration and innovation to flow through me in a culturally safe manner. The relationships formed with my peers throughout this paper following concepts of talanoa and vā are irreplaceable and to me are now some of the most valuable experiences and memories I will take with me into my future career. As a conceptual design major, prior to this paper I assumed I would just head into film and animation, but now I see various paths outside of film that could benefit by interweaving my visual storytelling practice. The positive expansion of my creative practice as well as my ability to expand my own cultural support network is in recognition of the safety and aroha (love) I experienced within this space.

Figure 6

Character visualization of Harley [Digital visualization] by Kristina Gibbs (2022)



Figure 6 was created for my major project which was happening in conjunction with Moana Methodologies at the time. The concept behind my animation was two Indigenous communities living in separation upon one secluded island that was facing a climate crisis of rising water levels. Harley, the main protagonist featured in Figure 6, goes on a journey to solve the climate crisis happening in her world and rediscovers the secrets of her culture's past and reconnects the two communities together, bringing harmony to the island. At the time of making this I was not consciously aware I was creating a concept parallel to what I was unpacking within my own life regarding feeling cultural division or as an outsider. I can now see, through the positive contributions this paper brought to my self-confidence, that I began naturally evolving my creative practice and allowing myself to create the stories and narratives most important to me: that being from an Indigenous perspective, for Indigenous benefit.

Co-Author Taura Alexander Te'o-faumuina

Figure 7

Digital artwork by Alexander Te'o-Faumuina (2022)



The creative expressions I bring forth are not mine alone, they represent the culmination of ancestral and familial support spanning generations. I aspire to serve as a pivotal influence for those grappling with self-doubt and uncertainty, fostering empowerment and self-assuredness. Central to my artistic approach is the seamless integration of Indigenous wisdom. This principle is ingrained in my work, coming from talanoa with my matua o matua and kōrero with peers utilizing Moana methodologies. These interactions have significantly enriched my understanding of self-identity and the intrinsic value of my creative contributions.

Concluding Reflections

Co-Author Kaiako Sonya Elspeth Withers

The pōhatu that featured as part of the activation of the Taonga (Figure 2) produced by the taurira featured above, portrays an interesting position to reflect upon. It was a rock that used to sit in the corridor and was used each week to hold the doors open for taurira because the operations staff kept forgetting to confirm their swipe card access (I counted seven different emails sent to them requesting them to adjust this). Someone had taken to drawing patterns over it prior to our use and at one point during the academic course it had disappeared and then reappeared a few weeks later; perhaps because word got around that it was being used to let our taurira in. Despite its functional and silent presence, it is interesting to reflect on how the pōhatu has been ever-present and enabling some form of access: wedged in a door, sitting to the side, listening to our talanoa and hyena laughs, the waft of food floating over its head. It seems honourable to be placed at the centre of this taonga and then passed around, acquiring the warmth and mauri of everyone sharing their contributions to the prompts. Pōhatu play an infinite role in Indigenous histories. Their silent steadfast nature and their dormant forms remind us of their ability to accrue time, hold presence now and in the future. Like Harris' aspirations for dismantling the Eurocentric design canon, the pōhatu reminds us that "[t]he designers of this new generation are not isolated. They are working within a long tradition that, though they may not be aware of it, stretches across the century" (Harris & Heller, 2022, p. 32).

Glossary

Te Reo Māori (Māori Language):

Aotearoa (New Zealand)

aroha (love)

iwi (tribal affiliation)

kāhui (group, flock, heard, cluster)

kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face).

Kaupapa (values)

karakia (prayer)

kōrero (discussion)

mahi (work)

mana (power, authority)

mātauranga (knowledge)

mauri (life force)

Moana-centric (identities with lineage of the Pacific, including Aotearoa, New Zealand)

pōhatu (rock)

Pukeahu (National War memorial park that College of Creative Arts campus is located on)

takatāpui (Indigenous queer)

tangata tiriti (People of the treaty who do not identify as Māori/Tangata whenua)

Tangata whenua (Māori, people of the land)

Taonga (treasure)

tauirā (student/s)

tautoko (support)

Te Moana-nui-a-kiwa (Pacific Ocean, Oceania).

Te Taiāo (nature)

tīpuna (ancestors)

tino rangatiratanga (agency and leadership of Māori)

Toi Rauwhārangī (College of Creative Arts)

tūrangawaewae (a place you have kinship to through whakapapa and as mana whenua)

waiata (song)

wānanga (to gather and discuss)

whakama (shame)

whakapapa (lineage, genealogy, history)

Gagana Sāmoa (Sāmoan language):

afakasi (Sāmoan and European heritage)

aiga (extended family)

fa'a aloalo (respect and care)
 fa'alavelave (family events; weddings, funerals, birthdays)
 Fa'a Sāmoa (Sāmoan way/culture and traditions)
 feagaiga (brother-sister covenant)
 gafa (lineage, genealogy, history)
 lalaga (to weave)
 laufala (Pandanus mat)
 lotu (church)
 luau (cooked taro leaves)
 malaga (journey)
 Moana-centric (identities with lineage of the Pacific, including Aotearoa, New Zealand)
 Pālagi (White or non Sāmoan)
 pisupo (corned beef)
 tautua (service)
 sapaui (chop suey)
 suafa'i (banana sago pudding)
 Tagata o le Moana (Peoples of the Pacific)
 teu le vā (to look after the vā)
 vā (space between, relationality)
 'upenga (net)

Lea faka-Tonga (Tongan Language):

koloa (treasures)
 monomono pani (sewn quilts and bedspreads)
 talanoa (moana-centric way of collectively talking through reflexivity and reciprocity)

Acknowledgements

This article is dedicated to the successes of our taura co-authors and their Moana-centric design practices.

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