

Ofo Hake: Koe Ngatu Teuteu ‘o ‘Akesa mo ‘Isileli Fifita

17 January – 18 April 2020

This special project features ngatu (painted bark cloth tapestries) created in Tonga, Aotearoa New Zealand and New Caledonia by artist and curator Ruha Fifita with friends and family. The works represent the critical role of fibre arts in Pacific culture, ceremony and community life, as well as honouring intergeneration learning. ‘Ofo Hake’ evokes a sense of awaking to respond to something new – an awareness embedded in the spiritual and material process of making the ngatu – and the narrative expression, knowledge and faith gained from Fifita’s grandparents ‘Akesa and ‘Isileli Fifita.

The first work, ‘Lototō’ (2016) – a Tongan word suggesting values of humility and generosity – speaks to our relationship and interactions with the natural environment. Made with pigments from Vava’u and Ile Ouen, it is based on stories, legends and songs associated with the ancestral migration of whales.

The second work, 'Koe Ngoue Manongi (The Fragrant Garden)' (2019), reflects on the bonds that unite extended families, as well as the way these relationships nurture levels of unity that extend amongst its members.

Contributors: Ruha Fifita, 'Akesa Fifita, Toa Misela, Paea Fifita, John Misela, Mele'ana Jones, Sunia Fifita, Lyndsey Ula, Lindsay Fifita, Angela Loza, 'Akesa Misela, Mele Misela, Sinovi Loza, Ebonie Fifita Laufilitoga Maka, Yvane Fifita, Minaira Fifita, Nisyola Fifita, Steev Laufilitoga Maka, Vitolio Laufilitoga Maka, Tiana Griffin, and Latu Fifita

He'ikai ke tau fakamavahe'i 'a e loto 'o e tangata mei hono 'ātakai 'i tu'a pea tau pehē ko 'ene liliu pē ha taha 'i he ongo me'a ni pea 'e lelei 'a e me'a kotoa. 'Oku mo'ui fakataha 'a e tangata mo e māmani. 'Oku takao 'e he mo'ui 'i loto 'a e tangata 'a e 'ātakai, pea 'oku o'i lahi 'e he 'ātakai 'a e mo'ui 'a e tangata. 'Oku na fengāue'aki pea ko e liliu kotoa 'oku tu'uloa 'i he mo'ui 'a e tangata, ko e ola ia 'o 'ena fepoupouaki.

We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions.

– Shoghi Effendi