



## **MICHEL TUFFERY**

*Untitled 4 piece panel work, each panel 250 x 250mm in size.  
Total size of work 505 x 1320 mm.*

*Medium is Acrylic on stretched canvas, painted in 2005, signed M. Tuffery.*

This work was a continuation from Tuffery's exhibition held at Williams Gallery in September 2004. In this work Tuffery continues to explore the written words of Anne Salmond & Michael King and the interaction between Cook and his South Seas voyage companions.

"This body of works continues the visual narration of my readings of : *E.H. McCormick's* book *Omai : Pacific Envoy*, *Michael King: The Penguin History of New Zealand* and *Anne Salmond's The Trial of the Cannibal Dog: Captain Cook in the South Seas*.

The dissection of the eclectic array of characters and the inevitable consequences of two cultures coming together are central to this exhibition, foremost is the *tahu'a* (translates High Priest) Tupaia who left Tahiti with Cook on his first voyage, acting as an Interpreter and somewhat of a Cultural Attaché. The relationships between Tupaia, Joseph Banks and Sydney Parkinson was of an intellectual nature and is where the visual commentary begins.

Parkinson and Banks both received *ariori* tatau (tattoo) while in Tahiti at the same time Tupaia began sketching and painting while naïve he documented contemporary events of his time."

*Michel Tuffery, September 2004*

Michel Tuffery completed a Diploma in Fine Arts (Honours) at the School of Fine Arts, Otago Polytechnic, 1989 and attended the School of Fine Arts at the University of Manoa, Hawaii, 1990. Tuffery has held Artist in Residences widely through-out New Zealand and Australia at community and Institution levels along with his participation in numerous International Exhibitions, Symposiums and Workshops. His artwork is held in a number of significant private and public collections globally.

Tuffery's artwork explores the positioning of the Pacific way of life in terms of point of origin, migration, cultural beliefs and the hybridisation of cultures infused through the current globalisation trend. His artworks reference the unique and rich cultural fabric of New Zealand and the far reaching role it plays in the wider Pacific region. Tuffery's interplay of iconography are abstractly based around Polynesian and Melanesian tapa cloth, tatau, navigation and ceremonial symbolism.

Renown as a printmaker and sculptor Tuffery has developed his art practise towards Performance, Sound and Installation artwork. Regardless of medium his artwork often incorporates a political comment or observation and focus on aspects of the Pacific not typically portrayed and the different adaptations of Pacific Island people according to whether their experience is Urban or Island-based.

## **Solo Exhibitions**

**2005** Cookies Portraits, The Artists Room, Dunedin, N.Z

**2004** New Works, Williams Gallery, Petone, Wellington  
Riria.Lili.Riri, The Lane Gallery, Auckland, N.Z

**2003** Tui, Tui, Tui, Williams Gallery, Petone, Wellington, N.Z  
Animated Effigy, Mackay Art Gallery, North Queensland, Australia

**2002** Mata Mata, Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland, N.Z  
Asiasi Telei, Salamander Gallery, The Arts Center, Christchurch, N.Z  
Kawhai, Gallery 482, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia  
Uma, Milford Gallery, Auckland, N.Z

**2001** Asiasi, Janne Land Gallery, Wellington, N.Z

**1998** Recent Works, Hogarth Gallery, Sydney, Australia  
Upeti Block Installation, Cairns Regional Gallery, Cairns, Queensland, Australia  
New Works on Paper, Portfolio Gallery, Auckland, N.Z

**1997** New Works, Centre for Contemporary Art, Christchurch, N.Z  
New Works, MacMillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, NZ  
New Works, Muka Studio, Auckland, N.Z  
New Works, Janne Land Gallery, Wellington, N.Z  
Pacific Diary, Hogarth Gallery, Sydney, Australia

**1996** Povi Tau Vaga Wellington City Gallery, Wellington, N.Z

## **Group Exhibitions**

**2005** Brian Strong, Michel Tuffery New Zealand Art Exhibition, The Art House, Singapore  
Big Fish, Centre of Contemporary Art, Christchurch, N.Z

**2004** Exit, Studio of Contemporary Art, Auckland, N.Z  
Board Art, Centre of Contemporary Art, Christchurch, N.Z  
Summer, The Artists Room, Dunedin, N.Z  
Sculpture on Shore, Fort Takapuna Historic Reserve, Devonport, Auckland, N.Z  
Surveillance, Studio of Contemporary Art, Auckland, N.Z  
Inaugural Exhibition, The Artists Room, Dunedin, NZ  
Contemporary Art, Williams Gallery, Petone, N.Z  
Paradise Now, Asia Society, New York, USA

**2003** Signs and Wonders he Tohu he Ohore, Te Papa Gallery, N.Z  
Voyages, The Lane Gallery, Auckland, N.Z  
20:20 Sight Pacific, CoCa, Christchurch – ‘*Touring Exhibition*’ N.Z

**2002** Islands in the Sun, Adams Art Gallery, Victoria University, Wellington, N.Z  
Chosen, Milford Gallery, Auckland, N.Z  
Contemporary Pacific Art, Williams Gallery, Petone, Wellington, N.Z  
Pasifika, The Lane Gallery, Auckland, N.Z



**Povi Series**  
Steel Rod, Cornbeef Tins, Rivets, Polyurethane  
580 x 230 x 455mm

Disapora – Art of the Asia Pacific, Portfolio Gallery, Auckland, NZ  
From, Milford Gallery, Dunedin, N.Z  
Mana Pacifika, Te Wa Gallery, Wanganui, NZ

**2001** Fourth Australian Print Exhibition & Symposium, NGA, Canberra, Australia  
Out of the Blue, Hawkes Bay Exhibitions Centre, Hastings, N.Z  
Islands in the Sun, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia  
Fanstastic Fish, Manawatu Museum, Palmerston North, N.Z

**2000** Tooth & Claw, Auckland Art Gallery, N.Z  
Annual Print Show, Marshall Seifert Gallery, Dunedin, N.Z  
Art Pasifika, The Lane Gallery, Auckland, N.Z



**Cook's Translator**  
**Acrylic on Tin Plate**  
**775 x 230mm**

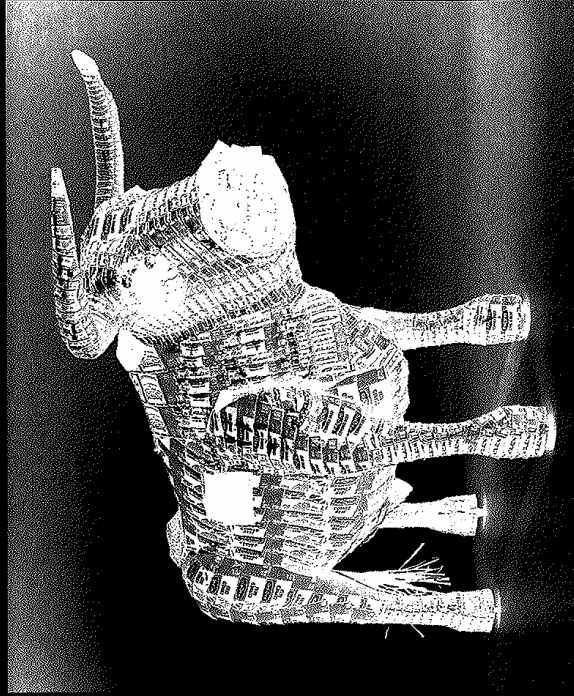


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During his 'typically Kiwi' childhood in Wellington, Tuffery was surrounded by stories about and images of his mother's homeland, Samoa. His first visit there, at the age of 10, had a huge impact on him but it wasn't until he attended art school in Dunedin that isolated from his Polynesian community, its values and attitudes, he began to examine his Samoa/Cook Island/Tahitian identity and to research the motifs and myths of his mother's ancestral home. However, although it is from his Samoan heritage that he draws much of the symbolism and inspiration for his art, Tuffery was equally influenced by his stepfather, a patent attorney who regularly brought home his clients' inventions for the family to investigate. When he later worked for a time in his stepfather's office, his eyes were opened to the complexity of design detail behind these prototypes. Tuffery spent many summers in the shadow of Mr. Taranaki at the isolated family homestead, relishing the natural surroundings which nurtured his interest in plants, animals and landscape, and being fascinated by his grandfather's experimental breeding of new types of lilies. It was at the Covey-Brewster Art Gallery during one of the family's infrequent visits to New Plymouth that Tuffery first saw and was awestruck by the kinetic artwork of Lon Lye.

Tuffery travelled again to Samoa in 1987 to learn about the local culture and art forms, and to pursue his particular interest in pre-European *sapo* (printed barkcloth) and tattoo designs, local legends and Oceanic art. He returned with rich imagery for the woodblock and lithographic prints that he produced on *apa* cloth and handmade paper the year after his graduation. Exhibited as 'Fa'a Samoa: Fa'a Samoa', these works featured the marine life, flora and fauna of the Pacific Islands, and the repetitive patterns found in Polynesian tattooing (page 60).

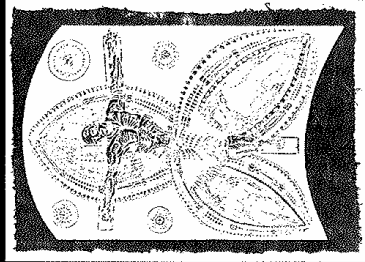
Whether a carving, print, painting, sculpture or drawing, Tuffery's works often incorporate a political comment or observation and focus on aspects of the Pacific not typically portrayed. The messages he seeks to convey are deeper than the bright colours or the humorous mechanisms he employs. His concern for the environment is evident in works such as *O le faia Lotoa Ma le Lotoa/The Hike and Deep Ocean*, 1997 (see artist's photo above), which reflects his love of the ocean, and his anti-driftnet series and works about the taro blight in Samoa.



Paul Christofide, 1999.  
Corried beef fish, aluminium recycled corrugated pipes, reeds, 1760 x 3110 x 1100 mm.  
Collection of Robert McDougall Art Gallery.

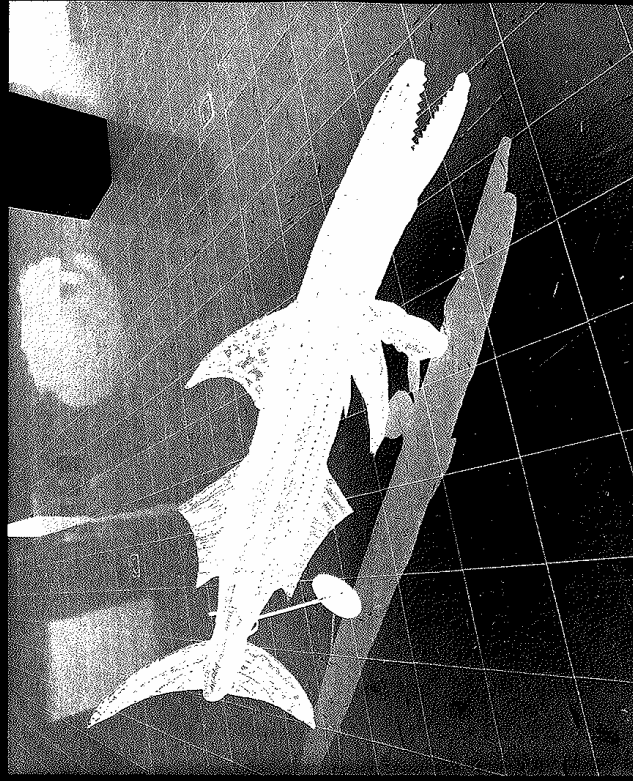
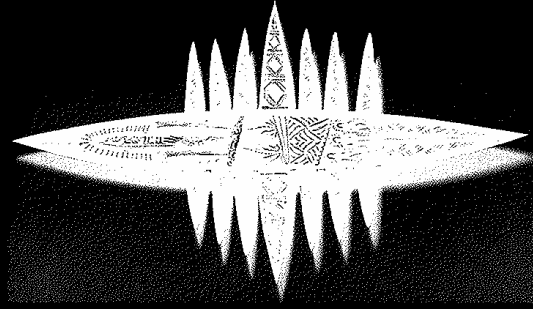
Tuffery seeks to extend his art-making beyond the tradition of gallery spaces and into the community often involving the audience in performance pieces. One of these, *Aisai*, 2000, involved the arrival of dancers breathing fire and fire dancing, bearing oversized fish sculpted from red Brunswick sardine tins. Contained in the fish were traditional Pacific Island foods, which the dancers distributed to the audience. The outrageous size of the fish, hinting at the potential problems inherent in the hyper-breeding of fish, referred to the smouldering 'genetic engineering' debate of the time. *Aisai* also made reference to the present-day accepted importation of tinned fish to the Pacific Islands as a contemporary reversal of the traditional practice of fishing for food.

During the early 1990s, Tuffery's art works became increasingly three-dimensional as he applied the carving skills he had seen practised in Samoa. His development of large scale performance art and sculptural artworks began in 1994, and first manifested itself in the release of *Poti Tam Hige* (The Challenge), 1996, at the close of his Rita Angus Fellowship and, in 1999, in *Poti Christofide* (page 59). These life-sized, mechanised and articulated balls made of corried beef tins symbolise the introduction and pervasiveness of processed Western foods in the Pacific Islands. These, somehow typified by corried beef, have become a



Te Hāhāngū Nui, 1972.  
Recycled newspaper, 177 x 200 x 100 mm.  
Collection of Cook Island Government.

Tigiani, 1988.  
Wooden, black and white paint, colour pencil on tapa, 765 x 540 mm.  
Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.



Sototo, 2000.  
Recycled copper foil, 16 x 16mm mesh, steel, 600 x 2300 x 400 mm.  
Courtesy of the artist.

dominant part of the diet of some Pacific Islanders, resulting in a diminishing of traditional food growing and preparation skills, health problems caused by poor nutrition, pollution from non-biodegradable waste, and environmental damage caused by introduced animals. Tuffery remains deeply interested in New Zealand's status as an island situated in the Pacific basin, in the modulating of its strongly colonial history through its evolving cultural groups, and in the different adaptations of its Pacific Island people according to whether their experience is urban or island-based. His works include symbols from other Pacific Island cultures, all of which he sees as being interconnected through their common Pacific history.

MICHEL TUFFERY

