

Sokota

Art • Health • Wellness



Sokola

Art Health Wellness

This publication was produced in conjunction with the Educating for Sustainable Lifestyles through the Arts which resulted in the Sokota: Art, Health, Wellness exhibit held at the FNU Unistudios Rawai Campus in Suva from November 14 to December 6, 2013. Curated by Lingikoni E. Vaka'uta.

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FOREWORD

It is my great pleasure, as Dean of one of the oldest Medical and Health Training institutions in the Pacific, to provide a brief introduction for this powerful and ground-breaking exhibition.

I say ground-breaking because this is an exhibition which represents the culmination of a journey of discovery and creativity for 19 fabulous Fijian artists and their mentors.

It wasn't too long ago that these gifted men and women were selected to participate in a unique project which dreamed of building a bridge between people from all walks of life who needed to understand key messages about good health and a group of people who see on a daily basis the challenges the Pacific is facing with non-communicable diseases.

Last year, my College introduced a new theme which is simply "Choose Health". A key part of the simple message is a call for every person in Fiji and the Pacific Islands to make some healthy choices. The key idea is that unless we all work together to Choose Health too many people will die far too early in life.

The sad reality is that right across the islands of Fiji, we are losing the battle against non-communicable diseases. This loss is evident on a daily basis where friends, relatives and soul mates are dying from preventable diseases like heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and poor mental health.

The message from many key Health agencies, such as the World Health Organization, is that the only way forward is with a renewed focus on primary health care and the empowerment of communities.

In this unique project we are drawing on the talents of a wide range of "artists" – people from, and in, communities who have carried special artistic talents. These artists share important personal, community and cultural messages of life and death and health and hope. In many cases, talents that have existed well before the advent of modern information technologies.

It has been an amazing journey of discovery for everyone involved in the project, and as the major sponsor, I am so proud to have been associated with this wonderful group of people. I am delighted to be able to provide my voice of appreciation.

We have certainly learned a lot about the significance of culture and of the ability of artists to reach out to the community with unique messages of health and hope in a world that is desperately in need of such encouragement.

The journey may have only just begun, but for now let's celebrate the first small steps, that this group of people, have so bravely taken.

Professor Ian ROUSE

Dean, College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, F.N.U.

STATEMENT FROM MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Health is an ever-present topic around the world, a healthy nation can grow and prosper, a healthy nation can make the best of opportunities and meet challenges head on. A healthy nation is a happy nation.

Unfortunately, no country in the world is free from health issues. However, a country can be defined by how it cares for its people, what it does to combat these health issues and change lives for the better.

In Fiji, one of the major risks to our population is the rising crisis of non-communicable diseases (NCD's) — diseases that are given every opportunity to grow through our unhealthy lifestyle choices.

We make unhealthy choices that are detrimental to our health. Choosing to smoke and drink too much alcohol and grog, choosing processed food and drinks high in salt, fat and sugar over the bountiful, healthy and natural foods Fiji offers us. Choosing to sit and watch TV, when we could be walking and playing in Fiji's vast playgrounds.

These decisions do not make us a healthy nation.

The Ministry of Health is always concerned with the health of our people. We face far-reaching health problems in Fiji and are often striving to communicate to Fijians in ways that will interest them, engage them, educate them and, most importantly, encourage behaviour change.

The Educating for Sustainable Lifestyles Through the Arts Project interested us immediately because it is not only an innovative idea, it is a ground-breaking concept. It tackles the NCD crisis in Fiji in a very different and engaging way. It explores the issue deeply and thoroughly and this exhibition is testimony to the effectiveness of this approach to health education.

If health is science, life is art. Sokota is not merely an art exhibition, it is a journey of revelation, created by artists who have become health ambassadors for the change we need in Fiji, it is the art of living.

Those involved in this project have been hard at work all year, fully committed to the idea that art can be a medium for change. Art is so closely tied to Fiji's heritage and culture and is celebrated for that reason. So how then, do we not consider our good health to be of the same, if not greater standing? How do we neglect such an important part of our livelihoods, especially when the power is in each and everyone of our hands to live healthier. It is up to the individual to make the right choices, it is up to each and every one of you because your good health is what makes our nation healthy.

This exhibition explores these questions and our hope is that this exhibition is defining for the arts and for the notion of health in Fiji. We are proud to be involved and excited for what comes next in the Educating for Sustainable Lifestyles Through the Arts Project. We acknowledge and thank the hard working people behind this project and the artists themselves for making the idea of this exhibition an exciting reality.

By giving these young artists the tools of health education and a platform on which to stand, you have empowered them, and given the next generation their voice.

Vinaka vakalevu
Dr. Isimeli Tukana
Wellness Unit Head
Ministry of Health

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Educating for Sustainable Livelihoods Project came about quite unexpectedly through a conversation on mutual concerns about the impending health crisis posed by NCDs in the Pacific islands and a mutual love for the arts. The overall goal of the project is to provide focused opportunities for discussion, awareness and understanding of NCDs and wellness through open dialogue.

This exhibition represents the completion of the first half of the project which involved engagement with nineteen local artists. Although initially envisaged as an August exhibition, it seems appropriate that this exhibition be staged during the month of November, the month designated as Non-Communicable Disease Month in Fiji.

The last nine months have been a period of incubation in which artists and facilitators have gone through deep reflection on health issues in Fiji and ways through which the arts might be harnessed to engage in a wider discussion of the same. Artists' engagement comprised two main components. Firstly, health dialogue and secondly, capacity building of artists to better understand their own roles and the challenges of choosing the arts as a career pathway in Fiji.

A one-week workshop early in 2013 on health, wellness and the arts gave way to weekly meetings which provided an avenue for an on-going talanoa or sharing of personal life-stories and artist development workshops. The latter was particularly important to the project team given the limited opportunities for artist training, education and on-going development in Fiji and the wider Pacific islands.

Education is at the core of this initiative. By this we mean both formal and non-formal education emphasizing preventative health care. It is developed around the understanding that the two greatest challenges to wellbeing remain ignorance and complacency. Many are simply unaware of their own risky behaviors; while others share a general disregard of the threats posed by unhealthy life-choices.

The next and final phase of the project will see closer collaboration with Health Promoting Schools including school visits to the exhibition, research and curriculum skills workshops on the teaching of Health and Wellness for teachers.

This project takes on a multi-faceted approach with the following basic levels.

1. Health through the Arts: The arts present a previously untapped potential entry point for health discussions. Artist engagement provides a further opportunity for the development of health advocates.
2. Arts in Education: Taking an arts-in-education approach, this project enables meaningful collaboration with the Ministry of Education Health Promoting Schools (HPS) initiative. It also opens the discussion to teachers and trainee teachers on how we teach health in schools. The exhibition provides an open space for teachers and students to reflect on these artists' interpretations of the health crisis and to consider their own life choices.
3. National dialogue: Through on-going media partnerships and community engagement in the exhibition, the project is designed to bring the arts and health talk into Fijian homes raising awareness about the importance of wellness in our communities.
4. Scholarly dialogue: The project also aims to bring together scholars from higher education, in particular from the areas of education, health and research to write, research and publish articles on these issues.

5. Meaningful engagement with Donors and Stakeholders: The project raises the issue of contextualized authentic approaches to health advocacy and education. We apply a value-added approach complementing other health efforts being undertaken by various stakeholders, institutions and NGOs. We would also like to raise awareness of the value and potential benefits of the arts in education.

With the on-going assistance of a strong project team, we have worked towards establishing a community of artists who share a concern and understanding of the NCD Crisis. As a collective, we share the view that it is only through the development of a national consciousness focused on holistic wellbeing that we might strive towards wellness in Fiji.

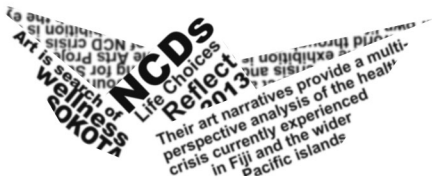
As project managers, we look forward to the year ahead and our continued engagement through the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, with partners at the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and WHO. We remain passionate about the need to educate for sustainable livelihoods and committed to enabling greater understanding of health at individual, family and community levels.

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Sokota

THE EXHIBITION

Sokota

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Growing up and living in the Pacific Islands has its many challenges but we, nevertheless, call it home. We have faced many natural disasters as far back as our oral histories can recall, from earthquakes and beau kula to the current and mostly man-made challenges such as climate change.

Ever since first contact with the western world numerous concerns have emerged including health and economic development issues. To put this into the 'Island Peripheral Context', these contact points, since the 18th century have brought both benefits along and challenges to the island communities.

The 'Peripheral Context' here refers to the fact that some issues are given more attention others in the mainstream media depending on the type of funding available locally and from foreign donor agencies. These issues usually include economic development as well as others such as HIV with the current issue of concern around the world appearing to be 'Climate change'.

There is one issue that has existed in the islands for some time now with a devastating outreach to our people in the Pacific Islands compared with all the other issues combined. That issue is 'Non Communicable Diseases'(NCDs).' Although various health agencies and professionals have tried to communicate the immense impact of NCDs on Pacific populations, for many it seems the message is often lost amidst other conversations about other issues of concern.

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The issue of NCDs and wellness brought us to this exhibition. This is an art project that focuses on 'Educating for Sustainable Livelihood through the Arts' taking into account both 'wellness and NCDs. So the question is; what does this mean? To put it in simple terms, this project is about educating and raising awareness about health, using the arts to share and expose local experiences and stories with regard to healthy living.

Sokota is an indigenous iTaukei concept meaning to embark on a voyage. It is also an open invitation to others to traverse the wide ocean. The concept encompasses the spirit of seeking, finding, and sharing new discoveries. This concept of a voyage or journey with the spirit of sharing seemed to fit well with the ideals of this art project because 'Wellness and NCDs' cannot be regarded simplistically. They are part of a complex system of various factors which play vital roles in determining whether we are able to avoid NCDs through 'preventative measures' or: if we are destined to live with one of the numerous NCDs that are prevalent in the Pacific. These are the key findings of the artists involved in this project.

Before we talk about this project in detail, it is important to establish the local context of the arts when it is directed at specific issues:

1. Contemporary Arts in Fiji is mainly driven by artists as a form of livelihoods, i.e. produce any artwork that can sell for an income.
2. Issues-based Art includes those focused art exhibitions with a thematic approach looking at specific issues such as HIV, gender inequality, climate change and others. These are usually driven by organisations that have both the agenda and funding available. Thus, it is usually left to the artist to submit any artworks that can sell without necessarily touching on that particular issue in much depth.

Given these two contexts, our team drew the conclusion that it was imperative to pick young emerging artists from various art disciplines for the project. This included contemporary, heritage, digital and performance artists. The reason behind the selection of new emerging artists was based

on the fact that the majority of artists in Fiji mainly produce artworks that can sell (livelihood). Their artwork focuses on interior design aesthetics. We recognized the need to build a new strand of thinking in terms of art production without the focus on the value of exchange. This, then brought us to a different paradigm in Fiji's art context. This new paradigm meant that before I could curate the artworks for the exhibition, it was also important to curate the artists. This included a one-week workshop where various health experts from the Fiji School of Medicines (FSM) and community representatives were invited to talk to the artists about the various issues concerning Wellness, NCDs and the Arts.

These issues varied and ranged from direct impact such as the type food intake and lack of physical activities to psychological (stress and mental health), economic costs and cultural beliefs. The intention of this workshop was not just to deliver engaging experiences for the local community and health experts, but also to harness the reality and energy of these conversations, ideas and visions across the health and art platforms with another intention of exploring new paradigms for our collective future.

These nineteen artists selected from the various art disciplines present diverse creative art responses to wellness and NCDs for this exhibition. These creative responses were developed and embedded in an ongoing weekly program of Talanoa workshops, in-house forums and interactive studio conversations to confront and challenge the wide spectrum of wellness and NCDs issues across Fiji using the arts.

With the rise in NCD cases locally which impose a large health, financial and economic costs on the country, NCDs and wellness resonates strongly in the present time. Recognizing the need to shift our collective thinking and actions towards raising more awareness and tackling this issue, Sokota offers a platform for creative responses, provocations and interactive experiences that can underpin new ways of thinking and inspire change.

Most of the artists in this project have never engaged in project of this nature. Sokota has expanded the art-view from the local dominated selling exhibition to something bigger. The works on exhibit include painting, mixed media installation using local concepts, carvings, pottery and engaging ephemeral projections of video and sound created from everyday items to dancing performances.

The notion of Sokota is exemplified through works of local musician and performer, Laisiasa Dave Lavaki, for example, presents a multimedia installation investigating the delicate balance between food and drinks intake on bodily health. The works of the various young dancers also act as multi-sensory performance installations which challenge our roles as individuals and as a society as a whole. Traditional masi (bark cloth) maker, Ms. Selai Buasala identifies the critical value of mothers and women in Indigenous knowledge systems and the ramifications of ignoring these roles. Sokota the exhibition raises the curtain on the stage, now open to engage with the artists and their works.

It is also important to acknowledge that this project will not have happened without the support and encouragement of many sponsors in particular, the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, AUSAid, Fiji Ministry of Health and many others.

I offer you Sokota, the works of nineteen Fijian artists who willing share their narratives on art, wellness and NCDs.

Welcome and Vinaka Vaka Levu

Lingikoni Vaka'uta

Curator



ELENI TABUA
PERFORMANCE ARTIST

Eleni has a passion for dance. She teaches contemporary dance at the VOU Music and Dance School. She is also a dancer with the VOU Dance Company, and represented Fiji at the 11th Festival of Pacific Arts in the Solomon Islands. The possibility of creating abstract art that people can relate to excites her, and she enjoys exploring collaborations with other artists. Her inspiration is found in her experiences, the people in her life, and her iTaukei culture. She is also passionate about pushing herself to be the best that she can and helping to inspire Fiji's upcoming artists.



KATHLEEN WAQA
PERFORMANCE ARTIST

Kathleen is a performance artist who dances as well as sings. She is mentored by her Jazz musician father and first entered the local music scene at the age of 17. Her introduction to dance was in secondary school but her attachment with VOU Dance Company taught her the technical aspects of dance training, technique, and commercial entertainment. As a VOU dancer she was involved in teaching dance to children. She also conducted vocal lessons for the VOU Music and Dance School. Kathleen ascribes her inspiration



to numerous artists, dancers and musicians that she grew up listening to and watching such as Natalie Cole, Etta James, Aretha Franklin and Sade, as well as local musicians. She is passionate about history, her family, and topical issues which provide the ideas for her art pieces. Kathleen is looking to explore a career in music and further her formal education in both music and dance. She is also interested in the teaching of performing arts in Fiji



CONCEPT NOTE

This is a collaborative piece that tackles excessive consumption of sugar, salt and fatty products. We believe that many Fijians are addicted to these products without realizing it, and want to show people how easy it is to have such an addiction. We also highlight the potential of this addiction to rob us of our family, our loved ones and our own lives. We share the view that we cannot achieve wellness in life if we are addicted to these foods. Our shared love for dance and music brought us to the realization that the arts are a powerful way to communicate and discuss important life issues. We use symbolism through dance to express the urgency of addressing these issues by making informed choices.

The Leap

8m 5sec

Choreography: Eleni Tabua, Kathleen Waqa & Navi Fong

Music: Eremasi Rova

Dancers: Eleni Tabua, Kathleen Waqa & Navi Fong



ESALA TALEBULA CAUCAU
VISUAL ARTIST

Esala is a contemporary visual artist and musician who began his artistic journey in 2004 at the Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture & Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific in Suva. His mother was his first mentor, a creative spirit who struggled to earn a living for the family. He finds inspiration in the human struggle, art books and daily conversations. He has participated in a number of local art exhibitions and workshops and aspires to be a full time artist who would like to one day run his own art gallery and to engage in community art development in Fiji.

CONCEPT NOTE

My piece is a visual art installation comprising of a number of paintings. My concept is wellness. It is about the choices we can make to achieve wellness. It acknowledges that we, as individuals, have the freedom to choose a healthy lifestyle however, we are influenced by the decisions of others. My message is for everyone - the general public. It asks the audience to think about what is important to their health, and to make decisions about choosing wisely so that they can live well. The series of panels is arranged like a jigsaw. Each panel symbolizes the different types of choices we make to fulfil our needs.

Awaken series

Acrylic & Oil on canvas
105inches x 133inches





TAKES HORNS

DRINKING
SMOKING

GIVE

Water

DRINK

GIVE



JOHN BRYAN MAUSIO
VISUAL ARTIST

John has always aspired to be an artist. The sale of his first art piece at the 2009 National Fine Art Exhibition in Suva, his first exhibition, encouraged him to pursue this dream. His art is informed by nature, social issues and everyday experiences. John has participated in numerous community art initiatives exploring mental health and environmental issues. John has explored various lines of work including graphic design, volunteer work, social work and tattoo art.

CONCEPT NOTE

I have two pieces that present my concept of wellbeing. The first piece, *Mind is a Cancer* is based on the idea that the mind is a powerful tool. Our own mindsets are a cancer to our wellbeing. In my suburban community, lifestyle is determined by mindset. Our lives are valued by the views of others and dictated by the collective mind of a deteriorating society. The second piece, *Labour*, is about obligation. Many times we are burdened by our obligations to ourselves, our family and our community. We labour day in and day out, bound by our struggles. Many of us fail to realize that we are digging ourselves into such a deep hole of unhealthy living. The choice is ours, we need to act now.

Labour

Acrylic on canvas
76inches x 111inches





JONE CAGI
CARVER

Jone is a heritage artist from a long line of wood carvers from Ogea, Lau. He first learned to carve from his father and has since practiced the art form for about thirty years. Wood carving has become his livelihood and he has participated in a number of local art fairs and workshops. Jone was selected as a heritage artist delegate for Fiji at the 2012 Festival of Pacific Arts in Honiara, Solomon Islands. He says that he feels a responsibility to share his heritage art and aspires to open an art shop in Fiji.



CONCEPT NOTE

My piece is an installation using wood carving and mixed media. It uses the symbol of a canoe to signify our life journey. If we are interested in being well we need to think about what we consume such as junk food, alcohol, tobacco, sugar and salt. My target audience is the general public but I also want my work to talk to especially to adults, to show that we can still make changes in our lives. The inspiration for this piece comes from my life experiences. In our lives, there are certain things that normally stop us from reaching our goals such as our tastes, our wants and things that we can do without. But, it is the colourful packaging and the media that influences our choices. My message is that we are all on a journey which should include good health but we are being held back by poor choices.

The Journey

Mixed media installation

120 x 25 x 27 inches





JOSEPH DANIEL WHIPPY
MUSICIAN & DANCE ARTIST

Joseph began performing in 1997 when he replaced his older brother in a church band under the tutelage of his father. Joseph studied music at the Fiji National University and later at the Conservatorium of Music in Suva. Until recently he was working with VOU Dance Company producing music for dance. He finds inspiration in culture, other musicians and conversations about the arts. Joseph aspires to be a qualified audio editor and designer, and a music instructor. He strives to create inspirational pieces of music.

CONCEPT NOTE

My piece is an audio performance titled *Change*. It stresses the need to confront the impact of our life choices. It looks at the changes occurring in our society and how this leads to changes in our lifestyles. It also examines how we neglect one way of life to cater for another. *Change* is intended to challenge - to see how we can bring together our cultural knowledge and contemporary knowledge to make better informed choices. This piece was inspired by our discussions with the group of artists involved in this project and talking about the real issues of NCD's. These discussions challenged me to think about the hidden agendas of quick and easy lifestyles. I hope to show the 'real' impact of our choices and how we look at those choices. Denial is always the first and hardest barrier to overcome. My hope is that when people hear and see my work they will see their true reflection and make better choices for themselves.

Change
Audio performance
8m 10sec



Photo credit: Courtesy of the artist



JOSEPHINE TAVAGA
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Josephine is a graphic designer who has always had a love for the arts. She began taking art seriously as a student at the Fiji National University in 2011. She is inspired by her father, a fellow artist. She is interested in colours and form in nature as well as other artists' work. She would like to own her own graphic company and has a desire to travel.

CONCEPT NOTE

My piece is a visual art multi-media installation titled *Act now!* It is targeted at the general public but specifically speaks to adult smokers. I use the symbol of the eye as witness to everything happening around us. In relation to smoking, it sees the harmful effects on people – families and communities. The installation challenges people to think about their actions and its effects in their own lives and the lives of others.

Act Now!

Digital Art on PVC Banner

2.4 meters x 3 meters





LAIASIA DAVE LAVAKI
PERFORMANCE ARTIST

Dave began recording as an MC rapper in 2007. A poet and rap/hip-hop follower for over seventeen years, he is a known popular rap-artist, Mr. Grin, in Fiji. He says that the experience of recording his first two songs has provided an incentive and excitement to continue the art form. He is inspired by family, daily encounters with people, and events which he describes as short moments which trigger ideas for music. Dave has spent many years editing and producing video and audio and consciously brings these skills into his art. His goals include collaboration with local and international artists as well as developing his own music and exploring other art forms. He has participated in a number of regional tours including the 2010 Melanesian Arts Festival in New Caledonia, and the 2012 Pacific Arts Festival in the Solomon Islands.

CONCEPT NOTE

We are attracted to substances, food, junk products and things that are killing us. Their attractiveness overshadows the negative side effects on our overall wellness. My piece is an audio-video multi-media installation using sound samples of things that contribute to NCDs such as salt in a jar or lolly wrappers. The main medium is music but videos are used to show where the sound sample came from. My target audience begins at 10-years and above. I have done sound sampling before but I was recently re-inspired during a 2-week beat making workshop where we explored sound sampling. Music is a universal language - something the world is attracted to – similar to our shared attraction to foods and substances and things that contribute towards ill-health and NCD's. People tend to just enjoy music without trying to understand what went into making it, in the same way that we enjoy those things which contribute to NCDs. We focus on what we enjoy – we don't think about consequences.



**The Beautiful Sounds
of Things that Slowly
Kill Us**

*3 m 34 sec
audio-video multi-media
installation*



LITIA ROGO
PERFORMANCE ARTIST

Litia is an emerging artist who began dancing in 2011 at the Oceania Dance Theater. While at primary school, she was trained in contemporary and traditional Chinese dance; but, it was only when she took up a short dance training session at the Oceania Centre at the University of the South Pacific that she began to take dance seriously. Litia says that her inspiration for choreography comes from poetry and music. She hopes to establish herself as a recognized choreographer and to one day teach dance in Fiji.



REN SLATTER
PERFORMANCE ARTIST

Ren is the youngest participating artist in the project. The seventeen year old grew up in an artistic household and created her first art piece (jewelery) at age 9. In 2011, she began exploring dance as an art form and a year later, featured in the popular local MIC show. She is inspired by her mother, Tessa Miller, a prominent contemporary visual artist in Fiji, who has demonstrated a love for the arts and the commitment to pursue her dreams. Ren finds meaning in real life events and iTaukei culture. She is currently a dancer at the Oceania Dance Theatre and a member of Pacifica Voices ensemble choir. Ren would like to make a living out of her art, explore children's literature and to exhibit internationally.





CONCEPT NOTE

This is a collaborative dance piece targeted at adults, especially parents. It portrays how the health decisions of one person can affect not just the individual but those around them too. It centres on the interconnectedness of health and family, and reflects on anecdotal modern mortality trends where women and men in their 40s and 50s are passing away leaving behind their family. We hope to engage the audience in a conversation on individual choice and health. Our inspiration comes from personal experiences. We incorporate dance, music, drama and poetry in our performance piece and hope to evoke a sense of responsibility within the family.

To be or not to be

15m 18 sec

Choreography : Lita & Ren

Music: Penitera Korijjuta

Dancers: Katalina Fotofili, Leilani Koroiveti, Demetria Takayawa, Kim Rova, Joseva Matailagi

Poem: Glenville Lord



LITE TADULALA

POTTERY ARTIST

Lite is a heritage artist who hails from a family of traditional potters in Naselai Village in Rewa. She was instructed as a ten-year old in the traditional art of pottery, Tulituli Mawi, by her father's sister. She describes her initiation into the art form as a simple verbal instruction: *"Hold a piece of clay in your hand so that you can know the way of the Tulituli."* Lite enjoys the art form and is inspired in keeping this cultural heritage alive. She is excited to explore contemporary forms of Tulituli Mawi. She explains that ideas come to her from within as well as her cultural experiences. She would like to develop her skills and understanding of the contemporary art world so that she might explore new opportunities in the arts.

CONCEPT NOTE

I am a heritage artist and I make pottery. My piece is about the amount of food we eat, and what we eat; and my target audience is families. I believe that we need to think about what we eat and how much we eat because many times we eat too much, eat the wrong foods, and do not eat enough vegetables. This, then, leads to NCDs. I have experienced this situation myself where my family ate the wrong foods and sickness like diabetes has developed. My pots are a symbol of traditional food preparation. They remind us that we need to think about what we are eating, how much we are eating and how we are preparing our food in the home. Whatever amount could be fit into the pots would be the only food cooked. We are reminded that traditionally, we ate more fresh food like vegetables and root crops. This helped us be healthy and not have sickness. I am using these pots to make people think seriously about their eating habits.

Na Bula vaka-Viti

Handmade clay pot



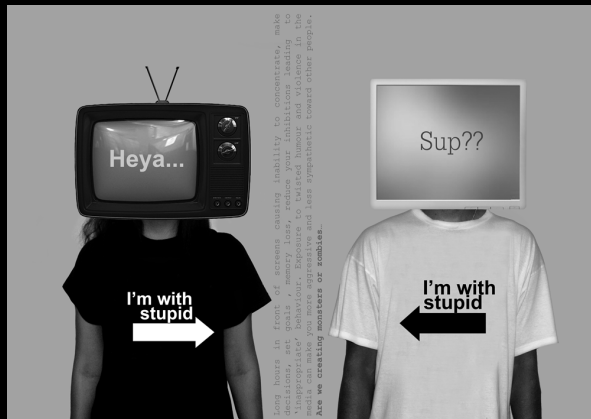


MARIE BERNADETTE KOYA
GRAPHIC ARTIST & PHOTOGRAPHER

Marie is a multi-media artist with a passion for visual arts, poetry, photography and digital media. A graphic design graduate from the Fiji National University, she is currently pursuing further studies in Early Childhood Education at the University of the South Pacific. She credits her art foundation to her family background in which all family members are engaged in some form of art from fashion to painting, drawing and home crafts. Marie finds inspiration in the works of various artists, in emotions, and in life experiences. In the long term, she would like to stage a solo exhibition, build on her photography skills as well as explore art as a learning tool in working with children.

CONCEPT NOTE

The way I see it, we have a lot to learn. I am concerned about the information gap that continues to feed our ignorance as a society. For me, I think that people simply do not know that some of their basic choices are in fact creating the perfect environment for NCDs and general ill-health in their homes. This series of twelve posters draws on the idea of poster art and combines it with marketing strategies used by the food industry which shapes the way we see foods and make food choices. It also applies memetics and uses the concept of the meme which is popularized in social media such as facebook, tumbler, twitter and other social networks. Given that there is a youth boom in Fiji and the Pacific, wellness and information about NCDs must target this population. When this information is presented in a way that engages young people, it is more likely to have an impact. Intellectual wellness is the most critical because without having access to accurate information and being able to make informed decision using that information, other forms of wellness cannot be achieved.



Checkpoint Series

Digital art & Photography on board
 A2 250gsm



MELI MAFI
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Meli is a graphic designer who discovered a love for art designing tee-shirts in high school. He is fascinated by the manipulation of colours, form, and texture required in creating an artwork through stencil and poster art. He also is inspired by everyday encounters. Meli is passionate about pursuing a future in the arts and hopes to inspire younger artists.

CONCEPT NOTE

My piece portrays the heart. I used typography to show how unhealthy habits can cause the time bomb to activate. It is sad that most people don't ever seem to realize this until it's too late. My target audience is the general public because death comes to everyone at an unknown time. In order to live longer, healthier, happy lives we need to make the right choices. This means changing your life. It is all up to you – the individual to make that choice. I was inspired to create this piece by my own family experiences. Death from heart disease has been a common trend in my family for many years and I fear this disease will be passed down to my generation as well as the next. I hope that the piece will speak to others so that they might think about their own family choices and health.

Utomu
Digital Art on PVC banner
2 x 3 m

PREVENTION

*** Is Better Than Cure ***

PREVENTION CENTERS ON THE MODIFIABLE RISK FACTORS, WHICH INCLUDE DECREASING BLOOD CHOLESTEROL LEVELS, ADDRESSING OBESITY AND HYPERTENSION, AVOIDING A SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE, MAKING HEALTHY DIETARY CHOICES, AND STOPPING SMOKING. IN THE CASE OF DIABETES MELLITUS, THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT VERY TIGHT BLOOD SUGAR CONTROL ACTUALLY IMPROVES CARDIOVASCULAR RISK. ALTHOUGH IMPROVED SUGAR CONTROL APPEARS TO DECREASE OTHER UNDESIRABLE PROBLEMS LIKE KIDNEY FAILURE AND BLINDNESS.

THE IMMEDIATE HEALTH BENEFITS OF QUITTING SMOKING ARE SUBSTANTIAL:

- HEART RATE AND BLOOD PRESSURE WHICH ARE ABNORMALLY HIGH WHILE SMOKING BEGIN TO RETURN TO NORMAL.
- WITHIN A FEW HOURS, THE LEVEL OF CARBON MONOXIDE IN THE BLOOD BEGINS TO DECLINE (CARBON MONOXIDE REDUCES THE BLOOD'S ABILITY TO CARRY OXYGEN).
- WITHIN A FEW WEEKS, PEOPLE WHO QUIT SMOKING HAVE IMPROVED CIRCULATION, PRODUCE LESS PHLEGM, AND DON'T COUGH OR WHEEZE AS OFTEN.

SIX MAJOR INDEPENDENT RISK FACTORS FOR CORONARY HEART DISEASE: AGE, GENDER, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, HIGH BLOOD CHOLESTEROL LEVELS, TOBACCO SMOKING, EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION, SUGAR CONSUMPTION, FAMILY HISTORY, OBESITY, LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS, DIABETES MELLITUS, AIR POLLUTION. WHILE THE INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION OF EACH RISK FACTOR VARIES BETWEEN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES OR ETHNIC GROUPS THE CONSISTENCY OF THE OVERALL CONTRIBUTION OF THESE RISK FACTORS TO EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDIES IS REMARKABLY STRONG. SOME OF THESE RISK FACTORS, SUCH AS AGE, GENDER OR FAMILY HISTORY, ARE IMMUTABLE. HOWEVER, MANY IMPORTANT CARDIOVASCULAR RISK FACTORS ARE MODIFIABLE BY LIFESTYLE CHANGE.

CIGARETTE AND TOBACCO SMOKE, HIGH BLOOD CHOLESTEROL, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, PHYSICAL INACTIVITY, OBESITY AND DIABETES ARE THE SIX MAJOR INDEPENDENT RISK FACTORS FOR CORONARY HEART DISEASE THAT YOU CAN MODIFY OR CONTROL. CIGARETTE SMOKING IS SO WIDESPREAD AND SIGNIFICANT AS A RISK FACTOR THAT THE SURGEON GENERAL HAS CALLED IT "THE LEADING PREVENTABLE CAUSE OF DISEASE AND DEATHS." CIGARETTE SMOKING INCREASES THE RISK OF CORONARY HEART DISEASE BY ITSELF. WHEN IT ACTS WITH OTHER FACTORS, IT GREATLY INCREASES RISK. SMOKING INCREASES BLOOD PRESSURE, DECREASES EXERCISE TOLERANCE AND INCREASES THE TENDENCY FOR BLOOD TO CLOT.

MAKE A CHANGE

BE THE CHANGE



PENI WAQA VUIDREKETI
VISUAL ARTIST

Waqa began his art journey in professional art work, first as a photographer in 1998 for Holiday Photos in Nadi and a year later, screen-printing for Art Wave Resort Wear. In 2007, he began to pursue visual arts as a free-lance artist but it was not until 2009 that he began seriously exhibiting his art through the Fiji Arts Council in Suva. His early inspiration came from watching his grandmother make Masi (Tapa), crochet and sew. He finds creative ideas in social and environmental issues. He would like to pursue a serious career in the arts, is keen to take up an artist residency abroad, and to exhibit internationally.

CONCEPT NOTE

My piece is titled *Na ilakolako* (journey) and is about how being aware and making the right choices will lead to a fulfilling balanced lifestyle. The target audience is those who have been diagnosed with an NCD, and those who feel the urgency of wanting to make a change in their lifestyle. It is also targeted at young adults aged 18 – 35. *Na ilakolako* takes us along the road to wellness. It is a journey that begins with oneself. There are many factors that can influence your decisions on living a healthy life. I have learned that there are 8 different interacting dimensions of living a balanced and fulfilling life. These are: physical, social and cultural, mental, cultural and academic, spiritual, environmental, economic and financial, and, emotional. I have realized that we have the answers right in front of us – keeping our lives holistically balanced.

Na iLakoklako

Mixed Media on canvas
104inches x 131.5inches







SELAI BUASALA
MASI MAKER

Selai is a heritage artist from a family of Masi makers. The art of masi making has been passed on through the female line from mother to daughter over generations. Selai has produced Masi for over 40 years both for cultural purposes and as her main livelihood for her children's education. She has participated in local workshops and exhibitions and has represented Fiji at a number of regional and international art events. She continues to use traditional motifs and also creates her own designs. Selai is actively teaching her children to continue the heritage art form and aspires to exhibit both her traditional and contemporary pieces internationally.

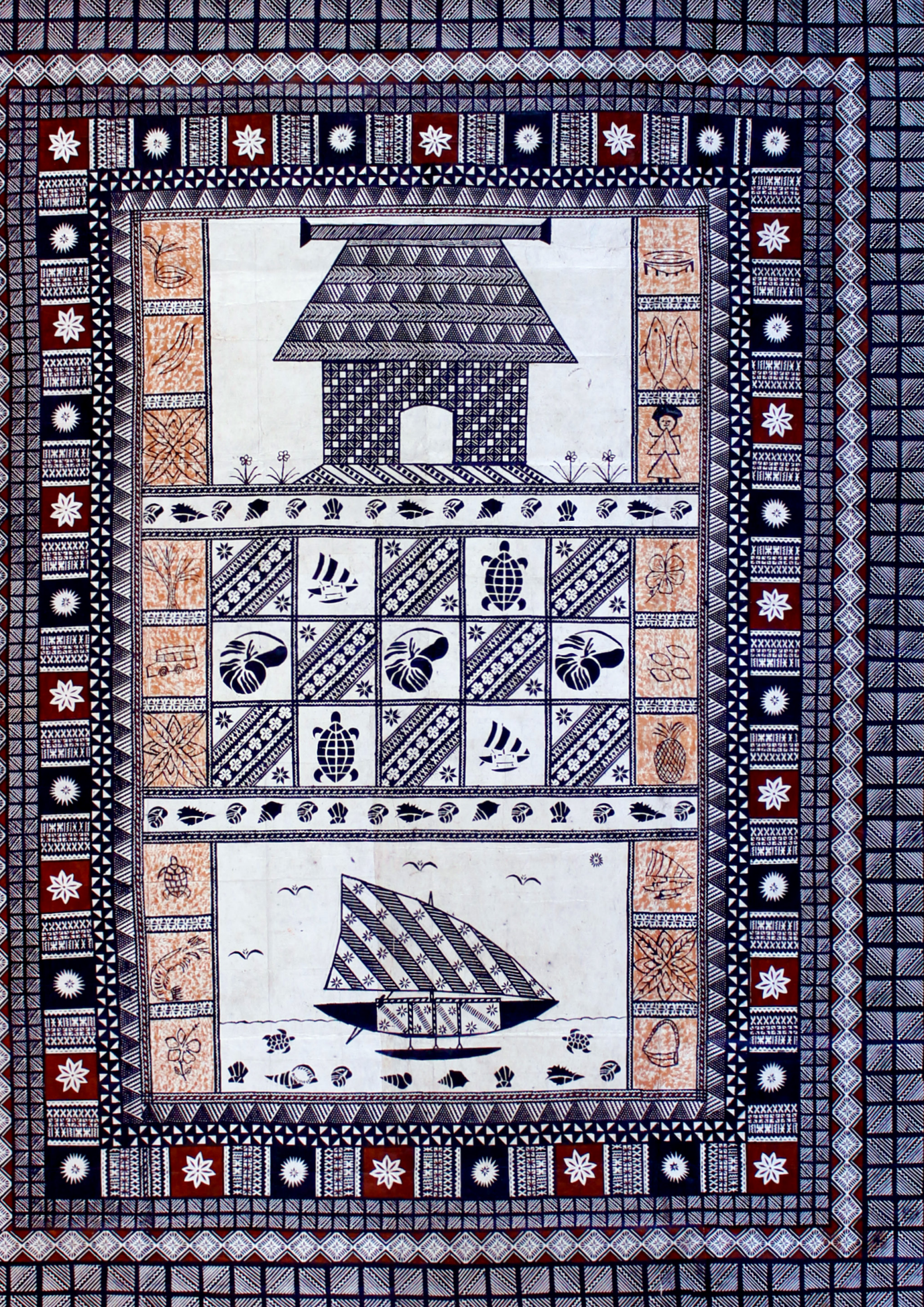
CONCEPT NOTE

The wellbeing of a person or a home is determined by its foundation. If we have a good foundation then we will surely achieve what we want. If a mother feeds her family members with good and healthy food, they will all be healthy and strong. The same goes for a house. If the foundation is firm, it holds up a very strong and safe house and people will be very comfortable living in it. I am a heritage artist and I am using my medium of masi incorporating both traditional and contemporary designs. My target audience is the general public, especially parents. The inspiration for my art work, *Suka lesu* (to go back) comes from the many health problems we face in our community. With the knowledge from this project and my thinking about these issues, I realize that if we want to fight against these diseases, we will have to re-think our meal-menus at home. Parents need to reconsider what they feed their family members for wellness and health.

Suka lesu

Hand printed tapa with traditional dyes
12 x 9 ft







SIAN ROLLS

COMIC ARTIST

Sian is a Journalism student at the University of the South Pacific in Suva. She took her first art class during her final year at International Secondary School. An avid reader, she is inspired by books and family, in particular her father and brother. She says that her ideas stem from personal experiences and are a reaction to what happens around her. She would like to collaborate with other artists and further explore web-comics.

CONCEPT NOTE

Non-communicable diseases are not only composed of physical illnesses. The focus on mental wellness, namely depression, is an opportunity to share a personal story. With many people dealing with depression along the spectrum, the more it is talked about, the more comfortable people may become to getting whatever help they may need, whether it be from a friend, family member or professional. My pieces are dedicated to those who have helped me along the way, support that some do not have. Despite the assistance I have had, admittedly the experience of dealing with depression will always have to be on the part of the person living with it as outlined in the pieces. These pieces are intended for anyone. It is my hope that it will help create an understanding of the situation of others, of oneself or simply of one experience among the many of NCDs. The pieces take the form of the main piece, *Boxed In* as comic art. It is purposefully laid out and centered on a large piece of cardboard as a play on the title. This is complemented with a short video. The remaining two pieces, both entitled *Words Cannot Express* aim to reflect the importance of two key support systems namely: love and acceptance.

Boxed in
Mixed media

CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION



Handwritten signature or initials.

CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION



TOMASI DOMOMATE
VISUAL ARTIST

Tomasi is a visual artist based at the Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture & Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific. He finds inspiration in his daily life and is constantly reflecting on social change and the kind of future that we are creating for ourselves. Tomasi aspires to be a full-time artist but is also driven to continue his studies towards teaching art in Fiji.

CONCEPT NOTE

My piece is titled *The will of the heart* because it is easy to ignore the heart and instead focus on what the brain is telling us. I believe that this is not the right way to use our body as a gallery of what we think and know is right. We need to learn to give our bodies what it needs. We all know what is good for us and we should learn to listen to that inner voice. The red background is symbolic of the danger we are in when we ignore the inner voice.

The will of the heart

Acrylic on canvas

201inches x 138inches



Free yourself

A Mindset Change

USE TO WHAT IS AVAILABLE

USE TO WHAT IS AVAILABLE

USE TO WHAT IS AVAILABLE

USE TO WHAT IS AVAILABLE

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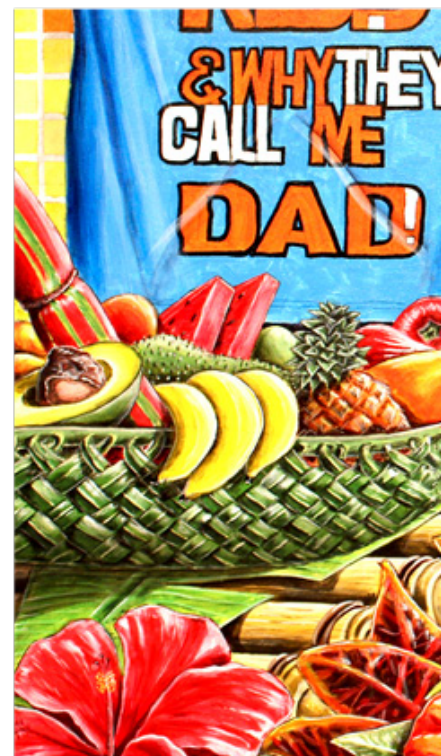


VILIAME VOSABECI
VISUAL ARTIST

Viliame is an emerging artist who is passionate about art. Originally from Mataikoro Village in Cakaudrove, he studied architectural design at the Fiji Institute of Technology. He started producing art in 2005, but only began to take it seriously in 2008 when he won the emerging art category in the National Fine Art Exhibition organized by the Fiji Arts Council in Suva. He is inspired by his encounters with other artists, real life events and traditional myths and legends. He identifies Kaveni Tomuse, a prominent local realistic artist as a creative influence. Viliame aspires to exhibit internationally. He was the recipient of the 2009 Indigenous Award and the 2012 Emerging Artist Award at the National Fine Arts Exhibition in Suva.

CONCEPT NOTE

My concept depicts a simple idea of how a family can contribute to the wellbeing of our nation as a whole. The main message is family unity, where members depend on each other for their survival. When a member is lost to an NCD, the family members lose an important member of their unit. My target audience is the general public. In my reflections on NCD awareness I think that phrases like “Smoking causes heart disease” are not effective because they concentrate on the individual. Instead, messages about families can have more impact because it forces people to think about the overall consequences of their actions. Thus, a message such as “Your family depends on you for survival, if you keep smoking you’re risking your and their life” may be more productive, especially if done through creative imagery rather than just words.





Family Series, Triptych

Woman, Child & Smoker

Acrylic on canvas

16inches x 19inches



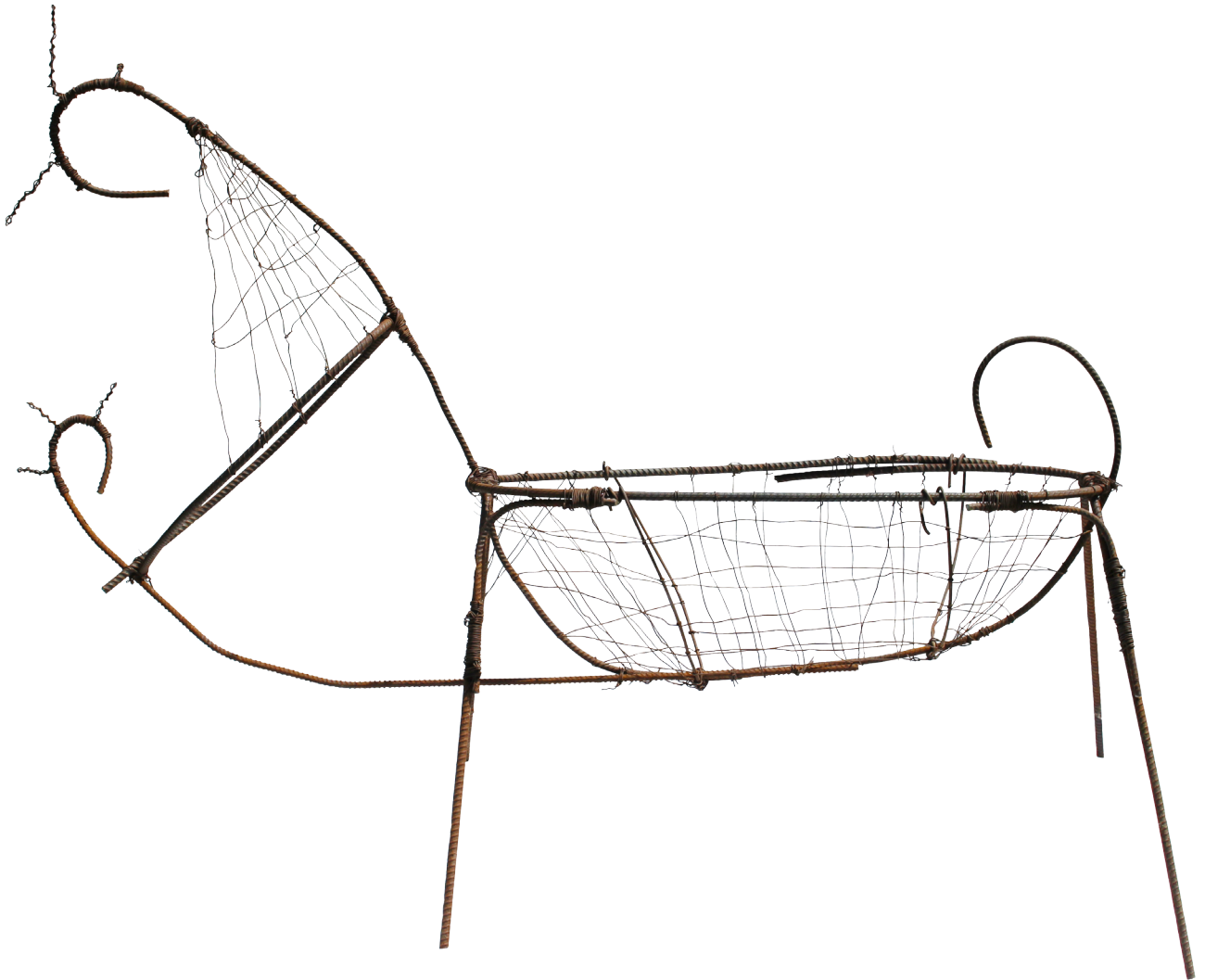
WILLIAM LYNCH CAMAKAU

VISUAL ARTIST

William is a visual artist based at the Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture & Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific in Suva. He discovered a love for drawing in high school and had the opportunity to take it seriously when he joined the Oceania Centre at USP. He studied signage and screen printing at the Fiji National University. He finds freedom in expressing his ideas in the arts and is inspired by nature, life experiences and everyday struggles. His father, a singer and choir conductor has inspired him to pursue his dream to be an artist. William acknowledges the support of his parents who have always supported him.

CONCEPT NOTE

My piece is titled *The Embrace*. I chose metal sculpture because it is an effective way to use symbolism to share ideas and have conversations. The sculpture depicts a father and son locked in an embrace that is strangling the child. The piece is deliberately held together with pieces of wire and not welded down because this relationship between parent and child can be improved. If we see these relationships as permanent then the child, in this case the son, is smothered by the learned bad habits and unhealthy legacies of the father.



The Embrace
Metal sculpture

EXHIBITION LISTING

Eleni Tabua & Kathleen Waqa

The Leap
8m & 5sec
Choreography

EsalaTalebula Caucau

Awaken series
Acrylic on canvas

Awaken.1
117inches x 138inches

Awaken.2
105inches x 133inches

Awaken.3
106inches x 98inches

38 Choice series
Acrylic on canvas

Choice.1
40inches x 50inches

Choice.2
40inches x 50inches

Choice.3
40inches x 50inches

Choice.4
40inches x 50inches

Choice.5
40inches x 50inches

John Bryan Mausio

The Mind is a Cancer
Acrylic on Canvas
115 inches x 157 inches

Labour

Acrylic on Canvas
76 inches x 111 inches

Jone Cagi

The Journey
Mixed media installation
120 inches x 25 inches x 27 inches

Joseph Daniel Whippy

Change
Audio-performance
8m 10 sec

Josephine Tavaga

Act Now!
Digital Art on PVC Banner
2.4 m x 3 m

Laisiasa Dave Lavaki

The beautiful sounds of things
that slowly kill us
Audio-video multimedia installation
3m 34 sec

Litia Rogo & Ren Slatter

To be or not to be
15m 18 sec

Lite Tadulala

Na Bula vaka-Viti
Series of clay pots
Various sizes

Marie Koya

Checkpoint Series x 12
Digital Art & Photography on
board
23.4 inches x 16.5 inches

Meli Mafi

Utomu
Digital Art on PVC Banner

Peni Waqa Vuidreketi

Na iLakolako
Mixed Media on Canvas
104 x 131 inched

Selai Bualsala

Suka Lesu
Hand printed tapa with traditional
dyes
12 x 9 ft

Sian Rolls

Boxed in
Mixed Media

Tomasi Domomate

The will of the heart
201 inches x 138 inches

Viliame Vosabeci

Family Series: Triptych
Acrylic on Canvas
16 inches x 19 inches

Mother

16 inches x 19 inches

Child

16 inches x 19 inches

Smoker

16 inches x 19 inches

William Lynch Camakau

The Embrace
Metal Sculpture

PROJECT TEAM





Peter Daniel Sixeli
Project Manager

Peter is the lead project manager of the Educating for Sustainable Lifestyles through the Arts Project. He began his career with ten years of work in the Non-Governmental Organization sector and has worked as a Human Rights Activist in the area of GLBT Rights. He has also worked with femLINK Pacific managing a regional women's information peace network. In the arts sector, he has worked at the Fiji Arts Council as Special Projects and Public Relations Officer. Additionally, he managed the popularized ROC Sunday street market for eight years (2002 – 2010). He joined the Fiji School of Medicine in 2010 as the FSM 125th Anniversary Project Manager and is currently employed as the Senior Projects Officer in the Dean's Office, College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences. Peter is passionate about wellness and the arts. He is a well known Spoken word artist in Fiji and has been instrumental in the revitalization of the Fiji SLAM in Suva.



Cresantia Frances Koya
Co-Project Manager

Frances, as she is commonly known, is a lecturer in Education at the University of the South Pacific in Suva. A literary and visual artist, she is interested in both raising the profile of the arts and artists in Fiji and the Pacific. In education, she works towards realizing the potential role that the arts can play in formal and non-formal education with reference to issues of resilience, sustainability and crisis in the Pacific islands. In addition to over ten years of art engagement in Fiji and the wider Pacific, she also held the position of Acting Director at the Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific (2009 – 2010) and more recently, was the Pacific island representative on the 2012 - 2013 Commonwealth Short Story Prize panel of judges. Her doctoral thesis explored Pacific understandings of ESD through an examination of Samoan and Tongan Heritage Arts. Research interests include: Pacific island education, Pacific Island Arts, Art as social learning; Protest Poetry and Pacific Research and Evaluation. She is co-project manager of the Educating for Sustainable Lifestyles through the Arts Project.



Lingikoni Emelio Vakautu
Arts Advisor and Curator

Lingikoni is a Fiji National who was born and raised in Tonga. He began his art career as a founding member of the Red Wave Collective in 1998. He was based at the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture from 1998 to 2008 as a resident Visual Artist. In 2009, he was the Visual Arts Coordinator at the Fiji Arts Council in Suva. Notably, in 2003, he was the first Fijian recipient of the Commonwealth Arts and Crafts Award. As a result, he spent six months in New Zealand. He has exhibited in more than forty exhibitions at local, regional and international solo and group exhibits. Lingikoni has served as a local art judge and has curated a number of exhibitions locally including the Fiji National Fine Art Exhibition and numerous bi-annual exhibitions at the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture. He worked with inmates as part of the Fiji Yellow Ribbon Creative Arts Project in 2008- 2009 and was the visual arts curriculum writer for the Education for Sustainable Development project pilot initiative 2010 - 2012. Lingikoni holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Computer Information System is currently completing his Masters degree in Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific. His thesis examines the development of contemporary arts in Fiji. He is passionate about community-based art projects and developing the arts in the context of the Pacific islands. He is artist advisor and curator of the Educating for Sustainable Lifestyles through the Arts Project.



Vivian Koster
Facilitator

Vivian taught social science and history at Secondary School in Fiji before joining the University of the South Pacific as the Coordinator of the Commonwealth Diploma in Youth Development Work Programme. More recently she was employed at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in Suva as Human Development Programme Officer, Youth. She is involved in netball administration in Fiji and is passionate about youth initiatives in Fiji and the Pacific, specifically with the Pacific Youth Council. Vivian is currently a full time student, pursuing a Master of Arts in Social Policy looking at Youth Empowerment in the Pacific. She is also a poet and artist. She is project workshop facilitator and rapporteur for the Educating for Sustainable Lifestyles through the Arts Project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude to the following individuals and organizations without which this project and ensuing exhibition would not have been possible.

First and foremost, we extend our sincere appreciation for the support and encouragement of Professor Ian Rouse, Dean of the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, FNU. Thank you for your confidence in our ability to engage in this exploratory project that uses the arts as a tool for communicating health and creating awareness. And for providing donor support through the AusAid Strategic Fund, to the College for this initiative.

We appreciate the contribution and partnership with the Ministry of Health, in particular the Wellness Center. To Dr. Tukana and his staff for their commitment and enthusiasm on this project namely Elizabeth Younger and Mia Cusack for providing project support. We also thank Dr. Margaret Cornelius of the Fiji Health Support Sector Programme for her enthusiasm, encouragement and support.

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We acknowledge the contribution from Dr. Berlin Kafoa and his staff of the Projects Resource Center for assisting with logistical and financial direction and advice.

We thank the Fiji Arts Council, VOU Dance Company and the Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies, USP for investing your artists into this project.

We also extend our thanks to Ms. Sharon Biribo, Director of the Research Office, College of Medicine for being an ear and a sounding board and for being an encouraging spirit throughout.

We thank the workshop facilitators for sharing their knowledge and skills: Ms. Sachiko Miller Soro (Dance); Ms. Mary Rokonadravu (Literary); Mr. Calvin Rore (Music); Dr. Margaret Cornelius (Wellness); Sr. Sangeeta Devi (Early Childhood Nutrition); Ms. Anne Rauch (Mental Health); Mrs. Kitty Bulamainavalu (Nutrition); and, Sr. Elena Randarath (NCD Toolkit Programme).

We thank our media partners for their support. Fiji Times, especially Ms. Ruby Taylor and Mr. Sailosi Batiratu for recognizing the potential of this project and creating a weekly space for articles as a regular feature in the Fiji times. We also thank the Fiji Broadcasting Cooperation for media support.

We appreciate Kalara Vusoniwailala and her staff of Mango Café for providing the space for the project team to sit and plan and execute this project.

A special thank you to Ms. Ann Tarte for the photography and Mr. Paulo Baleinakorodawa for his initial involvement as facilitator in the project.

And finally, but most importantly, we thank the artists. For investing your time and artistic efforts into this new approach using conceptual art design for committing to this long-term project initiative, we thank you.

Vinaka vakalevu. Dhanyavad. Fāiāk se'ea. Thank you.

Art is a search for wellness
NCDS Reflect 2013
Life Choices
Their art narratives provide a multi-perspective analysis of the health crisis currently experienced in Fiji and the wider Pacific islands.

Raising public awareness and dialogue on NCDs in Fiji
Educating for Sustainable Lifestyles through the Arts
Health Crisis
ART HEALTH WELLNES