The Potential of Vā

An investigation of how ‘Ie Tōga activate the spatial relationships of the Vā, for a Samoan Diaspora community

Primary Supervisor: Dr. Tina Engels-Schwarzpaul
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E muamua lava ona ai'i le vi'i'ga ma le fa'a'efetia i Le Atua mo lona agafele ma lona alofa ua mafi ai ona fa'ataumua'u te nei fa'tamoe. First and foremost, I must thank God, for all that he has done for me. I have truly been blessed with his guidance and belief that with him all things are possible.

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1.0 Abstract

The Vā is our past, present, and future. As much as we might want to define the Vā—it certainly defines us. It does not appear as a physical form. It is never vacant. The Vā connects us all through our relationships as a space that always already exists, whether we think about it or not, and even when we feel disconnected. It appears most strongly when we meet and practice Samoan ceremonial exchange.

The Samoan dictionary defines Vā as “separated, be divided, estranged – on bad terms, space, distance between, and relationship” (Milner, 2003). For my thesis, Vā is a relational space whose potential for the creation of spaces of display I will test. My project seeks to discover ways of creating communities, which nurture fa’asamoa (Samoan ways) in the diaspora. The Vā has the potential to create spaces of display – not necessarily lasting buildings: in Samoan culture, and Oceanic culture more generally, “space is indissolubly linked to time” (Tcherkézoff, 2008, p. 136). It is in these contexts that the project seeks to discover ways of creating communities, nurturing fa’asamoa, Samoan ways, in the diaspora.

The project examines the associations and ancestral connections of ‘Ie Tōga (Samoan fine mats) within their communities. It explores the relationships created through the exchange of historical ‘Ie Tōga, making visible their place in the Vā and how they activate it by presenting to us our past, present, and future. The design proposal is the creation of a space of display arising from the processes of Lalaga (weaving) and Lalava (according to Albert Reftiti in personal communication (2010), “stirring the Vā” is a literal translation of, Lala-Vā, lashing). In this case, the combination lead to a stirring and re-connecting of the relationships within diasporic space. The thesis will test the potential of Vā through various methods of experimentation, such as archival research, participation, documentation of images and mapping.
Like bundles of hay, coils of 'Ie Toga piled in our garage. Never used or tampered with, this precious royal land, and I recall memories of standing at the back of the church kitchen hall, next to piles of 'Ie Toga, seeing them passed from one side of the room to the other. Each time, an array of people were revealed in the space as they admired the 'Ie Toga, and I recall the pungent smell of dried pandanus leaves which filled the room. It was hard for me to grapple with the significance of this event and absorb what was going on. Only now, in my Master's year, 15 years later, do I realise the importance of 'Ie Toga for my culture, and the well being of fa'amāsio. 'Ie Toga, also known as 'fine mats', are to this day treasured by Samoans as central to ceremonial exchange. They indicate an individual's and their family's status and play a significant part in maintaining culture.

I am trying to come to terms with the concept of 'Vā' as a New Zealand born half Samoan, half Fijian/Indian and as a spatial designer who is interested in its capabilities for my practice. Dur- ing my tertiary studies, I never developed any interests towards design - a concept which feeds directly into the methodology. The last section of this chapter critically analyses the materiality of 'Ie Toga: Samoan ceremonial exchange. The materiality of 'Ie Toga brings about the need for my project to understand Traditional knowledge, particularly the fine arts Lavalava and Lalogae, to propose methods that may feed directly into the methodology. The last section of this chapter is Display: Exhibition and collections, which examines how these fine art forms from the Pacific are displayed, viewed, and archived by traditional Western forms of exhibition.

The Methodology chapter describes the design practice in five parts. Firstly, in Archipelago, it continues to explore past and present forms of display of Samoan-Pacific items in selected instances in early exhibitions of Samoa and the Pacific. I discuss three specific exhibitions concerning Samoan fale that were exhibited in the USA: (Chicago 1893), United Kingdom: London (1940), and New Zealand: Wellington (1940). Current museum displays provide visual images of present displays by Te Papa Tongarewa/Museum of New Zealand in Wellington and the Auckland War Memorial Museum. Participation and documentation give accounts of my involvement (social and participation in, vari- ous Samoan and more generally Pacific Auckland communities and events. Experimentation. Lavalava and Lalogae is an account of the practical exploration in my thesis of the two traditional meth- ods I explored in Theoretical frameworks. Particularly Lalonga then serves Mapping process of locating in the South Auckland community.

The Design chapter is my final proposal for a design intervention, locating a specific Site in the Otara community, followed by my reasoning for a Celebration of 'Ie Toga. It will be extended be- yond the submission of the draft exegesis and the examination, as I continue my experiments and add further iterations to the design. Therefore, this chapter only represents part of the process. A full document will be submitted at the time of examination. For the same reason, this exegesis does not have a conclusion yet.

This thesis is an equal combination of an exegesis of 50%, and the practice-based work of 50%. The final library copy will include the documentation of the exhibition of practical work.

2.0 Introduction

Wendt’s beautiful and poetic description captured the essence of this term in a post-colonial global context, but it also raised ques- tions regarding its meaning for me as a diasporic half Samoan. Did the same connotations come to mind when Wendt wrote ‘Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body’: “At the time, it continued to explore past and present forms of display of Samoan-Pacific items in selected instances in early exhibitions of Samoa and the Pacific. I discuss three specific exhibitions concerning Samoan fale that were

2.3 The Vā: A Samoan concept

In 1911, Vā was defined in Pratt’s Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language as “a space between” (p. 100). It refers to the space between places or people and “connotes mutual respect in socio-political arrangements that nurture the relationships between people, places and spaces. (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009, p. 12). The seminal definition in the last decades goes back to Albert Wendt’s 1996 ‘Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body’.

Important to the Samoan view of reality is the concept of the space between, not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All.” (Wendt, 1996, para 14).

This quote refers to the art of tatoo, or tattoo, from a “global per- spective” (Clayton, 2007). Wendt refers to “space” as the “space between” and considers how this “space between” relates to dif- ferent identities. Spaces of identitymerge and, as they draw closer together, form relationships. Differences between cultures, fami- lies and traditions are seen from the interaction in the relational space, of which we become aware when we draw close.

Wendt suggests that Vā is not a vacant space, nor a space that needs to be filled. Wendt further implies that some Westerners tend to think that space is a gap that has to be closed. But there

3.0 Theoretical frameworks
is no empty, separated or closed space. Rather, space is of woven connections – a “duality of substance and respect” (Wendt, 1996), it is also a spiritual embodiment in us all: we not only carry this Vā within ourselves, but it is embodied in our proper and improper behaviours. Food division and distribution, sleeping and sitting arrangements and language in the public spaces are all conceived through the Vā (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009, p. 14). There are also personal and group responsibilities, which maintain balance and agreement in the Vā, through formal and informal community. All this can be linked to Samoan epistemology. In an interview, Aumua Mata‘tu’i Simanu, Professor of Samoan Studies at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa, says:

Vā is the most significant concept to understand the complexity of Samoan social interactions between people, church, and the environment. It underpins all epistemologies of participation, obligation, and reciprocation that guide our interactions and continue even as Samoans move abroad. Performances of social responsibilities and obligations prescribed in Vā rest on the knowledge of social and genealogical connections that ‘aiga members possess (Aumua Mata‘tu’i Simanu and Mauana, 2006, quoted in Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009, p. 14).

Samoan explains how the relationships between Samoan people have great significance in the forming of social interactions. It is a way in which Samoans view their understandings of one another, and behave in a way expected in accordance with their roles and responsibilities.

Albert Refiti (2008) describes the Vā as a co-openness. Vā contrasts Wendt (1996) to an extent, as he explains by referring to the example of a meeting of Samoan chiefs (fono): When Samoan chiefs encounter each other in the fono they don’t think strategically about their vā as a being-Samoan can be said to be already opened. There is no gap, when a matai sits in the fono everybody is long before who he is today; he becomes the ancestor. This is what I mean by a co-openness (Refiti, 2008).

Refiti goes on to say that the Vā changes depending on the context of the relations and has thus a temporal aspect. He supports this with the example of a meeting of Samoan chiefs (fono) that tuagalu Tagaualu (2008) who specifically examines Vā from a New Zealand perspective, attempting to adapt it in “context to Samoan notions of Feda Fa’aosamoa (relational space) and Fā Ze’epa (sacred/worship space)” (Refiti, 2008).

Tuagalu (2009) in his article ‘Heuristics of the Fono,’ suggests that Wendt’s widely used definition has a commonality with a theory of social action that is being developed in New Zealand by Samoan scholars. They all deal with a notion of the Vā as a “holistic identity formation predicated on co-belonging and relationship building” (Refiti, 2008), its active character becomes desirable when applied as a strategic concept, “creating space for mutual building” (Refiti, 2008); its active character becomes desirable between thing – no, they are already in it, they are seized by the ancestor. This is what I mean by a co-openness (Refiti, 2008).

It is my contention that the meanings and nuances of the Vā fa’asamoa (identity), “with the Socratic maxim to ’know thyself’, the beginning of all knowledge (po’o) is knowledge of oneself” (Aiono, 1997). Aiono’s (1997) examination of Samoan fa’asamoa is founded on three main poles (po’o tuasaga): firstly, matai, chiefly titles to which one has genealogical ties; secondly, the land (eie’eie ma fanua), that is attached to those titles; and, lastly, the Samoan language, as the Samoan language is regarded as the “fundamental way in which Samoans differentiate themselves from others” (Tuagalu, 2009, p. 121).

I use the term Se’u through Samoan, in which an individual or a group is considered to be already opened. This concept is essential to Samoan identity, and consists of a number of values and traditions:

- ‘sige (identity),
- taualua Samoan language,
- pola (genital system),
- manuva (chiefly system),
- lotu (church),
- fa’amotua (ceremonial and other family obligations).

Samoan practices in Samoa may differ from those in New Zealand, but every Samoan has the concept. It is my contention that the meanings and nuances of the Vā fa’asamoa, (relational space) though not lost, become muffled in translation. For there are marked differences between the village organisation in Samoan and the Church organisation in Aotearoa. The Church does not have a Se‘u faithapepe, a per-united geographical notion, nor a Se‘u role when a matai seeks to fulfill the membership as the transcription (Tuagalu, 2009, p. 121).

Tuagalu (2009) explains that the relational space taught in a
3.3 Standpoint epistemologies

Epistemologically, Fij is encoded with respect, service, and hospitality in maintaining and retaining ‘iga status and a socially well-located family (Lomavita-Dekore, 2009, p. 12).

In the article “How We Know: Kwara’ae Rural Villagers Doing Indigenous Epistemology”, David Welchman Gegeo and Karen Ann Watson-Geggo (2001) review theories of knowledge, including the nature, sources, frameworks, and limits of knowledge. They state that “epistemology tolerates a variety of self-identities and accommodation practices” (p. 51).

In his essay “Working in the Space Between: Artistic and Media Discourses and Media of Communication”, Graeme Whimp (2009) critiques the significant and variety of concepts spaces such as balance, blending, duality, synthesis, fusion, limen, and interface. He notes that indigenous ways of knowing about knowledge that are activated and reformulating, and theorising about knowledge that are activated by Samoan communities away from Samoa – through traditional cultural space. Whimp critiques the significance and variety of concepts spaces such as balance, blending, duality, synthesis, fusion, limen, and interface.
3.4 Migration to New Zealand: Diaspora

Many cultural communities continually move from one homeland to another site of settlement, either for economic opportunity or political refuge (Clifford, 1997). In doing so, they considerably reconstitute their cultural and communication practices to speak to and reflect upon their migration experiences (Deze–vieck & Halualani, 2002). Also, upon moving to new places, cultural groups adapt, incorporate, and modernise (Westermier) to fit into new host countries, sometimes casting aside their traditional cultural practices. The circumstances of Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa/New Zealand are complex. While they retain ties with their home islands, their place in the “new” land is falsely given Pākehā (European) aspirations for a postcolonial reality, and the continued struggle of Māori against internal colonization. The situation is further complicated by the more recent migration to Aotearoa/New Zealand of people from Southeast Asia and China (Whimp, 2009, p. 18).

Yamamoto (1996) writes, “Diaspora in the past meant leaving the homeland forever. It accompanied the feeling of loss, losing one’s native identities, family ties, and the attachments to one’s homeland (para.2), but this is not the case for the Samoan New Zealand community. From the 1950s, Samoans migrated to New Zealand in large numbers (Anae, 2000). New Zealand’s industry and the service sector expanded over the next 30 years. Many Samoans moved to New Zealand for greater opportunities and a better education for their children. Within this span of 30 years, diasporic Samoans have adapted to New Zealand living by becoming part of the Samoan church communities. In New Zealand cities, Samoan churches increased in numbers and helped their people to adapt by subsequently taking on the role of villages to provide a platform for strong Samoan fa’samoana (identity). In the home land of Samoa it is important for the individual to locate one self: to their village as a form of identity, because there derives genealogical, ancestral and historic connections to the individual and family. The role of the church in New Zealand created these connections as it occupied a space of location and formalised an identity for the age.”

In Samoa, a person’s social status has always been based on their village structure, on the land, family connections, genealogies and ancestors. Yet, in a diasporic setting, Samoan communities in Aotearoa organised themselves around church structures. Within the church organisations, and the families instructed and taught the forms (practices) of Fa’a Samoa, or V2 religions. Within the church structures, all the major forms of Fa’a Samoa are practised; e.g., fa’aipopo (weddings), maliu (funerals), fa’alavelave (formal acknowledgement of goods) and lauga (traditional speeches) (Anae, 2000). Furthermore, Halualani noting that:

If you belong to the dominant culture of your society, it is relatively easy to build an identity and conform. You understand what things are, expected of you, and how to meet those expectations. You have freedom to decide whether you wish to adapt by subsequently taking on the role of villages to provide a platform for strong Samoan fa’samoana (identity). In the home

As a diasporic half Samoan I always find myself in a space of non-belonging, not being a native to New Zealand; although I am partially accepted in my Samoan community, as a half Fijian/New Zealand born. From my own experience, having seen and been to many Samoan (Fa’a Samoa) ceremonies and other family obligations, I found it difficult to understand the signification of the cultural ceremonies that were taking place. For example at my auntie’s funeral, a fa’aipoipo ceremony (ceremonial exchange of gifts) was taking place in her home. My
3.5 Te Toga: Samoan ceremonial exchange

Lemi Ponifasio (2008), director of dance theatre MAU, suggests that rituals activate the opening of the Fiti. Ponifasio offered a central idea, which my design follows, of analysing the customary practice of a Diaspora Samoan death ceremony. From there, the question arises: What specifically in these ceremonies activated the Fiti?

The gift exchange on so many occasions (births, marriages, funerals, the consecration of a house or a church, the installation of a new family or village leader, etc.) is called a ‘a e tioga, and the gifts exchanged are rugs and ‘Oloa (Yamamoto, 1996). ‘Ie Toga are female valuables composed in the past of pigs and other food items, canoes, tools, etc., but today these gifts may include very specific tinned foods, as well as paper money. A Samoan funeral takes priority over all other ceremonial practices, within the funeral are the Fa’alavelave (ceremonial and other family obligations) in which the presiding aiga (family) carry out a ‘a e tioga (ceremonial exchange) gifts) of food, money or ‘Ie Toga. It is a procession, which requires a lot from the aiga of the deceased, in terms of time, money and management.

In his essay the ‘First Contacts’ in Polynesia: the Samoan Case (1722-1848) Andrew McClellan (2007), reviews the work of Marcel Mauss in his famous essay, The Gift (Essai sur le don), published in 1923.

Mauss showed that a common feature of these practices was the sacred nature of the objects presented. Here the term sacredness should be interpreted in the Maussian-Durkheimian sense as the object that symbolises the larger group, be it society as a whole or one of its sub-groups. Such objects are opposed (in Maussian terms) to ‘individuals or ordinary objects (e.g., gift of exchange in Polynesia. Fine mats or tapa are never owned by an individual while previously leaf skirts and now printed fabric are); they always represent the identity of a group (McClellan, 2007, p. 163).

McClellan (2007) makes clear that ‘Ie Toga are sacred and symbolises the larger group (a family, clan, or similar), and further the identity that is attached to ‘Ie Toga. ‘Ie Toga are representative of the family, and holds an everlasting authenticity that is passed down through generations. Mauss noted that the gifts—the mats—were the symbol of a group (a family, clan, similar) and were inherited. They held the notion of ‘totality’ as he clarifies that there are different types of ‘Ie Toga that symbolise the larger group (McClellan, 2007, p. 163).

In the case of a funeral, the preceeding aiga of the deceased must give food and fine mats to the orators who attended the ceremony, and the mourning groups of orators visiting the ceremony. Throughout the exchange orators recite genealogies across the space of the room. Food is also prepared for the affiliation kin groups which bring valuables to the presiding aiga (Yamamoto, 1996, para.11).

‘Ie Toga play a central role in these processes, not only do they bring value to the ceremony, but within each mat presented Fiti relations are activated. It is mandatory to give ‘Ie Toga for ceremo-
The rise of tourism is one of the reasons why the skills of Lalaga (weaving) an 'Ie Tōga have missed a couple of generations. It led to a demand of cheaper 'Ie Tōga of much poorer quality. Samoan women did not want to go back to the finer quality, as it was difficult, and time consuming (TV New Zealand, 2007).

Samoan fine mats are not about individuals but about community. 'Ie Tōga is particularly important as a known and renowned object of value. Many 'Ie Tōga are held far from their place of origin, but still retain the memory of the family who wove it and passed it on. 'Ie Tōga carry the genealogy of that family. In Samoa, no other gift object has such a universal currency. I agree with Penelope Schoeffel (1999) that fine mats were never “inalienable objects” but were passed around among Samoa’s nobility, affirming the 'Ie Tōga exclusive identity and divine ancestry. Schoeffel further concludes that 'Ie Tōga had cultural significance as “feminine property”, or “women’s wealth”, or that women, like fine mats, were themselves objects of exchange. She argues this was misrecognition by the foreign missionaries in the early Christian period in Samoa. However, I disagree to an extent: 'Ie tōga had cultural significance as “feminine property” (although “property” is not the correct term, rather “feminine wealth”), and they too connected to the exchange between tamaatrū (descend- ants of a man) and tamafafine (descendants of a women, daughter of a women), and have a divine affinity attached to them, that is associated with “feminine wealth” (Schoeffel, 1999).

In this section of the thesis, on 'Ie Tōga, I have come to summa-
rise is not just about reviving a sacred tradition, but establishing the importance and wellbeing of this fine art.

3.6 Traditional knowledge: Lalava and Lalaga Lalava and Lalaga are male and female art forms respectively. Lalava is the lashing done by a skilled male, when binding to-
gether a fale, a canoe, tools, etc.; and Lalaga is the weaving done by women, in the form of 'Ie Tōga. The theoretical framework of both Lalava and Lalaga is the core strengthening within the objects or structure they compose. They formulate a conception of both male and female, and the importance that each role has in the aiga. In this section, I investigate the strengths and weaknesses of both traditional knowledges, and relevancy to the methodology and practice of design.

Lalava In the exploration of these knowledges, Lalava is a useful meta-
phor. Lalava is about joining and binding material passed around. Another intention of this technique, according to Tohi (2006), is to create distinct geometric patterns that once were a well-estab-
lished part of life within Pacific culture. Lalava patterns advocated balance in daily living and were metaphorical and physical ties to cultural knowledge. In the work of Tongan artist and Tufunga Lalava (lashing expert), Filipe Tohi, Lalava expresses his desire within his work to con-
struct and deconstruct. He writes: “I see everything around me as pattern, structures capable of being broken down and it makes me think about the illusion of things” (Tohi, 2006, para1). Sue Gar-
diner (2006) discusses how Tohi's work of Lalava is based on the building up of patterns, lines, and shapes. These layers evoke as-
sociations with genealogies and reflect spiritual, historical, social, and psychological links. Running strongly throughout the practice of lalava, and re-
ected in Tohi’s work as well, is the theme of intersection between traditional practices and contemporary abstraction. Moving back and forth and in and out of pattern, he decon-
structs the spaces and lines, paring back the components to seek the minimal (Gardiner, 2006, p. 53).

Tongan artist Senisii Potaasie gave me an opening to advance my reading of Vē, and thereby my methodology. To-
nae’s practical work on his objects or structure they compose. They formulate a conception of both male and female, and the importance that each role has in the aiga. In this section, I investigate the strengths and weaknesses of both traditional knowledges, and relevancy to the methodology and practice of design.
The image in Figure 1, reinterpreted by Filipe Tohi’s sculpture, expresses the physical manifestation of LalaVa. There are six main areas represented:

1. aiga (family)
2. tautala Samoa (Samoan language)
3. gafa (genealogies)
4. matui (chiefly system)
5. lotu (church)
6. fa’alavelave (ceremonial and other family obligations).

The interconnection of the physical lines in LalaVa reinforces aspects of connection and belonging to fa’a Samoa. Like Tohi’s work, they make physical links with one another, and are interdependent on each other. No representation is above the other, as they are all equal, and each needs its length to sustain a coherent system. They formulate a cross-over bond, overlaying each other. This repetitive action represents “moving back and forth and in and out” (Gardiner, 2006, p. 53), the constant negotiation and re-negotiation of space; the Vā. The underlying patterns are the relations that are not seen but are still present; they to sustain the overall structure and form the bases of the psychological links.

This framework model I have designed is derived from the concept of fa’a Samoa, and is essential to Samoan identity.
The technique of about one by two metres (Schoeffel, 1999). As Schoeffel explains, dried, split into fine threads, and finally hand plaited into a cloth of into strips, baked, separated into layers, soaked in the sea, sun-

In the past, ‘Ie Tōga had a texture like silky linen. They were made from a fine grade of pandanus leaves, dried, scraped, split into strips, baked, separated into layers, soaked in the sea, sun-

There are many meanings to the word weave and, for my project, I aspire to Lalaga, to interlock the threads of meaning and the threads of Fā relations active within a community. Holding on to the significance of Lalaga in Fā is essential to Samoan identity. The methodological processes of both traditions ‘Ie Tōga does not only refer to the weave (plait-

Timothy Mitchell writes of the mis-read representation of orientalism and culture. Mitchell, in his article entitled “Museum Studies Now” Andrew McClellan wrote that museum studies are not something I want to per-

Vivieaere commented, on this occasion and subsequently, that raised questions about the general visibility of Pacific art” (Thomas, 1996, p. 343).

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Vivieaere commented, on this occasion and subsequently, that raised questions about the general visibility of Pacific art” (Thomas, 1996, p. 343).

Many Pacific items of display have over time brought cultural signifi-

A Companion to Museum Studies, 2007, by Sharon Macdonald (London: British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, 1924) exhibited in the USA (Chicago: World’s Columbian Exposition, 1893), UK (London: British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, 1924) and New Zealand (Wellington City Gallery, 1986) raised questions from the books as a whole about the field of museology today. There seems to be a lack of research being done in areas such as the Pacific for cultural awareness, and it is notice-

The point of the exhibition at its time was that Polynesian cul-

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This was a great starting point, as it got me thinking about the effect of exhibition and the sunny form of display, specifically concerning Samos. Never had it occurred to me before how easily mis-representation occurred in the islands and how a cultural form of knowledge could be mis-understood.

Within this time frame display the richness of scholarship across various disciplines, arts history, history, sociology, and anthropology, and who had “remarkably little overlap among the volumes” (McClellan, 2007, p. 566). McClellan further comments that museum studies have emerged as a model of “interdisciplinarity and intellectual vitality” (McClellan, 2007, p. 566). McClellan further comments that museum studies have emerged as a model of “interdisciplinarity and intellectual vitality” (McClellan, 2007, p. 566). McClellan further comments that museum studies have emerged as a model of “interdisciplinarity and intellectual vitality” (McClellan, 2007, p. 566). McClellan further comments that museum studies have emerged as a model of “interdisciplinarity and intellectual vitality” (McClellan, 2007, p. 566). McClellan further comments that museum studies have emerged as a model of “interdisciplinarity and intellectual vitality” (McClellan, 2007, p. 566). McClellan further comments that museum studies have emerged as a model of “interdisciplinarity and intellectual vitality” (McClellan, 2007, p. 566). McClellan further comments that museum studies have emerged as a model of “interdisciplinarity and intellectual vitality” (McClellan, 2007, p. 566). McClellan further comments that museum studies have emerged as a model of “interdisciplinarity and intellectual vitality” (McClellan, 2007, p. 566). McClellan further comments that museum studies have emerged as a model of “interdisciplinarity and intellectual vitality” (McClellan, 2007, p. 566). McClellan further comments that museum studies have emerged as a model of “interdisciplinarity and intellectual vitality” (McClellan, 2007, p. 566).
4.0 Methodology

From the beginning, the need to understand existing forms of display in New Zealand based communities (specifically Diasporic Samoan and Pacific people living in South Auckland) was an important driver in the development of my methodology. Initially, this was with respect to exhibiting my own creative work. However, the need to understand subsequently related to central aspects of the design and organisation of an event entitled “Our Measina” (Our White Mats), a celebration of our most valued ‘Ie Tōga. Considering forms of display was crucial, because the relationship between modes of observation and engagement of these communities with my exhibit (or, later, the exhibition of ‘Ie Tōga) was an important factor that could determine success or failure of my design proposal. In my investigation of the potential of Vā relationships for the design of “Our Measina”, I surveyed and documented forms of display, from the past to the present. All forms of exhibition of Pacific items, and all ways in which they could be viewed, were principally included and seen as worthy of analysis. I mediated the shift between past and present through a reflection on the concept of Lalava: Lalava patterns are metaphorical and physical ties to cultural knowledge advocating balance (Tohi 2006). For my project, the balance of understanding past and present displays, and their sometimes conflicting aims, was important; it would help me select and develop appropriate modes of showing, learning from past Samoan exhibitions as well as present public museum exhibitions and displays by Pacific communities. At the same time, the potential of “stirring the Vā” as a driver for change remains an important concept.
4.1 Archival research
Archival research was the starting point of this investigation. Its goal was to col-
lect and collate all information available from New Zealand archives concerning
three Samoan fale that were exhibited in the USA (Chicago: World’s Columbian
Exposition, 1893), UK (London: British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, 1924)
and New Zealand (Wellington: New Zealand Centennial Exhibition, 1940). The
information was to be compiled in a database of written and visual documenta-
tion. From the documentation gathered, I found the visual images most informa-
tive, giving good insights into the forms of display. This form of knowledge criti-

cally challenged my perspective of how Samoan culture was viewed by others,
from the 1890s to the 1920s. It also helped me appreciate the difficulties of space
restrictions, the duration of travel, mis-readings and re-interpretations of items,
and the role of displays generated from non-Samoan cultural perspectives, which
cater for the interests of visitors to international and national exhibitions.

Of the national and international exhibitions I researched in the Archives New
Zealand, Wellington, the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago was by
far the most difficult to gather and source information about. Harry J. Moors, a
Michigan born entrepreneur who resided in Samoa, set out from Apia to exhibit in
the South Sea Islands part of the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. He wanted to repre-
sent a “Samoan Village” but his disloyalty to Malietoa (the then paramount chief
of Samoa) led to Malietoa forbidding Samoans to associate with Moors. This
meant his display would eventually be made up “mostly of half-castes (people of
mixed Samoan and Papalagi descent) and other Pacific Islanders, with only a
few full Samoans who had been spirited away” (Salesa, 2005). Moors managed to
take aboard a huge cargo of Samoan objects, including a seventy-foot canoe of
modern design (a taumualua), several smaller watercraft, and three large houses
(fale). It is here, with the three fale, that the information becomes blurred; two
book sources claim that there were three fale, and one claims it was one “knock-
down Samoan House” (Furnas, 1945). It is also still unclear whether one of the
fale belonged to Mata’afa Iosefa, an exiled high chief of the Atua district whom
Moors befriended. Initially, I was so fascinated by Moors’ approach to display
and authenticity that I intended to base my master’s thesis on the stories of his
adventures.

CD 1: Contains the images taken from Archives New Zealand & Alexander Turnbull library. [photographic images]
Mata’afa Iosefa turned out to have also played a role in the preparation for the British Empire Exhibition (B.E.E) at Wembley, 1924. From the communication between officials based in Britain, Samoa and New Zealand, held in the Archives, it appears that Mata’afa offered to build a fale for the New Zealand external affairs administrators who organised exhibits for the upcoming Empire Exhibition. He gathered 200 of his people as workers in Samoa and offered to erect it in Wembley. This offer was declined by the New Zealand colonial government, which had explicitly decided not to send any “Native troupes” to Wembley (Johnston, 1999, p. 150). Instead, an Englishman, Mr. H. Charles Reed, a trader married to Samoan chief’s daughter Masooi Reed, then erected the fale at Wembly – not unlike Moors at the Chicago Exposition. However, Reed altered the construction to some extent to fit it to a site that was shorter than anticipated. The Ministry of External affairs requested that the Samoan exhibits be returned to New Zealand after the British Empire Exhibition, later to be displayed at the Dunedin Exhibition. Delay in the fale’s disassembly by Reed, as well as a misunderstanding regarding a payment of £300 for the exhibits, meant the fale, at the time at least, remained the property of the British Administration.

A third exhibition I researched at the Archives NZ was the 1940 New Zealand Centennial Exhibition in Wellington. The documentation indicates that the fale exhibited in the Wellington Centennial arrived from Samoa by the ship Tofua. Along with the fale other Samoan exhibits arrived aboard ship, which were later to be displayed at several exhibitions to be held in New Zealand, namely in Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin as well as at the Hokitika Exhibition. Reading through the archives, I found it difficult to track the fale’s journey since then. However, there is a document to show that towards the end of the Hokitika exhibition, it was advised that the fale be exhibited in the Wellington Museum (image 4460). A search through Papers Past led me to a small extract from a newspaper article (15 May 1940) according to which the fale had been purchased by an Aucklander by the name of Mr. H. J. Kelliher. Kelliher intended to re-erect it on the island of Puketutu, in the Manukau Harbour, then owned by him. To this day, the fale stands on the Kelliher Estate.
4.2 Current museum displays

The Auckland War Memorial Museum was the beginning of my investigation for current displays of Samoan and Pacific items. What was most attractive at first sight was the Māori gallery filled with significant artefacts. The display was a coherent journey from the history of Māori culture to a live cultural performance. The Museum stores a generous collection of Samoan and Pacific artefacts. The individual Pacific displays within the Auckland museum reflect the Pacific Island groups who live in Auckland and highlight different communities; objects such as tools and utensils for communal living, hunting, fishing and recreation to me failed to communicate their use and natural environment. The Pacific gallery, although generous in its volume, I felt lacked in emphasising a materiality the Pacific Islands project. The Auckland Museum states “Artifacts from Tonga, Fiji, Samoa, Kiribati, Niue, Cook Islands, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea dominate the exhibition” (Auckland Museum, 2011), but in my opinion the displays also create clutter and a busy environment. Reflecting on the journey, I had to understand the many difficulties and restrictions curators must deal with when exhibiting such a large collection of Pacific items. I cannot fault the design concept, lighting, and craftsmanship of display units and as all these elements brought to life a somewhat imaginary voyage through the Pacific.
Te Papa is New Zealand’s national museum, located in the capital city of Wellington. Te Papa is renowned for being bicultural, scholarly, innovative, and fun. The success of the Museum is built on the relationships and ability to represent the New Zealand community. The Te Papa Museum, I felt, reflected a more urban view of Pacific items on display. A honest take of the diaspora Pacific youth, and their influence within the arts community through music, art and cultural festivals. Collage display units describe the colourful nature of Pacific communities in Aotearoa, and how they are very much integrated and interconnected with one another. Te Papa also has in storage some of Samoa’s most prestigious ‘Ie Toga. These items, in storage, become lost and forgotten by the public, the relations symbolised in these objects no longer in social use, become dormant and worthless.

“Museums are burdened with objects which do not fit and which therefore are rarely or never shown to the public.” (Kirshenblat- Gimblett, 2002, p. 60)

Most museums are only able to exhibit a very small share of their holdings and in many cases not more than 10 per cent. To create an opening for these ‘Ie Toga to once again become items of display, is to reunite Vā relations within the community, their histories hold a sense of mana to these Samoan communities, they hold genealogies of ancestry which enable the diaspora to imbibe fa’asamoa.
Reflecting on what I gathered as today’s forms of Samoan/Pacific displays, it seems that Māori and Pacific curators have in-depth knowledge of the items they display, as they are working within the restrictions of galleries, institutes and museums. The items on display and in storage are well organised, categorised, described, and archived. However, while it is clear that these forms of display are aimed at education and tourism, Samoan and Pacific communities, I feel, are unconnected with these institutions. To them, the thought of museums archiving items such as ‘Ie Tōga, which hold significant relations within the Diaspora community, is unsettling. If Lalava is about balance and change, Lalaga is about tying these different entities together in various ways. In contrast to the disconnected views of knowledge commonly held within the walls of the Museum, my plan of intervention is a proposal that Pacific communities have access to archived ‘Ie Tōga and Lalaga. “Our Measina” aims to interlock the threads of meaning and the threads of Vā relations active within the Otara community (or communities). It will emphasise to the community each ‘Ie’s importance and past significance to Samoan identity and fa’asamoa as people bring forth their own ‘Ie Tōga alongside ‘Le Aneagea o Tumua’ (see below).
4.3 Participation and documentation

The Pacific arts community is very much alive in the Diaspora, each year celebrating Pacific culture and showcasing a range of crafts on display. From the Otara South Auckland markets to the Waitakere Pacific arts and community trusts, Pacific culture is alive and noticeable. Part of my methodology was to become involved with my surrounding communities and to participate in workshops throughout the year. My participation and documentation adopts the method of Lalaga because, “like [in] a fine mat being woven, the strands of Samoan history, fa’asamoa and Samoan contemporary livings, and their interaction with ‘others’ interconnect to inform Samoan identity” {Anae, 1998, p. 1}. Thus, with my involvement and accounts (interconnection) of the many events and activities (threads) offered for Pacific peoples, this thesis acknowledges and connects to the larger body of the Samoan Diaspora (Samoan identity). I hope that the information collected here helps recognise the Samoan/Pacific communities in Aotearoa, and what they offer as Diaspora peoples.

This year, Colab, in conjunction with AUT University, invited Rosanna Raymond as their artist in residence. As part of the programme Raymond held a full day workshop, which I attended, using the AUT Manukau Campus Sculptures to investigate the tension between language, voice(s), the written word, the spoken word, the body and material objects. Rosanna Raymond is a woman of many talents, but advises she is first and foremost an artist. Raymond is a well-known figure in the New Zealand Pasifika movement, being an integral practitioner in performance, poetry and art installation and exhibition. The workshop was to create a series of performative interventions revealing, activating and interplaying with the hidden voices and stories imbued in the AUT Manukau Campus sculptures. Raymond held quick sessions where we were given a few minutes to describe the sculptures as a list of words. In relation to my practice as a designer it forced me to see beyond the physical object and read deeper into the meaning of form. The reading of patterns on the sculptures was a meaningful journey as it provoked feelings of my own identity. Raymond’s workshop covered creative expression using Pacific stories and cultural objects; I found a creativity voice within myself being expressed through words of identity. This information feed directly into my introduction of this thesis, describing this project from my own perspective and identity as a half Samoan diaspora community member.

Image 17-19: Kumar Simati, B. (2011). Photographs of AUT University, Manukau campus sculptures. [photographic images]
My next point of investigation was difficult in that I needed to figure out what was the physical spatial design of my proposal? Having done research on exhibition and displays it was appropriate to meet an architect behind these curated displays. Rick Pearson is an architect who specialises in Exhibition and Museum design; his expertise in this area gave me two important directions on how to begin the process of designing an exhibition. Pearson’s first point of direction was beginning with knowing your material of display, knowledge of the material meant an awareness of how to spatially create an environment. Second was to document every item, and familiarise myself with the site of display, space restrictions, lighting, preservation of items and those not necessary to the display. I knew I wanted to display ‘Ie Tōga’, but more specifically ones that were going to activate relations of location and identity, but those that were precious to Samoa were either held, or stored, in Te Papa, or by the government in Samoa. Pearson made me critically think about the traditional forms of display, I constantly kept coming back to forms of display cabinets, lighting levels, space restrictions; but when I thought about my Samoan diaspora community would these traditional forms of display cater to their needs? What forms of display could actively communicate to this community? I didn’t know an answer, however I knew the solution did not lie within the form of a museum or gallery exhibition.
From the beginning of May to the end of June this year was the 2011 South Auckland Pacific Arts Summit, this forum provided an opportunity for my practice to expand further from the museums and exhibitions and become involved with visual arts, forums, and literature in the community.

Mamas and Museums was a workshop created by Kolokesa Māhina-Tualooks as part of the 2011 South Auckland Pacific Arts Summit. The aim of the workshop was to create mutual understanding and foster better communication between the museums sector and Pacific women fine artists. Mamas from across New Zealand, representing a variety of island nations, were invited to exhibit their fine art and share a bit about the type and variety of art works they create and the materials and recourses they use. What was most interesting about Māhina-Tualooks’ workshop was the communication between the mamas and representatives from Te Papa museum and Auckland Museum who talked to us about the work they do with their respective Pacific collections. The conservation workshop sessions run by the conservators from both museums provided a safe place and mutual understanding for both parties; sustaining, distributing and contributing Pacific knowledge. What for me was most successful about this event was the safe environment Māhina-Tualooks provided for the represented mamas. The Manukau Institute of Technology Arts Building in Otara was the site of display. This campus is situated in South Auckland which has a strong community of Pacific Island residents and artists. The site has a rich history and played a role of community based to the success of this workshop, this site is pursued further in my design practice.
Reflecting on my documentation of both festivals, Pasifika and Polyfest, I couldn't help but feel the pride gleam from the sea of brown faces. The festivals, I felt, gave the youth self-importance for who they are, but also acknowledged their peers and the relations they share as Pacific Diaspora. The community participation was incredibly supportive and accommodating of their cultures. The essence of what Pasifika and Polyfest provide is the wellbeing of cultural identity. For this very essence was what the method 'participation and documentation' planned to seek out. My involvement as a South Auckland resident, member of the Weymouth congregational church of Samoa, church youth participant, and recipient of the Manukau AUT scholarship, has privileged me to view our community from these different vantage points, and analyse the successes of each event. For my project I wanted to relate the qualities of a festival to manifest in the display for 'Ie Tōga, qualities of an event, staged by a local community, which centres on and celebrates a unique aspect, 'Ie Tōga.

People from many Pacific nations grace Aotearoa/New Zealand with their rich cultures and spiritual traditions expressed in many ways including music, song, dance, prayer, language, visual art, performing arts and traditional arts. Involvement with the Pacific performance sector was the next stage in the methodology.

Pasifika is a Pacific Islands-themed festival held annually in Western Springs, Auckland City. The festival presents a wide variety of cultural experiences, including traditional Pacific cooking and performances from Samoa to the Māori of New Zealand. A second event, the ASB festival, is South Auckland’s most iconic Pacific event. The festival is a celebration of Māori and Pacific Island communities through cultural song, dance, speech and art. The festival every year brings healthy competition between secondary schools celebrating diversity and cultural identity.
4.4 Experimentation: Lalava & Lalaga

As stated in the Traditional knowledge: Lalava & Lalaga section, the information provided by Semisi Potauaine about Lalava had potential regarding the binding of directional lines in the mapping process. For this thesis, I initially reviewed the processes of my Honours thesis – specifically the use of materials that have no obvious relation to Pacific construction materials. Testing different variations of spatial relationships, I had begun to form my own language of Lalava. This year, I paid close attention to what happens in the process of binding together cotton and steel rod to produce spatial models. For example, I observed the properties of the materials (e.g., stability and fragility), how they react, and what the resulting spaces look and feel like.

I then took photos of the models created and adjusted light setting in Photoshop to explore the spatial properties of different configurations. I then moved on to Lalaga, this time focusing of the ‘Ie Tōga, finding spatial relations that pertained to the ‘Ie Tōga by means of photography, scanning, and lighting.

Reflecting on both these processes, it was interesting to note the fragility and fluidity of the materials. The feedback I received from this made it apparent to me that it was difficult for others to associate relationships, and distinguish spaces with my experimentation of Lalava & Lalaga. I had to ask myself, what was the potential of Vā within this experimentation? The physical manifestation of both these metaphors was not leading me to a design proposal. I therefore decided to move away from the materials, and to engage with my community to find other means of using Lalava & Lalaga as spatial relationships within the Vā.
4.5 Mapping: Manukau South Auckland community

The significance of location for my Diaspora community is crucial to the display of ‘Te Tūī. Location of belonging; blededawos our ancestors, location to Samoa’ villages, in relation to our own locations here in Aotearoa. Within this method of Mapping, Lalava is used as the visible lines that are drawn on site, Lalaga on the other hand is used as a metaphorical term of weaving and connecting the Samoan community to their Tūi relations through the visible lines of Lalava.

My strategy of mapping, as a design tool, was informed by precedents in the work of Daniel Libeskind, particularly the Jewish Museum in Berlin, which I used as a case study for my Honours project. Libeskind’s design involved a process of connecting and mapping historic events and locations of Jewish culture in Berlin. The resulting lines outline and structure the building. Libeskind also used the concepts of absence, emptiness, and the invisible signs of the disappearance of Jewish culture in the city. These notions had an affinity with the concepts of absence, diaspora and lines of location in my own project.
Further to this significant event is the history of Le Ageagea o Tumua, and the many genealogies and Vā relations pertained within it. The three Vā relations I chose to include within my project were the locations between Tonga, Samoa and New Zealand/Wellington. -King Tuitonga of Tonga gifted ‘Le Ageagea o Tumua’ to the Tuiatua Leutele in Samoa -‘Le Ageagea o Tumua’ previously stored in Mulinu’u ma Sepolata’emo, residence of Tuiatua -Wellington Te Papa, current location of ‘Le Ageagea o Tumua’ These three significant events will be marked on the proposed site, according to their geographical location. In the mapping process, the lines start at communal spaces of Samoans in south Auckland. From here, the lines on the location map spread out to Wellington (the current location of Le Ageagea o Tumua), Samoa, and Tonga. The physical mapping of these directional lines onto the site not only connects each individual to the site, but revives the significance of Le Ageagea o Tumua to the community. The mapping shown in images 72-75 begins with a view of the overall context and then zooms in to the Otara site “Our Measina”. Further to this significant event is the history of Le Ageagea o Tumua, and the many genealogies and Vā relations pertained within it. The three Vā relations I chose to include within my project were the locations between Tonga, Samoa and New Zealand/Wellington. -King Tuitonga of Tonga gifted ‘Le Ageagea o Tumua’ to the Tuiatua Leutele in Samoa -‘Le Ageagea o Tumua’ previously stored in Mulinu’u ma Sepolata’emo, residence of Tuiatua -Wellington Te Papa, current location of ‘Le Ageagea o Tumua’ These three significant events will be marked on the proposed site, according to their geographical location. In the mapping process, the lines start at communal spaces of Samoans in south Auckland. From here, the lines on the location map spread out to Wellington (the current location of Le Ageagea o Tumua), Samoa, and Tonga. The physical mapping of these directional lines onto the site not only connects each individual to the site, but revives the significance of Le Ageagea o Tumua to the community. The mapping shown in images 72-75 begins with a view of the overall context and then zooms in to the Otara site “Our Measina”. I chose this particular mat because of the significant occasion it marked for New Zealand and Samoa. The ‘Te Tōga’ not only served as a gift of forgiveness but sustains a history of Samoans living in New Zealand. The relevance of ‘Le Ageagea o Tumua’ within my project activates relations of the Vā, the knowledge pertained within the ‘Te Tōga’ belongs to the Samoan community, not to dwell on the past, but to remember the real meaning of ‘Te Tōga’ to pass down for future generations of Samoans and Samoan diaspora. Further to this significant event is the history of Le Ageagea o Tumua, and the many genealogies and Vā relations pertained within it. The three Vā relations I chose to include within my project were the locations between Tonga, Samoa and New Zealand/Wellington. -King Tuitonga of Tonga gifted ‘Le Ageagea o Tumua’ to the Tuiatua Leutele in Samoa -‘Le Ageagea o Tumua’ previously stored in Mulinu’u ma Sepolata’emo, residence of Tuiatua -Wellington Te Papa, current location of ‘Le Ageagea o Tumua’ These three significant events will be marked on the proposed site, according to their geographical location. In the mapping process, the lines start at communal spaces of Samoans in south Auckland. From here, the lines on the location map spread out to Wellington (the current location of Le Ageagea o Tumua), Samoa, and Tonga. The physical mapping of these directional lines onto the site not only connects each individual to the site, but revives the significance of Le Ageagea o Tumua to the community. The mapping shown in images 72-75 begins with a view of the overall context and then zooms in to the Otara site “Our Measina”. I chose this particular mat because of the significant occasion it marked for New Zealand and Samoa. The ‘Te Tōga’ not only served as a gift of forgiveness but sustains a history of Samoans living in New Zealand. The relevance of ‘Le Ageagea o Tumua’ within my project activates relations of the Vā, the knowledge pertained within the ‘Te Tōga’ belongs to the Samoan community, not to dwell on the past, but to remember the real meaning of ‘Te Tōga’ to pass down for future generations of Samoans and Samoan diaspora.
5.0 Design

The Vā, as the relational space I wanted to create through the display of 'Ie Tōga, relies on contextual qualities that are likely to foster communities and nurture fa'asamoa (Samoan ways) in the diaspora. To examine the associations and ancestral connections of ‘Ie Tōga (Samoan fine mats), it is important to explore the relationships created through their exchange. This exchange, and even the display of ‘Ie Tōga, can be problematic in some settings, when, for instance, audience access is restricted to that of the ‘arts community’, as in a white wall gallery or museum-like setting.

5.1 Site: Otara Markets

I want the display of ‘Ie Tōga to be aimed at the Samoan community, including all age groups, backgrounds, identities, and religion; I also aim for the project to call upon other Māori and Pacific communities to learn about Samoan culture, to take part in contributing to the knowledge of indigenous fine arts, and to celebrate the Vā relations of community well-being. To make visible the ‘Ie Tōga’s place in the Vā, the place and event has to be different from Western strategies of display, and draw upon our own indigenous community gatherings, in which they present to us our past, present, and future. Creating a space of display arising from the processes of Lalaga (weaving) and Lalava, ‘stirring the Vā’ leads to an excitement and re-connecting of the relationships within diasporic space.

The Otara Market has been the centre of Pacific communities since the early 80s. Synthetically created as a cheap housing area in the 60s, Otara drew attention as Auckland’s most notorious community of Pacific Diaspora, for immigrants in the low socio-economic groups (Auckland City Council, 2010). Years that followed led to high housing cost in Auckland’s central regions, pushing many Pacific residents out into South Auckland’s cheaper living areas and leading to ethnic clustering. Today’s township of Otara has a strong sense of South Auckland pride, saturating Otara’s formally fearful façade (which was the consequence of ethnic conflict, at times escalating into violence). In 2011, the South Auckland community gathers every Saturday morning at the Otara Market, filling the carpark with colourful Pacific culture, arts & craft, food & entertainment. This market is considered to be one of Manukau’s leading events, a fact which has made it attractive for my proposal to intervene with the display of ‘Ie Tōga.

Markets, festivals, and church gatherings are significant occasions and bring forth the display of ‘Ie Tōga, as ways to enrich Vā relations within the community. Conceived as part of the ASB Polyfest and Pasifika festival, my project embraces the performativity of ‘Ie Tōga in a festive display celebrating its significance to the Samoan diaspora community.

To really activate Vā relations, the display of ‘Ie Tōga had to be a part of the community’s social relations. During my observations at the Otara markets, I felt the social relations in the community were very active here: there are informal social gatherings of Chinese, but mostly social gatherings of Māori and Pacific people. The site provides an opening to all age groups, cultures, and communities.

5.2 Intervention: Celebration of ‘Ie Toga – “Our Measina”

The proposed intervention sites Vā relations because the display of ‘Ie Toga no longer takes place on a separate and formal occasion, but it intervenes into the every-day. “Our Measina” locates ancestral connections and activates them through the display of ‘Ie Toga – particularly the historically significant Le agaaga o Tumua. The function of the display enhances the Vā relations within the community by engaging people and ‘Ie Toga; the Vā is acknowledged in the presence and participation of the community. On site, weavers display their fine art and pass on knowledge of ‘Ie Toga, presenting new ways of understanding cultural identity. ‘Ie Toga communicate in this event the importance of identity; how we have adapted as Diasporic communities, and how our cultural understandings, beliefs and family ties are still significant to us today. Vā relations are activated when each family presents and displays to the community their individual ‘Ie Toga, precious to their aiga.

During presentation, ‘Ie Toga will be held hand or propped up by sticks to display the full adornment of the mat, in a parade like ceremony. Each individual or aiga will walk through the Otara market and display their most precious ‘Ie Toga. Like in a formal si‘i, Samoan families will be invited to participate in the gathering of these historical ‘royal robes’. Otara’s Fresh gallery, located next to the market, will be the venue were the ‘Ie Tōga are gathered after the ceremony; each ‘Ie Tōga and owner/s will then be documented by photograph inside the Fresh gallery. The significance of this photo is to archive the history of the aiga and the ‘Ie Toga (since, over time, these ‘Ie Tōga are passed on in fa‘alavelaves, through generations). The aim of the proposed festival is to gather a collection of photos over time, as a yearly festival of ‘Ie Toga takes place in the South Auckland community. The archived photos will trace the ‘Ie Toga’s journeys through the community and the Vā relations they gather. Over time, as the collection grows, future generations in the South Auckland community will have these images to refer to. The temporary form of the Vā as a space-between here is akin to the “dense inter-spatial of space and the event” typical of Oceanic architectures, as Amanda Yates suggests in Oceanic Grounds – a constellation less familiar “to the traditions of Western thought and architecture” (Yates, 2009, p. 12).

The proposed intervention will involve the diasporic Pacific communities by setting up stalls of Pacific foods, crafts, song and dances, languages, arts, and other life traditions. What each stall has in common is a display of ‘Ie Toga (or Pacific ceremonial mats, generally), together with information about their origins and the relationship with the current ‘Ie Toga’s (ceremonial mat’s) location. These inscriptions of location interconnect the links within the community and stir the relations of belonging. To activate these Vā connections is to actively sustain a Samoan or Pacific community. By proposing a space were Vā relations can occur, “Our Measina” provides a means of tracing and connecting the genealogies that derive from the many ‘Ie Tōga in South Auckland. By celebrating and sustaining the significance of ‘Ie Toga, the festival will enrich the Auckland Samoan diasporic communities and create a place of identity away from Samoa, to provide an alternative environment for the unfolding of Fa‘asamoa.
5.3 Exhibition of “Our Measina”

For this practice-led Masters thesis, “Our Measina” was proposed in an exhibition comprising eight A1 size drawings and four video projections. Image 80 provides a floor-plan of the exhibition space.

When the viewer entered the room, Screen 1 was the first point of contact with the exhibition. The projection showed an 8 minute video clip, posted on the internet by the Samoan Women in Business Developing Incorporation (Women in Business Developing Incorporated, 2010 #74), which shows Samoan women weaving and preparing an ‘Ie Tōga. This short but detailed clip introduced the viewers to the work of ‘Ie Tōga and its grass roots origins. The act of weaving in this introduction tells the story of ‘Ie Tōga and the many processes involved in preparing a fine mat; it symbolises the unity of people and their significance to Samoan culture.

Screen 2 showed an animated, time-sequenced floor-plan of the site and “Our Measina” event. The first scenes take place at 4am at the Otara car park site, when spaces are allocated, the last at 8pm for the closing of the event. This video animation provides detail and description of the whole event, from beginning to end. Understanding the sequence of events is important for the viewer in order to understand how the markets and celebration of ‘Ie Tōga are designed and curated for the community, and that everyone can take part and enjoy the occasion.

Screens 3 and 4 were deliberately placed in a corner to include the viewer in the projection space. The projection across both screens showed an animation of a busy corner at the Otara markets, a central point in the procession of families displaying their ‘Ie Tōga during the parade; the viewer watched them entering the projection space on the right screen and pass through to leave on the left screen. Standing in front of the projection, viewers would see their own shadow on the screen, as though they, too, were a part of the festival.

The drawings were visual descriptions of the festival to underpin the essence for the viewer. Each drawing exhibited a different scenario within the diverse settings of “Our Measina”, and described how both the markets (selling of goods) and the proposed festival would work hand in hand, overlapping one another and interrelating both themes. The drawings were important as they described what I envisaged for this festival, they detail the interaction of people and relations of the community.
7.0 References

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Lilomaiava-Doktor, S. (2009). Beyond "Migration": Samoan population movement (malaga) and the geography of social space (va). The Contemporary Pacific, 21(1).
Lilomaiava-Doktor, S. (2009). Beyond "Migration": Samoan population movement (malaga) and the geography of social space (va). The Contemporary Pacific, 21(1).


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<thead>
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Translation</th>
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<tr>
<td>‘Aiga</td>
<td>family, related, home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aotearoa</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fa’aipoipoga</td>
<td>weddings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fa’alavelave</td>
<td>ceremonial and other family obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fa’alupega</td>
<td>traditional words pertaining to each village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>the “fa'amatai” or “fa’amatai” is the traditional indigenous form of local governance in the islands of Samoa in the South Pacific</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fa’aSamoa</td>
<td>‘the Samoan way of life’; Samoan Custom, Samoan language</td>
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<tr>
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<td>identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Folafolaga</td>
<td>formal acknowledgement of goods</td>
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<td>a council meeting</td>
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<td>meeting house</td>
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</tbody>
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Si'i  ceremonial exchange of gifts
Tamafaine  descendants of women, daughter of a woman
Tamatane  descendants of a man
Tangata  people, men, persons, human beings
Tangata Whenua  New Zealand Maori
Tautala Samoa  Samoan language
Toga  female valuables
Tufunga Lalava  lashing experts
Tupa’aga  genealogical lineage
Tatua  tattooing
Tufunga Lalava  expert in lashing/binding
Vā  opening between or space between, to denote relationships
Vā o tagata  refers to the relationship space between people
Vā fealoaloa’i  refers to the respectful space
Vā Tapua’i  refers to the worshipful space
Whenua  land, country, ground

‘Ie sina  finely woven cloth of hibiscus fibre in which loose ends form a hanging surface on one side; worn by taupou or sao tamaitai; now very rare (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1998)

‘Ie tōga  finely woven mat of pandanus fibres bordered with red feathers. Varieties if ‘Ie tōga are named according to their size and quality, or for the purpose for which they are given. Usually called ‘fine mats’ in English, although they are not mats.

‘Ie  a ritual involving one party seeking forgiveness from another

Kupesi  stencils for tapa making

Lalaga  weaving

Lalava  lashing; binding

Langa  traditional speeches

Lotu  church

Malua  funerals

Mana  power

Matai  an individual vested with an ancestral name

Measina  white mats

Moana  sea, ocean, large lake

Ofoa  male valuables

Pākehā  non-indigenous New Zealanders

Palagi  foreigner