



OCEANIA CENTRE FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

The University of the South Pacific launched the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture in February 1997. From that seemingly inauspicious beginning, the Oceania Centre has emerged as a focus for innovation and original cultural creativity of the kinds not hitherto seen in our part of the Pacific.

What the Oceania Centre has achieved so far has been possible only because of the support given to it by the university community as a whole, the unprecedented degree of freedom bestowed on it to act on the university's behalf, and the availability in our regional community of a large pool of artistically talented young people waiting to be provided with the opportunity and encouragement to develop their talent, articulate their visions and passions, through the power of visual images, the poetry of body movements and the lyricism of music.

Since its establishment, the Oceania Centre has set out deliberately to cultivate and nourish a special spirit of creative originality that would lead to the flourishing of contemporary visual and performing arts firmly rooted in our histories, traditions and our unending adaptations to the changing international environment that is affecting every facet of our existence.

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A PAINTING
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The creative processes are continuously experimental in their striving for originality, and for the emergence of a distinctive Oceanic cultural identity that is autonomous and ever moving. What we generally take for creativity in our region is largely the process of adoption and occasionally refinement of things generated mainly outside Oceania, or of the original creations of our forebearers in eras past.

The development of new art forms that are truly Oceanic, transcendent of our national and cultural diversity, is very important in that it allows our creative minds to draw on far larger pools of cultural traits than those of our individual national lagoons. It makes us less insular without being buried in the amorphousness of the globalised cultural melting pot. The Centre's emphasis on Oceanic forms and identity in artistic and cultural production, should contribute significantly to the process of regionalisation of our part of the world.

The Centre's stance in relation to its artists is that of facilitation and mentoring. It gives its artists complete freedom of expression requiring only that they are accountable for their actions.

The arts of our ancestors grace the great museums and galleries of Europe, the Americas, and Australasia. They are works of power and beauty, as impressive as their creators' navigational and other historical achievements. And they have played a significant role in the development of modern art.

Nothing that we, their descendants, have produced in more recent times, could match their creations. The Oceania Centre takes these achievements very seriously, and aims to foster the development of the kinds of creativity that would honour the deeds of our forebears by striving to explore regions of possibilities that they could never reach, because of our access to technologies more advanced than those available to them, and to the variety of cultural influences that were beyond their reach. We learn from the great and wonderful products of human imagination and ingenuity the world over, but the cultural achievements of our own histories will be our most important models, points of reference, and sources of inspiration.

This should help to bring out the best in us, while we remain true to ourselves.

detail from
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