

TAKU IPUKAREA

*Mary Ama with
Caren Rangi, Selina Vainerere-Patia, Tuaratini and
Jarcinda Stowers-Ama*



Illustration by Cecelia Faumuina

“When you ask me ‘What is Art?’ to me it is Ipukarea.”

Mary Ama

IPUKAREA is not easily translated into English but generally means ‘ancestral homeland’. This is a kōrero that shares the stories of five Cook Islands women and their lived experiences and connection to their Ipukarea, through art, culture, and community. The kōrero of Caren Rangi, Selina Vainerere-Patia, Tuaratini and Jarcinda Stowers-Ama responds and reflects upon Mary Ama’s view of art and Ipukarea.

Mary Ama



Kia orana to turou avaiki ‘Ko taku Ipukarea’ e takoto maira ite ‘Moana-nui-o-Kiva’ Ko ‘Tumu-te-Varoaro’ Tei roto ia koe te ‘Vaka Takitumu’ ite tua itinga ra te akapuanga o taku ‘Ui Tupuna’ ko ‘Ngati Tangiia’ te vairanga o aku nga ariki - ‘Pa ma Kainuku’ ... Tei Aotearoa nei au ei akatupu ite inangaro tei papau ia ki te Ui Tupuna e kia Rangatira ta taua Peu Tupuna ite enua o tetai ke... Mou piri au iakoe ki te papa o taku ngakau kia kore e ngaro te koreromotu ia taua e taku Ipukarea te Kuki Airani.

English translation: *The Call from Avaiki to my homeland Tumu te Varoaro who sits among others upon the deep blue ocean. Vaka Takitumu to the East, Ngati Tangiia with Pa and Kainuku Ariki dwells and rules the vaka for all of us... Aotearoa has taken me away from my homeland. I reached out for your warm and comforting arms. I treasure our culture within my heart and soul as a sign of my commitment and connection to our ancestors and for those whom I respectfully love across that deep blue ocean - Cook Islands my homeland.”*

Mary Ama is a Cook Islands Taunga – artist, knowledge-holder and community leader.

Mary was born in 1947 on the island of Rarotonga, with ancestral bloodlines that connect her to the Cook Islands, Sāmoa and Aotearoa.

Mary is well known for her woven and textile works, that are housed in museums, galleries, private collections and community spaces across the globe.



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She is also a founding member of the Pacifica Mamas – a role that has seen her deliver arts and cultural programmes to over 40,000 participants, including school students and prison inmates. She has also played a key role in establishing the Pacifica Arts Centre: Moanaroa.

In recognition of her lifelong service to the arts, Mary has received a number of individual and collective awards that include the New Zealand Order of Merit – Companions, Creative NZ Pacific Heritage Arts Award in 2012, Arts Access Corrections Community Award 2015, Sunpix Pacific Service Excellence Award 2018 and the Matairangi Mahi Toi Artist Residency at Government House New Zealand 2019.



Caren Rangi ONZM of Hawkes Bay, is of Cook Islands Māori descent from the islands of Rakahanga, Manihiki, Rarotonga, Penrhyn and Aitutaki. She is an experienced public sector governance practitioner, with a passion for Cook Islands Māori dance, music and cultural history. Caren is Deputy Chair of the Arts Council of New Zealand. She is also a board member for Radio New Zealand, the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Pacific Homecare Services, and Pacific

Inc Ltd. She is also a Board director of the Cook Islands Investment Corporation in Rarotonga, and of Pacific Co-operation Broadcasting Ltd. In 2018 Caren was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for her services to governance and the Pacific community..... but really, the most important thing people need to know is that I am the founder of the Cook Islands World Domination movement #CIWD!



Selina Vainerere-Patia was born in Rarotonga with blood ties to Atiu. At a young age she became a true child of the Moana when her father took up diplomatic posts around the region taking Selina and the family along. She grew up in Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Noumea and Australia and connected with diverse cultures along the way. As a musician, composer, and drummer, Selina shares Cook Islands arts and culture through song. She provides workshop programmes for the Atiu Youth community and the Pacifica Mamas Education programme – and through her

work in Social housing for *Tamaki Regeneration* Selina, also a Justice of the Peace, uses her understanding of Cook Islands arts and culture to better serve the community.



Tuaratini is a *Takitua* (storyteller) of Mangaian and Rarotongan descent. She is also the Project Manager at the Pacifica Arts Centre in west Auckland facilitating various arts, community, and education programmes. After graduating with her Bachelor of Communications Studies degree in 1996, she entered the media industry and worked in pan pacific broadcasting as a journalist, producer, and announcer. In 2017 Tuaratini co-founded the Turou Takitua Storytelling Network, a group dedicated to the growth and development of Cook Islands storytelling in Aotearoa. Pre-Covid - Tuaratini regularly performed pacific storytelling at schools, festivals, libraries, and arts events around NZ and on international stages.



Jarcinda Stowers-Ama was born in Aotearoa with bloodlines that connect her to the Cook Islands, Sāmoa, Aotearoa and Ireland. Te peu Kuki Airani – the ways of Cook Islands culture and values – were the foundations of her upbringing in West Auckland. Jarcinda is the Director of the Pacifica Arts Centre: Moanarua, an interdisciplinary artist and founding member of Turou Takitua, a Cook Islands storytelling collective that is inspired by the knowledge passed down by her elders. She also serves as a trustee on the Waitakere Arts and Cultural Development Trust and is the former Deputy Chair of Pacific Advisory Group for Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira.

Front image caption & credit



Name: Taura tatai

Description: This taura tatai, fishing line, from Rarotonga in the Cook Islands was added to Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum’s collections in 1899. It is made from wood and coconut sennit fibre string, braided using a 3-ply technique.

Credit: Collection of Auckland Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira, 8343.

Link: https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/collections-research/collections/record/am_humanhistory-object-575625?p=2&k=cook%20islands%20fishing&ordinal=2