

Creation Stories

A project by Simon Denny and Karamia Müller

Introduction

Creation Stories is a project initiated by Simon Denny and Karamia Müller that takes their own genealogies as a point of departure for exploration. Stemming from their intertwined yet distinct genealogies, *Creation Stories* examines intergenerational knowledge-sharing, global exchange, and the mapping of relations between familial, colonial, commercial, and technological flows.

The many meanings of 'creation' are explored through different cultural and material expressions—from newly produced artworks by Denny and Müller, to new and existing work by Aotearoa and international artists. Taken as a dialogue, *Creation Stories* is intended to provoke questions around relationships, power, value, and extraction.

What is able to be imagined when personal connections are at stake—who is empowered to map these relational networks and who stands to benefit when they do?

Buck Nin (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Toa)

Putahi Incandescent

1968

acrylic and fluorescent paint on board

Putahi Incandescent was introduced to Karamia Müller through the teaching of Professor Deidre Brown (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Kahu) in a foundational teaching course. In the context of the class, the painting was shown to demonstrate a sectional view through the earth. In the discipline of architecture, the section view cuts through a building to reveal its interior. That which is unseen under the ground is revealed in *Putahi Incandescent* and is shown as living and ancestrally connected. This perspective demonstrates an alternative view towards land, where one can be related to the land itself. As a beginning point in the curatorial discussion between Denny and Müller, *Putahi Incandescent* was seen as pivotal for opening the possibility of including non-human bodies in a family tree, and, by extension, what constitutes the network of relations in considering genealogies.

Buck Nin was born in Northland in 1942 and from 1961-2 attended the University of Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts. Later attending the University of Canterbury, he trained under Rudi Gopas and gained a Diploma of Fine Arts from Ilam in 1966. That same year, Nin initiated *New Zealand Māori Culture and the Contemporary Scene* at the Canterbury Museum, one of the earliest exhibitions of contemporary Māori art in Aotearoa.

On loan from the Barry Hopkins Art Trust, courtesy Waikato Museum Te Whare
Taonga o Waikato

D Harding (Bidjara/Ghungalu/Garingbal peoples, Australia)

Digging Stick

2019

shovel, blue pigment

Digging Stick highlights the role of museums and exhibition-making in framing indigenous knowledge systems and their transferral as primitive and culturally static. In the context of *Creation Stories*, *Digging Stick* demonstrates how intergenerational knowledge is made resilient through genealogical practices and offers a reframed approach to the “primitive” indigenous object. In the arts education that Denny and Müller underwent at secondary school level, the indigenous object was considered a “still life object”, culturally static, and by extension not technological either. Here, questions also surface surrounding the distinction between “tools” and “technologies”—and, equally, around who has the power to cleave these distinctions.

D Harding’s practice includes painting, installation, sculpture, domestic handicrafts, stencilling, woodcarving and silicone casting. Their work explores the untold histories of their communities. Harding has a particular interest in ideas of cultural continuum and investigates the social and political realities experienced by their family under government control in Queensland, with a focus on matrilineal elders.

Collection of Milani Gallery, Brisbane

Leah Jaynes Karp (USA)

The Numbers are Growing

1982

dye coupler print on paper with ink

Collection of The High Museum, Atlanta; Gift of Lucinda Bunnan for the Bunnan Collection

Leah Jaynes Karp (USA)

Aa Bb Cc Flowers

1982

dye coupler print on paper with ink

Collection of The High Museum, Atlanta; Gift of Lucinda Bunnan for the Bunnan Collection

Leah Jaynes Karp (USA)

Reward for Information-Victim Eulogized Yesterday

1982

dye coupler print on paper with ink

Collection of The High Museum, Atlanta; Gift of Lucinda Bunnan for the Bunnan Collection

Leah Jaynes Karp (USA)

Another Name Gentle Asphyxiation

1982

dye coupler print on paper with ink

Leah Jaynes Karp is an American mixed-media artist from Illinois who studied art later in life when her two sons were at school. One of her sons, Alex Karp, went on to cofound Palantir Technologies with Peter Thiel in 2003.

These artworks are part of a larger series of twelve by the artist. Karp made these collages in the early 1980s in response to current events. Between 1979 and 1981, at least 29 Black children and young adults, mostly men, were kidnapped and murdered in what came to be known as the Atlanta Child Murders. Karp's works appropriate text from news articles detailing the events, alongside imagery reminiscent of primary education like alphabets and rulers, which also allude to data and quantification. These motifs are collaged alongside cut out photographs of lilies which are commonly associated with funeral sympathy bouquets.

Her practice was introduced to Denny, whose previous work has dealt with Palantir, through a New York Times profile of Alex Karp. Palantir develop data integration software that is used by clients ranging from the United States Army to Credit Suisse to immigration enforcement agencies like ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). Palantir has been criticised as their tools for network analysis can be used to identify a person's friends, colleagues, and relatives, making it possible to map and instrumentalise their social relations. Notably, Palantir was implicated in the Cambridge Analytica scandal that surrounded Donald Trump's election as president. Palantir's software has also been accused of reinforcing racially biased surveillance and for predictive policing by the Los Angeles Police Department.

Leah Jaynes Karp's work has not been widely exhibited but received critical acclaim in the 1980s. She was featured in *Constructed Images: New Photography*, a landmark exhibition curated by Deborah Willis for the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1989. This is the first showing of her work in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Collection of The High Museum, Atlanta; Gift of Lucinda Bunn for the Bunn Collection

Daniel Boyd (Kudjla/Gangalu peoples, Australia)

Untitled (T11)

2015

oil, charcoal and archival glue on polyester

In *Untitled (T11)*, Daniel Boyd depicts a reproduction of a navigational stick chart from the Marshall Islands. The reproduced image appeared in a sales catalogue indexing the collection of the Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson. Stevenson lived in Apia, Sāmoa in the late 1800s—a time of conflict and emergent colonisation—and he was critical of German, British, and American attempts to politically control Sāmoa in that period. The estate that Stevenson built and housed his collection continued to host other people after his death, including Denny's own maternal great grandfather J.E. Wilson who served as Chief Justice of Sāmoa in 1921. The New Zealand military occupation of Sāmoa lasted until 1921, when it was replaced with a civil administration.

Boyd's practice engages with the colonial history of the Australia-Pacific region, exploring the ways in which political, cultural and personal memory are composed. Born in Cairns, Queensland, Boyd has both Aboriginal and Pacific heritage; his work traces this ancestry and its associated visual cultures, with an eye to uncovering the colonial past and its ongoing legacy in Western art history. This resonates with the questions Denny and Müller have of the assumptions embedded in the arts education they received as foundational learning experiences.

In the series to which *Untitled (T11)* belongs (created for the 2015 Venice Biennale) Boyd draws inspiration from Stevenson's 1883 novel *Treasure Island*. Here, he reframes the motif of the "pirate" in the context of museums, where the spoils of colonial conquest are now preserved. Taking the form of navigational charts, this work also gestures towards the subjective nature of mapping, in which histories of power and exploitation are bound up in technologies of geographic information. This also resonates with the Godeffroy role in colonial collecting and German museum collections.

Buxton International Collection, Melbourne

Ryan Kuo (USA)

Family Maker

2017 - 2018

macOS application

Family Maker is a Mac application where a series of system windows prompts the user to navigate family dynamics including love, guilt, and debt. These are explored through the classic format of the Mac user interface, where each window representing one affect or scenario builds on a network of interactions.

The work was created using SuperCard, a descendant of HyperCard which is one of the first successful hypermedia systems and predates the World Wide Web.

SuperCard is a software program for creating applications in the form of stacking cards onscreen. Kuo used SuperCard's built-in scripting language to articulate the connections between the windows that make up *Family Maker*, amounting to a cluster of connected desktop windows that guide the user's focus and understanding as they move through the puzzle-box-like stack of prompts.

While family dynamics are the subject of the work, *Family Maker* is not an explicit representation of the artist's own family; neither is it the outcome of a research process, nor a coding process in the strictest sense. Rather, like much of Kuo's work, it is a process-based and dynamic attempt to map the multitude of forces that can influence the experience of a single body—in this case, a generic user—at a given time.

Collection of The Current Museum

Simon Denny (Aotearoa New Zealand/Germany)

Document Relief 29 (Palantir Image Identification patent)
2021

ink jet print on archival paper, glue

FALCON is an image database and recognition system made to capture, record, and catalogue human faces. Developed by Palantir Technologies, FALCON is available to state and non-state agencies ranging from police departments to Facebook, and deploys biometric data analysis to carry out various surveillance-related activities. It is a central tool in Palantir's wider program of mapping social graphs and mining them for data, functionally harvesting relational data extraction. This *Document Relief* slices into the United States patent for FALCON, detailing its facial recognition technology. Peeking out from its pages is a portrait of Palantir co-founder Alex Karp, the son of Leah Jaynes Karp whose work is displayed in the exhibition.

Simon Denny's *Document Reliefs* are produced with a now-outmoded 3D printing technology from the mid-2010s where a machine cuts, glues, and stacks sheets of A4 paper into relief prints. The printers that produce these artworks were designed for rapid-prototyping, but were deemed too ponderous to be commercially viable. The source material for other works in the *Document Reliefs* series has included patents filed by Salesforce and Amazon, including one describing the notorious cage-like device designed to contain a human worker on their warehouse shop floor. The recurring appearance of patents across the project gestures towards their use by corporations as tax-avoidance tools, simultaneously showcasing Silicon Valley's entrepreneurial machinations.

The social graphing that comprises Palantir's main enterprise informed the logic behind Denny and Müller's cable harness sculptures. These works also attempt to map and trace particular relations, albeit to highly different ends. In both cases, however, value is created by technological interventions that track social connections.

Private collection

Stella Brennan (Aotearoa New Zealand)

Tuesday, 3 July 2001, 10:38am

2001-2002

cotton on canvas

Over the course of a year and together with a circle of friends and family, Stella Brennan rendered her Mac OS 8 desktop as a needlepoint embroidery work, with one stitch corresponding to each pixel. The woven computer screen brings countervailing values into tension: speed and duration; contemporaneity and tradition. It also gestures to the history of computation, where these forces are more intertwined than they might initially seem.

The work calls to mind the role of punch cards during the industrial revolution: initially used to control Jacquard looms, it was Ada Lovelace who proposed that such cards should be used in Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine, an early progenitor to the modern computer. In *Creation Stories*, the artwork contributes to a material conversation between weaving and "technological" interfaces that runs through many of the exhibited works. Who is making, and what is being made, echoes beyond the soft screen.

Stella Brennan is an artist based in Tāmaki Makaurau. She curated the exhibitions *Nostalgia for the Future* (Artspace Auckland 1999), *Dirty Pixels* (Artspace, the Adam Art Gallery, the Dunedin Public Art Gallery and the Waikato Museum of Art and History, 2002-3), and co-curated *Cloudland: Digital Art from Aotearoa New Zealand* (The Substation Singapore, 2008). Brennan co-founded the Aotearoa Digital Arts discussion list and in 2008, she and Su Ballard edited the *Aotearoa Digital Arts Reader*, the first comprehensive text on digital arts practice in New Zealand.

With thanks to Josephine Brennan, Claire Brennan, Steven Davies, Vikki Henderson, Juliet Pang, Nova Paul, David Perry, Steven Ritchie, Elaine Robertson, Hanna Scott, Nichola Trevithick, Siobhan Garrett, Tracey Wedge.

Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

Leafā Wilson and Olga Krause (Aotearoa New Zealand/Sāmoa)

Untitled

2008

ink on paper

Leafā Wilson and Olga Krause is a Waikato-based multi-media performance artist. She says, "I use the name on my birth certificate for my lifelong performative work 'Olga Krause - Deutsche Kuenstlerin'. Leafā is my given ancestral name from my grandfather." In her performance work, the artist's own identity is a site of contest where the relationship between her own Sāmoan and German identities is interrogated.

Wilson and Krause writes of an ongoing series that, like the artwork on display here, addresses her mixed identity with German text:

As a child of the Sāmoan diaspora in Aotearoa, I have a very clear understanding of my place in relation to indigeneity. I am a long distant relative of Māori but I am not tangata whenua / people of the land. I am in fact, indigenous to Sāmoa. My parents were both born and raised in Sāmoa.

These works are a response to thinking about the colonial presence of Germany in Sāmoa around the time of my great grandfather, Henry Paul Krause (German/English), who married my great grandmother, Clementina Godinet (Sāmoan/French). My paternal grandfather August (Aukuso) Krause was their only child. My father was born in Vaimoso on our ancestral land. His name and the name of all his siblings were all non- Sāmoan. His name was Charles Augustine Krause. There was little to no semblance of 'Germany' in the cultural context of the Sāmoa he grew up in.

For some reason, my parents named me Olga Hedwig Janice Krause.

One of the underpinning ideas for [the ongoing series Ich Heisse Olga Hedwig Krause: Deutsche Kuenstlerin], a lifelong performative project, is the notion that on paper, Olga Krause is a white German person. I have adapted a notion relating to war propaganda to the propaganda of the colonisation of my name by my Sāmoan body. My illiterate German texts are evidence that I am not properly German, reinforcing the provocative nature of my claims.

The relational untitled drawings presented here on black paper depict rooms, as remembered from personal encounters of the artist. Twice it is noted in text at the bottom of the drawing that the familial figure, whose room the drawing depicts, died in the space.

Courtesy of the artist

Tunaga Funaki (Aotearoa New Zealand/Niue)

Lapalili fakamanaia
raffia, coconut ribs
2016

Courtesy of the artist

Salle Tamatoa (Aotearoa New Zealand/Niue)

From the series Koe Puhala Fooou he Talatalai Moe Lalanga
raffia, aluminium wire, macrocarpa wood
2020

Courtesy of the artist

Salle Tamatoa (Aotearoa New Zealand/Niue)

From the series Koe Puhala Fooou he Talatalai Moe Lalanga
raffia, aluminium wire, macrocarpa wood
2020

Courtesy of the artist

Weaving at Tunaga Funaki's home, including 'Niue' woven mat gifted by a friend (Lisa) in early 2000s.

Matua moe Tama is an intergenerational conversation between Salle Tamatoa and his grandmother Tunaga Funaki that illustrates the importance of magafaoa (family) through their respective weaving practices.

Niuen weaving arrived in Aotearoa beginning in the 1800s and early 1900s when Niuen students came by boat to study here, bringing weavings with them. At that time, an industry of woven Niue tāoga (treasures) was produced and exported largely to the growing Pālagi populations in Aotearoa and Australia.

A more recent resurgence of interest in Niuen weaving has taken place in Aotearoa. As authors of the exhibition publication '*Matua moe Tama: Weaving Within Magafaoa*' Jess Pasisi, Toliain Makaola and Inangaro Vakaafi write:

The practice of weaving fosters intergenerational connections through practical learning, centred on Niue culture and heritage. Not all aspects of weaving can be accessed or described in the English language, so the use of Vagahau, a Niue language, is intrinsically embedded in the weaving process: instructions, exclamations, songs and conversations are intertwined, literally woven into the weaving process, as the craft is remembered, shared and learned.

Tamatoa and Funaki's weavings resonate in form with the cable harness artworks by Müller and Denny, which also trace familial relationships through woven material. These reference how Pacific systems parse intergenerational knowledge and creative practice and how this can be expressed through the embodied object.

Courtesy of the artist

Deutsche Handel und Plantation Gesellschaft House Flag, Sāmoa, WW1

catalogue entry shown on LCD screen

German Naval Ensign, pre 1915

catalogue entry shown on LCD screen

Two screens show museum database entries of flags found by New Zealand military forces in Sāmoa in the early 20th century, shortly after the First World War, dating to Germany's colonial occupation. One depicts the German Naval Ensign: an eagle with the German coat of arms bearing a golden crown, depicted between horizontal stripes of black and red and a gold anchor in the upper corner. The other is an artifact from Deutsche Handel und Plantation Gesellschaft, a company central to the trade enterprises which Germany carried out in occupied Sāmoa.

Here, the choice to exhibit the database entries on digital monitors, rather than simply hang the flags themselves, points to how colonial dynamics are re-inscribed by other means. The webpages are taken from the Auckland War Memorial Museum, an institution partially responsible for the construction and codification of unified national identity—itsself a relic of New Zealand's occupation of Sāmoa—wherein the role of the historical museum is, in many ways, a continuation of the control and domination enacted by colonial power.

Courtesy of Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira

Anne E. Guernsey Allen (USA)

Bracketing diagram for Indigenous Style Construction Process
1993

A0 digital print on paper, enlargement of original offset print

Courtesy of the artist

Anne E. Guernsey Allen (USA)

Bracketing diagram for Western Style Construction Process
1993

A0 digital print on paper, enlargement of original offset print

These two diagrams are from the work of art history scholar Professor Anne E. Guernsey Allen, enlarged and displayed as prints here. In her thesis research, Karamia Müller encountered these diagrams which compare the cultural reference points for architecture construction, distinguishing between “western style” and “indigenous style” construction processes.

Allen, whose work focuses on Sāmoan visual and spatial culture, developed a unique notational methodology, which she has also used to map various Sāmoan creation stories. This style of diagramming served as a starting point for the cable harness diagrams that Müller and Denny made for *Creation Stories*.

Allen is a Professor of Fine Arts at Indiana University Southeast where she has taught since 1994. Her research areas include Sāmoan village architecture, cloth, and ritual, and how these are reflected in, and facilitate, cultural concepts and uses of space. She holds an MA in Art History from California State University, San Diego and a PhD from Columbia University. As a Fulbright-Hays scholar, Allen studied in Sāmoa, where she frequently returns to continue her work.

Courtesy of the artist

Simon Denny (Aotearoa New Zealand/Germany) and **Karamia Müller** (Aotearoa New Zealand/ Sāmoa/Solomon Islands/Switzerland)

Creation Story Cable Harness 1
2022

mixed media, cable harness wiring components, Ethereum cryptocurrency mining hardware components

Creation Stories is a new body of work by Simon Denny and Karamia Müller where the structures of electrical wiring harnesses used in automobile manufacturing are turned into sculptural weavings. They take the form of diagrams resembling family trees, and chart commercial, cultural, familial, historical and technological interconnections across the Pacific and Europe. These *Creation Stories* forge an ongoing investigation into how connections across geography and time are able to be imagined and made material.

Some of the sculptures are also functional cryptocurrency miners, drawing electrical power to solve mathematical equations and create digital money. These are operational over the duration of the exhibition and transmute these relational graphs into sources of financial value.

The diagrammatic methodology that guided their creation was influenced by the work of Anne E. Guernsey Allen whose art-historical research compares differing construction processes employed in typical Western and indigenous modes of building and was a central reference point in Müller's academic study.

At Gus Fisher Gallery, the harnesses are displayed mounted on shelving from Swatek Limited's assembly plant in Ardmore. Swatek specialise in the manufacture of commercial, military, and aerospace specification cable/wiring harnesses and control boxes.

Creation Story Cable Harness 1 maps, on one side, Denny and Müller's personal family lineages, which connect or mirror each other in significant ways. Müller is Sāmoan with Swiss ancestry; Denny, who now lives in Berlin, had a great grandfather who served as the first Chief Justice of Sāmoa during New Zealand's early occupation. Denny's maternal great uncle was the head of the National Bank in New Zealand when the currency changed from Pounds to New Zealand Dollars in the 1950s; Müller's cousin Luka Müller, whose company is the subject of the left-hand side of the diagram, was instrumental in the creation of mainstream cryptocurrencies.

Luka Müller headed MME, the firm that provided early legal assistance to many high-profile companies in the blockchain space. Notably, Luka helped architect the legal framework and initial token sale for Ethereum, the second-largest blockchain behind only Bitcoin. Later, he and MME were involved in launching protocols like Tezos and Cosmos. Denny now often makes artwork about cryptocurrency, touching on companies whose legal framework MME helped architect using their networks for the creation of NFT artworks. Within and across the artists' personal biographies, these connections vivify the inextricability of economic, geographic, colonial, and technological flows unfolding over time, space and relationships.

Courtesy of the artists and Michael Lett, with special thanks to David Bennewith, Oliver Ray-Chaudhuri, and Nick Coakley and team at Swatek Limited.

Simon Denny (Aotearoa New Zealand/Germany) and **Karamia Müller** (Aotearoa New Zealand/ Sāmoa/Solomon Islands/Switzerland)

Creation Story Cable Harness 2
2022

mixed media, cable harness wiring components, Ethereum cryptocurrency mining hardware components

Creation Story Cable Harness 2 explores the aspects of financial history that span the artists' biographies in more targeted detail. On one side, it focuses on the history of New Zealand's currency which Denny's family was involved in at various points, and on the other side it delves further into Lūka Muller's biography and his work with MME to establish the legal framework for various cryptocurrency projects. The artwork also maps the design development of New Zealand's printed currency, demonstrating the relationship between national narratives and iconography in the building and representation of value.

Courtesy of the artists and Michael Lett, with special thanks to David Bennewith, Oliver Ray-Chaudhuri, and Nick Coakley and team at Swatek Limited.

Simon Denny (Aotearoa New Zealand/Germany) and **Karamia Müller** (Aotearoa New Zealand/ Sāmoa/Solomon Islands/Switzerland)

Creation Story Cable Harness 3
2022

mixed media, cable harness wiring components, Ethereum cryptocurrency mining hardware components

Creation Story Cable Harness 3 retraces moments in the political history of Sāmoa, with the different protrusions in its clover-like form representing different attempts at colonial occupation by Britain, the United States, New Zealand, and Germany, highlighting the political figures responsible in power at each time. These leaf out from the central representation of Sāmoa in the middle of the diagram, representing indigenous peoples often decentred in these histories and reinstating them in the centre.

The relationship between colonisation, ecology, and technology is also at issue here. The diagram relays different descriptions of indigenous trees and colonial accounts of encounters with New Zealand flora alongside details about the cable harness assembly plants like Ferro, a significant industry that acts as one of the largest employers in Sāmoa today.

The resonances between these connected threads display how colonial histories are intertwined with commercial ones. Often, commercial histories predated and established the ground for political and colonial occupations, as was the case in the instance of Germany's occupation of Sāmoa. The continued reverberations of colonial power dynamics remain an open question, as the ongoing importance of Sāmoan-made cable harnesses to global auto industries suggests here.

Courtesy of the artists and Michael Lett, with special thanks to David Bennewith, Oliver Ray-Chaudhuri, and Nick Coakley and team at Swatek Limited

David Bennewith (Aotearoa New Zealand/Netherlands)

David Bennewith is a New Zealand-born graphic designer and design researcher. Though now based in Amsterdam, Bennewith has kept a firm connection to New Zealand through his work—most visibly, through his collaboration with the iconic New Zealand Sāmoan alphabet designer Joseph Churchward, whose work was the subject of a monographic book by Bennewith. The publication compiles Churchward's archive material, letters, ephemera, and design work, alongside new essays about his practice penned by writers and designers from New Zealand and elsewhere.

Bennewith is the head of the graphic design department at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam and was a researcher in design at Jan van Eyck Academy, Maastricht. He graduated in Typographic and Graphic Design from the Werkplaats Typografie, Arnhem. Bennewith also works under the moniker Colophon. He designed the layouts for the cable harness sculptures featured in this exhibition.

Courtesy of the artist

Sarah Friend (Canada/Germany)

Lifeforms

2021

ERC721 NFTs on Polygon blockchain, digital print on paper

Lifeforms are NFTs—digital entities associated with unique tokens on the blockchain—which, unlike a lot of NFT art, resist speculation by design. Figured as mortal creatures, they are programmed to require regular care in order to thrive. How do you care for a lifeform? Within 90 days of receiving it, you must give it away, transferring it to another wallet, keeping it in constant circulation. If not properly looked after—i.e., consistently shared—a lifeform will die, ceasing to appear in any wallet. A lifeform that has died is no longer transferable and cannot be brought back to life in any way.

Lifeforms incentivises sharing over accumulation, countering the tendency towards speculation that often takes hold of NFT art projects. Passed between users' wallets, they map a network of relation, upending the conventional dynamics of their underlying technology to dwell in care rather than extraction.

Sarah Friend is an artist and software engineer from Canada who is now based in Berlin, Germany. Her work focuses on blockchain and the peer-to-peer web.

Courtesy of the artist

Shane Cotton (Ngāpuhi/Ngāti Rangī/Ngāti Hine/Te Uri Taniwha)

Pararaiha #1
2022
ink on paper

Shane Cotton's work examines Māori and Pākehā cultural histories, often referencing early nineteenth-century Māori art and its intersection with Christianity. The intersection of his own Ngāpuhi and Pākehā heritage is a running theme across his work.

The unique representational style that Cotton adopted in the 1990s was influenced by Māori figurative traditions that emerged in New Zealand in the late 1800s. These include symbolic references to significant events in New Zealand's history, especially around land ownership and the preservation of Māori culture, alongside imagery from popular culture and various art historical canons.

Cotton was born in Upper Hutt and graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Canterbury in 1988. Cotton's work has been included in many international projects such as *Turbulence*, The 3rd Auckland Triennial (2007), *Paradise Now? Contemporary Art from the Pacific*, Asia Society Museum, New York (2004), and he was New Zealand's representative at the Prague Biennial in 2005. His work was surveyed in a major retrospective exhibition at City Gallery Wellington and Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki in 2003. He has also received numerous awards, notably the Frances Hodgkins Fellowship (1998), made a Laureate of the Arts Foundation of New Zealand (2008), and received an ONZM for services to the Visual arts in the 2012 Queen's Birthday Honours. He lives and works in Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Cotton has made this new work specifically for *Creation Stories*.

Courtesy of the artist and Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland

Estelle Müller (Sāmoa)

Untitled

1991

oil pastel, paper

This artwork was produced by Estelle Müller, Karamia Müller's sister. The expressive artwork was likely produced in an educational context, exposing the conditions of possibility for a creator to professionalise their artmaking practice.

In the context of the exhibition, the inclusion of this work references indigenous creative practices such as the patterning of tapa (barkcloth) to create siapo (patterned barkcloth). Siapo is a gendered practice in Sāmoa, where women often congregated to firstly make tapa through planting, harvesting and then preparing the mulberry tree, often as a familial collective. The resulting cloths were then decorated, often a process that was highly experimental and masterful. In the broader Pacific context, decorated tapa cloth embodies life events and social processes.

This work has been held in the family collection, hanging on the walls of various family members, signifying a period of time that the family spent in the Solomon Islands, as well as Sāmoa. It's presence in the exhibition resonates with questions of arts education, the indigenous practitioner and the indigenous object.

Courtesy of the artist

Creation Stories

A project by Simon Denny and Karamia Müller

**GUS
FISHER**

GALLERY

In collaboration with

Michael Lett

Thank you to our exhibition funders:



art + object

Thank you to our exhibition lenders and supporters:

Andrew Thomas, Chartwell Collection and Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki; Buxton International Collection, Melbourne; The High Museum, Atlanta; Milani Gallery Brisbane; The Buck Nin Trust; Waikato Museum Te Whare Taonga o Waikato; The University of Auckland's Summer Scholarship programme; The

Hood Fellowship; The Current Museum; Gow Langsford Gallery; Trish Clark Gallery; and Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira.

We'd like to extend our sincere thanks to David Bennewith, Oliver Ray-Chaudhuri, Nick Coakley and all at Swatek Limited for their work on the project. Our gratitude goes to the Denny, Wilson and Müller families, Luka Müller, Marie Shannon, Leo Dashper and The Estate of Joseph Churchward.