



The Curators,
MANUIA
Ben Bergman &
Mahiriki Tangaroa



Mahiriki Tangaroa
Michel Tuffery
Andy Leleisi' uao
Michael Tavioni
Jerome Shedden
Kay George



Jerome Shedden
& Mike Tavioni

NEW YORK contemporary art exhibition

Beachcomber Contemporary Art

On March 15th 2010, the group contemporary art exhibition MANUIA opened in New York City. It was officially introduced by United Nations Development Programme Administrator & former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark.

MANUIA is an initiative of the Cook Islands own BCA Gallery and it is curated by BCA director Ben Bergman and artist Mahiriki Tangaroa. The exhibition is site-specific and the first ever contemporary art statement curated in the Cook Islands specifically for New York City

MANUIA features the artists Michel Tuffery, Andy Leleisi' uao, Michael Tavioni, Kay George, Jerome Shedden & Mahiriki Tangaroa.

MANUIA is designed to confront traditional, institutionalized theories about contemporary

pacific art practice, a challenge to the persistent, universal, 'pacific fantasy' perspective that dominates the understanding of contemporary pacific art frameworks. It is a progressive statement of contemporary art that explores themes not only relevant to Pacific societies but universal themes common to humanity.

The exhibition has been in development for nearly two years, initiated by an art research trip undertaken by BCA to NYC in 2008 and a follow up excursion/return to NYC in 2009. During the 2009 journey, BCA director Ben Bergman & exhibiting artist Andy Leleisi' uao were hosted to an official function by the New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations to introduce MANUIA, present were the UN Ambassadors of Tonga, Samoa, PNG, Solomon Islands



18 **MANUIA** Crowd in attendance including BCA Artist Hye Rim Lee and Art Asia Pacific Editor Elaine Ng (centre).

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Exhibition opening night was a great success, introduced by a curators talk/ Q&A immediately prior to the official opening by Helen Clark. Approximately 70 people attended the evening and multiple works were sold from the exhibition. Present at the opening were art advisors Jane Sutherland, Debbi Gibbs & Virginia Lee-Webb, New Zealand Consulate General the Hon. Paul Gestro, Kiwi Club President (NYC) Aaron Snodgrass, Art Asia Pacific Editor Elaine Ng and ISCP Director Dennis Elliott. Curator Mahiriki Tangaroa and Jerome Shedden both arrived in NYC on the 15th, in time for the opening event. Their attendance added an extra dimension to the event.

In the extremely competitive art environment that is NYC, MANUIA held its own with good attendance and buyer interest. On the night we were competing with several major openings including Sotheby's, The Asia Society and Sean Kelly Gallery.

Of importance is that we

have effectively demonstrated to a very well informed, international art audience that as a small nation, we are capable of delivering relevant contemporary global art statements, a fundamental objective of MANUIA. Further exhibition and residency opportunities are now on offer as a result of this exhibition.

Major sponsors of Manuia are BCA Gallery & Air New Zealand, assisted by the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation, Cook Islands Printing Services (CIPS), CITC Liquor/Montana Wines, Pacific Resort Hotels, The Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The New Zealand High Commission (Rarotonga), The New Zealand Consulate-General (NYC), The New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations, KEA (North America), The Kiwi Club of New York, The American Indian Community House (NYC), Flying Eagle Woman Fund & the Department of Cultural Affairs, New York.

MANUIA remains on exhibition in NYC until May 29th.



Helen Clark opens **MANUIA**.