

TIFFANY BABINGTON

## 'Amui 'i Mu'a/Ancient Futures: A Nuku'alofa Dedication from the New Zealand High Commission

### Abstract

*This bilingual greeting from Tiffany Babington, then New Zealand High Commissioner to Tonga (to 2022), acknowledges the weeklong symposium 'Amui 'i Mu'a/Ancient Futures held in Nuku'alofa, October 7–12, 2019.*

**Keywords:** *'Amui 'i Mu'a/Ancient Futures, Tonga, Tongan diaspora, Sopolemalama Filipe Tohi, Dagmar Vaikalafi Dyck, art, exhibitions, community engagement*

The New Zealand High Commission in Tonga was delighted to support Sopolemalama Filipe Tohi and Dagmar Vaikalafi Dyck when they brought the 'Amui 'i Mu'a/Ancient Futures weeklong symposium to Nuku'alofa from October 7 to 12, 2019. The symposium was a component of the larger project Ancient Futures: Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Tongan Arts and Their Legacies, funded by the Royal Society of New Zealand's Marsden Fund. It enabled work on three continents toward the discovery and examination of ancient Tongan objects in museum collections and, significantly, facilitated communication and exploration between parties in Tonga and around the world. The symposium presented two days of knowledge offered by local cultural authorities, historians, and creative experts. Guests included an official visit from a German cultural delegation from Dessau, and a keynote offering by Dowager Lady Tunakaimanu Fielakepa. In addition to the presentations, the Me'a 'Ofa Gallery at the Tanoa International Dateline Hotel hosted the 'Amui 'i 'Mua exhibition of work by Tohi and Dyck, with a second group exhibition, *Art in the Dark*, demonstrating the passion and virtuosity of Tongan artists. For outreach beyond Nuku'alofa, Dyck and Tohi presented their experiences and knowledge at villages and secondary schools in Lapaha and Hihifo.

The symposium launch, funded by the New Zealand High Commission, was held at the Tanoa International Dateline Hotel. A demonstration of partnership

with the Tanoa Hotel Group and Creative New Zealand, artists, historians, and creative people from across the Pacific came together for the launch and symposium. This program presented multiple opportunities for local creatives of Tonga to share their art practices across numerous genres including visual arts, dance, performance, spoken word, film, drama, academic scholarship, and education with New Zealand-based colleagues.

The launch event furthered our commitment in the Pacific; demonstrated New Zealand's culture, values, and creativity; showcased Tonga's rich cultural traditions across its diaspora; reinforced our deep linkages with the Pacific Islands; and strengthened New Zealand's relationships with Pacific creative leaders and influencers including here in Tonga.

Na'e talitali fiefia 'e he Haikomisiona Nu'u Silá 'a Sopolemalama Filipe Tohi mo Dagmar Vaikalafi Dyck 'i he'ena tū'uta 'i Tonga mo e timi 'a e 'Amui 'i Mu'á/Ancient Futures ki he konifelenisi uike taha na'e fakahoko 'i Nuku'alofa 'i he 'aho 7 – 12, 'Okatopa 2019. Ko e konifelenisi ko 'ení, ko e kongá ia 'o e polokalama fakatoto 'a e 'Amui 'i Mu'á/Ancient Futures ki he ngaahi koloa fakamea'a Tonga me'i he kongá ki mui 'o e senituli 18 ki he kongá ki mu'a 'o e senituli 19, 'a ia na'e fakapa'anga 'e he *Royal Society of New Zealand's Marsden Fund*. Ko e faingamālie eni ke fakahoko 'a e ngāué ni 'i he konitinēniti 'e tolu, ke fekumi mo vakai'i 'a e ngaahi koloa fakamea'a Tongá 'i he ngaahi misiumé. Ko e faingamālie ia ke fengāue'aki vāofi ai 'a kinautolu 'i Tongá mo kinautolu 'i he opé ki he 'etau ngaahi koloá. Lolotonga 'a e konifelenisi na'e lava ke vahevahe ai 'e he kau nimamea'á 'enua ngaahi 'iló mo e a'usiá pea mo ha ní'ihī kehe fekau'aki mo hotau hisitōliá mo e tukufakaholó. Na'e kau mai ki he konifelenisi 'a e kulupu me'i he *German Cultural Delegation* mei Dessau, Siamane pea mo Lady Tunakaimanu Fielakepa na'á ne fakahoko 'a e lea 'o e 'ahó. Na'e ngāue fakataha 'a e *Me'a'ofa Gallery* 'o e *Tanoa International Dateline Hotel* mo e timi 'Amui 'i Mu'á 'o lava ke kau ki he polokalamá ha faka'alí'ali makehe 'a Tohi mo Dyck na'e ui ko e *Art in the Dark*. Na'e fakahāhā heni 'a 'ena ngaahi ngāué mo e taukei 'o e nima mea'a Tongá. Na'e hoko atu 'a e vahevahe 'e Tohi mo Dyck 'ena ngaahi a'usiá ki he ngaahi kolo mo e apiako 'i Lapaha mo Hihifo.

Na'e fakapa'anga 'e he Haikomisiona Nu'u Silá 'a e konifelenisi ko 'ení 'a ia na'e fakahoko 'i he *Tanoa International Dateline Hotel*. Kuo ngāue fakataha 'a e *Tanoa Hotel Group* mo e *Creative New Zealand* 'o lava ke folau mai ai 'a e kau 'aati, kau tohihisitōlia, kau nimamea'a me'i he ngaahi fonua 'o e Pasifikí ki hono

faka'ilonga'i 'o e kamata'anga 'o e polokalama fakatoto'lo mo e konifelenisi. Na'e 'omi 'e he polokalamá ni 'a e ngaahi faingamālie ki he kau nimamea'a 'o Tongá ke faka'ali'ali 'enau ngāue faka'aati 'oku ngāue'aki ai 'a e founa kehekehe 'o kau ai 'a e tā valivali, ngaahi faiva, lea, ngaahi filimi, tulama, mala'e 'o e akó mo kinautolu 'i Nu'u Silá.

Kuo hoko 'a e kamata 'a e polokalama ngāue ke hokohoko atu 'a e fengāue'aki vāofi 'a e Pule'anga Nu'u Silá mo e Pasifikí pea lava ke vahevahe atu 'a e tukufakaholo 'a e Tongá mo e kāinga 'i he ngaahi fonua mulí, pea ke toe vāofi 'a e vā 'o Nu'u Sila mo e kau lavame'a he ngāue fakamea'a 'i Tonga ní.

Translation by Alioth Helu

*Tiffany Babington was a senior diplomat for more than twenty-nine years, including just over four years as Aotearoa New Zealand's High Commissioner to Tonga. During her tenure, she was instrumental in securing and implementing New Zealand's response to the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption and subsequent tsunami, Cyclone Gita in 2018, Cyclone Harold in 2020, and the COVID-19 pandemic.*