Repositioning Pacific Arts: Artists, Objects, Histories: Proceedings of the VII International Symposium of the Pacific Arts Association, Christchurch, New Zealand.* Anne E. Allen and Deborah B. Waite, eds. Canon Pyon, England: Sean Kingston Publishing, 2014.

Reviewed by Billie Lythberg

In June 2003, the city of Christchurch, New Zealand, hosted the VII International Symposium of the Pacific Arts Association (PAA) and launched a handsome volume of essays from the PAA's "Festschrift in Honor of Philip Dark" held at the Field Museum in 1999. Entitled *Pacific Art: Persistence, Change and Meaning* (Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2002), it observed a model whereby an edited volume followed each symposium, often in time for launch at the next. Most recently, a special double edition of the *Journal of the Pacific Arts Association* (Vol. 14[1–2] 2015) has brought together a selection of papers read at the last symposium (IX), held in Vancouver, Canada, in August 2013, and the proceedings of PAA 2003 have finally been published as *Repositioning Pacific Arts* (2014).

In March 2016, the PAA returns to New Zealand for a meeting to be hosted in Auckland. In the years that have elapsed since PAA 2003—and most evidently in PAA symposia held in Rarotonga (2010) and Vancouver (2013)—Pacific artists, curators, and academic and traditional experts have attended PAA in increasing numbers to articulate their experiences and knowledge, and to express what it means to have “a shared ancestry and history that has been shaped by over a millennium of dynamic relationships of exploration, encounter and exchange” yet all too often be “absent from the discourse of Pacific art and visual culture.”

Those quotes come from the call for participation for PAA 2016, at which it seems likely *Repositioning Pacific Arts* will have a visible presence (Pacific Arts Association 2016). The overarching theme for 2016 is “By the lessons of the past, we are guided into the future,” an appropriate lens through which to view a volume that is no outdated collection of old essays, but rather a comprehensive compilation of recently revised papers. Adrienne L. Kaeppler's keynote speech “Recycling Tradition in the Arts of Polynesia” is the conceptual anchor and introduction for the volume, which has 16 chapters arranged thematically into three broad sections. As editor Anne E. Allen notes, many of the essays could have been placed in multiple sections—“classification is always fallible” (1)—but the arrangement works. “Artefacts and Traditions” umbrellas papers emerging from museum studies and historical research alongside others based on field investigation; “Collections and Collecting” considers the museum as a storehouse of identity and constructor or construction of authenticity; and essays within “The Contemporary Pacific” consider “how to define oneself as distinct from the majority and how locale intersects with identity” (3). The essays span conceptual offerings backed up with examples from across the Pacific, such as Kaeppler's introductory essay, through surveys of the development of particular arts, such as Hilary L. Scothorn's “Consequences of Conversion: The Transformation of Samoan Siapo in the Nineteenth Century.” The volume also provides in-depth considerations

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of the trajectories of singular Oceanic objects, such as Christian Coiffier's "The Exceptional Voyage of a Biwat Painting from Kinkatem to Paris."

I particularly enjoyed the papers that leapt into difficult territory to discuss how Oceanic arts contribute to the identities of the communities for and by whom they were made to be used or otherwise appreciated, as well as to the identities of European makers and collectors exploring their own sense of place within the Pacific. For example, the contributions of Rose Evans ("Constructing Identity: Collecting Oceanic Art/Artefacts in New Zealand") and Saumaeafe Vanya Taule'alo ("O le tai faga'e: Reality and Change in Contemporary Samoan Art") speak with eloquence, care, and nuance to the tensions that emerge when Europeans make or collect Oceanic arts. Moving from the individual to the institution, curator Jill Hasell's explication "Bridging the Gap: Connecting the Māori Collection at the British Museum to New Zealand" sets out clearly and logically the British Museum's strategies for knowledge revitalization and reciprocal exchange between its locale in London, the London Māori Club known as Ngāti Rānana (the latter word a transliteration of "London"), and Māori artists and communities in Aotearoa-New Zealand and its diaspora. While art historians Ngārino Ellis (Ngāpuhi and Ngāti Porou) and Caroline Vercoe (of Samoan descent) bring significant personal insights to their essays—Ellis writing on "Māori Self-Portraiture" and Vercoe on the art practice of New Zealand-born Samoan artist Andy Leleisi'uao in "Against the Grain: Counter-Images of Urban Pacific Identity"—I predict that the volume prepared from 2016's symposium will demonstrate the much larger contribution now being made by Pacific people to the PAA discourse.

This is an important collection of essays that were ground breaking in 2003 and are ground staking now, setting out some of the PAA's genealogy of people, research, and ideas—lessons of the past to guide the association's future. It is also quite a pleasing book, with numerous color and black-and-white photographs, images, and maps, and a hardcover wrapped in John Pule's *Malika*. But at \$155 it is expensive, which will restrict its readership, and whilst a few typos keep the gods happy it regrettably omits macrons and signals the Pacific glottal stop incorrectly (this must always point to the vowel following it, as in Hawai'i). These small grumbles aside (and with an apology for orthographic pedantry!) I enjoyed revisiting the lectures I attended in 2003, and commend the book's authors and editors for keeping their ideas fresh and relevant through to 2014.

Reference Cited

Pacific Arts Association. 2016. "The Pacific Arts Association XII International Symposium Call for Participation." Accessed March 9. http://www.conference.co.nz/ispaa16/call_for_participation/call_for_participation

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