

## **Hōhua Ropate Kurene**

Aotearoa – Ngāti Apa Ki Te Rā Tō / Ngāi Tūāhuriri / Kāi Tahu / Te Aupōuri  
Samoa – Luatuanu'u

Hōhua Ropate Kurene is an artist specialising in photography, creative writing and multimedia design. In his work he captures a breadth of Tangata Whenua/Tauivi/Moana experiences, establishing new expressions of beauty, fashion and identity within Aotearoa and Samoa. Whilst much of his work is firmly rooted in his own heritage and history, Hōhua's unique perspective has already resonated with a variety of artists – resulting in powerful collaborations spanning a range of mediums.

### **TALANOAGA (sharing / unfastening)**

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Samoa – Luatuanu'u

*Framed photographic print*

## Tala a'ao Mai

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Samoa – Luatuanu'u

*Framed photographic prints, Asi Toa, Lele'a, Luatuanu'u, Upolu, Samoa 2022*

A young Asi Toa growing under the guarded watch of La'au Niu (Coconut trees), set apart from the encompassing dark of night by firelight.

From a birds-eye-view, Asi Toa extend like outstretched arms across the ridges of our family mauga.

Close up, they stand tall and proud amongst the local networks of flora that make up the forest systems of our family's land and mark the parameters of our fanua.

My grandfather, "Luafalealo Misipati Kurene", would travel great lengths across these mauga and forest systems, recording the findings of his travels and instilling his very being through the planting of young Asi Toa throughout our fanua as he went.

When exploring these mauga and forest systems with my sisters, the Asi Toa stand as a reminder of our forebears.

We can look upon these trees with our father and see him mirrored in them, and are reminded of our grandfather and those who came before him, recalling the shapes of their faces, the sounding of their names, and the warmth of their hands opening earth and space for Asi Toa to take root.

The existence of my aiga today are the tender aches and dreams of my grandfather, realised. I continue to find him as I further delve into our gafa: the living knowledge of our Tuaā.

A key element in the construction of our fale and central to the ways in which my aiga have long existed, Asi Toa are memory-keepers and storytellers, just as we are.

In the night by firelight these Tuaā, meticulously woven and lashed under the tightly-fitted thatching of our roofs, loom and dance above us. The Asi Toa that had been split lengthways into floorboards and laid out as the ground of our fale are in the morning the first to awaken, coated in dew and the fragrance of salt and smoke, yawning under the weight of stirring bodies.

It is upon these trees that I am held, kept from the cold of the earth and cradled against the luring pull of the sky above.

The Asi Toa have long known the perpetuity of their standing within the reaches of our fanua, and by their example I am reminded of my own.

"Tala a'ao Mai" is a greeting which invites you to loosen yourself from the outside world, opening yourself to the shared space so that you may embrace it. In this depiction, I centre the Asi Toa and their likeness in great numbers across our mauga, to the open and embracing arms of my Tuaā.

## Manawa-tāwhi

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*Framed photographic prints, Te Rerenga Wairua, Te-Hiku-O-Te-Ika, Aotearoa 2021*

In the distance, Manawa-tāwhi (Three King Islands) is captured from the viewpoint of Te Rerenga Wairua, softly perched under a Raumati dusk above the meeting of two oceans.

The huddle of islands, just breaking the surface above the two meeting waters, are known as Manawa-tāwhi, or "last breath", after the long journey our spirits take — from their final terrestrial resting place, and up the line of Aotearoa before their return home. This is a karakia of love and gratitude for my tīpuna. For the threads they have sewn across time and space and in turn the stories they have left us to continue.

## Tui Tolu

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Samoa – Luatuanu'u

*Framed photographic prints, Lele'a, Luatuanu'u, Atua District, Upolu Samoa 2017*

My blood. From the Left: Si'ufaga, Faleni, and Aiomanu, playfully collecting young breadfruit from the backyard in preparation for a feast.

Our family mauga, "Mt. Tolu", was named as such by my Grandfather, a title woven together from his account of the braiding of three mountains and three streams spilling from the spine of Upolu and feeding the Namu river that binds, cleanses and nourishes the space between my home village Luatuanu'u and neighbouring village Solosolo. Captured beneath the lip of "Lele'a" (a place to leap from). I share from my perspective an account of Joy, an essential fizzing of life, a glimpse of a time and feeling where our beings are simultaneously full and hungry, all at once. Long before the known journey to Te Rerenga Wairua, but also long after.

The word "Tui" in Fa'aSamoa can also mean to pierce or puncture - this is represented by the Lou at my cousin Aiomanu's shoulder. This device is used to puncture the stem of high-hanging fruit like Ulu (Breadfruit - displayed) & Esi (Papaya) and release them from their branches.

## **Ta'i Afi**

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Samoa – Luatuanu'u

*Framed photographic prints, Lele'a Plantation, Lele'a, Luatuanu'u, Atua District.*

My dear aunty Poto. Surrounded by coconut trees, guava, mango & citrus fruits.  
In a calm and quiet only she could master, she rakes in the littering leaves along the slope  
of Lele'a. Seldomly pausing to look upon a smoking fire hat burns the littered  
leaves for their return to soil.

"E malū le ala-ala, ae faigatā le ta'i afi"

It is easy to enjoy the fire, though it is hard for the one who feeds it.

An offering to those who keep the eternal flame burning.

## **Oriori**

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Samoa – Luatuanu'u

*Framed photographic prints, Waimakariri, Te-Waka-O-Aoraki, Aotearoa 2021*

Shimmering sunlight on Waiti (fresh water) of the Waimakariri river

Oriori - Songs and chants that tell stories / Lullabies to soothe pēpi to sleep.