

TALKING TAPA: Pasifika Bark Cloth in Queensland 11 December to 31 January 2010



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Talking TAPA: Pacific Bark Cloth in Queensland showcases the diversity of Pacific Islander cultural practices, heritage and visual iconography through beaten bark cloth or tapa, which is mainly made from the paper mulberry tree inner bark.

Tapa is synonymous with the Pacific Islands. With the increasing number of Pacific Islander peoples coming to live in Queensland it now appears regularly in meeting halls, at performances, weddings and funerals and in the homes of these relatively new migrants to our shores.

In the exhibition, Fijian wedding outfits vie with Papuan New Guinean ceremonial skirts and cloaks and unusual tapa clothing from Wallis and Futuna. Large Tongan pieces serve many functions and have been passed from family to family, depending on needs within the Pacific Diaspora. Loincloths and headdresses from the Solomon Islands and bark cloth lengths from Erromongo, Vanuatu remind us of those 'blackbirded' labour recruits of yesteryear, whose descendants now form a significant community in Queensland.

While most tapa is made from the inner bark (bast) of the paper mulberry tree, fig and breadfruit are also represented in this exhibition. The oldest bark cloth in the show is from Futuna Island and dates from the 1860 whilst the latest was acquired in the Solomons in September 2008. Tapa decoration draws on clan and family patterning, the spirit world, the plant, bird, animal and fish kingdoms, abstract and geometric designs, as well as historical events and representations.

Talking Tapa offers an opportunity to view traditional and contemporary Pasifika design and to learn more about Australia's Pacific neighbour and migrant communities. There is a comprehensive 88 page full-colour catalogue and extensive didactic panels that draw on the cultural knowledge of Pasifika communities and scholarly research to place each work in its social and historical context.

Talking Tapa is a national travelling exhibition presented by Brisbane Multicultural Arts Centre curated by Joan G Winter and toured by Museum and Gallery Services Queensland. The exhibition is supported by Visions of Australia, an Australian Government Program supporting touring exhibitions by providing funding assistance for the development and touring of Australian cultural material across Australia. This project is also proudly funded by Queensland Government, Gambling Community Benefit Fund and Brisbane City Council.



Two Manus Island skirts
fig bast, seeds, shell, cotton cloth
104 x 83cm; 86 x 43cm [detail]
On loan from the collection of
University of Queensland
Anthropology Museum



Suluni Vakamau Traditional female wedding
attire/set
Three-piece set made by Nainasa Kacimaiwai
Nayau village, Lau Province, acquired from the
makers at the Melanesian Arts and Culture
Festival, Fiji, 2006
Mannequin dressed by Jiwana Dau Miles
On loan from the collection of Dr Susan Cochran



GALLERY OPENING HOURS:

10.00am - 5.00pm Monday – Saturday
1.00pm – 5.00pm Sunday and Public Holidays
Gallery admission: Adults \$5.00
Children up to 16 years are free

Cnr Abbott & Shields Sts, Cairns. Tel 4046 4800
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