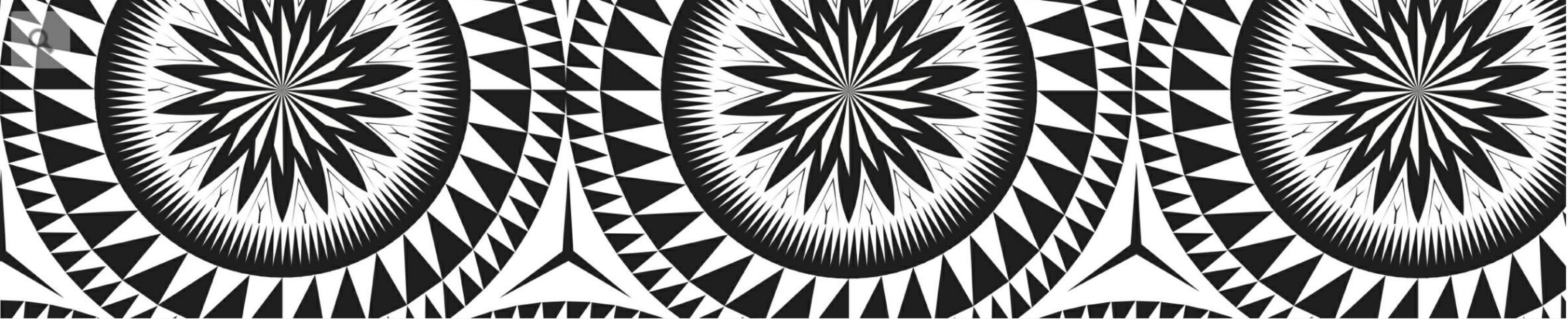


Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.



Navigating the values of Siapo

Through Identity, Le Va and Textile Design

Introduction Part 1 Part 2 Part 3 Part 4 Part 5 Opening Conclusion
Subject 1 - Tav Subject 2 - Ali Subject 3 - Nick Acknowledgements

Introduction

Growing up as a child of mixed race, I was never aware of the major influences my ethnic identity would play upon my existence as a designer today. Looking back now I have seen how important the teachings of my elders and Samoan relatives have become in providing me with a sense of respect for tradition, Samoan culture and faith. Yet, I am always reminded of my European and Scottish heritage when encountering differences.

From the experiences I have attained through my involvement in the Pasifika Arts community, my professional role in high-end menswear, and a daughter to a father of European Scottish heritage, I have begun to question where these values around tradition and culture will lie in the future.

The interconnected culture of Siapo has been a prominent medium in navigating this journey.

About this Exegesis

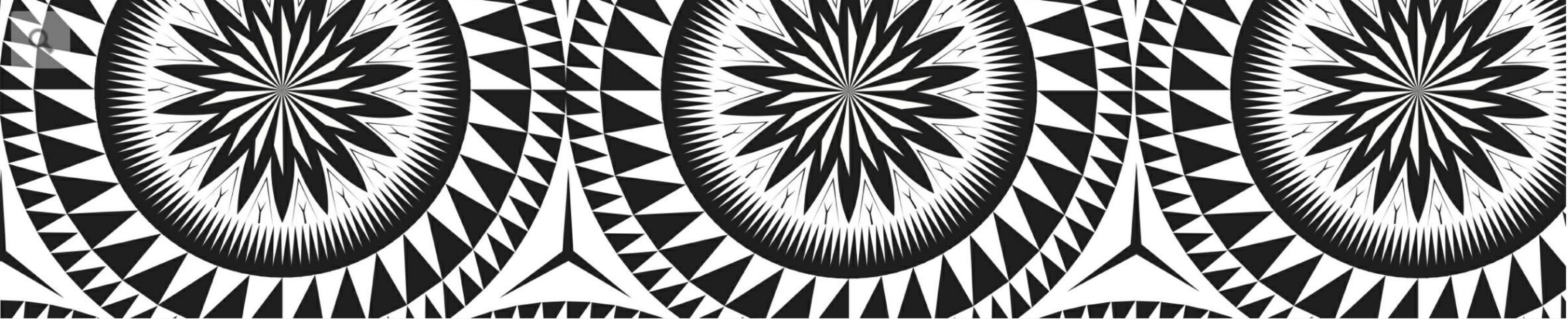
This exegesis is constructed through five main parts and a progressive conclusion. Each part consists of a short film and supporting text as an attempt to provide a glimpse into the experiences and context gained throughout the project.

It should also be noted that the use of Talanoa has been a prominent research methodology throughout this journey. (1)

~ **Part 1**

(1) *Talanoa* - a tongan term meaning “a personal encounter where people story their issues, their realities and aspirations” (Vaiioleti, 1999-2003). Several talanoa with Rev. S.L. Vaiioleti, Head of the Church of Tonga, USA, in Palo Alto, Oakland, San Francisco.





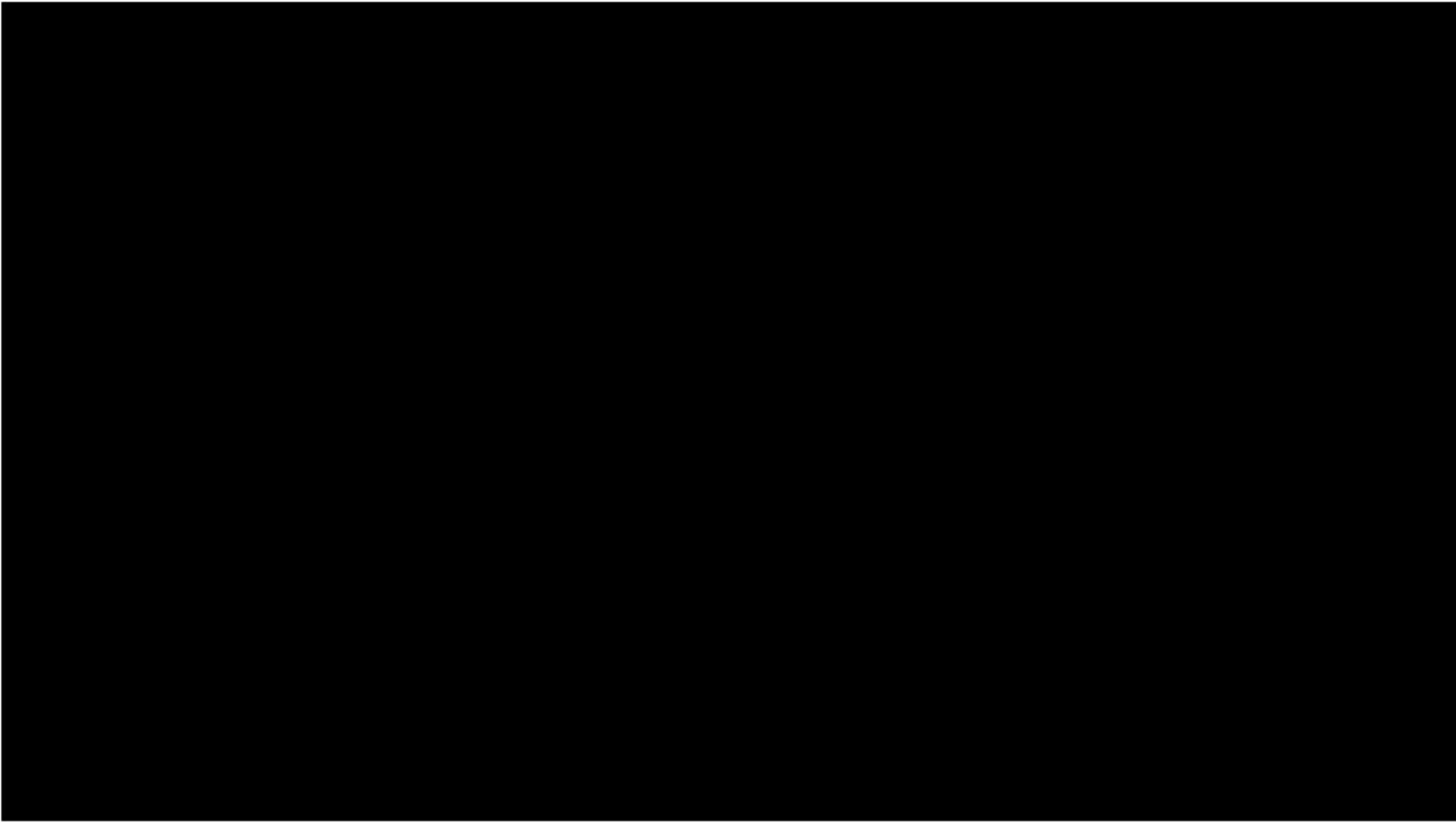
Navigating the values of Siapo

Through Identity, Le Va and Textile Design

Introduction Part 1 Part 2 Part 3 Part 4 Part 5 Opening Conclusion
Subject 1 - Tav Subject 2 - Ali Subject 3 - Nick Acknowledgements

Part 1

In the beginning



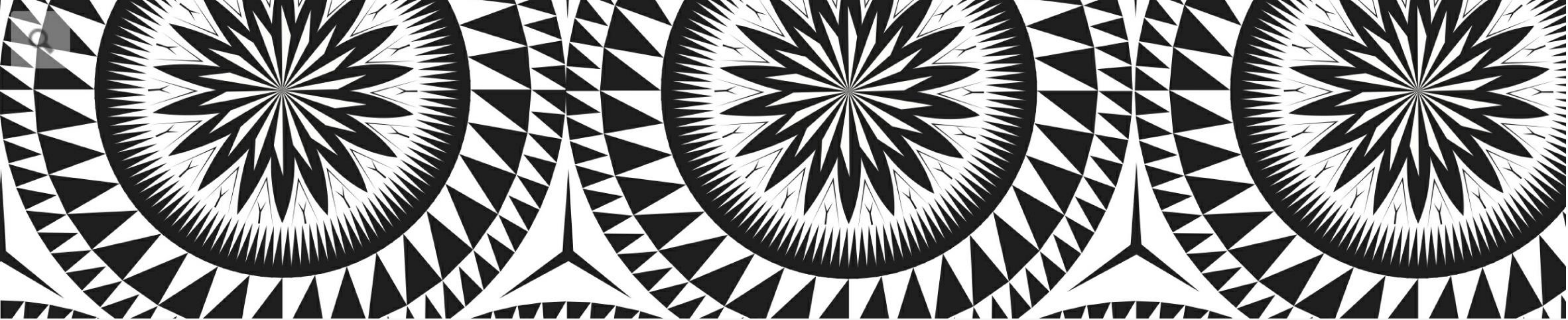
“Play with your birds and come out with a flower,” (2) illustrates the nature of appropriation in the most prominent symbol used in Siapo - the fa’a tuli (3). The growing appropriation, adaptation and recognition of this symbol are a direct reflection on the kind of social lives (4) a Siapo can live. This is dependent on its settings and place. For instance, the social lives in which I have encountered from the Siapo I received, reflect a time around family and its contribution to fueling my creativity. What can initially be seen as a paperbark cloth, can reveal its social and cultural value through scale, pattern, place of setting, and a time in which it has travelled. The physical and non-physical values that have surfaced through the Siapo featured, have since influenced the questioning of its existence from a Samoan and commercial textile perspective.

References / Ethics / Appendices / Glossary

~ **Continue to Part 2**

—

(2) Pritchard, M.J. (1984). *Siapo - Barkcloth Art of Samoa*. pp.44 (American Samoa: Council on Culture, Arts and Humanities : 1984)



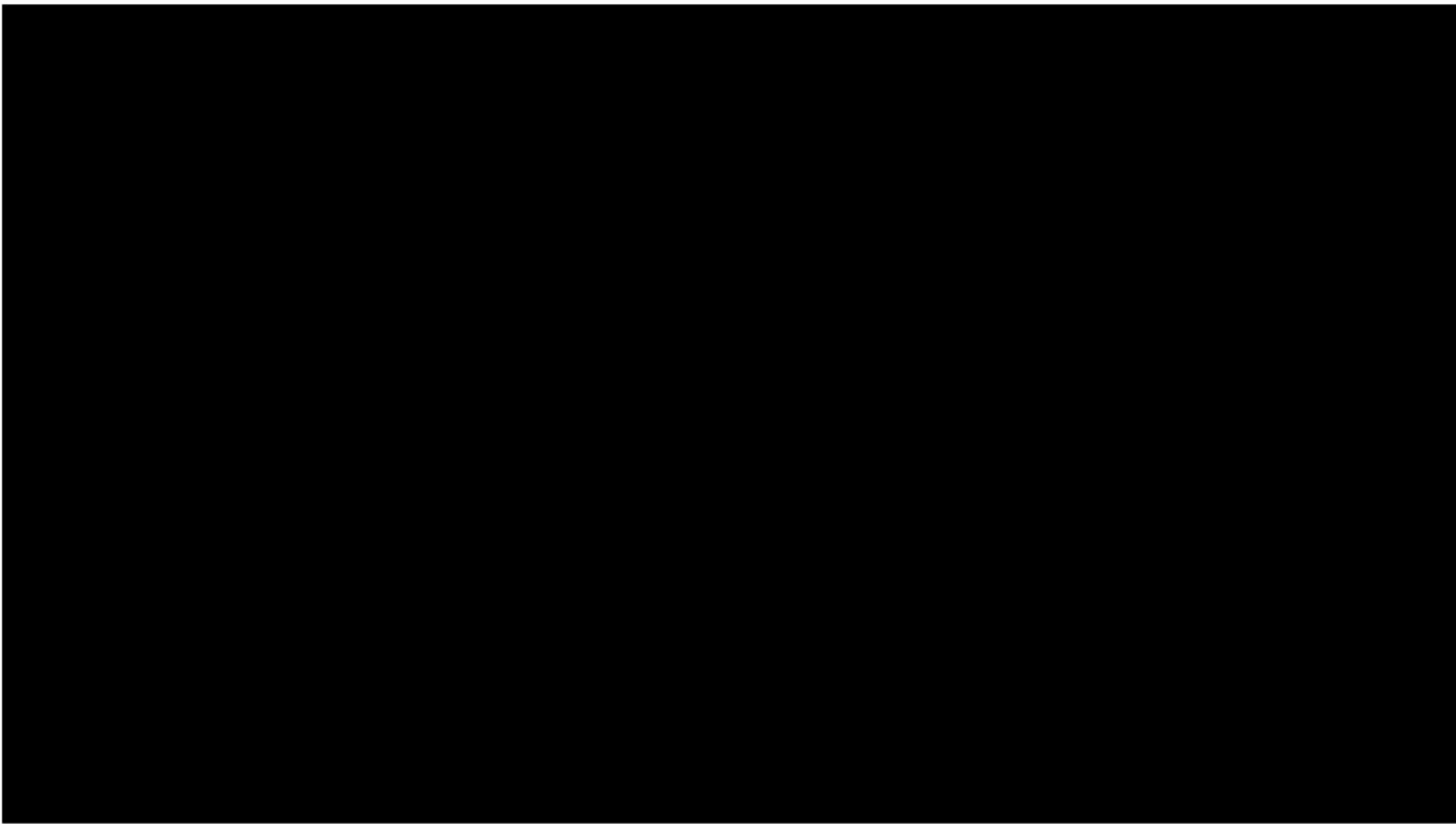
Navigating the values of Siapo

Through Identity, Le Va and Textile Design

Introduction Part 1 Part 2 Part 3 Part 4 Part 5 Opening Conclusion
Subject 1 - Tav Subject 2 - Ali Subject 3 - Nick Acknowledgements

Part 2

My Preconceptions



Three research questions framed this research project:

"How can Siapo be brought forward to survive naturally in the global textile industry, through this developing world that myself and many other young Pasifikans are living through today?"

"What parts of Siapo can be contributed to the environment and community in order to be utilized and maintained in its transition to the textile industry?"

"If so, how will this transition benefit the people of the Pacific from a health, environmental and economic perspective?"

These were a response to the concerns in survival of Siapo culture, natural fibre potential and the environment it was made from. The next step was in how best to approach these questions and responses.

Methods associated with auto-ethnography and other ethnographic practices helped to shape this design-led research project. The Siapo culture needed to be identified and explored through an interpersonal style of approach. A Talanoa (5) was constructed for the first critical presentation of

2013. This proved successful in revealing stories about the people attending the critique and established connections among us as a local community.

However, coming to grips with the physical process of Siapo proved frustrating in attempts to isolate parts for exploration. For example, the construction of Siapo tools by hand became tedious and time consuming, yet revealed differences in resources easily available to myself being based in New Zealand compared to being based in Samoa. This also tied back to the response made in regards to ‘experience in making Siapo’ (6). Having never actually made Siapo myself, or lived in the environment in which it is made from, was enough to put together a trip to Samoa.

Travelling to Samoa and interact directly with people who made, worked with and marketed Siapo meant having to gain ethics approval from Massey University (7). Through my growing involvement with the Pasifika arts community I began to identify the nature of our network in comparison to the nature of my interpersonal skills when working my job in menswear. For instance, in the Pasifika community it was always a mutual meeting that began to reveal ourselves, our family, or people we know in comparison to a client walking in with a request as a result of them coming to us. I started to feel slightly insecure about going through the ethics process as I felt its structure in approach to participants could potentially hinder the mutual meeting space that reveals our stories in creating a secure space to exchange information. Following through with the ethics process, I provided an information sheet, an interview sheet of questions and a consent form, all of which were translated in Samoan. Upon arriving in Samoa and realizing the irrelevance of these sheets, I chose to dismiss them and utilize the natural presentation of the culture and connections to my purpose for being there.

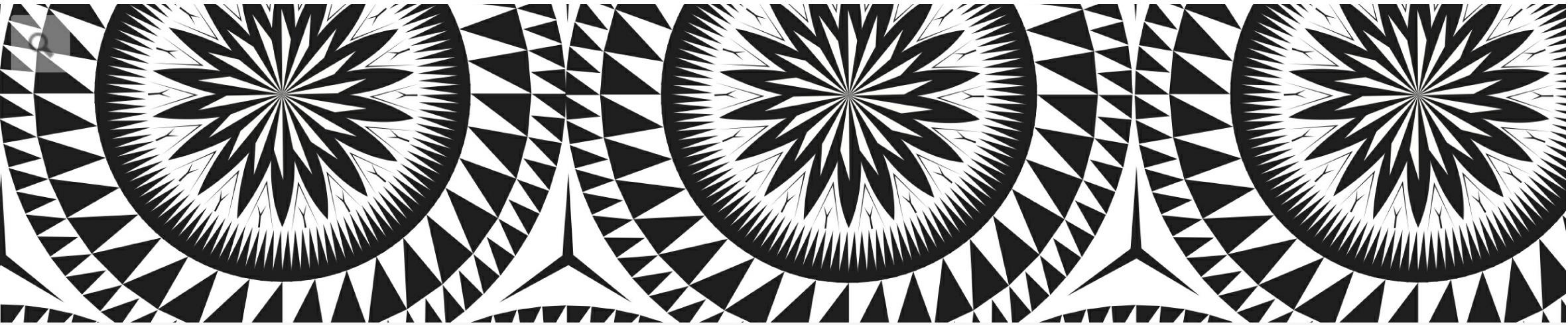
References / Ethics / Appendices / Glossary

~ **Continue to Part 3**

(5) *Talanoa* - a tongan term meaning “a personal encounter where people story their issues, their realities and aspirations” (Vaioleti, 1999-2003). Several talanoa with Rev. S.L. Vaioleti, Head of the Church of Tonga, USA, in Palo Alto, Oakland, San Francisco.

(6) Participant response from “*Adapting the Traditions of Siapo*”2012, Withers, S.

(7) Appendix 1



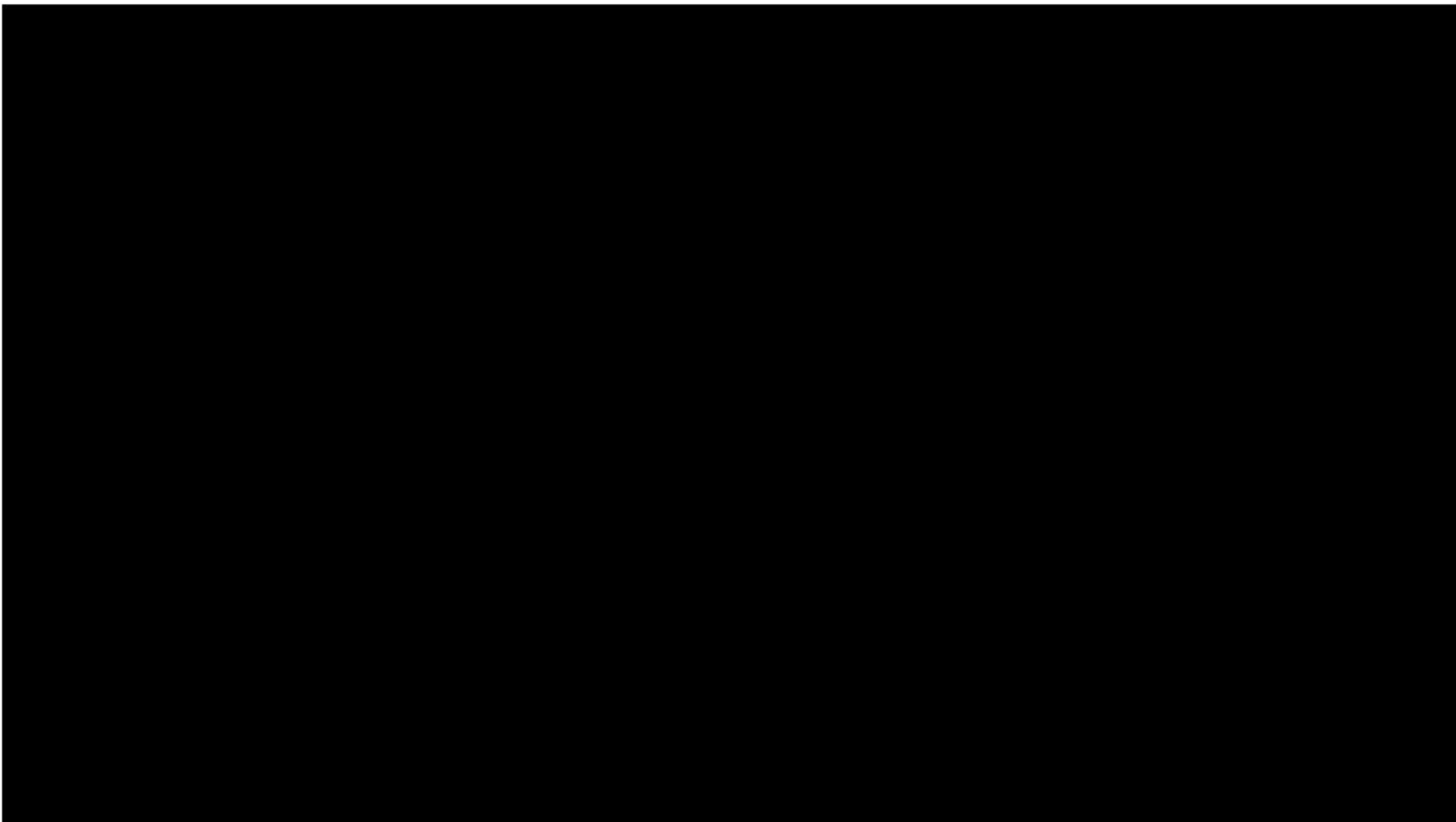
Navigating the values of Siapo

Through Identity, Le Va and Textile Design

Introduction Part 1 Part 2 **Part 3** Part 4 Part 5 Opening Conclusion
Subject 1 - Tav Subject 2 - Ali Subject 3 - Nick Acknowledgements

Part 3

Samoa



The ‘Samoa’ that I travelled to in June 2013 was a completely different Samoa to the one I had visited as a child. The heat, nostalgic memories and the feeling of being homesick were just a few of the emotions I experienced over there. Prior to arriving in Apia (8), I had planned out the time I was going to spend in Samoa. After my first two days on the island, these plans become irrelevant as a result of the peaceful laid back culture of Samoa and my misguided perceptions of Siapo. I began to realize the differences in how fast I could get things done in New Zealand compared to the laid back style of Samoa. This made me think back to the time consuming hand carving methods I had been frustrated with, only to realize how the nature of this fit perfectly with the island time of Samoa.

Realizing that in order to fulfill the purpose of the trip I needed to adapt fast. Thankful for the interpersonal skills I had been practicing in New Zealand along with the help of extended family in Samoa, I began making my way through networks to get to where I needed to be. People were very helpful, kind and supportive in assisting me. I became so overwhelmed and reminded of how blessed I was to be part of a culture such as Samoa.

During the down time I decided to explore the markets. I looked for people to interview in regards to the ethics I had planned prior to leaving New Zealand. This consisted of interviewing a range of

people that made Siapo and sold it at the markets. I was interested to hear what their response to the tourist market would be, and what their range of Siapo products were and what their sales were like. I discovered that many of the questions I had put together were irrelevant and proceeded to let the culture and stories talk for themselves. I found that most of the Siapo featured at the markets were actually from Savai'i (9) and that many of the people who sold it there were either selling it on behalf of the maker or they had purchased it from the makers. Many of the Siapo products were of average scale indicating its convenience for tourists to take back with them. Some Siapo products remained as pieces that featured decorative motifs or had been used as part of a product. For example, Siapo was used as a book cover or made into bags, place mats and so on.

Siapo was not the only kind of textile product that filled the markets. A range of adapted siapo design methods were found including Elei printing(10). Elei printing is an adapted method of the Upeti board. Used to relief prints onto fabric rather than Siapo, the use of Upeti and Elei printing was transitioning itself to the rise in the use of stencil printing on fabrics. As a result of foreign influences from China, accessibility to other products such as spray cans and the recycling of x-ray sheets from the hospital to produce stencils were becoming more convenient in producing the traditional Elei fabric-look used to produce puletasi (11), lava lava (12), shirts and so on.

Absorbing and adapting the responses from locals, prepared me for what I was about to undergo in Savai'i. It wasn't until the second to last day in Samoa I was able to meet with the executive director for the Women in Business Organization(13). She was very helpful in introducing me to Fa'amomoi and her family, who made Siapo on the island of Savai'i.

References / Ethics / Appendices / Glossary

~ Continue to Part 4

—

(8) Apia is the capital of Samoa on the main island of Upoulu.

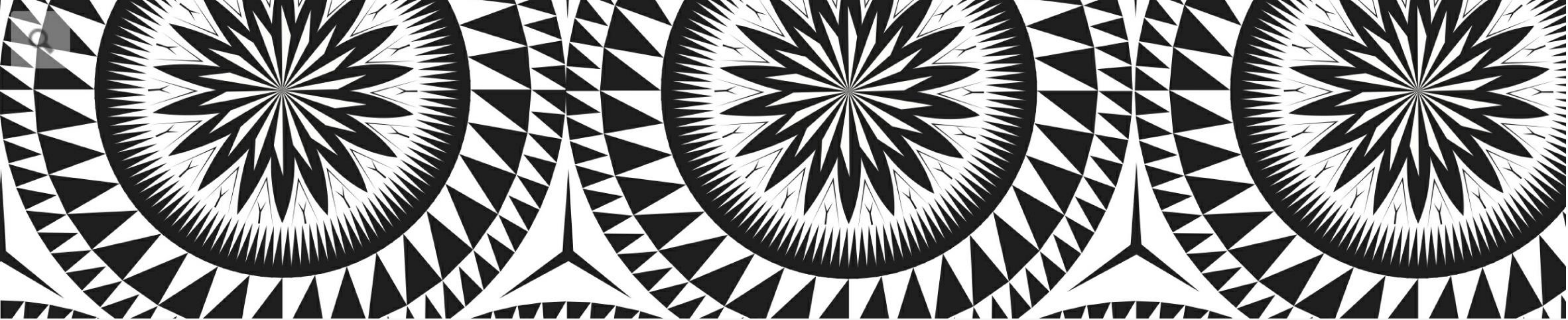
(9) Savai'i is the neighbouring island to Upoulu.

(10) Elei printing - a textile process used in Samoa where a wooden carved board is covered in ink, fabric is pressed over the top to reveal a relief print.

(11) Puletasi - a traditional two piece uniform of clothing worn by women.

(12) Lavalava - piece of cloth used to wrap around the waist.

(13) Women In Business Development Samoa Inc. is an organization that strengthens village economies in Samoa. <http://www.womeninbusiness.ws/>



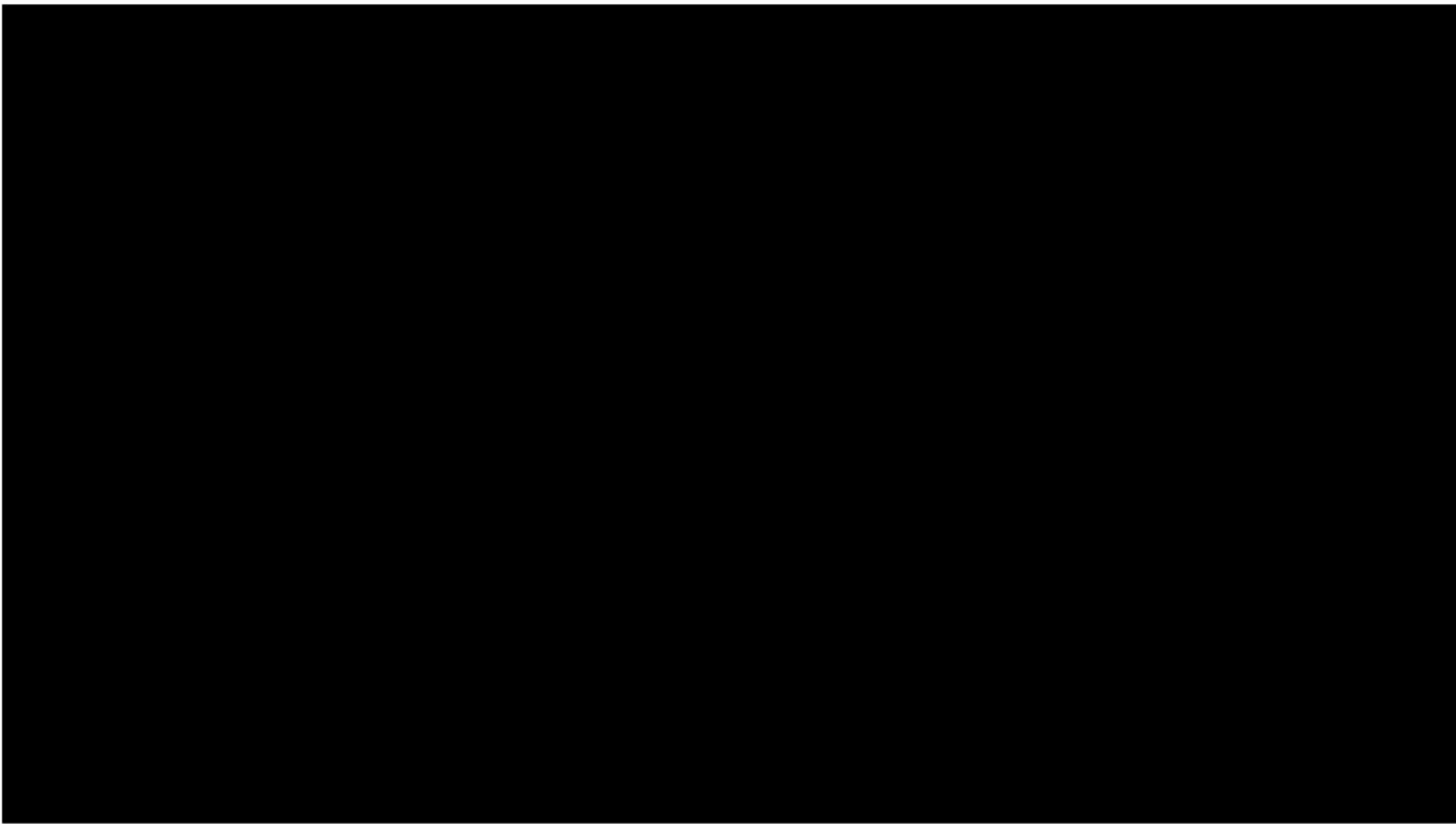
Navigating the values of Siapo

Through Identity, Le Va and Textile Design

Introduction Part 1 Part 2 Part 3 Part 4 Part 5 Opening Conclusion
Subject 1 - Tav Subject 2 - Ali Subject 3 - Nick Acknowledgements

Part 4

Savai'i



The early morning ferry refreshed me for the beautiful island of Savai'i. After being reminded from the Women in Business Organization about the traditional protocol that still exists in Savaii, I was reminded of my mother's village, Falelatai. Compared to the city of Apia where one can walk around in shorts and a singlet, many villages still practice traditional protocol. I was lucky I had packed my lava lava and chosen to wear a short sleeved shirt for the small trip.

Having never met Fa'amomoi and her family, the start to our morning consisted of a talanoa style introduction. We discussed our families, our background and my purpose for being there. We had no solid plan to follow before arriving, so I proceeded to embrace what was presented in the day by making the experience a priority. This meant having to put the cameras and notebooks down. I learnt to appreciate the experience of making Siapo by participating and stepping out of my comfort zone. In doing so, I found that the Va (14) between myself and Fa'amomoi and her family became less foreign. In fact once I put the camera down, her husband decided to give some filming a go.

Reflecting on this now, as much as I was trying to do a lot of the filming and interviewing on my own, I was reminded of the communal factor Siapo culture consists of. For example, everyone in Fa'amomoi's family played a part in the process that day. Her husband cut the stalk down and peeled

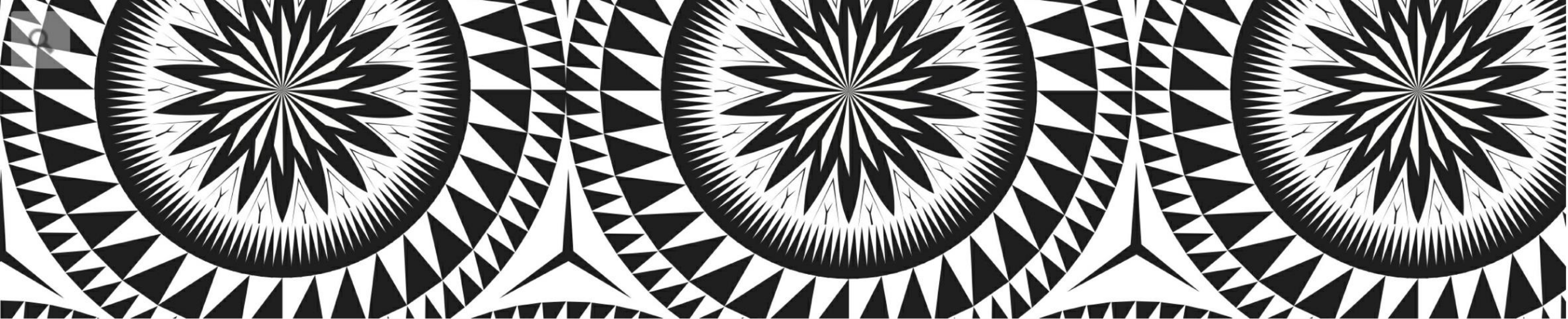
it, her son cleaned the baste, her husband then beat it, then her daughter and myself flattened it out. I began to identify Fa'amomoi as a head designer in how she closed the process through preparing the dried pieces for design application.

From a textile perspective, I began to identify areas of textile process that could be applied or transferred from the process. For instance, the key part of the Siapo process that stood out for myself was the need for the baste to be flattened, cleaned then slapped down flat onto the lino. I began to question this need to flatten and the bastes ability to adapt to what it was being stressed upon. The overall experience provided me as a textile designer with detailed areas for exploration in the project. After I returned to New Zealand it became evident that this learning experience provided me understanding beyond what I had already achieved in my undergraduate degree.

References / Ethics / Appendices / Glossary

~ ***Continue to Part 5***

(14) Va - a term used to describe the space in between - a space that relates, rather than separates.



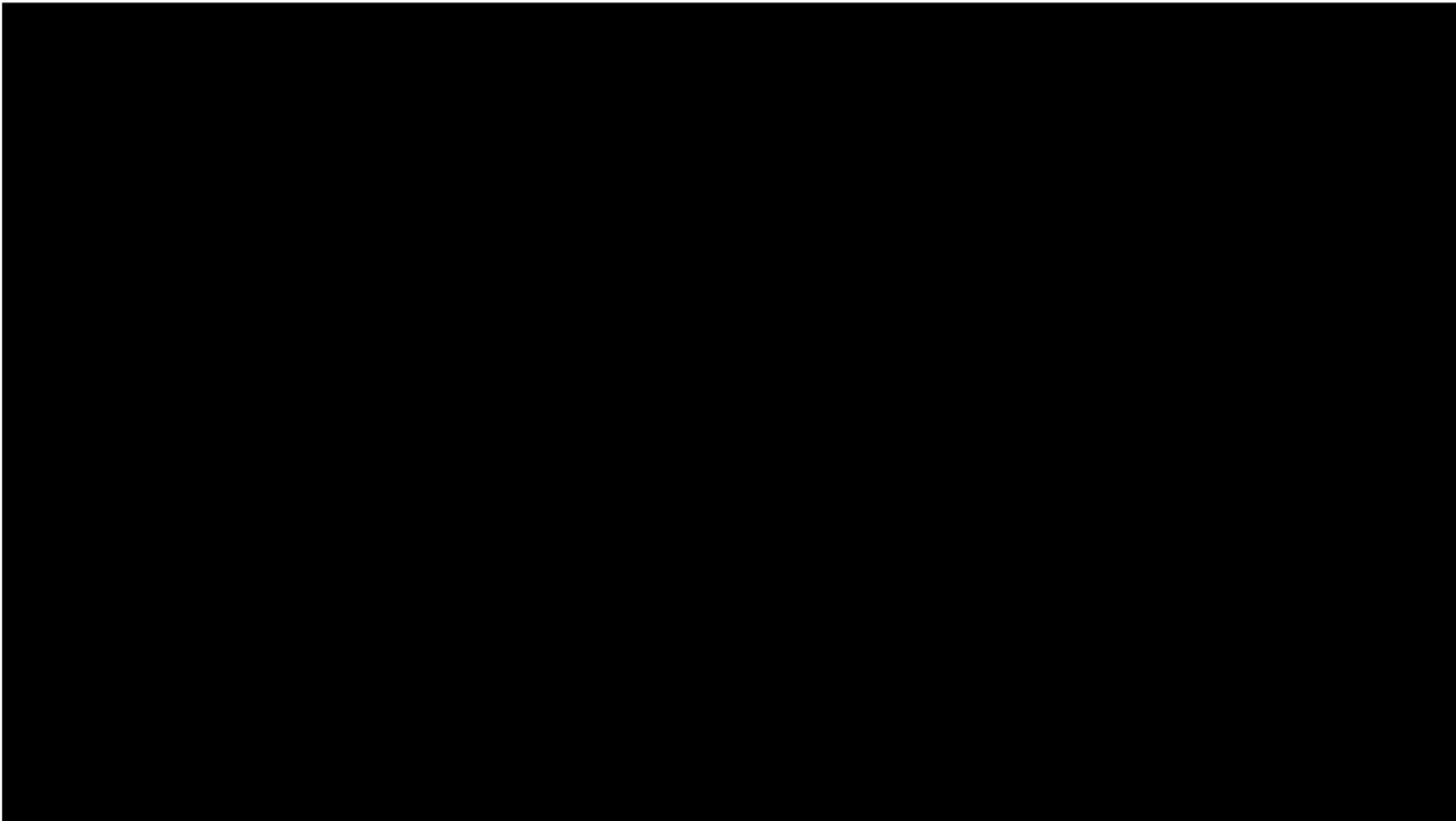
Navigating the values of Siapo

Through Identity, Le Va and Textile Design

Introduction Part 1 Part 2 Part 3 Part 4 Part 5 Opening Conclusion
Subject 1 - Tav Subject 2 - Ali Subject 3 - Nick Acknowledgements

Part 5

Afakasi



Afakasi: A term used to describe an individual of mixed race and a term that I have encountered in conversations with locals whilst in Samoa. To be truthful, I did not feel like I belonged entirely to Samoa. And I can’t decide if this is because of the language barrier, the fact that I was never born or brought up there, let alone my heritage of mixed race. I also wondered if this contributed to the experience becoming an emotional part of this journey. I came across a poem through an uncle on my dad’s side of the family called, ‘Afakasi is Dead’ (15).

I felt that this poem illustrated the experiences I had encountered as a textile designer attempting to combine the textile processes I had learnt in New Zealand along with the parts of the Siapo process. I was torn between the large variety of fabrics and technology that is available here, compared to what was being utilised in Samoa. In addition to this, was also my ethnic identity and how I am perceived by others both in New Zealand and Samoa. Then there is also the regular theme of trans-generations. Whilst growing up I am reminded of tradition. Almost like a rule used to inform how I should behave, yet I am also frustrated at the feeling of being held back by it. This is a constant struggle for myself as a textile designer of Pacific heritage, I want to embrace my culture through my work, yet I also want it to appeal and reveal connections to others of my generation from a mixed ethnic background as well as reflect the current space of today.

Lindah Lepou's (16) work, *Aitu: Homage of Spirit*(17) has stood out to me as a young Afakasi textile designer. She is informed by her Gafa (18) yet is able to communicate these stories through her multiple lenses as a Multimedia Artist. These being fashion, photography, styling, film and music. In addition to this is her voice that binds the media as a whole, revealing the stories of her lineage. Her work is informative through the immersive use of media and narrative.

When I visited the exhibition, I was immediately struck at the connections being made by myself as a designer of Samoan heritage. I felt that her stories reflected the uses of Talanoa as a method that could be used to gain knowledge, as well as experience of the Siapo culture. This has given me a sense of direction in how best to initiate the next stage of the journey. Although my background has been textiles, I have begun to identify more with Talanoa as a research methodology as seen in Lindah's work;- I have identified the non-physical values of Siapo and how I would like to utilise these through a contemporary space.

References / Ethics / Appendices / Glossary

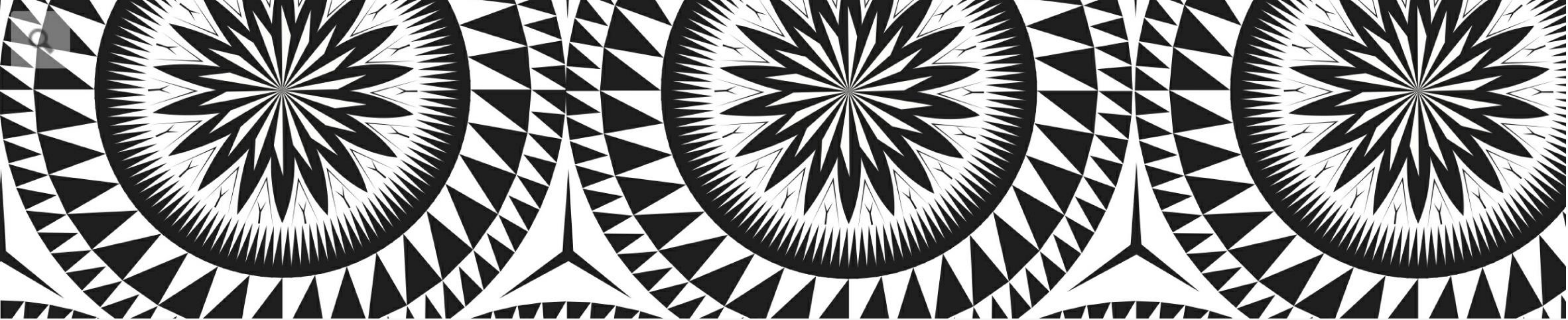
~ Working Conclusion

(15) G.Taylor Afakasi is Dead YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JWyKWWgyxY>
20/08/2013

(16) Lindah Lepou is a multimedia artist, born in Samoa and is of afakasi identity.

(17) L. Lepou Aitu: Homage to Spirit Wellington City Gallery 20/10/12 - 09/12/12 Deane
Gallery. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JP18HPGjfCA> 20/12/2013

(18) Gafa - Samoan term used to describe genealogy.



Navigating the values of Siapo

Through Identity, Le Va and Textile Design

Introduction Part 1 Part 2 Part 3 Part 4 Part 5 Opening Conclusion
Subject 1 - Tav Subject 2 - Ali Subject 3 - Nick Acknowledgements

Opening Conclusion

As a result of the trip to Samoa, the many Talanoa formed and the current design precedents explored, the scope of ‘Navigating the Values of Siapo’ has surfaced more clarification on the culture of Siapo, the process itself and my identity.

As a response to this, I constructed an example that is informed by the context of Siapo culture and reflective of the current space that myself as an Afakasi lives in. This is communicated with the use of textile process through the product of a garment.

To address this, I have decided to identify with three subjects, all of male gender. A Siapo Ie Faitaga will be the garment of choice to display the textile processes informed by the Va through the method of Talanoa. Siapo Ie Faitaga was chosen because of it’s already adapted nature and formality it has transitioned from the Ie lava lava. This also coincides with and builds upon my profession in menswear.

The subjects chosen are of afakasi samoan identity, two of which are related to myself and the other had been unknown before participating as part of the example. The reason for bringing in an unknown subject was to test the Talanoa method used to help shape and form their bespoke Ie Faitaga.

As a result of the progressive Talanoa with each subject, a context of Siapo was identified to their identity, which will then verify an appropriate textile process to use in producing their bespoke Ie Faitanga.

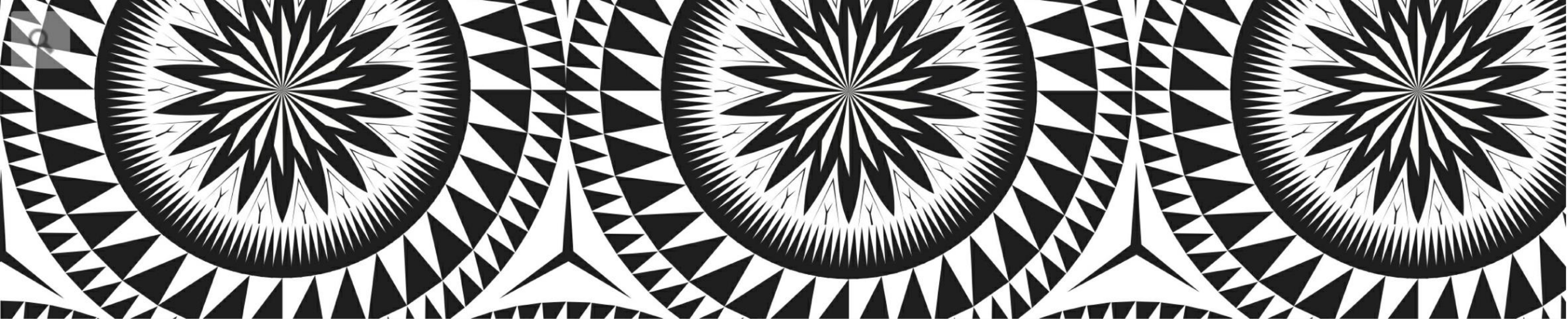
These methods of approach with each subject and the use of textile processes was featured and further discussed at the presentation examination. I have constructed short videos of the subjects wearing their garment along with a supporting piece of text that outlines the parts of them that influenced their design process.

Subject 1 - Tav

Subject 2 - Ali

Subject 3 - Nick

[-acknowledgements](#)



Navigating the values of Siapo

Through Identity, Le Va and Textile Design

Introduction

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Part 4

Part 5

Opening Conclusion

Subject 1 - Tav

Subject 2 - Ali

Subject 3 - Nick

Acknowledgements

Subject 1 - Tav

“Tempered by the use of secondary skin as wraps... a completed bark cloth may reveal many different repeated patterns.. referring to distinct parts of family...”

- S.Kuchler & G.Were *Pacific Pattern* (Thames & Hudson 2005).

The above quote relates to one of many historic aspects of Siapo. This example was referencing the sons of chiefs who would be adorned with patterned Siapo until they had come of age to undergo the enduring process of Tatau.

The first subject I identified this example with was that of my good cousin Tavita Ioane Sila. The oldest of two, a father to a one and half year old and a caring partner to his other half. Tavita has always displayed a selfless yet quiet sense of leadership and responsibility regardless of what life has presented him with.

I bring up this aspect of Tavita’s identity as a result of a conversation I had with my mother on the phone one evening after my trip to Samoa. I was curious to learn more about my mother’s family tree only to discover that the name “Sila” was a Matai name presented to my step grandfather from my Nana’s family.

During our childhood in Taumarunui it had never occurred to me that out of myself, my younger brother, and Tavita’s siblings that Tavita himself had the only Samoan name out of all of us. It was now clear to see the non-physical links that potentially gave purpose to Tavita’s role in our family. And now as a father, he too has passed the last name onto his son. After this discovery and it’s contextual connection to the above example it became clear that the main theme for Tavita’s garment would be that of Aiga.

In addition to this was the idea of Tavita’s Siapo Ie Faitaga becoming transgenerational. This was a reference to many stories I had gathered from the diaspora of Pacific Islanders living in Niu Sila who had spoken of large Siapo passed down to them or that had been collected from their homelands. Most of which I had witnessed in their lounge or seen exchanged in ceremonial events.

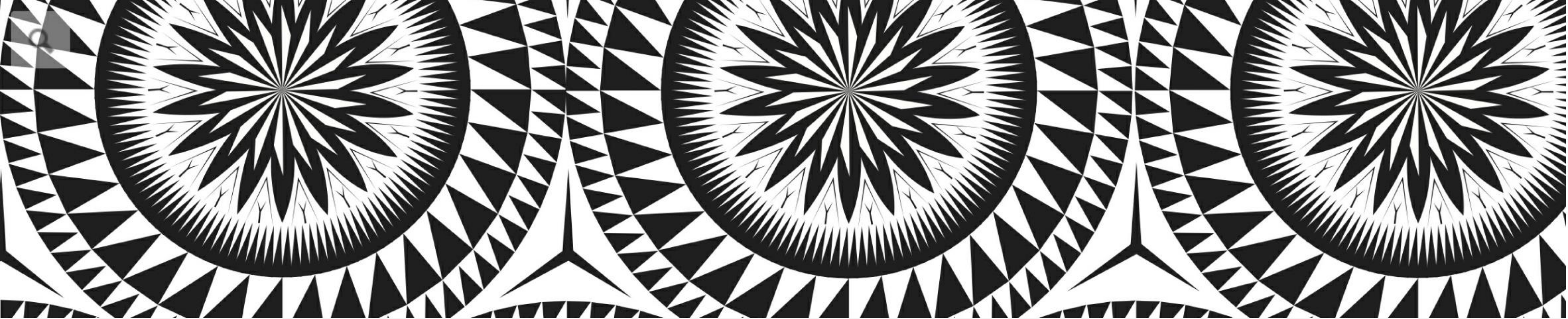
As part of our Talanoa I asked Tavita to come up with an object that symbolized the relationship between him and his newborn son. His response was his Xbox 360. Prior to this I had brought back an Ula fala necklace from Samoa for Tavita to put away for future use. I had seen how the Matai or people of importance had worn these at special events. Together with our conversations around

technology and the necklace I began developing patterns for each of the items. Just like playing with the Fa'a tuli pattern, I made repeat surface patterns for each. I translated the symbol of the xbox to that of the fa'atuli symbol and then turned it into a grid pattern. The presence of technology was further developed through the physical manipulation of the siapo. This was done by laser cutting a repeat pattern of pandanus keys that featured on the Ula fala necklace.

I chose to screen print the translated xbox pattern as a white opaque print on white silk organza. I then applied a fusing technique of bondaweb onto the siapo sheet before laser cutting the pandanus key pattern. I had picked this up on a Ngatu my mother and step dad had received at their wedding from a tongan guest. The Ngatu had been backed with Vilene. I assumed that this was to assist the preservation of tapa as well as extended use of tapa material. With the amount of Siapo I had gathered from Samoa, I too was experiencing the small stretch with what I had left.

When constructing Tavita's siapo ie faitaga, we didn't tailor it with fastenings or finishes for the sake of versatility. So that it could be worn, adorned on ones living environment and gifted or exchanged for a future event. This was also the reasoning behind keeping the colour pallette neutral.

Although I may have known Tavita since a very young age, every talanoa we have I am constantly learning something new or something admirable about him. This experience has definitely taught us a few lesson about each other, most of which I am most thankful for.



Navigating the values of Siapo

Through Identity, Le Va and Textile Design

Introduction Part 1 Part 2 Part 3 Part 4 Part 5 Opening Conclusion
Subject 1 - Tav Subject 2 - Ali Subject 3 - Nick Acknowledgements

Subject 2 - Ali

“Tapa was used to wrap around spiritual objects / bodies to enhance value...”

The above example discusses the use of Siapo in ancient Polynesia as an object that enhanced one’s spirituality to the gods. This was applied to dead bodies being wrapped in Siapo as a gift to the gods.

The next subject I identified this quote with was that of my younger brother Alistair Edward Robert Withers. I identified this example with him for his dedication and endurance in bodybuilding, cross fit training and current power training. In our younger days I would never have thought my brother would entail this kind of pathway. The Alistair I remember then was very shy, a comfy couch potatoe and addicted to television. Today he is still the gentle young man I remember him as. His difference now is his passion for building his image through his knowledge in diet, exercise and anatomy. He portrays his hard work and achievements through his body image and how he composes himself. His knowledge, dieting and training are like his tapa that he uses to enhance his physicality and appearance.

Our talanoa involved going to the gym with him to watch his power training sessions. I consider myself someone who is not very active when it comes to fitness. So going to the gym with my brother that night really opened up my appreciation for his endurance, skill and techniques. What stood out to me most were that of Ali’s self or subjective parts of his identity. I began to ponder the idea of Siapo in being used or developed to enhance his appearance or performance in routine exercise.

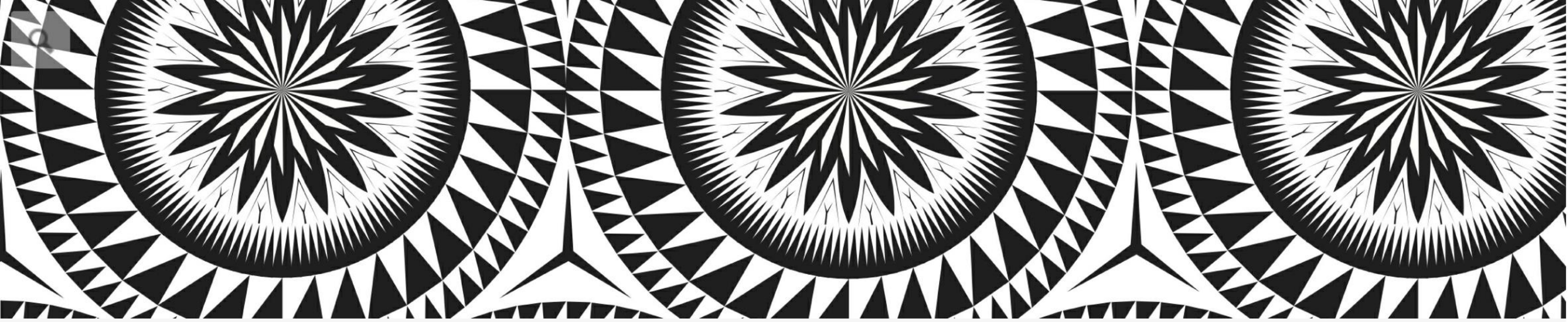
In addition to this, I thought about similarities between muscle fibre and the fibrous nature of Siapo. Considering the amount of Siapo we had left to transform into the three garments, we took upon the idea of how we could stretch them out. As I recall my time over in Samoa, I remember watching the fibres spread when being beaten by the mallet. As my Samoan supply of Tapa was growing thinner throughout the project, I had gone on to purchase some Ngatu from a lovely Tongan lady in Avalon. In comparison to the Siapo I had brought back from Samoa, the Ngatu was a lot thicker in areas and slightly off white. My assumption for its outcome was that it had been directly beaten once its baste had been collected off the tree without going through the cleaning and scraping process. The cleaning and scraping process results in the evening out of the Siapo and its whiteness. Going back to the use of my brother’s physicality, we decided to have a session of attempting to re-dampen the Ngatu purchased and then re-beat it to try and stretch out the fibres more. We found this not entirely successful but more so exciting in how fibrous the Ngatu was becoming after applying the pressure and slapping it flat to the concrete floor in the studio. We then left it to dry over night.

This process doubled our lengths of Ngatu as well as heightened our sense of the nature of the

materiality. Watching it slowly widen whilst being beaten our talanoa was directed by its similarities to muscle fibres. This thought then lead me onto thinking about the lines in muscle fibres and a shibori technique I had trialed awhile ago. It consisted of a pole wrap with string and then it was immersed in a black Dylon dye bath. Afterward being dried and unraveled I then sprayed it with soy milk and lay it over a rubber basket ball to see if it would take its form when dried. Prior to this I had been looking at natural dye on Siapo and was doing some searching into potential mordant to use on the Siapo due to its cellulose state. It was here that I discovered soymilk and its content in protein. I had hypothesized about whether its protein would enhance the cellulose fibre into becoming more absorbent for color pigment.

As a result of our Afakasi nature, some talanoa had formed over whether the entire garments should really be made entirely out of Siapo. We then started looking into other fabrics available in New Zealand that were of similarity to Siapo. The fabric chosen was that of linen. The reason behind using linen was because of its cellulose similarities to that of Siapo.

The visual layout for Ali's garment was derived from a memory at church. Out of Tavita, and myself Ali was the only one that went to a Samoan preschool. They had a fundraiser that required Ali to wear an Ie Faitaga with a belt that had money stapled to it. My cousins and myself had to get up and support him by dancing around him. This memory inspired the visual layout of his Siapo Ie Faitaga. The "money" had been translated into Siapo.



Navigating the values of Siapo

Through Identity, Le Va and Textile Design

Introduction

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Part 4

Part 5

Opening Conclusion

Subject 1 - Tav

Subject 2 - Ali

Subject 3 - Nick

Acknowledgements

Subject 3 - Nick

Nick had been recommended as a potential subject through a friend. The purpose behind choosing someone like Nick, (someone I had never met before) was to test out the Talanoa process and how this would dictate the design process in comparison to my family connections with the other two subjects. Upon meeting Nick for the first time, the first thing I immediately noticed about his appearance was his Tatau. His visual appearance reminded me of a sentence I had seen that had been used in context to that of Siapo:

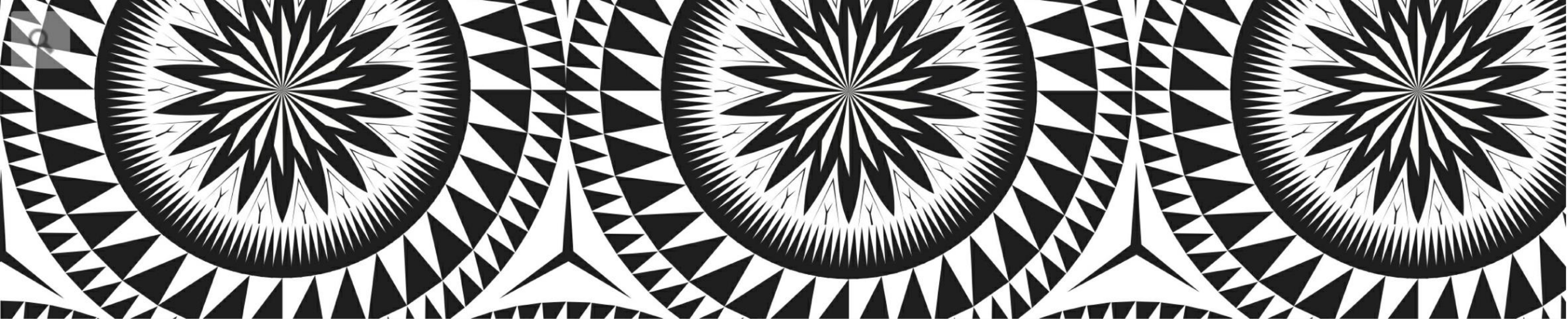
“or the distinctly patterned parts of a tattooed body...”

Nick is also of Afakasi ethnicity and is visually defined by his Samoan culture through his contemporary tatau that adorns him. Throughout our first Talanoa, it had not occurred to me that he was very curious and considered himself slightly disconnected to his Fa’a Samoan culture. Being brought up by his European mother, his reasoning for going out and getting a Samoan Tatau was a reaction in how people would assume he was of European ethnicity due to his first and last name: Nick Van Driel. He found that undergoing his arm and leg piece helped establish his Samoan heritage linked to his father. As we started to have more and more talanoa I soon learnt about who did the Tatau designs and how they were done. The two pieces that he has, both have a styling point of difference. One is wrapped around his arm, as if drawn to the shape and form. It features small kinks. Not perfect but enough to show it was hand drawn. His father’s brother in the back of his garage in Auckland did his arm piece. Nick received this piece when he was just 18 years old. His leg piece consists of delicate detailing within a shape to the back of his calf muscle. Designed and tattooed by a renown Tatau artist in the Pacific: Steve Ma-Ching. The layout is very clean, equally structured and symmetrical in design in comparison to his arm piece. If I had to choose which one I admired the best – it would have been the arm piece because of the sentimental story behind it, regardless of the kinks that visually appear throughout.

Going through the Talanoa process with Nick assisted in which aspect we decided to take forward into the design process. We decided to use the garment as another tatau piece to the body. It was here I started looking more into pattern, especially that of the traditional Pe’a Tatau. I started looking at how the patterns drawn specific to the body shape by reading about what they meant and how they were positioned. I decided to take it a step further by designing the construction of the garment specific to the hip, waist and thigh part of his body. This called for a lot of fitting sessions to get the fit right. In addition to this I was also questioning the idea of the patterns becoming more 3D rather than 2D bound on the skin. I started playing around with scoring the paper into geometric patterns and folding them into shapes. This lead to sample pleating as a means to follow lines around the waist

and hip in reference to the Pe'a Tatau. For the Siapo itself, we felt that we did not want the garment to portray prominent visual references to the Pe'a so decided to create the garment in one full colour. Then using the laser cutter to etch in the patterns and small cuts at the back. Before going straight black I had looked at other methods of natural dye as well as starch resists. One starch resist in particular was that of Kumara flesh. I grated it and wrapped it in a silk organza then used it to rub onto the Siapo flat then left to dry. Afterward, I would apply a black ink such as Indian ink or Suluape Tatau ink I had gathered from Taupou Tatau. Performing the process of starch resist would restrict the amount of dye needed and create a flat layer that is very beneficial to the laser cutting process. Again, similar to that of Tav's garment, after numerous test fittings with Nick there was also a factor of comfort. So we resorted to heat pressing the already dyed tapa onto bondaweb, then put it through the laser cutting process, then heat pressed the laser etched Siapo onto black silk satin. Then I machine stitched the pleats and the garment pieces together.

Going through this entire process was very beneficial for Nick and myself as we were both learning a lot about Tatau, especially considering the Pasifika residency at the time consisted of a group of Tatau artists. We were learning a lot about cultural meaning, purpose and detail definition. Along the process of Talanoa with Nick I also learnt that Nick is a personal trainer and has a very fond hobby of analogue cameras and men's street fashion. However, at first Nick did appear rather shy but near the end it was no longer evident.



Navigating the values of Siapo

Through Identity, Le Va and Textile Design

Introduction Part 1 Part 2 Part 3 Part 4 Part 5 Opening Conclusion
Subject 1 - Tav Subject 2 - Ali Subject 3 - Nick Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

E fa’apupuati le gase

Traditions and happenings of ancient times are not forgotten but survive among the people.

—
Joy Roxas, your endless support and determination to see this till the end is phenomenal and continually appreciated. #WeGotThis

To my aiga: Mum and Nick, Ali, Dad and Jenny, Aunty Po and Uncle Oscar, Tav, Sylvia and Marley, Mira, Jemmy and Sopho. Although you may not know it, you filled the most important gaps in this project.

To my supervisors: Ass. Prof. Julieanna Preston and Dr. Jessica Payne, your encouragement, patience and guidance has contributed in more ways than one to this project, let alone myself as an individual. Fa’afetai tele lava.

My continued respect and appreciation of support goes out to the following:

The CoCA Pasifika Advisory Committee and External Pasifika Advisory Committee.

Christina and the team from The [Tautai Contemporary Pacific Arts Trust](#),

[Lindah Lepou](#), [Janet Lilo](#), [Shigeyuki Kihara](#), [Lumepa Apelu](#) and [Taupou Tatau](#)

Margot Vlassoff

Wendy Neale from [Fab Lab](#)

Richard, Chris and Virgil from [Harfords Menswear](#)

Pacific Island Polynesian Education Foundation

[The Women in Business Development Inc Samoa](#)

[The Global Natural Fibres Forum Commonwealth Secritariat](#)

Fa’amomoi and family

My noble subjects: Alistair Edward Robert Withers, Tavita Ioane Sila and Nick Van Driel

Creative assistance: Huei Yin, Shannon Butson, Turhan Ropata, Tavita Sila, Stacey Wong and Matt Fraser.

To my Pasifika brothers and sisters. This is a gift to you all. I pray that this will shed some guidance, inspiration and determination in support of the paths you choose to lead.

And to the man above – Thank you for Beyoncé.