A Study of a Samoan Savage

YUKI KIHARA

Above: *Bicep with Skinfold Caliper* (2015)
Outside gatefold cover from left to right: *Head with Pelvimeter* (2015)
Subnasale-nasal Root Length with Vernier Caliper (2015)
Nose Width with Vernier Caliper (2015)
Inside gatefold cover: *Sprinting* (2015)

INTRODUCTION

Although seldom acknowledged, West Auckland has a significant population of Pacific peoples, including many artists and other creative practitioners. It is important that public institutions, including Te Uru, recognise the people who make up their community and respond to pressing contemporary issues that affect us all. An exhibition like Yuki Kihara's *A Study of a Samoan Savage* addresses important historical and contemporary issues of identity that impact on diasporic communities worldwide.

As always, Kihara's work is richly layered, weaving together contemporary events and cultural histories through a variety of disciplinary perspectives and critiques. In Mandy Treagus' essay, we are reminded of the role photography played in 19th century anthropological anthropometry to help classify, compare and standardise human specimens. The gathering of data and specimens played an important role in colonial exploration and expansion, and also contributed to the growth of Western museum collections. This was largely done on the basis of non-Western Indigenous cultures being seen as exotic savages and inferior subjects, tamed for the purposes of study or entertainment.

The development of anthropometry coincided with advances in photography, particularly the high-speed motion capture techniques developed by Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey, which paved the way for moving image technology. As the world moved faster, so did our ability to record it. A fascination with the dynamism of motion and machines inspired the Italian Futurist artists of the early 20th century.

Influenced by Muybridge and Marey, French artist Marcel Duchamp had similar interests and used the cubist technique of splintering static forms into multiple angles and overlays for his iconic painting *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912), which is another reference point for works in Kihara's *A Study of a Samoan Savage*. Like Kihara's photograph and video, Duchamp's nude fractures and collapses time into a cascade of simultaneous realities where the past and future collide. Curiously, although cubism developed as a reaction to photography to explore new, non-literal ways of seeing the world, Duchamp brings these rival forces together, as does Kihara. (Cubism also took aesthetic influence from the exotic energy of 'primitive' cultures, particularly in Oceanic and African art, enabled by the growing colonial collections in French Museums.)

Central to this new body of work is the figure of Polynesian demi-god, Maui, performed here by the Samoan artist Ioane Ioane. Maui is known as a trickster and shapeshifter. In Kihara's earlier series *Vavau: Tales from Ancient Samoa* (2004), Maui resembles a Christ figure, a reference to Kihara's upbringing in an all-male Catholic school where rugby was a dominant force. Lisa Uperesa's essay provides context for the sporting and performance references in these new works, where athletes have become the new sought-after (exploitable) resource for the colonial machine. As Kihara reminds us, brown bodies are still being objectified and collected, but in these images, Maui takes the upper hand, defiantly looking back at us. He challenges our view and, in doing so, Kihara reclaims these images, making us re-examine who is looking at who, and what is it that we see.

Andrew Clifford
Director | Kaitohu
Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery

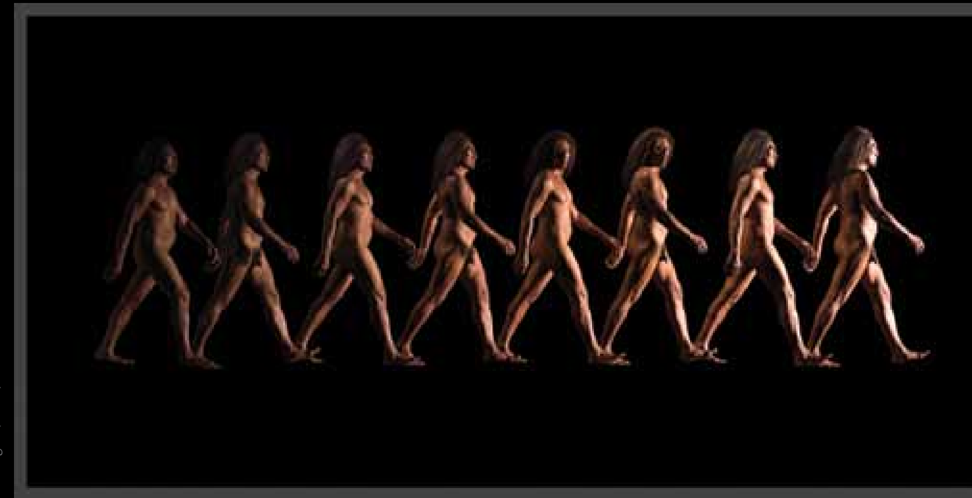
FROM ANTHROPOMETRY TO MAUI: A STUDY OF A SAMOAN SAVAGE (2015)

Mandy Treagus

Anthropometry is the study of human diversity that reached its peak in the late-nineteenth century. Its applications crossed a number of fields. For example, it was used in British boarding schools to track the healthy growth (or otherwise) of students, in order to correct any 'flaws' in growth or weight. Attempts were also made to classify criminals and the mentally ill according to their 'type' so that they might be recognisable. The form of anthropometry that is evoked here by Yuki Kihara's photographic series, *A Study of a Samoan Savage*[1], is its use in anthropology, and the classification of human 'types'. The series also references anthropometry's contemporary functions in professional sport, in which minute functions of the body are studied in order to produce the best possible human sporting machine. Anthropometry produces standards, averages and comparisons, but most of all it establishes hierarchy. Humans become specimens, reduced to certain aspects of their physicality, more like animals, as Louis Sullivan's *Essentials of Anthropometry: A Handbook for Explorers and Museum Collectors*[2] points out: "Trunk height is particularly advised because it is comparable to similar measurements on animals"[3]. Humans are animals, but not all animals are equal, and Sullivan makes it clear that his chief interest is in "primitive people"[4].

Kihara cites Sullivan as one inspiration for her series, and his work is based on that of earlier anthropologists, especially Franz Boas (also famous as the teacher and mentor of Margaret Mead, whose subsequently controversial work *Coming of Age in Samoa* was published in the same year as Sullivan's guide). Boas advocated the use of anthropometers and callipers "measuring to the nearest millimetre"[5] and "he was directly or indirectly responsible for measuring over 27,000 subjects", mostly focussing on Native Americans[6]. While Boas also studied other groups, such as European immigrants[7], he "viewed much of his data collection as recovering information from people who were either vanishing, or whose way of life was vanishing"[8]. While the collection of data from human subjects might seem a relatively benign activity, albeit objectifying, the practice of anthropometry was also implicated in the collection of human remains by museums in the nineteenth century. "Specimens" were collected in order to measure and classify, and the practice continued well into the twentieth century[9]– Sullivan was still asking for skeletal remains for the American Museum of Natural History in 1928[10].

Sullivan's work is directed not only at museum professionals, but also at enthusiastic amateurs, in an attempt to improve the data they were sending in. Anthropologists had relied on such amateurs since the establishment of their discipline in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The amateur collector – "the man in the field" – served the so-called "armchair anthropologists[11]" who then theorised the gathered material. One such amateur was Graham Balfour. His diary outlines the journey he undertook through the Pacific in 1893-4 to visit his famous cousin Robert Louis Stevenson in Samoa. He stopped off in Tonga, and managed to record measurements he took, as an amateur 'scientist', of the circumferences of waists, forearms, thighs and other bodily parts, a practice he continued while staying in Samoa. He notes



Walking II (2015)

later in the diary that an anthropological report by an American explorer from 1838-1842 gave the average Samoan height as five feet ten and a half inches, which was "above my maximum". His suggestion that Samoans had gotten smaller in the intervening fifty years would fit with the widespread view, summarised as "extinction discourse," that once in contact with Europeans, indigenous races were doomed and declining, and hence were appropriate subjects to dominate[12]. Balfour's assumption that it was useful and appropriate to do such measurements of 'native' peoples was part of the widespread sense of ownership of the imperial project by the British middle- and upper-classes. They saw the Empire as advancing the cause of civilisation, with science, technology and religion in the vanguard. Balfour's views were not necessarily shared by his cousin Stevenson, who had a much more nuanced view of the values of different cultures, and who was also outspokenly critical of the role of the colonial powers – Britain, Germany and the US – in Samoan political life (as outlined in *A Footnote to History*). Balfour spent much of his time on Upolu exploring, shooting and taking photographs. He also gathered artefacts in the Pacific, as he eventually donated 144 objects to that leading monument to colonial anthropology, the Pitt Rivers Museum[13].

Anthropometry, one of the key tools in nineteenth- and early-twentieth century studies of 'human diversity' arose concurrently with significant developments in photography, and these advances were imbricated in specific ways[14]. Two photographers in particular explored the study of human movement, their work providing precedents for the development of cinema as well as studies in movement. Englishman Eadweard Muybridge, who undertook most of his work in the US, developed a shutter system in 1877 which would operate in under one thousandth of a second. Using this advanced shutter system, Muybridge placed twelve cameras in a fifty-foot shed and, activated by the movement of a horse, was able to capture its progress over the distance. Later he employed 24 cameras, and was thereby able to capture all the phases of movement. Eventually "he produced over 100,000 sequence photographs, of which 20,000 were reproduced in the *Animal Locomotion* folios in 1887"[15]. These included human movement studies, many shot with their subjects in the nude. The work of Frenchman Étienne-Jules Marey was facilitated by Muybridge's work. Marey produced

Le Mouvement in 1894, the summary of his study of human movement. It was enabled by a range of developments, including the chronophotographic gun in 1882, which took 12 frames a second. He quickly abandoned this for the chronophotographic fixed plate camera, equipped with a timed shutter, and followed with making exposures on sensitised paper using a shutter capable of 20 frames per second. Finally, his shift to transparent celluloid ushered in the possibility of moving film, though ultimately he was more concerned with movement studies. Such concerns are reflected in a number of works from *A Study of a Samoan Savage*, in which the Samoan male is the object of scientific study.

While Muybridge and Marey were attempting to capture the human in motion, anthropologists were attempting to achieve a kind of human stasis in their ethnographic photography. The attempt to classify was also an attempt to fix those seen as Other in the ahistorical, yet clearly antecedent zone they were presumed to occupy. In 1869, J.H. Lamprey published an influential piece in the *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London* advocating the use of a grid backdrop in ethnographic photographic studies. Such a grid would enable a means by which "the anatomical structure of a good academy figure or model of six feet in height can be compared with a Malay of four feet eight in height"[18]. Such comparisons invite hierarchies, only reinforced by the use of the term 'good' for the academy figure. At the same time as Lamprey was making his recommendations, Thomas Huxley circulated his guidelines for ethnographic photography throughout the British Empire via the Colonial Office. Knowing he was dealing with amateur informants, his recommendations were aimed at producing consistency. Models were to stand unclothed, and three images were to be recorded: "one face shot, one full-length portrait with the model facing forward and another picture of them in profile"[19]. Models were to stand at a set distance from the camera and a visible measuring stick provided the same sense of scale sought by Lamprey[20]. A number of photographs using both of these methods were collected, but there was also difficulty in finding 'natives' who were prepared to pose unclothed[21].

While the role of nakedness in movement studies would appear to have obvious advantages, it has an added verve in anthropological photography. Philippa Levine suggests that the "timeless fascination with colonial nakedness" enforced "the enduring association between savagery and the lack of clothing"[22]. Nakedness itself is culturally specific, and the discussion of the confluences and differences between nudity and nakedness are ongoing, varying between disciplines. Yet different expressions of these ideas invoke different gazes depending on the context. To Victorian missionaries, bare-breasted Samoan women were sexualised; to Samoans of the time, they were in everyday dress, and customary. To be naked, of course, and unashamed, was to be pre-lapsarian, Adam and Eve before 'the Fall.' Such persons could be seen as Noble Savages, or else, and this became the dominant view, as "people whose souls were in danger" and therefore in need of Christian salvation[23].

This understanding of nakedness is solidified in colonial anthropological photography. Such images are understood to be 'scientific', displaying a safe version of nakedness that was removed from both the 'nudity' of high art and the 'perversity' of pornography. In reality, these boundaries were never so secure. What colonial anthropological photography did was to make available the bodies of colonial subjects/objects to the gaze of white male scientists, that small class named "men of genius" by one of the developers of the anthropological photographic genre, Francis Galton[24]. Nakedness was made a requirement of the genre, but rather than desexualising the gaze, as the rhetoric would suggest, this guaranteed that those scrutinising such images would always have access to views of the genitals of their subjects/objects.

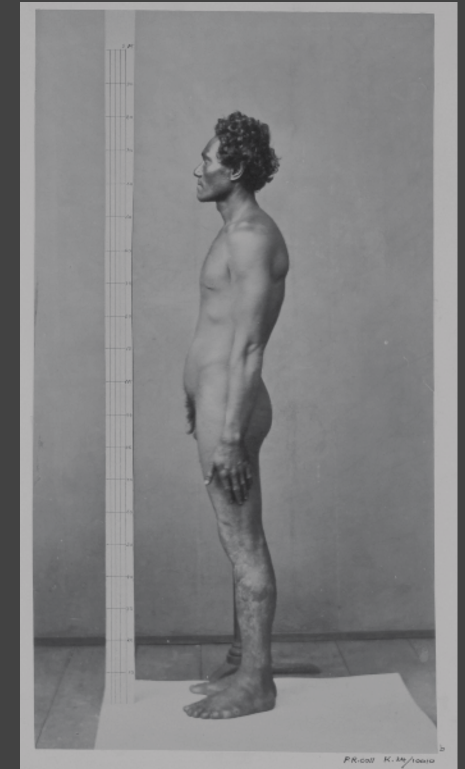
The chief way that anthropometry persists in the present day is via its use in sports science. Its objectives are remarkably similar to those of anthropology. Sporting anthropometry is concerned with a disciplined body; it constructs the body as a machine, or tool, fit for a very specific purpose. Just as anthropometry in the nineteenth-century boarding school was enlisted to produce healthy and obedient citizens, so the body scrutinised in sporting anthropometry serves the civil and corporate requirements of modern capitalist sport. This has a specific relevance to Samoans in both Aotearoa New Zealand and the broader international sporting context. In terms of representation, the male Samoan is most often represented as a sporting body. He comes to mean 'body' rather than 'mind', 'object' rather than 'subject,' in need of the disciplining regimes of anthropometric discourse and practice. The morphing of the exoticised, savage body into an exoticised, muscular body becomes part of the project of the invader-settler nation. Non-white bodies are co-opted in the creation of national identity, and are disciplined to become the perfect playing machines, bringing glory to the (predominantly) white nation. In serving the national project, they enforce and endorse its dominant values. Their presence signals its colonising premise — they would not be there without it — while at the same time eliding this reality. Kihara's series captures continuities in representations of the Samoan male over the colonial period. While the shift from anthropological object to heroic sportsmen might seem vast, both roles are disciplined, scrutinised and measured in ways that highlight the body's objectification. It is no surprise then that sportsman and coach Pat Lam's response to racism (referenced in an artist statement by Kihara)[25] was an assertion of players' character and intelligence, speaking to the need for the public to see them as more than just bodies: "Lots of them are All Blacks who won a World Cup, they are intelligent good men and it is a shame those things are around"[26].

The 'reality effect' of photography is countered by the inherent critique of its uses in *A Study of a Samoan Savage*[27]. The series shows that photography is never neutral; it is always produced out of particular discourses and knowledge. Yet photography is also capable of the critique of colonial regimes of knowledge. Not only the politics, but also the aesthetics of this series transcend the limitations and objectifications of anthropological photography. Such aesthetics are not entirely inspired by the history of photography; artist Marcel Duchamp is not only specifically referenced in the titles of two of the works but also in the limited, Cubist colour palette of the series. The warmth of the skin tones in *A Study of a Samoan Savage* also owes something to Duchamp's painting, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912). This is somewhat circular though, as Duchamp in turn references Marey's motion study *Man Walking* (1890-91). Together with the chiaroscuro effect of light and dark, the series is striking in its visual effects, which foreground almost exclusively the body of its subject, artist and former sportsman Ioane Ioane, who portrays the character Maui. (Callipers and the white sleeve and hand of the anthropometric technician are the only other objects in sight.) Maui's body expresses not the supposed masculine perfection of a young sportsman, but rather the full masculine power of maturity. The resistive fierceness of his persona in many of the images is part of the series' critique of colonial practices, but it is counterbalanced and nuanced by the series' lushness, and by the delicacy of the movements in the single work *Siva (Dance)*. Despite its resistive tropes, each image draws the viewer in rather than away.

During the video work *Maui Descending a Staircase II (After Duchamp)*, there are moments toward the end when Maui turns to the viewer, his gaze confronting, challenging any voyeuristic gaze. This is made more powerful by the elapsed time and the fact that several minutes have passed in which the viewer, lulled by ultra-slow motion, warm skin tones and multiplications of the figure of Maui, has forgotten his power. The return gaze is shocking when it occurs; no longer is the 'Samoan Savage' subject to objectification by others as a naked performing specimen. He is his own man, powerful, unique, hinting at the divine.

MANDY TREAGUS is Senior Lecturer in English and Creative Writing at the University of Adelaide, where she teaches nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, culture, and visual studies. Her recent book, *Empire Girls: The Colonial Heroine Comes of Age*, examines narratives of development in colonial settings, and she also co-edited the collection *Changing the Victorian Subject*. She has published widely on Pacific literature, history and visual culture.

1 Milford Galleries Dunedin, *Yuki Kihara. A Study of a Samoan Savage*, 2015. Accessed 11 Jan, 2016 <http://www.milfordgalleries.co.nz>
2 Louis Sullivan, *Essentials of Anthropometry: A Handbook for Explorers and Museum Collectors*, New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1928.
3 Ibid., p.41.
4 Ibid., p.62.
5 Richard L Jantz, 'The Anthropometric Legacy of Franz Boas', *Economics and Human Biology*, 1(2), 2003, p. 277.
6 Ibid., p. 278
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., p. 282
9 T.K Penniman, *A Hundred Years of Anthropology*, London: Gerald Duckworth, Third ed., 1935, p. 300.
10 Louis Sullivan, p. 73.
11 Henrika Kuklick, 'The Color Blue: From Research in the Torres Strait to an Ecology of Human Behavior.' in Roy MacLeod and Philip F. Rehbock (eds.) *Darwin's Laboratory: Evolutionary Theory and Natural History in the Pacific*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994, p. 341.
12 Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races*, 1800-1930, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003, p. 1.
13 The curator of the Pitt Rivers for over fifty years was Henry Balfour; while there may be a family connection, I have not been able to confirm it.
14 Efram Sera-Shriar, 'Anthropometric Portraiture and Victorian Anthropology: Situating Francis Galton's Photographic Work in the Late 1870s', *History of Science*, 53(2), 2015, p. 157.
15 Brian Coe, 'Eadweard James Muybridge' in Stephen Herbert and Luke McKernan (eds), *Who's Who In Victorian Cinema*. Accessed 11 January, 2016 < http://www.victorian-cinema.net/muybridge>.
16 Ibid.
17 Laurent Mannoni, 'Étienne-Jules Marey' in Stephen Herbert and Luke McKernan (eds), Who's Who In Victorian Cinema. Accessed 11 January, 2016 < http://www.victorian-cinema.net/muybridge>.
18 J.H. Lamprey as quoted by Christopher Pinney in 'The Parallel Histories of Anthropology and Photography' in Elizabeth Edwards (ed.) *Anthropology and Photography: 1860-1920*, New Haven: Yale University Press,1992, p. 76.
19 Efram Sera-Shriar, p. 160.
20 Ibid, p.161.
21 Ibid.
22 Philippa Levine, 'States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination', *Victorian Studies*, 50(2), 2008, p.189.
23 Ibid, p. 191.
24 George W. Jr Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, New York: The Free Press, 1987, p. 253.
25 In her artist statement, Kihara references the threatening messages Samoan New Zealander Patrick Richard Lam – coach of the Blues rugby team – received in 2012. These messages blamed the Polynesian ethnicity of many Blues players for the team's recent losses. Milford Galleries Dunedin, Yuki Kihara. *A Study of a Samoan Savage*, 2015. Accessed 11 Jan, 2016 <http://www.milfordgalleries.co.nz>
26 Wynne Gray, 'Pat Lam Breaks Down Over Racist Taunts'. *New Zealand Herald* April 11 2012. Accessed 28 December, 2015 <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/sport/news/article.cfm?c_id=4&objectid=10798136>
27 Christopher Pinney, 'The Parallel Histories of Anthropology and Photography' in Elizabeth Edwards (ed.) *Anthropology and Photography: 1860-1920*, New Haven: Yale University Press,1992, p. 76.



Description: A series of two anthropometric photographs of a man identified as Ssas, about 30 years old, a sailor who came to Hamburg (full length full face). Photographed in an unknown Hamburg studio for the Godeffroy Museum, circa 1873.
Format: Black & White prints, 275 x 146 mm, 275 x 149 mm.
Continent: Oceania. Geographical Area: Polynesia. Country: Independent State of Samoa
Acquisition: Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers (Founding Collection) - donated 1884
Courtesy of Pitt Rivers Museum, UK

OF SAVAGES AND WARRIORS

Fa'anofo Lisaclaire Uperesa

Yuki Kihara's provocative exhibition *A Study of a Samoan Savage* draws on a wide range of influences to engage the colonial gaze of science, bodily measurement, and racial thinking. In doing so, she interrogates prevalent ideas about Pacific Islander bodies, masculinities, and physical performance, and foregrounds the past in the present. Ultimately, it forces viewers to confront some inconvenient truths, foremost among them that the discourse on male Pacific Islander bodies in popular culture in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and the United States is structured by a deep genealogy of colonial racism that remains with us today.

Race, Anthropometry, and Pacific Peoples

Throughout the exhibition, artist Ioane Ioane is depicted as the mythical demi-god, Maui. In one group of photographs, he is shown being measured, using some of the tools that were standardised as part of the quest toward bodily measurement spearheaded by Franz Boas of Columbia University and the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in the early development of physical anthropology. Boas shaped the early development of American anthropology; he collected some of the largest sets of physical measurement data of Native peoples and his findings on the plasticity of human type provided strong scientific counter to social Darwinism and the hard racialism of the time.[1] These practices of scientific bodily measurement were later carried to different parts of the Pacific by Columbia graduate and AMNH physical anthropologist Louis Sullivan, whose work has also inspired this critical and creative re-reading. Working with the museum in the years before his untimely death, Sullivan provided real and would-be anthropologists with a handbook that was meant to help standardise data collection carried out by different parties (1928).[2] Motivating this wide-ranging project of measurement were intense academic and public debates ostensibly about the variety of humanity, but whose central questions came to revolve starkly around race, physicality, capacity, and social difference. Science became an important staging ground for this battle, and new scientific methods were mobilised both in favour and stridently against racist theory and policies.[3]

In these photographs, Maui is staged as a specimen to be measured by an unknown white researcher — all we see are a white hand and the sleeve of a white lab coat. Like the early photographs from Sullivan's research, also included in the exhibition, Maui is shown nude so that every inch of his body is made available for viewing. That he is without clothing serves a double meaning: in context, it marks him as a scientific specimen, but it also calls forth the problematic interpretations of dress and undress in which the lack of clothing for subjects of the Pacific served also as a marker of their native and subordinate status to European onlookers.[4] Yet Maui is no passive specimen: he looks directly at the camera, thoughts inscrutable, in a way that both engages and subverts the dominant power of the photographic gaze. This is reminiscent of some of Kihara's other well-known works such as *Fa'a fafine: In the Manner of a Woman* (Triptych 2008), where the artist offers unflinching critique, re-working and re-interpreting colonial photography in an approach that is firmly engaging contemporary dynamics through historical legacies of colonialism, gender, and representation.

Other photographs speak to a different aspect of physicality. The image of Maui in *Walking* recalls the famous image *March of Progress* where homo sapiens are depicted evolving from ape-like ancestors.[5] Kihara seems playful and subversive here: because of the silhouetted figures' similarity, the viewer might reach for this reference instinctively, yet what does it mean if she does? Is the viewer inadvertently placing Maui in the evolutionary 'savage slot', betraying her own racialized frames of interpretation, or does recognising that shadow image mean the viewer is 'in' on the sly critique? In either case, Kihara's use of the motion-photography silhouette indicts both the primitivist positioning and savage ethnology of Sullivan's time that produced representations of Pacific peoples as data for Euro-American scientific knowledge and the enduring shadow of primitivist thinking about Pacific Islanders in the settler colonial societies of Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia that remain today.

Bodily Performance and Consumption

Siva (Dance), *Leaping*, and *Sprinting* provide commentary on the fascination with Samoan bodies and their physical prowess. Together they show more explicitly, Kihara's interest in engaging the 19th and 20th century ethnographic zoos, where native peoples were brought to colonial metropoles for exhibitions of primitive culture in 'authentic' contexts recreated to look like their home areas. *Siva (Dance)* in particular links to her earlier exhibition, *Culture For Sale* at City Gallery Wellington (2014), which critiqued voyeuristic consumption of Samoan culture historically through events such as the 'traditional' villages of the Völkerschau staged in Europe and as part of world fairs, as well as contemporary touristic and performance enterprises. Like many other native peoples of the time, the turn-of-the-20th-century ethnographic expositions highlighted cultural difference, the superiority of Western civilisation, and white supremacy.[6] Part of these ethnographic expositions, including *Anthropology Days* at the 1904 St. Louis Olympics, was aimed at proving white Euro-American superiority through sporting exhibitions, thereby bolstering the claims of scientific racism. The triumph of non-white athleticism in the 1930s through the Olympic performance of Jesse Owens and others fractured the claim of complete – intellectual and physical – white supremacy.[7] However, the new scientific paradigm that emerged did not upend American racism and invalidate racial science, but rather pushed it in new directions: many commentators argued that African Americans were closer to 'primitive' peoples and therefore naturally superior in physical performance while white Euro-Americans maintained intellectual superiority.[8] The new performances by non-white sporting figures were then used to bolster new versions of tenacious American scientific racism.

Kihara's *Kicking*, which features a rugby ball, is the image that links directly with the portrayal of Samoans and other Polynesians in contemporary sporting contexts. This single image highlights Kihara's critique of the contemporary voyeuristic consumption of Samoan physical performance in sport. That this exhibition is in part inspired by the backlash against Polynesian players in a losing rugby context is telling: more often, the players are 'positively' racialised, in the sense that the focus on their bodily performance is linked to genetics that supposedly make them a sought after commodity in the sporting context.[9] This framing in global popular sporting culture serves as an entry into circuits of transnational sporting movement: in British Commonwealth areas and beyond, Polynesian athletes are racialised as perfect rugby players; in American circuits they are racialised as perfect gridiron football prospects.[10] Many players have taken full advantage of this access, becoming national and international icons through their physical prowess and performance on the world stage.

Yet we are reminded that this positive evaluation of the 'savage' in a sporting context has a double nature: the focus on the body of Pacific men as 'natural athletes' or 'savage players', foregrounding their punishing physical sporting performance, may draw the cheers of the crowd in rugby and gridiron football, but it emerges from and remains tethered to racist imaginaries. Just as Māori rugby players carry a genealogy of attributed savage masculinity,[11] other Pacific players have also come to be understood within a framework of racialised masculine performance. The troubling outcome of foregrounding physical talent has been a hardening division of athletic and intellectual achievements for Pacific men regardless of actual capacities; this continues to reinforce hierarchies, stereotypes, and ceilings based on racialised opportunities in the settler colonial Pacific nations, as well as in the U.S., the UK and beyond.

The figure of the noble and ignoble (male) savage traces its historical genealogy to a colonial context in which non-Anglo-Europeans were objectified, dehumanised, treated as specimens for the advancement of colonial knowledge systems, and stripped of 'universal' rights. One outcome was to be saved, converted, and assimilated while the other was to be enslaved or exterminated. In both cases, assessments of their 'nature' from the Anglo-European colonial perspective eventually required their transformation or disappearance. That Polynesians were racialised as 'almost white' by early 20th century scientists invited their absorption and disappearance in settler colonial areas like Hawai'i.[12]

In the Samoan context, due to the strength of their villages, colonial authorities saw native men as a threat to be managed; as leaders they were often brought into the governing state apparatus. When this failed, they were dismissed, undermined, or in extreme cases, became subjects of state violence.[13] Set opposite the supposedly compliant 'dusky maiden', men remained a problem for colonial interests. They were only viewed positively in contexts where their physical labour and sacrifice was accrued to the colonial state or economy (as plantations labourers, factory and meat workers, military servicemen, and today as sportsmen). In the contemporary moment, they are exalted as rugby and gridiron players, bolstered by common sense understandings of racialised athletic Pacific bodies that some scholars argue are neo-racist.[14] This common sense circulates within Pacific Island nations and across the region and beyond, and is tied to acceptable and preferred post-colonial masculine expressions for Pacific Island men that are orientated around a warrior identity.[15]

This is the violence of (mis)recognition that Kihara's exhibition also addresses: who has the power to interpret or imagine these portrayals? Images are mediated in different ways as they travel, depending on context, community, and power.[16] Should the fact that images of Samoan physical prowess circulate in contexts informed by genealogies of racism strip Samoans of pride in their countrymen? If cheering this vision of Pacific Island men at home and in diasporic contexts obscures the questionable aspects of the commodification of their bodily performance, should we turn away? Or should we resist the power of this external framing? Is it possible to mediate these visions in new ways, on our own terms, or are they already saturated by colonial genealogies of racism? These are some of the provocative questions Kihara's exhibition inspires, and they are timely conversations for Pacific communities.

DR LISA UPERESA is Associate Professor in the Departments of Ethnic Studies, Sociology and Women's Studies at the University of Hawai'i.

Siva (Dance) (2015)

1 Franz Boas and George W. Stocking, *The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883-1911*; A Franz Boas Reader, New York: Basic Books, 1974; Richard L. Jantz, 'The Anthropometric Legacy of Franz Boas', *Economics and Human Biology*, 1, 2003, pp. 277-84.
2 Louis R. Sullivan, *Essentials of Anthropometry: A Handbook for Explorers and Museum Collectors*, New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1928.
3 Paul Farber, 'Race-Mixing and Science in the United States', *Endeavor*, 27(4), 2003, pp. 166-70.
4 Serge Tcherkèzoff, 'Of Cloth, Gifts, and Nudity: Regarding Some European Misunderstandings During Early Encounters in Polynesia' in Chloe Colchester (ed.) *Clothing the Pacific*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2003.
5 Francis Clark Howell, *Early Man*, Life Nature Library. New York: Time, 1965.
6 Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996; Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions*, 1876-1916, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
7 Susan Brownell, 'The 1904 Anthropology Days and Olympic Games: Sport, Race, and American Imperialism', *Critical Studies in the History of Anthropology*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008; Mark Dyreson, 'American Ideas About Race and Olympic Races from the 1890s to the 1950s: Shattering Myths or Reinforcing Scientific Racism?', *Journal of Sport History*, 28(2), 2001, pp. 173-215.
8 Mark Dyreson.
9 Michael Field, 'Polynesian Men a Global Commodity', 26 May. http://www.stuff.co.nz/sport/8718871/Polynesian-men-a-global-sports-commodity. Accessed June 25, 2013.
10 Brendan Hokowhitu, 'Tackling Maori Masculinity: A Colonial Genealogy of Savagery and Sport', *The Contemporary Pacific*, 16(2), 2004, pp. 259-84; Fa'anofo Lisaclaire Uperesa. 'Fabled Futures: Migration and Mobility for Samoans in American Football', The Contemporary Pacific, 27(1), 2015, pp. 263-79.
11 Hokowhitu.
12 Maile Arvin, 'The Polynesian Problem and Its Genomic Solutions', *Native American and Indigenous Studies*, 2(2), 2015, pp. 27-56.
13 Michael J. Field, Mau: *Samoa's Struggle against New Zealand Oppression*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed Ltd., 1984.
14 Brendan Hokowhitu, Brendan, 'Race Tactics: The Racialised Athletic Body', *Junctures*, 1, 2003, pp. 21-34.
15 Lena Rodgriguez, James Rimutu George, and Brent MacDonald, 'Constructing Legitimate and Illegitimate Pasifika Masculinities in the Global Diaspora', *Culture, Society & Masculinities*, 7(2), 2015, pp. 102-121.
16 Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, London: Sage, 1998, p. 3.

MY ANCESTOR IN A MUSEUM

Momoe Von Reiche

After a long journey
They put him
In a glass case
At an English museum.
People came to stare
At his wooden genitals
One professor said,
"Some romantic notion of the
Past, eh, what?
Or is it cannibalism?"
The other one said,
"It's the savage titillation of
Holding evil in the hand no doubt …"
Every night he turned
To the direction of home;
Every morning they
Straightened him up
To face the West –
With fear
In their pale eyes.

MOMOE VON REICHE is an artist and writer based in Samoa. She has published her essays and poems widely in Samoa and internationally, and she is the owner of MADD Gallery based in the Island of Upolu.

Originally written in 2007, reproduced with the kind permission of the author.

Maui Descending a Staircase I (After Duchamp) (2015)

Published on the occasion of:
YUKI KIHARA: A Study of a Samoan Savage
27 February – 22 May 2016
Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery

Contributors Andrew Clifford, Momoe von Reiche, Mandy Treagus and Fa'anofo Lisaclaire Uperesa
Editor Andrew Clifford
Proofreading Ioana Gordon-Smith and Yuki Kihara
Design Julia Gamble
Images of artworks courtesy of the artist and Milford Galleries Dunedin

Thanks to Milford Galleries Dunedin and the Pitt Rivers Museum, UK

ISBN 978-0-473-34968-4

WAITAKERE
CONTEMPORARY
GALLERY