COSMOPOLITANISM: THE NEW GENERATION OF CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ART HISTORY

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Preface

From 2006 until 2009, I worked as Curatorial Assistant for the Jolika Collection of New Guinea Art at the Fine Arts Museums, San Francisco. I assisted with the Jolika Fellows program, which provides opportunities for Pacific Island and Papua New Guinean artists to exhibit their work in San Francisco and the de Young Museum. From the artists, I heard about their experiences living in the Pacific Islands and about the importance of contemporary art throughout Oceania.

It was during my time there that I conversed with important figures in the Papua New Guinea (PNG) art world such as scholar and performance artist Dr. Michael Mel, anthropologist Dr. Pamela Rosi, painter Martin Morububuna, and fiber artist Cathy Kata, all of whom left lasting impressions on me. They told me stories about everyday life, the diverse landscapes and cultural complexities of PNG and, often, their stories were guided visually through their artworks. I also began learning about the inadequate resources and lack of institutional support for PNG artists. Coming into the museum position with limited knowledge of PNG, their descriptive stories of art, culture, and politics forged a profoundly new understanding and relationship for me with that country.

As I helped organize public events and conducted visitor surveys in de Young Museum’s gallery of New Guinea art, it became clear that there is a general misunderstanding in the USA about contemporary PNG society and art. In my position as Curatorial Assistant, I often took on the role of advocate for PNG culture and for mutual understanding between disparate cultures. Rich exchanges between museum visitors and PNG visitors made me realize how mutual understanding can start simply through the exchange of stories. I learned the importance of indigenous-centered history and highlighting the Pacific artists as agents of cultural knowledge.
and social change.

It has been my intention to continue to make stronger connections and further mutual understanding between international museums and institutions and the voices of young artists in PNG. Through the eyes of young artists, I hope to highlight the new roles for contemporary artists in PNG, and the changing art-related economic structures within the nation. The broader goal of this research is for it to become useful for Pacific Islanders, museums, galleries, and cultural policy-makers interested in understanding the complexities of art as a vehicle for conceptualizing social commentary and change in the Pacific Islands.

My research was undertaken through the Art and Art History department at the University of Hawai‘i Mānoa, and reflects links with the Center for Pacific Islands Studies and the East West Center. It has been my intention to emphasize indigenous Papua New Guineans concerns about the social function and significance of contemporary art, while stressing art historical points of view focusing primarily on visual investigations, as well as cross-disciplinary and ethnographic approaches.

In this study, I employ the following research methods: archival/library research, ethnographic interviews, and participant observation. Through the first research method, I rely on secondary information and publications written on the topics. Books, dissertations, articles, and exhibition catalogues about Papua New Guinea and the Pacific region were consulted and referenced in my conceptual discussions. I also rely on scholars who have written on issues of art, identity, and nationalism in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands. The bulk of this information has been gathered from the Pacific Collection in the Hamilton Library at University of Hawai‘i Mānoa.

Secondly, I employed semi-structured interviews. Biographical profiles, provided in
chapter two, are derived from a series of interviews carried out in Papua New Guinea during August, September and October of 2011. In organizing the interviewees, I considered artist communities in both National Capital District and the East Highlands province, two areas with long-standing artist communities since the 1960s and 1970s. During field research, I interviewed nine artists based in Goroka and Port Moresby including Peter Leo Ella (Port Moresby), Jeffry Feeger (Port Moresby), Anderson Habiri (Goroka), Pax Jakupa (Goroka), Albert Joseph (Goroka), Mongia Kua (Goroka), Kawaiwan Yai Pupu (Port Moresby), Laben John Sakale (Port Moresby), and Leonard Tebegetu (Port Moresby).

Interviews focused on life histories, as well as themes including artistic narratives and socio-political roles of artists in Port Moresby and Goroka. The interviews were informal and divided into three parts, including personal history, experience as an artist and description of imagery, and personal views and opinions. The stories I gathered were meant to contextualize the artwork and also offer understanding of the struggles and successes as an artist in Papua New Guinea.

To narrow the scope of this project, I selected four artists for intensive study: Jeffry Feeger, Pax Jakupa, Leonard Tebegetu, and Kawaiwan Yai Pupu. The selection was based on the interviews and images they presented to me. Some artists I interviewed were either at the very beginning of their careers or presented work that related to an earlier generation. I also considered age and professional development. All four artists I selected are between the ages of

1 All interviews were conducted during this period unless stated otherwise in the text.
2 The artists interviewed are centered around University of Goroka and/or University of Papua New Guinea and do not belong to a particular group or community of artists. Initially, when I began this research I did not confine my studies to a certain class or group of artists. I was interested in working with grass-root artists (living in a village settings) and also urban artists. However, after returning home from field research, I decided to concentrate on four artists that are urban middle class artists. Details of selection process are listed on page 8 and 9.
28 to 32, and began entering their art in domestic and internationally exhibitions during the first decade of 2000. Each of the selected artists were able to present a significant body of work – an important component of the analysis in this research.³

Research methodology included other related activities and informational interviews. I interviewed numerous scholars and artists, including Michael Mel, Tom Deko, Larry Santana, Amanda Adams, and Florence Jaukae, who provided different perspectives about the contemporary and historical art movements. During my stay in Port Moresby and Goroka, I visited universities, libraries, museums, galleries, and artist studios. In Port Moresby, I visited National Museum and Art Gallery as well as two local commercial galleries – Art Stret and Gamba Krai Art. I spoke with staff members at each of the institutions and documented the contemporary arts environment from institutional points of view. I spent extensive time at the University of Papua New Guinea to meet with scholars engaged with contemporary arts in PNG. In October 2012, I attended Anthropology Week, an anthropology forum which also dedicated two days to a workshop for PNG contemporary artists.

In Goroka, I worked closely with faculty and professors in the Expressive Arts Department, at University of Goroka. From August 20 to September 25, I volunteered to help coordinate the national exhibition called Live Lave Art Award. I worked with Dr. Michael Mel, Larry Santana, and Tom Deko, to photograph and catalogue all art submissions for the 2011 competition. I also attended the Goroka Show (an Independence celebration event) and was invited to be a judge at the Bilum Festival, also held in Goroka. I photographed events and

³ Interviews with artists were approximately 1.5 hours. However, the amount of time I spent with each artist varied. For example Kawaiwan Yai Pupu and Leonard Tebegetu, I met only once or twice, whereas I spent numerous days meeting up and working on different projects with Pax Jakupa and Jeffry Feeger. Still, each artist profile is based on single interviews I conducted with each, and not on other conversations or interactions.
conducted informal interviews with organizers and participants, which provided insight into theange of media in national art exhibitions. Attending these competitions and exhibitions was
(crucial for my research because they are some of the few events throughout the year dedicated to
contemporary visual art.

I consider this thesis to be a work in progress and the foundation of many more inquiries
and possible collaborations in Papua New Guinea and beyond. Firstly, I would like to thank my
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last few years of working on this project. Despite the collaboration and support that went into
this research, I take responsibility for any mistakes or misinformation that may be presented in
this text.
Abstract

In recent years in Papua New Guinea (PNG), there has been a rise of new and bold contemporary artists whose work provokes socio-political awareness and builds a strong affinity to global urban communities. Today, in PNG, the economy is booming and accessibility to the Internet and multimedia technology is made possible for a wider demographic. More than ever, there is a new generation of artists who are able to disseminate information anywhere and learn about life everywhere. This research offers a framework to begin to understand the significance of the art and life of a “cosmopolitan generation” of artists.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I briefly describe circumstances that defined previous movements of artists starting with the emergence of contemporary art during Papua New Guinea’s Independence period in the 1970’s. Through first-hand interviews, the second chapter focuses on four young artists based in Port Moresby and Goroka. In chapter two, I provide biographical narratives of four young Papua New Guinean artists, juxtaposing oral narratives, a visual analysis of art practices, and examples of the ways artists exemplify cosmopolitan attitudes. Following their artistic narratives, I offer insights into the complexities of their integration into a global community, one that is empowering, and simultaneously, disempowering for young emerging artists.
Introduction
“Transparency, accountability and ethics are at the top of my agenda. A new generation wants these things. People who fall within a category of having a good education and having access to information on the Internet, there is a growing urge for change. I think I am part of that, but I'm doing it through my art. I try to confront the corruption that is existing at the moment and try to generate transparency of such issues through my art.” (Jeffry Feeger, 2011)
“I have come to realize that there is a lot you can do with the exposure that comes with making art. When the media comes and reports on [different stories], they come from a different angle. For example, that the people on the streets are a nuisance… they brand them as illegal, and they make the streets look bad to people who come into the city. The media forgets to look beyond that, to look beyond the struggles and what causes them to do this. I have realized that I could take on the task.” (Leonard Tebegetu, 2011)
“[My paintings are] personal and in general too, because that feeling is still here today. I mean, I got educated in Australia and went the best schools in POM but I still feel cautious about what I say and what I wear, depending on who I’m around. You still have people saying, ‘she’s PNG not white, or mixed race, why is she acting like that?’ you know its still around. I don’t think or see, or feel like that towards other people. People do think that way, and it’s hard to come out of the shell, cause its still there. That’s why a lot my paintings are about that. Most of my paintings are a reflection of myself.” (Kawaiwan Yai Pupu, 2011)
“My dad was an artist already, a well-known artist. I thought I have to do paintings like my dad. People know my dad’s type because his paintings were published. I want people to look at my paintings and see that my dad is still alive… [My artwork is] inspired by contemporary art but its moving. I need to move on, and paint the way I see things with my eyes.” (Pax Jakupa, 2011)
I often say I am a ‘PNG contemporary artist’ when I write a document or something. I always have that associate with that. But I’ve already proven to myself and others that I’m very versatile and I can work in many different environments. I think it is important to travel because once you are outside of your country you are able to see your country for what it is. You are able to see the perspectives of people outside. That’s really important to see your place in the world. When I travel I find that people are quite fascinated by my Papua New Guinea heritage and my identity, but I see myself as a world artist. I am no longer bound by my society, but I can step out of that and think creatively without having to define my identity so much. And I don’t think that my country defines me as such. And that’s just the way that I’d like to be viewed, first and foremost, as a creative thinker rather than a mind that is constrained by one particular culture. (Jeffry Feeger, 2011)

In two regions of Papua New Guinea (PNG), Port Moresby and Goroka, the paintings of Kawaiwan Yai Pupu, Jeffry Feeger, Leonard Tebegetu, and Pax Jakupa reflect some of the emerging concerns for a new generation of artists. Artists think through urban identities, religion, political-economic changes, evolving cultural traditions, and the effects of new media in everyday life. Most issues that these artists are working with are specific to situations happening in Papua New Guinea, however, through a cross section of localized/traditional aesthetics systems and globalized poetics of paint artists are approaching their subject matter in way that opens their discussions to a broader global audience. As Jeffry Feeger suggests for his own artistic practice he sees himself unbound to his own society and is adopting a universalist perspective and self-understanding.

Beginning in the early 2000s, PNG artists emerging in the art world increasingly began identifying themselves as contemporary artists not solely bound to tribal or even national affiliation, and increasingly began drawing from global issues and concerns. By 2008, as social media technologies became more and more accessible, and the macro economy began to boom, artists enacted new attitudes towards art and seeing themselves as “cosmopolitans” imagining themselves beyond the limits of nationalism. Yai Pupu, Feeger, Tebegetu and Jakupa visually
negotiate between the global and the local which is opening up new possibilities for mutual understanding across pre-existing regional borders and class systems within Papua New Guinea and international borders.

The purpose of this study is to generate a framework that analyzes a shift in contemporary art practices in Papua New Guinea. Who is the new generation of artists in Papua New Guinea? Are they different from previous generations of artists at all? In what ways have their socio-economic environments influenced their style and the subject matter of their work?

Particularly for the new generation situated in Port Moresby the capital of PNG, their artworks, choice of aesthetics and subject matter fluidly responds to changing political-economic conditions. Yai Pupu, Feeger, and Tebegetu partake in visual commentaries from the purview of urban realities. Port Moresby has been exposed to outside influences for a century or more, and there has been rapid growth in urbanization, technology, and economic organization, primarily in the city centers. The influx of influence has also been internally generated from Papua New Guineans interacting among themselves to change their own aesthetic systems including forms of architecture, fashion, music, literature and visual art. These artists have built an affinity to global urban cultures. They are re-conceptualizing PNG cultural identity and social issues through global urban aesthetic tools.

In other parts of Papua New Guinea, such as Goroka in the Eastern Highlands district, contact with international communities has only taken place in the past fifty years. Populations in these areas are not that far removed from a customary lifestyle based on traditional knowledge and practices, knowledge systems that define the environment, medicine, sorcery, agriculture, 

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4 Comment on contemporary art elsewhere in the Pacific where indigenous/local artists have done/are doing the same thing as a reaction to standing at the crossroads of communications technology and art. This needs more research.
religion, warfare, trade, and social relations. Pax Jakupa who resides in Goroka conceptualizes and recodes these Highland historiographies. At the same time, he feels the forces of the global contemporary art world. Stories are rooted in epistemologies and localized knowledge systems, while choices of aesthetics or visual presentations are in a constant flux and repositioned in relation to understandings of art markets, global contemporaneity, and his own intuitive innovation.

Examples of new contemporary art from Port Moresby and Goroka are indicative of larger trends happening around the globe. In *Worlding Cities* (2011) Aihwa Ong defines today’s multidimensional aspects of urban environments. Ong states, “The art of being global ignores conventional borders of class, race, city, and country. There are promiscuous borrowings, shameless juxtapositions, and strategic enrollments of disparate ideas, actors, and practices from many sources circulating in the developing world, and beyond” (23). As Ong suggests, instead of seeing a metropolis as a “fixed space or node” we can approach the metropolis “as a milieu of experimentation where diverse actors invent and aspire to new ways of being global” (23). This is similar to the way the new generation of artists are practicing contemporary art and envisioning themselves as artists. Artist do not feel confined to speak in singular terms about their own country, identities, and communities, but rather they expose diverse ways of seeing the world. There is no ambivalence towards cultural borrowing, appropriation, and hybridity. In fact, artists use these techniques as strategies to cross boundaries and open discussions to new audiences who, otherwise, might not understand visual discussions about socio-cultural topics. Their art presents a variety of crisscrossed pathways and constant combinations of culturally specific and global modes of practice (Escobar 2004 in Papastergiadis 185). The diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities shows that PNG art is entering a
new global dialogue expressing a common, yet distinct identity, unique to Papua New Guinea (Papastergiadis 108).

This research argues that a new generation of artists from Papua New Guinea present a *cosmopolitan turn*. Kwame Anthony Appiah suggests the possibility of a cosmopolitan community wherein individuals from varying locations (physical, economic, etc) enter relationships of mutual respect despite their differing beliefs (religious, political, etc). He states, “Cosmopolitanism shouldn’t be seen as some exalted attainment: it begins with the simple idea that in the human community, as in national communities, we need to develop habits of coexistence: conversation in its older meaning, of living together, association” (Appiah 2006, xix). In the opening quote to this thesis, Jeffry Feeger exemplifies a desire to communicate on a human level, as global citizens. The artists find this a necessity for dealing with the realities of the specific situation of PNG and to express a new level of ethics, while using visual art as the primary medium to cross borders and create vital intercommunication amongst Papua New Guineans and international communities.

In the book entitled *Cosmopolitanism and Culture* (2012), Nikos Papastergiadis suggests that since 9/11 tragedy and the production of “ambient fears,” contemporary artists around the world are initiating alternative models for cross-cultural dialogue. Confronted with issues of globalization, artists are creating situations in which “strangers can enter into dialogue with each other, collaborating with diverse networks to form new platforms for global knowledge” (back cover). He further states, “Although globalization is increasingly a threat, it is equally clear that the desire to stage an open conversation between the local and the global has emerged as a core aim among artist” (9).
Within the post-colonialism context of Papua New Guinea, such political ramifications in contemporary art suggest that the way in which young artists are using their art to reinforce ideas of mutual understanding. Their interactions are multi-directional, fluid, and diverse. They are strategically thinking about how they change their work according to their audiences and with tools that they have available. Even within an era of cosmopolitanism, at various levels artists are showing the importance of their own cultural knowledge systems.

This generation has emerged into the PNG art world with significantly different attitudes towards art, unlike their predecessors who found patronage from the government. The young artists have been well acquainted with a government that does not provide basic services for artists. Since the 1989 economic crisis (instigated by the Bougainville Crisis)\(^5\), art leaders have failed to persuade the PNG government to reconsider its budget priorities and invest in contemporary art as a significant component of national cultural and economic development (Rosi *Painting My Country*, 82-83). PNG artists since the late 1980s have resorted to marketing their work in alternative spaces – urban markets, city streets, hotel lobbies or, occasionally, at the National Museum. Without the support of the government and with a decrease of art education, the artistic environments have become disparate, sporadic, and diversified throughout the nation. The situation has created domestic art markets that are highly dependent on external resources to promote their work internationally (Rosi, *Painting My Country*, 2011, 82-83).

In 2002, the macro economy took another turn as mineral, crude oil, gas discoveries, and

\(^5\) Bougainville crisis refers to an incident of opposition to the mining development at the Bougainville mine in Papua New Guinea’s Eastern island province. By 1988 the simmering anger of a group of militant landowners ensued in a campaign of sabotage and harassment of mine employees, which led to riots, bloodshed and the introduction of PNG Defense Force personnel to implement law and order. By January 1990 the mine was placed on a ‘care and maintenance’ basis and the company began to evacuate its employees from Bougainville (“Bougainville Crisis” http://epress.anu.edu.au/sspng/mobile_devices/ch13.html)
the subsequent development of mines began to fuel economic growth (Guy 2). Many contemporary artists began to feel the effects of a growing economy, manifested in an increasing demand from expatriates moving to Port Moresby for paintings and increasing market value of contemporary paintings. A report written by the PNG National Research Institute states, “Beginning in early 2008, macroeconomic indicators were as healthy as ever, or at least as healthy as they had been since independence in 1975” (although statistics on the level of social development are staggering low) (Guy 1). The booming economy for artists living in Port Moresby has facilitated new avenues for sales, self-promotion, and artistic innovations. New waves of expatriates moving to Port Moresby (mostly from Australia, New Zealand, and the US) for work have regulated a new demand for paintings to fill blank walls in houses and office spaces.

Within the last two years, wider interconnections through cell phones, Internet, television, advertising, and mass-media have brought forth modes of communication and a new kind of literacy. As national art investment declined and privatized economic investment in media communication has increased, a new situation for artists in PNG has emerged. The increasing role of the Internet in PNG has generated self-initiated opportunities for artists to disseminate and self-promote. These opportunities allows for artists to branch out to a larger audience and connect with Papua New Guineans interested in similar conceptual terrain. Internet access has been an essential medium for enabling young artists to educate themselves about global and regional contemporary art issues, and connect to global art communities.⁶

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⁶ Jeffry Feeger, Kawaiwan Yai Pupu, and Leonard Tebegetu, in particular, have particularly taken advantage of the onset of the Internet. Pax Jakupa, on the other hand, has had more difficulties connecting to the Internet because it is more expensive, slower, and less accessible in the Highlands region.
For the new generation growing up in a world with diversifying economies and communication networks and stronger connections to international communities, aesthetic and representational agendas have transformed according to their new environments. This research questions how cultural flows conditioned and shaped new relations within global/local interactions. In Papua New Guinea there is a broad expression of aesthetic cosmopolitanisms evident in a range of locally-ground and globally-oriented artistic tendencies. These trends in artists’ practice can be identified in their aesthetic compilations and traced back to some of the artists’ personal experiences in everyday life.

Thus, there are a number of objectives for framing a new generation of visual artists organized in the following four chapters. To comprehend the current status of cosmopolitanism in art and society, the aesthetics, styles, and pressing issues of previous generations of artists must be understood. Chapter one provides a historical overview of shifts in contemporary art practices in Papua New Guinea and closely examines some of the prominent artists and their paintings to illustrate the shifting relation of art to society in an Independent PNG. This study will profile characteristics and circumstances that defined previous waves of contemporary artists, starting with the emergence of contemporary art during pre-Independence (1969-1975), Independence (1975-1986), and post-Independence periods (1987-2012).

In chapter two, I provide biographical narratives of four young Papua New Guinean artists, juxtaposing oral narratives, a visual analysis of art practices, and examples of the ways they exemplify cosmopolitan attitudes. This research offers an interpretation of the current generation, prioritizing the young artists’ viewpoints by including interview transcriptions, art material, and personal narratives. Their artwork is a make-up of multiple spheres of everyday life made of complex systems politics, cultural tradition, globalization, media, and market flows.
What comes across is the differences in their identity, ideologies, and relationship to societies. Still there are underlining themes and methodologies presented in their work.⁷

Chapter three presents some of the common themes generated from the artists’ narratives and addresses four common themes as in relation to larger issues pertaining to PNG society. In a discussion about cosmopolitanism, I identify four components and themes presented by the artists.⁸ Firstly, it is important to discuss the ways artists maintain connections to cultural heritage from various places, such as Eastern Highlands, Enga, and New Ireland. From varied perspectives, artists visually expose rootedness in heritage and give agency to Melanesian knowledge systems. Mobility is the second concept explored in chapter three. Mobility is an important element of their cosmopolitan identities because their socio-economic background enable artists to interact with diverse assemblages of society. Thirdly, the concept of connectivity is crucial for understanding new ways artists are interacting the world. The newly integrated system through the Internet has been transformative for artists in Papua New Guinea and means not only that people can affect lives elsewhere but they can learn about life anywhere (Appiah 2006, xiii). Fourthly, I discuss the evolving role of social commentary and reflexivity with society. Historically artists’ discussions about society from 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s took on different roles; however, the new generation offers a new understanding of how visual articulation enforces awareness and social function in society.

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⁷ See Preface for more about the selecting process.
⁸ These terms are borrowed from theorists who have discussed cosmopolitanism previously including Nikos Papastergiadis, Kwame Appiah, and Marsha Meskimon.
Chapter 1

Painting a Nation:
Shifting attitudes of Art and the Nation
This chapter provides historical context for contemporary PNG art, by following shifting attitudes and discourses of art production. The time frame begins with the formation of Centre for Creative Arts in the 1960s and follows art and narratives to 2008. Historically, contemporary art in PNG has been synonymous with the nation and shifting interpretations of society. Since the 1960s, PNG contemporary artists have used their nation’s politics and cultural traditions as key reference points. The changes in everyday society similarly manifest changes within contemporary artistic discourses in Papua New Guinea. Strong themes throughout artists’ work are the contested notions of nation-making and modernization, and relationships with traditional knowledge and practices. Artists have often used art to communicate personal views and resistance against the dominance of hegemonic values and the evolving integration into a globalized state.

Visual expressions are understood and situated as ‘historical moments’ in a particular time and place, and in relation to socio-political ideologies of their time. At the same time, artists’ practices are a form of self-definition and express personal stories and insights. Thus, the creation of art is a discursive practice involving artists as defined by practice, personal values, cultural discourse, and the social process with which they are associated. When presenting and analyzing the movements, I refer to their own words and perspectives, as recorded in secondary sources and audio recordings I accessed in Papua New Guinea in 2011.⁹

A fair amount of scholarship focuses on evolving discourses of contemporary art in PNG. To set the conceptual parameters, this chapter considers the development of contemporary art in Papua New Guinea through the eyes of other scholars who have discussed similar movements

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⁹ See preface for detail about field process.
and discourses. From the 1970s through the 1990s, scholarly attention concentrated on the relationship of art-making practices associated with the nation-making project. By the 1990s and early 2000s, however artists lost institutional support in PNG, and there was a new need for artists to work together and seek exhibition opportunities abroad. Scholarship during this period concentrated on building a “market” and broader understanding for PNG art in a global context, but often fell into the trap of Western categorical structures. Beginning in 2008, publications and exhibitions began moving away from Western categorizations of art, and emphasized the importance of artistic narrative structures that counter ethnocentricity, and explored contemporary socio-political awareness.

This chapter is divided in five sections: the Early Masters and the Formation of the Centre for Creative Arts (1969-1975), Bung Wantaim (coming together) and the “Production Workshop” Artists (1975-1986), Contention with the “Nation” and Expressions of Discontent (1980-1989), Economic Instability and Negotiating International Markets (1990-2000), and Economic Restoration and Growing Art Markets (2002-2007). Following the socio-political and economic narratives, this chapter offers insights about the shifts in art and discourse, and the way in which artists use their images to critique cultural identities, national identities, and growing global affinities. This research analyzes the shifting discourses of art and identity that echoes the complex process of nation-making in Papua New Guinea.

1.1 The Early Masters (1969-1975)

Following Australia’s decision to expedite Papua New Guinean Independence and stimulate the formation of a new national culture, cultural policies began to loosely emerge in the 1960s (Narokobi 1993, 164-166). According to Anthropologist Pamela Rosi, the PNG government implemented numerous programs to revitalize artistic expression as a source of
cultural pride in anticipation of Independence in 1975. She states, “In 1968, creative writing was introduced at the new University of PNG; in 1972, a Creative Arts Centre opened in Port Moresby; and in 1974, the National Theatre Company and Raun Raun Travelling Theatre were established to bring song, dance, and drama to provincial audiences” (Rosi 2009).

Three visual artists- Timothy Akis, Jakupa Ako, and Mathias Kauage- were known as the “Early Masters”10 and had profound effects upon the contemporary art development (Narokobi 1993, 164-166). Georgina Beier, one of the founding expatriate art educators in Papua New Guinea, stated that these artists emerged in a timely manner to communicate ideas against the grain of mainstream society. She wrote: “It was by no means an accident that the first modern Papua New Guinea artists emerged in the late sixties and early seventies. The time was ripe. In Papua New Guinea we have witnessed a similar break up of traditional values. In fact the impact of colonialism was harsher, the local cultures were more vulnerable, because they were numerically smaller, and the period of transition was accordingly more traumatic” (1977, 8). Beier went on to state that the artists were “suddenly free from the restraints of religious function, artistic convention, and cultural conditioning” (1977, 11). These artists powerfully expressed indigenous spirit, experiences, and worldviews through a process of visual storytelling. The early masters used their creativity to resist a colonial environment and were guided by ex-patriate educators (Ulli and Georgina Beier and Tom Craig) to use foreign art materials to hone their skills and create works (Lewis-Harris 2008).11


11 Prior to Independence in 1975, there were three influential expatriate art educators; Ulli and Georgina Beier (husband and wife) and Tom Craig. Georgina initially moved to PNG with her husband Ulli who pioneered a
In many ways the visual narratives of Timothy Akis, Jakupa Ako, and Mathias Kauage are products of the colonial upheavals and the violent changes in societies and value systems. Port Moresby retained a distinctive colonial atmosphere. Their images countered a newly dominant integration of lifestyles and belief systems. These artists were part of an increasing number of migrants, predominately Highlanders, who arrived in Port Moresby enticed by the excitement of a growing city and the hopes of finding employment. The majority of new migrants resided in “squatter camps” out side of town (Rosi 1994, 126).

For these migrant artists, cultural understandings were deeply rooted in epistemological concepts of time and place. Transitioning from village life to city life, they relied more on cultural invention and “created their own images, their own myths, their own style, their own techniques and their own motivation” (Beier 1977). In the process of migrating to Port Moresby, the village was not left behind, rather moved and transformed to a “new urban village” (Castells xxiii). Their self-definition was rooted in their ethnicity, re-defined by their new locality in an urban center and conditioned by Western education. They were the first cosmopolitan artists defined and empowered by the act of visualizing their identities as “Papua New Guinea.”

literature movement in PNG. Georgina, an artist herself, opened her studio to villagers seeking art instruction. Tom Craig, initially the Director of Art Education at Goroka, was appointed the first director of the Creative Arts Center that opened in Port Moresby 1972. The Center offered associate-ships to selected artists which included free accommodation, studio space, materials, and a small stipend. Craig and the Beiers were important players in conceptualizing the art education philosophy. The Beiers and Craig articulated three vital qualities needed in art education: “it should encourage creative imagination; stimulate young PNG men and women to know and be inspired by their own artistic heritage and dynamically engage PNG’s modernizing society” (Bung wantaim, 63 Rosi quoted from (Craig 1972; 1976; G. Beier 1974a). Tom Craig witnessed new urban dwellers being exposed to Hollywood films and western popular culture. It was during this time that radios and cassettes spread a liking for western “rock” and other forms of popular imported music. These pioneering educators saw that young Papua New Guineans faced a new threat of “losing their unique cultural identity unless a sense of worth in indigenous cultural resources and creativity could be fostered through new education and efforts to stimulate home grown entertainment.” The objective of Tom Craig and the Beiers was to foster meaningful relationship to their own artistic heritage, not necessarily by “imitating” the past, but rather translating cultural knowledge through new media (Bung Wantaim, 151-2). It was the “nurturing atmosphere” (All Together exhibition catalogue, 2009, Lewis-Harris) that spawned a plethora of new art styles that advanced the contemporary art movement.
Timothy Akis (Figure 1.1) is known as “PNG’s first contemporary artist” (Rosi 1994, 293). Akis came from Tsembaga village in the remote Simbai Valley of Madang Province. Akis’s artistic style changed very little from the beginning to the end of his career. His works focused on imaginative animals, spirits, and people from his village environment. As recorded by Rosi (1994), Georgeda Buchbinder mentioned in her personal reports that Akis was interested in ideas of modernization and was fascinated by modern machinery, but his concerns with modernity almost never appeared in his artworks (Rosi 1994, 301). Although Akis’s work is contemporary and he was stimulated by his own creativity, the repetitive use of design elements maintained deep rootedness in traditional visual heritage. In Akis’s case, he was inspired by designs found in material culture such as face painting, shield designs, and bilum patterns. As Georgina Beier pointed out, “His art was not rooted in myths or oral traditional [nor even reason]. It flowed as the expression of familiar things finding structure in a repertoire of basic shapes artfully reconstructed and modified” (Georgina Beier in Rosi 1994, 301).

Mathias Kauage’s early drawings (Figure 1.2) included elaborate headdresses, colorful design patterns, and, a like Akis, showed a preference for repetitive shapes (Rosi 1994, 356). More so than the other founding artists, his style changed throughout the years to reflect his

12 He is part of the Maring cultural group, who were horticulturalists and pig raisers who had little contact with the Western world until the late 1950s (Rosi 1994, 293).
13 In 1965, Akis began working as an interpreter and artist (drawing/categorizing local flora and fauna) for an anthropologist named Georgeda Buchbinder who came to conduct research in Tsembaga (Rosi 1994, 295). When Buchbinder introduced him to Geogina Beier in Port Moresby, Beier began working with Akis and promoting his aesthetic talent. In 1969, the popularity of his first University exhibition made him an instant Port Moresby celebrity (Rosi 1994, 296).
14 Kauage was born in the late 1940s in Miugu No. 1 village near Gembogl in the vicinity of Kuniawa. This area is inhabited by a large tribal group called Chimbu, who first encountered foreign explorers in 1933 when the Taylor, Leahy, and Spinks Expedition arrived looking for gold (Rosi 1994, 320). In 1967, he traveled to Port Moresby, where he found work as a cleaner. In 1969 he visited Akis’s first exhibition and was so impressed that a villager could become a successful artist, that he decided to become an artist himself (Rosi 1994, 322). Beier assisted Kauage to develop artistic techniques, and a unique style recording traditional customs as well as the events, problems, and social values of contemporary PNG society (Rosi 1994, 320).
attitudes and the forces of his social environment. Around the time of Independence (1975) his work adapted to the general excitement around him. He incorporated images of celebrations, illustrating people singing and waving flags. He even created an image of the aircrafts that brought Prince Charles of England to attend the official celebration. Kauage is known as a social commentator, and he was one of the first artists to contribute to concepts of a national culture through the vehicle of contemporary art.

When Jakupa Ako (Figure 1.3) began his work as a janitor at the home economics and art department, he began watching the creative activities of Tom Craig’s students and was encouraged by Craig to start drawing. Jakupa started to draw figures, using pencils, and then progressed to poster paints. His images were fantasies from his imagination or simple shapes of birds and animals he encountered in Papua New Guinea (Rosi 1994, 351). Jakupa’s art is derived from concepts of highland cultural traditions, but his imagery is a result of re-imagining his environment in a non-direct and creative way. In some of his images he recreates faces of humans and spirits that look like masks. Like Kauage, Jakupa’s work changed considerably throughout the years, adapting to his evolving visions of the world (Rosi 1994, 356). Jakupa’s early work (created in 1974 when he moved to Port Moresby to join the Creative Arts Centre) was characterized by bold, flat, and figurative forms. Rosi comments, “Jakupa did not adapt the

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15 Jakupa Ako (commonly known as “Jakupa”) was born in 1942 and comes from Bena in the Eastern Highlands. Jakupa is the only Papua New Guinea village artists to be awarded an Order of the British Empire for his contributions to contemporary art. In recognition of this honor, the NAS appointed him a permanent artists in residence. Until 1990, he lived at the school in two small rooms in the “student village” with his wife and youngest son. He eventually was offered a scholarship to go to Port Moresby, and arriving at the center in 1974. Jakupa’s first public exhibition was early 1975, when he joined other painters in an exhibition to celebrate the opening of the center. The following year, he became the first Papua New Guinean artist to hold a solo exhibit in Australia, which took place at the Solander Gallery, in Canberra. Returning home he launched a number of exhibitions at the new National Art School in 1977. He continued to work abroad in Germany, Australia, Vanuatu, and Tahiti for exhibitions and residency programs (Rosi 1994, 356).
usual Western convention of focusing on a particular moment in time, but depicted an entire narrative sequence using devices such as x-ray vision and the incorporation of figures that symbolized major themes or events. The result is a stylized composition dynamic and rhythmic” (Rosi 1994, 356).

Akis, Kauage, and Jakupa were artists with highly individualistic styles and personal visions, who shared common experiences, and similar positions in society. Consistent throughout the biographies of these artists is the fact that they became artists, more or less, by accident. None of them had planned art as a career until they encountered other artists or expatriate art educators. They took on the initiative to test their artistic skills and discovered that they could become empowered through their visual and creative voices.

Nearing Independence (in the late 1960s and early 1970s), the foundational educational objectives helped guide the early careers of these three artists. Later, the educational philosophy of the Beiers and Craig was built into a larger art curriculum, which set to redefine a new national identity and facilitated a new social understanding of each other as “Papua New Guineans.”17 At the same time, artists began to emerge in society, documenting new social happenings, inspired by their cultural heritage and personal insights.

In 1973, Australia gave Papua New Guinea five million dollars to establish a program for cultural development for five years. This funding made it possible to expand the Creative Art Center and build an administration building and gallery, housing for staff and students, a theater, and studios for music, visual arts, and textiles (Downs 1980, 497 quoted in Rosi Traveling Ahead). The completion of the Center’s building, in 1975, coincided with the National

17 This is what Manuel Castells calls “project identity”(xxvi).
Independence celebrations and was renamed the National Art School. This period marked the second phase of Craig’s leadership wherein the National Art School underwent educational expansion. For example, to continue to foster imagination and draw inspiration from cultural heritage, new curricula were designed for students including field trips to their own villages. However, this ended in conflict and his resignation in 1984 (Downs 1980, 497 quoted in Rosi Traveling Ahead).

1.2 Bung Wantaim and the “Production Workshop” Artists (1975-1986)

The second wave of artists’ activities draws a clear connection between the art-making process and PNG’s Independence, by bringing together culturally diverse people through an expression of common identity. When Papua New Guinea became an Independent nation on September 16, 1975, a new sense of celebratory nationalism erupted throughout the country. A vital concern for the PNG government was to convince Papua New Guineans to support this new democracy and to feel pride in a national identity (Rosi 1991, 289). During this time, artists continued to draw from cultural identities but attempted to create narratives and symbols that related to the nation as a whole. The years between 1975-1986 were an active period for artists and “period of macroeconomic stability” (Gumoi 121). Educators and the local government set up the “production workshop” in which NAS artists were actively commissioned to create new imagery within urban environments.

Artists were seen as natural allies by Papua New Guinea’s politicians and art production and politics centered in Port Moresby at the National Art School (NAS).18 Already aware of

18 The struggles, sentiments, and moods of PNG artists varied from subtle nationalism to fiery anticolonial resistance; and from imagining one's own community, to living in one that was about to become independent. Artists proved that the arts has a purpose to serve the people of Papua New Guinea as a united nation.
these circumstances before Independence, the PNG government recognized that contemporary artists contributed in creating a new national consciousness and pride to indigenous identity (Rosi 1994, i; Beier 1980, xiv). To further these political messages, the state provided professional training and institutional facilities, and recruited artists “in the spirit of national community” (Rosi 1994, i). Expatriate organizations were also encouraged to support new production by providing venues and patronage for the arts (Rosi Painting My Country, 82).

Although students who entered the NAS developed their own artistic practices, their time was primarily consumed by commissions to design public works. These include St Mary’s Cathedral, the Downtown branch of the Papua New Guinea Banking Corporation (PNGBC, now Bank of the South Pacific), and the National Parliament House, the National Museum and Art Gallery, all in Port Moresby. These public works were more than just buildings; there were constructed with a symbolic message of political independence in PNG.

For example, the visual vocabulary of Parliament House (Figure 1.4) acted as a metaphor of the post-colonial nation, and was meant to enforce ideas that the nation is united by its multi-cultural citizens. The design of the building resembled architectural traditions of a haus tamabaran (men’s meeting house) in the Sepik Region of Papua New Guinea. Constructed from local concrete and mosaic tiles, the exterior embellishments were designed at the National Art School, bridging cultural expressions of weaving traditions, concepts of land, water, and items of wealth. When designed, the building gave PNG citizens a common understanding of history through the loci and decoration of the building, thus, assisting to forge national identity (Rosi 1991, 289).

Numerous artists made a profound contribution to the newly nationalistic aesthetic. Metal sculptor Ruki Fame initially entered the Creative Arts Centre when it established in 1972. He
worked there throughout the seventies and to the eighties designing sculptures, murals, and decorative gates for the government and business establishments.

Martin Morububuna, who first attended the National Art School in 1974, began envisioning new ways of understanding diverse cultures as a cohesive nation through painting techniques (Figure 1.5). Although he is rooted in developing a style distinct to his Trobriand Island heritage, he offers a “syncretic character of PNG society” (Rosi 1998, 12). As stated by Rosi (1998), Morububuna refers to his mode of representation as bung wantaim (coming together). He comments, “When I paint in my bung wantaim style, I am showing not only my background but what is happening to PNG. I am trying to bring it all together- the people, the many lifestyles brought about by modernization, our rich traditions. You can recognize my work, eyes, noses… but this is not just my style, it’s everybody’s… Papua New Guinea tasol! (that’s all)” (Rosi 1998, 12). Morububuna had a strong social conscience and, although living in poor circumstances himself, he was devoted to painting about everyday life often through public works and murals. He told Art Historian Susan Cochrane, “[My images] were intended to add some color to what are bleak environments and to reassure villagers, particularly women, that what they are doing in town is a reflection of everyday urban activities” (Cochrane 1997, 61).

Joe Nalo also contributed to the bung wantaim narratives. He was one of the first educated elites to join a community of artists in Papua New Guinea. After completing teacher’s college, he taught expressive arts at Wau International Primary School, and then became the headmaster of Salamaua Boarding School from 1970-2 (Cochrane 1997, 57). In 1974, he was awarded a scholarship to the Creative Arts Centre and began exhibiting. Nalo’s art is informed by his culture, traditions, and oral stories from Manus Island. Stories, such as Fish Meri (1990) (Figure 1.6) are lyrically painted, different from the approaches of earlier artists. He is most
noted for the detail of his images and complex iconography. The work of Joe Nalo focused on common values of leaders and citizens of PNG’s Independent nation. Themes built into national agendas such as *Universal Man* and *Universal Woman* (Figure 1.7) acted as reminders of “enduring qualities of leadership” and qualities of womanhood to his people (Cochrane 1997, 60).

1.3 Contention with the “Nation” and Expressions of Discontent (1980-1989)

Beginning in the eighties and after the celebratory years after Independence, there was a change in Papua New Guinea artists’ subject matter and a shift from bung wantaim narratives to visual criticisms of the nation-making process. The major concerns of painting cultural identity and national identity were still apparent; but the simple act of self-assertion through cultural identity became less applicable (Beier 1980, xiv).

This was also true for writers at the time. In the 1960s and 1970s, writers primarily focused on autobiographical approaches, but shifted to more ambiguous positions such as social commentators and creative writers. The last significant auto-biography was written by Michael Somare, the Prime Minister at the time, that was published on Independence day (Beier 1980, xiv). As stated in the previous section, during the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, writers and artists boosted the positions of Papua New Guinea’s emerging politicians and generated ways for citizens to relate to their newly emerged government system. However, artists’ and writers’ critical examinations of society were irrelevant to new political objectives. Artists began

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10 In an examination of the National Art School (NAS), Pamela Rosi (1994) underscores a persistent tension between the national and local in the production of nationalistic art. Rosi argues, however, that making national culture and identity was a highly contested process. The NAS program was publicly criticized for what they regarded as perpetuating colonial hegemonic themes in its program. Criticisms such as these raised the fundamental question – what constitutes national identity?
to comment on political events of their time and generated images that expressed sentiments of disillusionment with the national government. Ulli Beier mentioned some of the controversial policies and attitudes that triggered discontent. He states (1980, xv), “...conservatism, its easy acceptance of foreign business, its timid stand towards Indonesia, and the resultant “betrayal” of the West Irian Jaya freedom fighter. Above all there is disillusionment with the power hungry bureaucracy and the increasing pompousness and Westernization of the co-called elite.”

Port Moresby had a large expatriate population that supported NAS and the Waigani Art Centre. However, in 1986, NAS was forced to deal with increasing budget cuts, including the elimination of art exhibitions and public programs. Eventually these actions eroded the national cultural agenda that was founded during the independence period, and affected the livelihood of NAS artists. Despite the national rhetoric about the importance of cultural programs for developing and maintain a sense of national identity, Craig comments, “cultural development simply could not compete with other concerns, such as roads, schools, health services, economic development projects and tourism” (Craig vii). Moreover, large numbers of expatriates began to leave the country in the late 1980s. According to Rosi the departure of expatriates was prompted by two factors: “Post-independence government regulations which instigated national policies of

20 Barry Craig states, “One of the primary goals stated by Papua New Guinean elites at independence emphasized the rhetoric of unity is diversity – a bold attempt to encourage citizens to maintain their regional differences within the overarching framework of an emerging nation-state. Is the use of cultural resources and institutions for the purpose of defining ‘identity’ creates a tension between local groups which are determined to maintain their ethnic individuality and the central government which seeks to avoid fragmentation by promoting of single national identity at the same time as it subverts ethnic diversity and integrity though tourism. The issue of national identity was again stressed as was the concern for promoting and strengthening ‘the living culture’. Cultural integrity in the service of national identity not only appealed widely to the Papua New Guinea elite but it seemed to touch a responsive cord among many foreigners and it went down well with UNESCO and with its ‘parent’ the United Nations, which was keeping a close watch on the progress of the relationship between Australia and it Territories. Despite the rhetoric about the importance of cultural programmes for developing and maintain a sense of national identity, cultural development simply could not compete with other concerns – such as roads, schools, health services, and economic development projects, tourism” (Craig vii).
self-reliance on foreign workforce; and the escalation of violent crime related to high urban unemployment, deep poverty, and criminal gangs” (Rosi \textit{Painting My Country}, 82).

In the 1980s, Kauage continued to develop social commentaries and images according to his personal sentiments towards PNG society. He adapted images of bras and underwear representing what was “wrong” with society, including other topics such as alcoholism, prostitution, and the new behavior of modern PNG women (Rosi 1994, 330). Although he continued to draw inspiration from village life and stories, he expressed a new social criticism of urban life and events related the development of the nation and its association with the outside world. For example, foreign subjects began to appear his paintings: the first Chimbu missionary, Father Trapper, Queen Elizabeth on her Jubilee Tour of PNG with Prince Phillip, and John Glenn, the American astronaut (Rosi 1994, 331).

Similarly Jakupa’s artwork shifted in style and subject matter reflecting his ambiguity about Papua New Guinea’s progress as a nation, deepening fears of his position as an artist as the National Art School, and, also, anxieties over the heightened political instability. In the 1980’s, possibly to convey anxiety, his images moved away from “flat expressionism” to images depicted in a more realist matter. He started to include references to important economic activities such as coffee growing; social disturbances, including tribal fighting and regional rivalries; and the new city nightlife of disco dancing (Rosi 1994, 359). Directly expressing his feeling towards national disillusionments, Jakupa painted \textit{Hammas natin long Indipendes} (1989) (Figure 1.8). In this image, a man waves a PNG flag with an accompanying caption that reflects Jakupa’s increasing opposition to the ideals of nationalism and progress. Jakupa inscribed on the painting, “there was a big celebration at Independence, but I am not feeling so happy about it anymore” (Rosi 1994, 361).
Larry Santana, who has exhibited in Australia and the United States, was one of the most well-known younger and radical artists during this time. Like others, he expressed sentiments of deep despair and disillusionment at a national and personal level. Santana studied graphics and painting and obtained his diploma from NAS in 1980. Santana’s work often shows the influence of his graphic training. In 1988, Santana lost his job as a graphic designer and was forced to build a shack from material at the city dump and to scavenge for discarded food (Rosi 1998, 14). His self-portrait entitled Struggle and Pain at the Six-mile Dump (1989) (Figure 1.9) describes his immense struggles. He describes the painting (Rosi Painting My Country, 78): “Tears and blood are in my eyes. The carving represents the traditional culture we have lost. The red wash is the pain of living in the city. The blue wash down below show my little kids playing around the house... Life is not worth living, but I have my family to care for... [This] is a painting from my heart to let the world know what is happening to artists like myself as we struggle to survive in the garbage dump.”

Although pain, struggle, politics, and contested lifestyles are integral to Santana’s representations of urban life and its dislocation, he also looks at rural village life. On visits to see his relatives in Madang Province or the mountains of Central Province, he felt inspired to create scenes of village landscape, wild life, and portraits of people. It was common for artists during this era to focus on dual themes: legends and traditional knowledge and confusion created by capitalism and broken promises of nationalism.

Taba Silau who attended the NAS from 1976-77 found power expressing these themes. For example, in his painting Sing Sing of the Bird of Paradise (1985), he captures images of people from his village in Madang, and attempts preserve memories of living in the village. However, his later images from the late 1980s and 1990s moved into bleak images of Irian Jaya
refugees and directly criticized the national government for foreign policy that abandoned its “Melanesian brothers” facing genocide in Indonesia (Rosi 1998, 16).

Papua New Guinea entered a deep economic downturn when the Bougainville crisis surfaced in May 1989. The situation worsened throughout the nineties due to financial instability and the government’s mismanagements. For artists, this led to continual hardships and also forced artists to seek alternative pathways for expression and sales.

1.4 Economic Instability and Negotiating International Markets (1990-2000)

1990-2000 is marked by three major occurrences: a deep economic depression, government’s withdrawal of support for contemporary artists, and growing international attention for Papua New Guinea art. The merger in 1990 of the NAS and the University of Papua New Guinea, halted financial support for art communities. In effect many artists decided to either display and sell their pictures outside the tourist hotels, find available space in craft markets, and/or seek opportunities with international museums and galleries interested in contemporary Papua New Guinea art (Beier 2005). Artists began to realize that more than ever, if they did not produce artwork and sell independently they would have to return to subsistence living in the village. In the 1990s, even the most established artists began changing their styles and adapted aesthetics that appealed to expatriate, tourist, and international communities. As Larry Santana suggests, “the 1990s was survival of the fittest for artists in PNG” (Personal Communication September 17, 2011).

At a macroeconomic level, the country faced instability and negative growth. 1991-1993 witnessed rapid economic growth with new major mineral and petroleum projects, but this was followed yet again with financial instability due to economic mismanagement (Sowei). Even worse, 1997-1998 was a period of economic, political and natural calamity (Sowei). These
political events clearly continue to effect artistic narratives during this time as many artists expressed feeling of anxiety and disillusionment.

The 1990’s marked a decline of artist productivity and the end of assistance for new artists without a formal education background. Without the support of the government and its institutions, an air of frustration began to loom over artists who turned to tourist and international markets for assistance. Martin Morububuna describes the situation (Meyer 2009):

I mean to go on – that’s life. My government does not see the importance of contemporary art...they do not understand how it is important to culture and traditions. They think the older things are more sacred and spiritual and spend money taking care of them. There are students coming out every year but there are no jobs – contemporary artists are only used when they want exhibitions for outsiders… then the artists are thrown out again. We can be good ambassadors for our culture. They think the value of art lies only in the pieces in the museums or traditional work in villages… With or without their help, I will carry on.

Although Papua New Guinean contemporary arts in the 1970s and 1980s attracted overseas curators and scholars, the 1990s brought new need and dependence on international exposure in order to survive financially as an artist. Some of the first international exhibitions during this period focused on surveys of contemporary art movement in Papua New Guinea from 1970s to late 1990s. Contemporary Art of Papua New Guinea (1987) curated by the American anthropologist Pamela Rosi at the 800 Gallery of Monmouth University, New Jersey, and Luk Luk Gen! (1990-91) curated by Australian art historian Susan Cochrane were some of “the first fully comprehensive [exhibitions of] contemporary art of Papua New Guinea” to be shown internationally (Meyer 2009). As contemporary artists encountered new audiences, curators were faced with the crucial problem that the country and culture were not well-known outside of

21 Quoted in “Final show for ‘Lukluk Gen’ Exhibition”. The Times, Papua New Guinea, September 15, 1994. Earlier exhibits include Contemporary Art of Papua New Guinea, curated by Pamela Rosi and shown at the 800 Gallery at Monmouth University in 1987, and Ting Ting Bilong Mi, curated by Ingrid Heerman, shown at Stuttgart’s Institute fur Auslandsbeziehuger in 1979.
the Asia-Pacific Rim (Rosi *Painting My Country*, 84). Thus, survey exhibitions were also designed as educational modules introducing historical timelines of PNG culture, colonization, and emergence Papua New Guinea’s political sovereign society.

As Papua New Guinea contemporary art emerged in the spotlight of the Western world, scholarly discussions shifted focus from “art and nation-making” to contextual analyses of Papua New Guinea art in the global art world. The catalogue of *Luk Luk Gen!* published in 1990, contributed to new understanding of Papua New Guinea and defined divisions of urban/rural, traditional/contemporary, and old and new subcategories of Papua New Guinea art.\(^{22}\) Hugh Stevenson employed the subcategory of “Naïve Art” to describe the flat, simplified, and hybridized forms of Highland artists including Timothy Akis, Mathias Kauage, and Jakupa Ako. But as Pamela Rosi states, Stevenson devalues the situated power of their narratives and hybrid nature of art forms as “dispirited copies of Western art that lack cultural identity” (*Painting my Country*, 85). His approach is quite contradictory to the way in which PNG scholar Bernard Narokobi describes Papua New Guinea art as something that contains the spirit of Papua New Guinea. Narokobi states, “Our contemporary artists will pass into history as our artists, our visionaries, our prophets in our times. Our art should be seen and enjoyed and our artists appreciated for what they are and not for what or whom they resemble” (Narokobi in Cochrane 1990, 21).

Although it seems relevant for Western scholars to discuss emerging fields of commercialization and categorical understandings of art, such theoretical approaches that define contemporary PNG art in global markets often reinforce “value laden” authenticities according to

\(^{22}\) These categories are discussed.
international curatorial preference (Lewis-Harris 2004). Ultimately, PNG art of the 1990s was labeled as “tourist art” in the global art world, which called to question whether it was really art at all (Rosi Painting My Country, 84). Furthermore, in international museums and galleries, PNG art fell between the lines of “traditional art” and “contemporary art”. Curators who were interested in acquiring contemporary PNG art and display it as “contemporary art” are often unsuccessful because it is considered unequivocal to global standards of visual and material innovations in art. Artists and curators had to vie for space in the global consciousness, but inevitably were caught in a “pigeon hole” where international museums were looking for “art” to compliment their collection of “artifacts” and “primitive” art collections.

PNG artists encountered a bipolar understanding of positioning their art in a global market. They faced new questions: Who is the audience for PNG art? What types of images attract tourists and will intrigue an outside community? Although artists continued to depict cultural identities and express their anxious tones of nationalism, artists had to make new negotiations layering aesthetics, styles, and meanings that attracted an outside audience.23

The 1990 merger of the NAS and the University of Papua New Guinea brought a new need for artists to work together and to promote themselves in new ways. When public funding for exhibitions and support for artists came to end, Mathias Kauage and his sons started finding new avenues for sale. Mathias’s sons Apa Hugo, John Siune, and Oscar Towa began

23 In the inaugural issues of Art and the AsiaPacific (1993-1996), an art journal dedicated to the contemporary arts of the Asia-Pacific region, topics of PNG contemporary art and artists were included in the art journal. PNG scholar, John Waiko wrote an article entitled “Through our own eyes” briefly explaining the historiography of the contemporary art movement. In an issue entirely dedicated to contemporary art in the Pacific Islands (1995), Susan Cochrane emphasized the unfavorable imbalance of indigenous art from the Pacific Islands and Papua New Guinea in broader discussions of AsiaPacific context. Jacquelyn Lewis-Harris (1995) also wrote an article entitled “Printed, beaten, and coiled” examining the continuation of textile traditions in PNG. Interestingly, however, contemporary art of PNG was hardly highlighted in Art and AsiaPacific after 1996. Pamela Rosi wrote a profile on Michael Mel and also wrote two reviews of exhibitions that included PNG artists, but they mostly ignore coverage of Pacific art, and seem to dismiss PNG art as inconsequential.
reproducing the colorful style of Mathias Kauage. They soon became known as the Kauage Lain or Kauage family painters. These artists began successfully selling their work in front of the Holiday Inn and craft markets, and enticing tourists with the “naïve” and playful interpretations of modernity.

For many artists and commentators, the work of the Kauage Lain devalued PNG art in general because they lacked quality materials and techniques, and some critics questioned whether the sons’ work was a mere copy of Kauage’s work. Although the Kauage Lain genuinely and creatively expressed contemporary moments in time, their primary motive was to make quick sales, targeting tourists and business visitors. This objective is highly emblematic of the time in which they emerged as artists in society.

In the early 1990s- when he returned to PNG after visiting the United States as a visiting artist at Monmouth College and Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts- Larry Santana began to shift the aesthetic appeal from realistic hardships of Papua New Guinean, to surrealistic narratives of his cultural identity. Pamela Rosi, who organized Santana’s US residencies and exhibitions, mentioned that he was advised by US curators to paint “beautiful pictures that appeal to western stereotypes of Papua New Guinea as a primitive paradise” (Rosi Painting My Country, 87). At this point Santana did not completely accommodate the expectations of his foreign audiences and resisted comprising his critical vision; however, he eventually mediated the delivery of his messages. He explained, “When I exhibited in the US with Kauage and Jakupa, my realistic approach couldn’t compare to their approach of blending tribal and modern aesthetics. So I decided to change. It was a sink-or-swim situation” (Personal communication October 2011).
Two of Santana’s paintings depicting women’s issues in PNG exemplify his aesthetic negotiations. The painting entitled *Educate a Woman and You Educate a Nation* (1989) (Figure 1.10) illustrates a woman leaving the village in pursuit of education, transitioning from a traditional lifestyle to a modern one. Santana relies on realism to configure his images. In a painting depicting similar subject matter entitled *Bilum Hevi Tumas* (2005) (Figure 1.11), Santana adds a “mystical” appeal by incorporating images from his village in Madang. Santana believed PNG artists must create images that make people aware of the beauty of his country, but also of the destruction of culture affecting the well-being of his people and forthcoming generations (Rosi *Painting My Country*, 87).

Similar to Santana’s approach, Daniel Waswas, who graduated in 1990 from NAS, utilizes a realist approach. He evokes nostalgia for an idealized PNG, but his images are layered with meaning and intent that echoes the problems of urbanized PNG. In the 1990s, Port Moresby became known as a “lawless” city where crime rates, gambling, and poverty sky-rocketed. Greed and materialism began to take over deeply engrained value systems. Waswas primarily paints his home society in Mendi and large-scale interpretations of Highlander self-decoration, almost secretly commenting on growing tensions occurring across Papua New Guinea (Cochrane 2008, 172). Inspecting a series of 10 paintings entitled *Confusion* (Figure 1.12), at first glance, viewers might simply think Waswas is celebrating his Highlander cultural identity, but a deeper look into the complex painterly gestures shows otherwise. He uses dripped layers of paint, to provide a base for his metaphorical messages. He states, “The work explains the entire situation in PNG. The title is *Confusion* and it represents the despair shared by common Papua New Guineans, the lines symbolize prison bars and the face looking out wondering where the future is. This work
also questions are we really independent after 30 years? We need to look inward and check ourselves” (Cochrane 2008, 172).

Daniel Waswas employs layered meanings allowing multiple possibilities to be read within his paintings, one is “official, one secret, one archaic, and one progressive, one that allows the myth of origins” (Homi Bhabha in Winduo 607). Within the international public sphere, the multiple meanings may be dislocated and disassociated in the process of commodification and categorization of the art market.

Beginning in the 1990s, artists had to consider and negotiate their messages and aesthetics in order to insert their work into a global consciousness. Economic dependence on the tourist and international art market had prohibiting effects within the contemporary art communities in Papua New Guinea. Inevitably, artists had to juggle, juxtapose, and negotiate their positions in PNG society and the global public. The creation and dissemination of PNG art is often greatly tied to an economic necessity and process within the globalized world. The images that are created for the market are coterminous socio-political sentiments in PNG but, even more so contingent of dominant discourses or the likeness of outsiders’ ways of understanding PNG society.24

24 Susan Cochrane (1997) redressed discussions on understanding contemporary art as traditional/contemporary or old/new are categories in art that ignore a continuum of traditions and published one of the first major publication entitled Contemporary Art in Papua New Guinea (1997) that included textiles, bilums, carvings, painted objects, ancestor figures, body decorations, and masks made for tourism, as well as created for ritual and ceremonial purposes. In a later publication Jacquelyn Lewis-Harris (1995) also wrote an article entitled “Printed, beaten, and coiled” examining the continuation of textile traditions in PNG. (Need to mention women artists and Michael Mel’s performance art in 1990s. 1990s brought wider definition of “PNG Contemporary Art”. Cochrane's 1997 book.)
1.5 Economic Restoration and Growing Art Markets (2002-2007)

In 2002, the mining developments began to, once again, fuel economic growth (Guy 2). In some ways, the turn of the millennium brought more opportunities for contemporary artists in PNG. Many contemporary artists began to slowly feel the effects of a growing economy, manifest in an increasing demand for paintings by expatriates moving to Port Moresby and increasing market value of contemporary paintings. Although opportunities were still limited, the international art world began to show growing interest in contemporary arts from Oceania with opportunities for PNG artists to promote their work overseas. Opportunities emerged such as participation in group/solo exhibitions and artist residency programs. Exhibitions and community projects in Papua New Guinea (with a focus on contemporary arts), have also worked in favor of the evolving art market and have promoted a competitive environment in PNG art communities.\(^{25}\)

\(^{25}\) Starting in 2003, the annual *Luk Save Exhibition* at the Yacht Club in Port Moresby, has generated a reliable venue for the artists to present their work to the expatriate community in a formal environment. *Luk Save Exhibition* has been the only chance for PNG artists to reach out to the larger community and sell their work outside of hotels, craft markets, and their own network of patrons. During more recent years, other national exhibition opportunities have opened up for all artists and public viewing. The National Cultural Commission funded the *National Arts & Crafts Exhibition (NACE)*, held in Port Moresby and Lae 2005-2009. In 2008, *Live Awe Art Competition* began in Goroka, in the Eastern Highlands district, and in 2010 the National Capital District inaugurated the *Garden Art Exhibition* at the Grand Hall, National Parliament, Port Moresby. These exhibitions are open to all Papua New Guineans seeking to display their work in a competitive environment. Internationally, numerous exhibitions were organized with the incorporation of PNG artists. For example: In 2006 *Turning Tides: Gender in Oceania Art* curated by Samoan-American artist Jewel Castro curated at the University of California, San Diego; in 2008 *Altogether* curated by Jacquelyn Lewis-Harris at the East-West Center Gallery in Honolulu; in 2009 *Pacific Storms* curated by Jocelyn Leahy at the Bundaberg Region Art Gallery, Queensland Australia; in 2009, Giles Peterson curated *Spirit of the People* Okaiocenik art gallery (the first exhibition with a region-wide focus of new Melanesian art to be shown in Auckland); in 2009 *Hailans to Ailans* co-curated with Michael Mel and Pamela Rosi held in the Rebecca Hossack Gallery (London), Alcheringa Gallery (Victoria, Canada), and de Young Museum (San Francisco, CA) (Rosi *Traveling Ahead*). Artists have also been invited to residencies around the globe including Germany, Aotearoa New Zealand and the US. One of the most significant and far-reaching programs was initiated in 2006 called *The Jolika Fellowship* program at the de Young Museum, San Francisco. This program annually offers PNG artists and scholars residencies to create their artwork in one of the museum’s public galleries and work with the museum’s collection of Papua New Guinea.
Senior painters continued to produce work and participated in exhibitions and residencies. A number of women painters also had a strong presence in Port Moresby art scene including Jane Wena, Winnie Weoa, and Julie Mota. Although women artists are important voices in contemporary society, they have found it challenging to find a place in the art world in PNG.

The views of new artists emerging in the late 1990s and early 2000s, reflects experiences in post-Independent Papua New Guinea; they continued to negotiate their art and aesthetics according to the demand of the growing market. This generation is passionate about discussing problems specific to Papua New Guinea but that could be understood across international borders. It reflects a changing nation-building ethos amongst this generation and their concerns about the state of the nation” (Yala 4-5).

Laben Sakale (a graduate of the National Art School in 1997) addresses issues of gender roles, family affairs, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, and law and order. In the painting entitled *Street Beggar* (2009) (Figure 1.13) he intermingles bright hues of blue, orange, and white. His emotionally intense compositions may seem indecipherable from a far, but with a closer look, a viewer can see the multiple views of faces, eyes, and human figures. A significant aspect of his work goes beyond imagery; the tools and materials used to create his work are just as important. He uses kitchen knives, broken bottles and glass, sticks, and paint applied with his own hands and feet to paint lyrical imagery. Without a doubt, he has access to paint brushes of different sizes and texture that would inheritably offer softer and more detailed imagery. Instead, he chooses found objects of the everyday. In this way, the physical and unconventional material is a vehicle for expressions, and provokes its own abundance of associations and cultural references. He states, “A lot of these themes have very strong link to cultural beliefs and is having an effect
in modern Papua New Guinea society” (Bruder 2009). His images are blurred, abstract, and full of impassioned content.

The work of Gazellah Bruder, who graduated from the National Art School in 1997, reflects some of the changing concerns of art in society. Her interests draws on the complex web of culture, traditions, and law that state women’s role and place in Papua New Guinea today. She is concerned with gender, social, and sexual issues that define the existence of PNG women today. In her painting called Two Faced Two (Figure 1.14) she confronts the multiple responsibilities of women living in urban areas. In a podcast (2009) on the Pasifik Nau website²⁶ she states, “In urban areas there is a division of labor. Women must be the child bearers, homemakers, gardeners, and they must carry the firewood. Culture defines our roles, not to be heard, just to be seen constantly supporting a man.” As suggested by the title, this painting depicts a woman with two faces oscillating between her myriad roles; one in an urban setting, and the other in a village. The dark blue and black wavering lines poetically communicate a woman’s struggle with multiple roles; a woman who has a job, who comes home to look after children, and then goes to the village to do the gardening on the weekend. She states (Gazellah Bruder 2010):

After years of virtually trying to reach a level of recognition and appreciation for my art, I no longer feel inclined or desperately claw my way through this rat race to achieve fame and glory. I guess I no longer feel that I need to prove my self. I am what I am, an artist with grand dreams and a realistic perspective of my life and the world around me and an innate desire to talk about it. I simply, want to express myself. My art is my life splashed out for the world to see. I don’t feel the need for public approval. I simply create what I feel in my soul. I thank you for your confusion, disgust, pity, and agreement. That is the ‘appreciation’ of art that every artist craves.

1.6 Conclusion

In the 1960s and 1970s, artists who pioneered the indigenous contemporary art movement in PNG urban setting, had to establish their identity and their place in a milieu that was dominated by expatriates and a colonial culture. In the 1980’s and 1990’s artists began to feel disillusioned towards new narratives of the nation. As corruption and economic and political instability infiltrated PNG, artists began painting as way to communicate their distrust for politicians and convey the hardships of new urban environments. When artists lost support of government funding, they began to paint for international and tourist markets, exhibiting their work in local craft markets and international exhibitions. According to a study done by Marion Struck-Garbe, the most prevalent motifs found in PNG paintings were “motifs involving people dressed traditionally with traditional face painting of village life.” However, a younger generation of artists since the 2000s, have grown up as urban dwellers with a significantly different life experience and outlook (Cochrane 2008,162). New themes began to emerge including social issues specific to their urban realities such gender issues, HIV/Aids, and family issues. The next chapter discusses in detail, yet another shift in PNG art history entitled the cosmopolitan turn.

Struck-Garbe Out of 168 artworks chose at random from more than 300 in the collection in Hamburg. She recorded the most important themes displayed in these paintings: traditional dress and village life, ornaments and traditional wealth, animals, personal stories, myths and legends.
Chapter 2

Profiling a New Generation:
The Art, Aesthetics, and Lives of a New Generation
In this chapter, I highlight the personal stories of four young Papua New Guineans as the focus of the overall discussion about the new generation of artists and cosmopolitism. I argue that the roots of the cosmopolitism of the new generation are explicit in their biographical stories, personal and societal perspectives, and written in their visual vocabularies. There are two objectives of this chapter. Firstly, to contextualize the dynamics of an emerging generation of artists; who they are, where they come from, and more generally, what they think about domestic and worldly issues. In doing so, I argue that conversations about cosmopolitanism stem from socio-economic backgrounds, paired with their lived experiences in Papua New Guinea and global societies. Secondly, this chapter focuses on the production of cosmopolitan aesthetics. I highlight the voices and perspectives of the artists themselves, who have particular and insightful readings of their artwork and how they see core functions of art in their societies. Still, I make a case for multiple readings of their work for which the materiality conveys greater conceptual messages about PNG in larger global contexts. The artwork of the new generation is embedded with multiple metaphors, enforces a sense of activism, and allows for an interchangeable/flexible reading (where various audiences are able to generate meaning and connections).

The selected artists come from different backgrounds – social, economic, ethnic, linguistic, and educational levels. Their diverging settings and sentiments are indicative of broader social changes in PNG today and how young citizens participate in a larger movement of cosmopolitism. They have simultaneous connections to the rural, urban, local, and global, they negotiate and express dilemmas of their realities through their art practice. Trying not to gloss

28 Biographical profiles are derived from a series of taped interviews carried out in Papua New Guinea during August, September, and October of 2011, unless otherwise footnoted.
over the complexities, this chapter enunciates the essence of their lives as it relates to the artists’ artwork, process, and the aesthetics of cosmopolitism.

2.1 Jeffry Feeger

At a young age Feeger, gained a variety of experiences which opened his perspective to many aspects of society. Feeger’s German father was a teacher and taught all over PNG, so the family traveled to various provinces around the country. Feeger began traveling abroad at an early age including Australia every two years, and then to Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. These experiences from a young age contributed to his multicultural social identity, but still he was firmly grounded in a Papua New Guinean cultural identity.

Feeger comes from mixed heritage. His father, who is German, migrated to Melbourne, Australia as a young boy and eventually moved to Papua New Guinea for work. His mother, on the other hand, is from a village called Tapala in the Gulf Province. After moving to Rabaul, his mother and father divorced when Jeffry was a young boy. He lived in Rabaul with his father and brother for nearly ten years. Thereafter, he spent the rest of his young adult life living in Port Moresby and attending Port Moresby International School.

Feeger credits the start of his artistic career to his father, who often told Feeger, “go with what you want to do with in life.” Feeger states:

He could see a lot of potential in what I do. He is quite a creative thinker, and he likes to think out of the box. He was supportive of me choosing something that was different. There weren’t many role models for me, [but] he just believed that I could do it, because it was practical. It brought home the money and I didn't have to sit at an office. [It] made sense to him and made sense to me.29

29 The fact that Feeger has had support from his family in pursuit of his art career is significant. In Papua New Guinea, the general idea of getting an education and building skill-sets for a future career is often grounded in economic pursuit; parental figures commonly urge their children to pursue business oriented careers.
After he graduated from high school, Feeger was offered a scholarship to complete a degree in creative Arts at the University of Papua New Guinea. However, after one year he dropped out because he was dissatisfied with the course and felt the program lacked sufficient administrative support. From this point, he began engaging with the art community in Port Moresby and entered his painting in the annual art competition Luk Save Art Show.

In 2009, Feeger began traveling to promote his art and became the first artist-in-resident supported by the Tautai Contemporary Pacific Arts Trust in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. His name and art quickly grew in popularity. He began traveling to Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia for various solo and group exhibitions. In 2010, he represented Papua New Guinea at the World Expo in Shanghai for four months. For Feeger, experiencing different cultures, opened up new perceptions and ideas of nationalism, global contemporary art trends, and the importance of utilizing art practice to benefit his society.

There are three elements in Feeger’s work that particularly draw upon a cosmopolitan mindset. Firstly, his aesthetics systems that are both global and local. In 2007, he began painting urban portraitures of men and women throughout different regions in Papua New Guinea; and continued to develop his use of realism, which could be read as quintessentially Papua New Guinean, and also transferable to a global audience. Secondly, an aesthetic concept called magic realism that will be discussed, in which elements of magic and realism merge. Thirdly, the visual transparency of his work. Topics relating to the government’s accountability, civil rights, and economic ethics dominate Feeger’s narrative agendas. He enlivens and politicizes urban portraitures through a process of layering the canvas with personal, historical, and very timely stories.
2.1.1 Global/Local Aesthetics and Cultural Translation

After leaving the art program at UPNG, Feeger began developing an individual style and teaching himself about contemporary art theories and global art history. Feeger states:

Before I had access to the Internet I would look for books in secondhand shops. I did as much reading about [art] as I could. I would try and watch things on TV, and now that the Internet has come along I do a lot of research on the Internet about the foreign and contemporary art world. That’s my main thing I do now, is to grasp that and relate it back to what I do here in Papua New Guinea. It puts me in good position, I think.

In this way he is able to share stories about PNG with foreign audiences and successfully build bridges between detached communities.

The Internet became a strategic tool for Feeger develop an expansive repertoire, through which he gained a deeper understanding contemporary art politics and global conversations. By default, Internet search engines broadened a reflexive space to receive, investigate, and interact with evolving cognitive model of paintings. His incorporation of larger understandings of such global art practices is important to cosmopolitanism. Without displacing previously understood concepts, he instead coats his artistic visions with both the global and local viewpoints.


Feeger’s early work includes portraitures of his friends and family. The painting Dreaming of Home (2004) (Figure 2.1) demonstrates some of Feeger’s stylistic techniques through which he presents a situated narrative and localized characteristics, while wielding contemporary art notions of aesthetic presentation. The painting presents Feeger’s partner, Fiona who is originally from the island province of Bougainville. She stands casually in the shallow
waters of Ela Beach (a coastal suburb in Port Moresby), and behind her are the iconic expatriate residences of Port Moresby’s hills. Fiona wears a blue t-shirt and blue laplap (sarong), which juxtapose the idyllic blue hues of the sky and ocean water. The image narrates a commonly understood experience of migration from rural homes to the bustling and culturally eclectic urban environment of Port Moresby. Her eyes are shut and the wind gently blows against her hair and clothes: she is dreaming of home. By intensifying hues and layering the image with culturally nuanced signifiers, Feeger does more than imitate a photograph, he incorporates other-worldly elements into the picture. The dominance of the blue sky becomes an important element suggesting a transfixed or dream-like state. Her skin tone is softened with an enhanced shine, that clearly identifies her as Bougainville compatriot.

Early on Feeger mastered techniques of photorealism and compelling compositional design. Working from his own photographs, he created paintings by replicating photographic qualities, but he continued to mediate the subject matter by enhancing the subjects through different techniques such as enhancing the colors, contours, and physical gestures of the image. Part of Feeger’s work that continues to intrigue viewers is his ability to impede and subtly alter photographic images during the painting process, thus transforming the image to something that is quintessentially Papua New Guinean.

One of the most important aspects of Feeger’s artwork is the way he localizes aesthetic elements of realism to become more meaningful and specific to traditions belonging to Papua New Guinea. Feeger, in his own words, describes the importance of realism in his practice:

Realism is at the core of a lot of my work, this ability in me to represent realism. At one stage when I was doing realism, people suggested that I should stick with it. At the same token, many people said that realism was overdone and that it was no longer in, and I shouldn’t do just realism. So, realism has always had this sort of debate surrounding it. As being exposed to the outside art world, I found myself often caught up in this debate.
I’m just having to find my own way and find what is true to me and so I continued with what I did.

Significantly, Feeger is one of the first contemporary artists to display artwork in a contemporary art gallery (not specifically for Pacific art). A commercial gallery in Aotearoa New Zealand called Whitespace Contemporary Art became interested in his work during his residency with Tautai and Feeger subsequently held two solo shows. Feeger talks about the difficulties bridging worlds of contemporary issues in Papua New Guinea and global contemporary art discussions.

It’s really difficult living here in Papua New Guinea, which is rough and raw, and having to paint for an environment that is very refined and is just sort of a different place to be. I had to be very mindful and it’s a challenge to be very mindful of what I am painting for and where it will be presented. It’s [easy] to lose sight of that and that is not just my challenge but it’s a challenge for [all artists] here if you want to improve; we need to have that exposure to know what it is like at the high end of the market.

2.1.2 Magic Realism

The foundation of Feeger’s work starting in 2008 relied on his concept of ‘magic realism.’ He takes the term from a movement in literature also called ‘magic realism.’ The importance of this is the way in which his work mediates a multidimensional aspect of society. He states his intentions, “I do realism and portraiture. [This] world that exists is magical. The ordinary world is seen through a magical lens.” Feeger goes on to say,

I view Papua New Guinea, generally floating in that realm. Like people’s mindsets are floating in that realm. They see the everyday, but there is something else they see also, and you hear that in everyday conversation. For example, if someone died of a heart attack they will immediately jump to the conclusion that it was some sort of a ‘puri puri’, which is a sort of magic, or curse, or someone made some upset in the spirit world. Or ancestors come back to take them. There is always something, and sometimes we don't realize but we overlay these two worlds, in everything we do. So when I create my art from realism from rural places, it’s not seen as something as normal but perhaps it’s something mysterious or magical even. I’ve had the experience being called a ‘magic man’, so I allow that to become who I am and what I do, and let that relate back to the culture that I live in.
Images from the series entitled *Transition* (2008) (Figure 2.4) do this. Taking portraiture one-step further, he assembles multiple images on top of one another to be read simultaneously. *Behind the Petals* (2008) (Figure 2.3) juxtaposes low opacity hibiscus flower petals with the discerned face of a young boy. This powerful image enforces a mosaic of possible meanings that could be read as magical, real, spiritual, and contemporary but are also suggestive of the rough realities and cultural signifiers deeply rooted in the specificities of Papua New Guinean culture. Feeger’s images are masterfully painted and depict an affectionate view of PNG that can easily be accepted by international art communities.

Performance has also become an important part of his repertoire, through which Feeger is able to express magical and spiritual aspects of his art. In this process he paints live in front of an audience, taking one to three hours to complete a single painting. Feeger explains the first time he painted live:

> Not till I went to the Shanghai World Exposition [in 2008], [did I have] the opportunity to paint live in front of [an audience] and in collaboration with musicians. This was a first for me, and from then I found I could fall into almost like a trance-state in my work. I experimented a lot with music and what it could do for me. I started to enjoy it more. I always enjoyed music in my studio as I worked. So there was this whole aspect of using music, using rhythm and the atmosphere that music created for me; a facilitation of the creative process.

Feeger has completed numerous performative paintings throughout PNG, Australia and most recently, during his trip to the USA. Live painting is nothing new to the contemporary art world, however, Feeger’s performative style powerfully reminds viewers that the essence and power of the image is not only infused in the finished painting, but it is the act, the work in progress, and
the energy of artist that is important. As Feeger explains, performance is about tapping into a spiritual realm and bridging the audience, environment, the painting, and deeply rooted cultural ties. He further describes the importance of experiential aspects of performance:

Each song is a new creation for me, a new [form] of movement. So this whole performance aspect organically ties in with my spiritual discoveries. When I was painting I also began painting with African drummers. African rhythms were specifically trance-like music. I felt when I was painting to that music I felt that I was in a trance, that I was a Shaman, taking that spiritual journey. In my work, every time I painted [it was a] journey in to the spirit world. It was an opportunity to create new things, to remember things, to recall things from my early childhood [and] to remember aesthetics of color combinations. All this was appearing to me when I was in this trance like stage. I am channeling on a different level and I am communicating at a different level. At this level I have no fear. It’s a great place to be. It is part of the process for me. So every time I am performing, wherever it is, it’s always going to be a new experience.

2.1.3 Urban Portraiture

In 2008, Feeger started creating a new kind of portraiture that communicated a sense of responsibility for the communities he belongs to in Papua New Guinea. In interview with Feeger, he stated “My work, transcends race and class and status and society and first world and third world. I wanted to transcend and bridge the gaps between people who have everything and don’t have everything.”

Feeger typically visits communities and establishes relationships with individuals to inspire his portraiture. He talks with them, gathers personalized histories, and then captures their

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30 This observation is based on Neo Malesa’s comments who wrote a blog post entitled “Some reflections on the ‘Quarter-to-Twelve’ experience today with Jeffry Feeger” (Masalai Blog February 25, 2012) after watching Feeger’s performance entitled “Quarter-to-Twelve” (February 2012). Malesa states, “It was the first time for me to see a live exhibition and from that two hours alone, I learned and captured more of the energy and spirit of the artist than in all my twenty-four years of life. And I’m sure most who were there feel that way too. I realized that it’s not just the finished painting that speaks, it’s also the act, the work in progress, the energy of the painting artist that is infused onto the canvas that speaks much more. Those who view the finished work will not really feel the energy and emotion of that painting. I am so privileged to be part of that work of art, I watched the entire work as it started and I feel like my soul is in that, I feel it is part of me and I am a part of it. I can still feel the energy of it in me as I write this – every stroke, the dabs, the etching, the splatters, the scratches and even the final violent cuts and slashes and the anger that broke that final canvas off.”
image on his camera. He, then, tirelessly reproduces the stories of their lives into a single layered image, each painting shares aesthetic dispositions, but suggests individualized and interpersonal spaces.

He also integrates a communal aspect within his work. Feeger often paints people he knows but at other times, he will paint a stranger. Through painting strangers, he builds a new level of trust. For example, if he paints a woman at the market, he maintains a strong friendship with her, and a percentage of money he earns from the sale of the painting is given to her to help pay for her children’s school fees. Feeger states, “To me, it relates back to what is a communal society and about sharing what you do. Instead of being an individual benefactor, what you do is part of the community and the community benefits from your actions.”

The images themselves allow viewers to explore complex histories of Papua New Guinea as a nation, while offering insight to power of individual agency in society. He ultimately suggests that people are connected via assemblages of national politics, economics, and technologies. His refined painting techniques expose untold stories and merges conflicting systems of time and space.31

In the series called the *New Buka Series* (2009-2010), he uses this vivid aesthetic, but

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31 Feeger explains similar ideas as they relate to his most recent series of paintings entitled *Port Moresby Market Series* (2011) (Figure 2.7). He states: “As for the 3 paintings featured in Hawai'i, they are 3 different women from the Paga Settlement area in Downtown Port Moresby. They offer us the chance to see a real life view of women at different stages in their lives, with the common thread being they all ended up behind a market stall. I interviewed all three and these were the stories. The young teenage girl, who did not attend school because her father couldn't pay the school fees and she ended up spending her time selling buai and cigarettes. The there's the happy Hagen women who was contented and successful in selling her buai, it had paid the school fees of her six children. Then there's the older women who had experienced a tough life of broken marriage and day-to-day survival through her sales, this time selling peanuts grown near her house.” The artworks presented in Port Moresby Market Collection offer a snapshot of the visually rich narratives of Port Moresby markets. Feeger illustrates the informal character of markets, including the recycled materials and reused displays. Simultaneously, he layers the images with the personal histories of individual street vendors. (Although development, the majority of PNG communities participate marketplaces lurk in the shadow of political and economic as producers and consumers.) These portraits suggest the vitality and important contributions of street vendors in PNG society.
incorporates political and social issues in the region of Bougainville. Just years before the end of the Civil War in Bougainville, Feeger moved to the region with his partner and began painting portraits of people in their everyday activities. He depicts casual moments in their lives and presents the socio-political disparities through the use of cultural symbols associated with place and the identities of his subjects. The painting *Lapun Meri/Old Woman* (2008-2010) (Figure 2.5) shows a woman selling buai (beetle nut or arcega nut) at a local market. This painting, like the others in series, importantly describes people's feelings, identities, and socio-economic statuses as it relates to Bougainville. Discursively he opens a visual dialog that offers an “inside” view of the entangled stories of one woman, her dependency on local markets as a source of income.

Another painting entitled *Yu Laikim Buai? (Do You Want betelnut)* (Figure 2.6) provocatively presents the conditions of contemporary life in Buka (The capital of Bougainville). The use of incandescent hues of blues, reds, and yellows in stark contrast with dark and murky colors of city structures, are emblematic of Buka scenes. Furthermore, he introduces undertones of black that emphasize a gritty atmospheric effect. The blurred and murky background contrasts with a focused foreground, also gesturing towards confused connections of the past, present and future. The young woman’s face asserts great strength, as she firmly grasps the umbrella that seems to act as a source stability and grounding in an urban society with lost infrastructure. The red paint represents buai spit, that in real life splatters to paint the exterior of buildings and streets throughout Buka.

Buai stains are found throughout Feeger’s portraiture. Buai is commonly chewed throughout PNG and is a large aspect of everyday culture. Chewing the mixture of areca nut,

32 See footnote in the Introduction about the Civil War in Bougainville.
betel leaf, and powdered lime is a tradition associated with rituals that date back thousands of years in the coastal regions of Papua New Guinea. Today, however, it constitutes an important and popular cultural activity in many important components of socializing. When friends meet, a typical activity is to “chew” and talk story. Visually, buai spit is prominently seen throughout villages, towns, and cities in Papua New Guinea. For Feeger, the buai stains have a deeper meaning. Feeger’s symbolic use of dripping red paint carries deeply engrained metaphors:

Within this context I use buai stain in my work as a form of social commentary, as one who is familiar with PNG will describe it as buai stain, while on the other hand one unfamiliar with it would consider it blood. All-in-all the buai stain becomes the metaphor of life in Port Moresby. Generally, by Western standards Papua New Guineans are very tolerant of unsightliness and live in a very rough and raw kind of way. Our lives in the city are also very dramatic as we are often experiencing a wider range of emotions everyday while our hundreds of different ethnic cultures are pushing and pulling on each other to survive.

Feeger’s use of red dripping paint is an important aspect of this series. The delicately applied red paint on his canvases situates the subject in the time and place of Port Moresby. It reveals an experiential aspect of Papua New Guinea culture. At the same time it creates palpable tensions about post-colonialism and issues of sovereignty.

2.1.4 Conclusion

Feeger’s notion of citizenship and art practice is a process of maintaining a flexible relationship with multidimensional communities. This is done through actions and interaction with society, but also through particular visual codes. He began developing ways in which his art

33 He explains: “Red buai spittle stains often go unnoticed by most PNG residents who have become desensitized by it. It can often be seen adorning many streets corners, markets and shop fronts. To tourists however, who have no clue what buai is, may think it's some kind of left over blood stain. Perhaps even creating a feeling of disgust or even fear. Fear stems from the negative perceptions of PNG urban dwellings like Port Moresby, being noted as a particular aggressive and dangerous city to live in” (Interview November 13, 2011).

34 Interview November 13, 2011.
practice, applied aesthetics, and ethics actively play a reflexive relationship with one another. It is this aspect of Feeger’s life that is important for understanding a cosmopolitan attitude. For instance, understanding contemporary issues that are affecting the livelihood of grassroots communities, but, then, attempting to solve such issues through epistemologically engrained attitudes through new and global medias.

Feeger uses aesthetic “tools” in his artworks to communicate between the global, contemporary, traditional, and spiritual realms. Although this technique did not come right away in his artistic career, such “tools” began accumulating over time derived from his interactions with international and local communities, and paying close attention to the art worlds. His work began transforming with the introductions to new ideas and new interactions with the world. Important to the way that he envisions his social and political life is the fact that he has had a rich education and access to information via his travels and the Internet, which is one of the most significant aspects of the new generation of artists in PNG. The art, ideology, practice, production and dissemination of Feeger’s work implements an effort to work in solidarity with local and global communities. There is nothing fictionalized, or traversed about Feeger’s work. As a young artist, he has mastered a technique in which he materializes everyday scenery in its most real yet magical form.

2.2 Leonard Tebegetu

Tebegetu engages with two primary themes: one that is rooted in his identity as a New Irelander, and the other that engages with his experiences living in the urban environment of Port Moresby. Although he is early in his career, the complexities of issues and intricate aesthetic systems he conceptualizes are truly significant for the new generation. He has exhibited in Luk Save Art Show (2010 and 2011), The Orchid Show Garden Exhibition (2009, 2011) and
exhibited two of his paintings in the Liklik Luk Save Art Show in New Zealand (at The Aesthete Gallery) and in the newly inaugurated gallery at Art Stret Gallery in Port Moresby.

Tebegetu is from the Lelet village on the island of New Ireland, where he was born in 1980. He grew up in Goroka where his father worked as officer for an oil company and his mother worked as a laboratory assistant. He spent the majority of his youth growing up in this town belonging to the Eastern Highlands Province. In 2000, he moved to Port Moresby to law school at the University of Papua New Guinea. For several years, from 2000-2006, Tebegetu struggled with the course work, and moved in and out of living on the streets. He made three attempts to re-enter law school, but failed to complete his course work and returned to the streets numerous times until he moved in with his sister in Port Moresby. Tebegetu discovered he could paint through graffiti when he lived on the streets in Lae and in Port Moresby.

While he was living on the streets, Tebegetu began casually experimenting with graffiti. Eventually he was asked to design a poster for one of his friends, which opened up a new avenue for art-making. He states, “From the left-over of paints, I decided to give a go at painting. I painted odd stuff here and there, I had this, I found that wasn’t enough, what I was doing, and I wanted to do more photo realistic stuff, so I did a little Internet research. So thats how I learned most of the stuff prior to coming here [at UPNG].”

Similar to Feeger, he started doing Internet searches and reading books to teach himself basic techniques and art theories. He states, “I mainly buy books with collections of other international artists, with fine artists’ works, and books on art theories and drawing books mainly. Its mainly ideas on line and the use of lines. Stuff like that.” Initially, he was drawn to concepts of abstraction, and modern artists such as Kandinsky and Picasso. This influence is visible in his earlier work, which display thick/dark line work.
2.2.1 Malagan Identity

From the beginning of his art career, Tebegetu abandoned immediate connections with to art. He states, “With graffiti, is not looked at as art. In other places around the world, there is market for graffiti. Whereas, here, if people see you doing graffiti, then you are associated with crime and the police.” During the first few years of his career, he started painting images that expressed a connection with his New Ireland cultural identity. During these years, Tebegetu was able to experiment with paints and techniques. He was able to secure an income selling his work at the Ela Craft Market in Port Moresby and began building a contingent of patrons.

When Tebegetu returned to New Ireland, after many attempts at law school, he developed a distinguished style using these techniques. In New Ireland, he was able to establish business contacts and build a relationship with senior PNG artist David Lasisi, who helped advised him in his art career. The owner of the popular resort, Nusa Island Retreat, began collecting Tebegetu’s paintings and now holds one of the largest collections of sixty to eighty paintings, which are displayed around the hotel and for sale to the occasional tourist. During his stay in New Ireland, he met an art collector who told him to start looking at traditional art forms such as kapkaps\textsuperscript{35} and malagan figures\textsuperscript{36}. Tebegetu states, “[The art collector] told me I should start looking at these things, instead of portraying them as realistic. Instead of painting a kapkap just as I see it, I

\textsuperscript{35} Kapkap is a pattered shell valuable worn around the neck of high-ranking people in New Ireland. It is still used today in funerary rights (Gunn 58).

\textsuperscript{36} Malagan is a funerary ceremony belonging to the northern regions of New Ireland. There are a number of stages of the malagan ritual, starting with the cleansing stage. In order to travel to the next world, he must be fully removed from the earthly realm. Bush spirits raid the village of the dead to destroy all physical remains. It could be years until the final stage of malagan is enacted- which Michael Gunn calls “finishing off the dead”. A man will seclude himself in a house in order to dream and visualize the malagan figure. He will then call the spirit of the dead back and finally release him from all worldly responsibilities. The final malagan ceremony involves a large feast and ceremony. The malagan figures are wonderfully complex, and describe totemic and cosmic relations to clan identities. Once the ceremony is over, the figures are burned or sold to collectors because they are considered of no use. Today there are more malagan figures in museums than any other oceanic figures (adapted from Gunn 2007).
should take a bit from here and there. And so this is the direction I began heading. So it was mainly traditional designs here and there.” These connections encouraged Tebegetu’s painting career. It was at this point that Tebegetu began using his canvases to stage an assemblage of New Ireland material culture and invent new ways of incorporating his previous stylistic development using graffiti art.

The image entitled Tatanua37 (Figure 2.8) is directly referencing a type of malagan mask from the northern region of New Ireland (Gunn 260). Anthropologist Susanne Küchler states, “Tatanua is recognizable by its wooden mask, whose wide jaw and over-emphasized teeth are characteristic features, as are the pointed head of the mask” (Küchler in Gunn 262). Tebegetu alters the image and removes recognizable features of the tatanua mask, juxtaposing them with unrelated features. He is “mixing it up a bit.” Most recognizable are the crescent shaped eyes of tatanua masks and the heads and beaks of birds, which are often depicted in northern New Ireland malagan figures (Gunn 2006). He uses a loose grid-like structure, layering recurring symbols and motifs of tatanua while melding blues, blacks, reds, yellows, and whites, colors often used in malagan figures. The composition of Tatanua is an aesthetic response to traditional culture (also seen in Tatanua I [Figure 2.9]) but with an obvious relation to graffiti aesthetics where visual elements are unstructured, dense, and wildly interlocking. He fades colors, which blend together and look three-dimensional. His application of acrylic paint is in a graffiti style, as if he used spray-paint.

Similarly in his paintings entitled Malagan Identity III and Identity II (Figures 2.10 and

37 I am checking with Tebegetu about his connection with tatanua practicing communities. Michael Gunn mentions that the relationship between tatanua and malagan is disputed. He says that people from Tabar region in New Ireland say that anyone can dance tanaua masks in public, therefore, it is not malagan. These masks are not as cultural sacred and secretive as other malagan masks, so Tebegetu’s representation may not be breaking cultural copyrights. I need to check on this.
2.11) Tebegetu responds to his malagan identity. Canvas becomes a stage for merging motifs, fragments of patterns, vignettes, and vibrant hues. Tebegetu comes from Lelet Village (Lelet Plateau) which according to Michael Gunn is the most southern malagan community in New Ireland province. Malagan sculptures are traditionally derived from original prescription belonging to a “string” or “chain” of malagan symbols owned by a sub-clan and passed down matrilineal (Gunn). Sculptures vary in size and style, as some are tall and vertical, whereas others are horizontal. Human figures are a basic element in malagan sculptures, as well as fish birds snakes, lizard, and octopus. The malagan sculptures are wonderfully complex, in which figures are morphed into one another.

Tebegetu has developed his own lexicon of geometric motifs and malagan figurative elements. Some of the figures in his work come directly from the malagan mythology; others are derived from his imagination. Figures include hybrid creatures incorporating birds and humans figures. His paintings are assemblages of images, that merge dream-like qualities, traditions, and New Ireland history. Like his other paintings, he applies graffiti effects of blending colors, dark line work, and interlocking imagery.

Tebegetu references traditions of art-making in New Ireland, but embodies a new aesthetic for its time. His work is influenced by graffiti styles, and also incorporates elements of fine arts. Tebegetu transforms and melds localized visual traditions and translates aesthetic systems that are much more globalized. This is a cosmopolitan approach, and like Feeger, he seamlessly incorporates larger understandings of global-urban art practices without displacing culturally understood concepts visualization. In this way, his paintings about malagan culture aesthetically oscillate between both the global and local.
2.2.2 Urban Distorted Realism

In 2009, Tebegetu shifted from a focus on his “cultural identity” to concepts of his “urban identity.” In doing so, he began developing a new aesthetic foundation and found a closer affinity to global urban identity. While Tebegetu’s early art works were based on the structural tradition of malagan, his recent works largely abandon the previous linear formality. Still he continues to communicate antidotes of his New Ireland identity. He states:

There are little shells that I pop into the paintings. The real shells, they look like eyes. For somebody who knows malagan carving, if you see a malagan carving- they use the shells as eyes. Wherever I can, I poke one of these little shells in, just to show the identity of the paintings. If artists use these shells, you would see that the biggest use would be on malagan carving. So it would look at the painting, and that person knew the customary content, then they would know I’m from New Ireland, but without the context they wouldn’t know.

As stated earlier, Tebegetu abandoned a direct relationship from graffiti influences. Recently, he started re-thinking the connection of graffiti art in the context of Port Moresby. He says:

If we do it in a good way, and go through a proper process, then [graffiti art might] look different. When I started trying to teach myself how to paint properly, I can just totally figure it out. But now I’m trying to go back again, and regain an interest, with a new distorted style. Sometimes I sit back and wonder if I try and bring in and combine the two with a bit of fine art and a bit of graffiti style. Mixing them up a bit. So that’s what I’m trying to explore right now. Try to mix them somehow.

The painting entitled Bishopotonamous (Figure 2.12) is an example of how his compositions began to change. He merges bright colors and applies paint with a “spray paint” mannerism. He also integrates elements of popular culture such as the baseball hat with the Bougainville flag (the man portrayed in this image is now the President of Bougainville).

Tebegetu also became interested in a New York-based artist named Justin Bua, who
melds urban rhythms, graffiti, and classical art training to something he calls “distorted realism.” In Justin Bua’s own words he describes the meaning of this technique:

My work is heavily influenced by music and especially by hip-hop— the breakdancing movements, the lines of graff and rhythm of the music. I want people to feel the beats, the movement, the rawness, and the cool smoothness of the culture that I am portraying in my work. I use the elongated style as well as the hard lines from graffiti. On occasion, I’ll throw up a piece in the background, as you can see in The DJ (Figure 2.14).

Tebegetu has adapted this style to convey his feelings of the raw urban realities in Port Moresby, that he feels are also distorted. He relates “distorted realism” to what he calls “distorted concepts of urban development”. He states,

To distort these characters, its goes to show. Realistically its kind of our perspective of development, it is a bit distorted in a way. Because we try to think of it in one way, but the reality [is that] it happens and it’s there, but people are caught in-between. More or less, our views, whether we think of it as that or not, they are distorted in one way or another.

Tebegetu adapts Bua’s schemes by inserting his own figures and subject matter into them. He recreates recognizable architectural elements that are true to New York but rarely seen in Port Moresby. For example, Tebegetu’s painting called The Botanist (Figure 2.13) and Bua’s painting The DJ (Figure 2.14) presents an interesting juxtaposition. The Botanist portrays a woman standing in the corner of room with a brick wall on one side, and a large bookshelf on the other. She is wearing a traditional bilum hat and a sleeveless dress, dipping an orchid into a wooden dish filled with water. Compositionally, compared to Bua’s image, they are almost identical, replicating the brick walls, large bookshelf, and lighting effects. He makes subtle alterations, where a painting of an orchid hangs in Bua’s image, Tebegetu replaces it with a

38 This is technique in which an artist depicts his subject matter in a realistic way, with a distorted perspective. For example, the artist may stretch the image making the head look smaller, and hands look much larger.

39 Interview with Justin Bua http://www.thecitrusreport.com/2010/features/justin-bua/
traditional Awan mask. He also mimics bodily gestures making the woman’s head tilt left
towards the brick wall. The woman’s hand (positioned at the opposite end of the canvas from her
head) is scaled proportionately larger than the rest of her body, similar to the way Bua elongates
the DJ’s hand.

The appropriation of Bua’s work is important to emphasize because it is a cosmopolitan
element of his work. Interestingly, he creates a seamless layer of images and cultural signifiers of
both Port Moresby and New York. It is as if the disparate histories of each place become an
amalgam of contradictory traditions combining urban schemes of U.S.A with traditional
elements of PNG. Conversing with issues of urbanization Tebegetu conveys Port Moresby as a
city of such complex and jarring dichotomies.

*The Botanist* portrays these complicated webs of cultural and economic development.
Instead of having a botanist in a garden house, Tebegetu places the botanist in a library with
shelves full of books, including books about PNG orchids. Through entangled codes, Tebegetu
narrates new roll of Port Moresby urbanites. He describes the meaning behind *The Botanist,*

It’s a way of getting away from everything around. Within a day, going to and fro, for
people who don’t have vehicle- the hectic day begins when you leave the house, you try
and get to the bus that is totally packed and try to rush to get to the bus at six am. Then
you work the whole day, and at the end of the day when you finish at four or six and you
have to stand at the bus, if you live here in Gerehu and you get back to house at six at
night.. It’s kind of a hectic experience day in and day out… It’s exploring the idea of
getting away from the hustles and bustles of the city life.

According to Tebegetu, the painting portrays a common everyday ideology for Papua New
Guineans living in an urban area trying to hold onto their cultural heritage. When they return,
their home a sanctuary and place to relax. This painting also signifies the replacement of rural
with urban. The role of a woman in society, is now socially accepted as an employee. She is a
middle-class woman. She stays connected with her cultural environment through reading books,
growing orchids in her house, and collecting artifacts from her village albeit in a cosmopolitan or urban way.

Through distorted realism, he engages with stories of struggles of the everyday men and women Papua New Guinea, especially growing dichotomies of class and wealth in the city of Port Moresby. With the influx of business opportunities coming through the city of Port Moresby, and the rapid emergence of new buildings and businesses, he engages with questions about who and what “development” serves. He states:

Given the changes in Port Moresby, the problem is that we have development, and the idea brings about different ideas to people. And then, it’s how people struggle to go with the flow of the so-called ‘development’ that is currently happening. The truth about it, regardless of the millions of kina (PNG currency) that is coming in, whatever development is taking place/or has taken place, realistically the person on the street has the same struggle day in and day out. There is one aspect that is common every time…if you have a little bit of money on you, you don’t wonder about that person sitting there. So, my aim lately, has just been trying to bring this to life and trying to portray these people. I guess it shows with the latest piece. What I’ve tried to do is put most characters in modern setting with cities, skyscrapers, and with some form of traditional element in there with those characters in those paintings.

2.2.3 Conclusion

Initially when Leonard began painting it was a source of income for him, but as time has gone by and he has gained more experience with painting, he has come to realize that a painter plays multiple roles as a documenter of social activities. For him, painting is a medium of communication. In his words,

For example, people on the streets are branded as a nuisance.. They brand them as illegal, and they make the streets not look good to people who come into the city. The media forgets to look beyond that, to look beyond the struggles and what causes them to do this and that, so I’ve realized that I could take on the task.

It’s a way of generating social commentary and reporting on life in Port Moresby from a critical viewpoint. His recent work involves sitting in Boroko (suburb and commercial center in Port
Moresby) for several hours at a time, taking notes and drawing sketches of people. While he sits on the streets, he immerses his mind into the positions of the people he paints. One time, he even pretended to be a beggar, in order to paint a beggar: “It totally shifted my perspective of street people. Being a human being, [the beggar] demands a lot from within, and it takes a lot to spread a laplap and ask for money. After that experience, I saw it in a different light.”

Tebegetu has constantly worked between issues of his New Ireland identity and experiences of living on the streets, and inadvertently carries signifiers of his New Ireland identity and contemporary street culture. His current aesthetic approaches have developed from Internet searches that initially deepened his understanding of realism and then shifted to concepts of realism to convey individual stories of less fortunate characters he encounters and paints. He combines aesthetic forces of photorealism and graffiti compositions, “I am mixing them up a bit.” In a time that graffiti is socially unaccepted in society (which is reason he left graffiti art years back), he is now returning to this controversial style, distorting it, and suggesting a new situated understanding in Port Moresby.40

His art presents a cosmopolitan imagination full of dualities. He merges dichotomies of tradition/modernization, high art/low art, and original/reproduction. He appropriates persona and lifestyles of the USA into his paintings. Tebegetu has never been to the USA, and so his pictures

40 In January 2011, Tebegetu decided to go back to school, but this time joined the art department to receive a diploma in Art. Over the past two decades, the art program has lost its reputation in art training, since it major budget cuts and staff lay offs were implemented. But Tebegetu feels that he will have more opportunities with a degree and may have more chance to find opportunities outside of the PNG art scene. Thus far, in the program, he has taken introductory courses in Life Drawing, Painting, and he has been able to learn and appreciate more about color theories. He says: “What I’m scared of is losing the raw edge of my work and being influenced by theory and interrupting what I’ve already learned through experience, and what I’ve been able to develop without theory, which I shouldn’t interrupt... I’m a bit scared I will loose the rawness of it all. Its been a bit different because when I come here, and do a live portrait, I do it for submission. I’m not really- there is a big difference with the distorted pieces I have. The new paintings are totally distorted, like I could have some one’s head look like a peacock’s head. I don’t know how im going to manage, how im going to do this, but to hold whatever Im learning on one side of my brain, and keep the other reserved.”
are very much an imagined state of that place. This merging of the imagined and representation takes place both in the artist’s mind and in the viewer’s mind, where the current status of cultural identity and urban identities of PNG are completely re-imagined.

2.3 Pax Jakupa

Pax Jakupa, originally from Bena Village, spent the majority of his life living in a settlement outside of Goroka, in the Eastern Highlands province of Papua New Guinea. He is the son of the late Jakupa Ako, one of the first students to be admitted to the Create Arts Centre in Port Moresby in 1974. In his own words, Pax describes his upbringing:

I live in a settlement down at Kama where my family members are subsistent farmers. I spent a lot of my life there. When I completed high school I stayed back home and started to learn about my dad and who he was. I saw a lot of his materials lying around and I started to play around with [his paints] until I saw the outcome of the paintings…I knew he was an artist but I didn't really discover his work, who he was, his exhibitions and his work overseas, until he died. When I stayed back home, I saw his biography and some of his work and his award from the Queen and I was really impressed with that, so I decided to do paintings.41

Pax began painting by mimicking his father’s images that had been left around his family’s home. His father’s work was a visual inspiration and, more or less, a stepping-stone for Pax’s art career, which allowed him to expand his personal visual perceptions. He states, “I saw my father’s work. I couldn’t do it from my head, but I saw photos of my dad’s work. I couldn’t do it exactly like him, but I did what I could do. From there it went. I didn’t change my work and style until [recently]. I keep changing every year.” Pax explained that he has only seen his father’s paintings in photographs because most of his father’s work was housed in the National

Art School in Port Moresby or sold to expatriate/international art collectors, and rarely exhibited in his hometown of Goroka. Growing up, Pax had limited interactions with his father. In effect, his understanding of his father’s work has been limited because Jakupa spent a lot of time in Port Moresby with other artists and teachers throughout his painting career. Regardless of this disconnection, his father’s career path as a contemporary artist was important to Pax and he had a strong impetus to follow his father’s footsteps.

There are numerous reasons why he decided to pick up a paintbrush. Firstly, he says “I really want to do something for PNG or [for] when outsiders come to PNG.” But more than that, he says, “I really want to tell a story through my painting that my dad is still [here].” Maintaining the artistic lineage of his father’s work is an important objective for Pax and his artistic career. Pax also thought through the financial benefits of writing the name “Jakupa” on his canvases. “If I write my name, maybe someone might buy it because I’m the son of a famous artist.” In the initial stages of his career he felt encouraged to continue painting upon realizing that he was able to sell his artwork. During the first years of his painting career, he met friends of his father who helped promote his artwork.

He began submitting work and successfully made sales at art exhibitions held at the local hotels around Goroka. Since he started painting in 1999, Pax has regularly exhibited his work at the Coffee Festival (May), the Goroka Cultural show (September), and has held numerous exhibitions at Goroka’s Bird of Paradise Hotel and Pacific Garden Hotel. He has also exhibited in Melbourne, Australia and is represented by Alcaston Gallery.42

42 Goroka hosts a number of cultural institutions that were initiated at the time of independence by the National Cultural Commission, including Raun Raun Theater, the National Film institute, and JK McCarthy Museum. The government and local businesses currently support a range of interrelated cultural festivals in Goroka that include the annual Goroka Coffee Festival, the Bilum Festival, and Live Lave Art Competition, which all coincide with
There are numerous elements of Pax’s work that present a cosmopolitan aesthetic and state of mind. Mainly, he negotiates aesthetic systems that are both local and global melding multiple notions of personhood, family, village, nation, and world into singular images. These mobile gestures play an important role in cosmopolitan identities.

2.3.1 Lineage, Cultural Appropriation, and Creativity

In his early years, although Pax mimicked the artwork of his dad, he quickly adapted a unique style. It is important to note, however, that when Pax develops a new style he does not abandon the old. Some images he painted in 2002, he continues to paint in 2011. This is an important aspect of Pax’s art practice, maintaining an aesthetic deeply akin to his father’s approach. He explains, “I want people to know he is still alive. Through his artwork, he is still alive. I usually do ten to fifteen paintings. Five are like my dad’s and the rest are my own. Using watercolor on paper or acrylic on canvas. I still do that today. Or maybe eight or ten are like my dad’s.” Pax began to conceive sets of guidelines and a basic understanding for painting looking at his father’s images. As he progressed, he seems to rarely trail too far away from the origins of his identity as an artist. For example, Pax, like his father, created images about the natural world around him. The images *Moth* (Figure 2.17) and *Snail on Kumu* (Figure 2.18) pay attention to natural shapes, shades, and contours of the insects and plants. They both enliven their images by accentuating colors, re-imaging the designs, and, overall, they make the figures look more playful. Both, Jakupa and Pax concentrate on everyday narratives in the Highlands district, depicting stories of village life, nature, and mythologies. Pax describes his painting *Wokim Fire* PNG’s annual national independence celebrations in the month of September. Two daily markets - Tumbuna Market and The Bilum Wall- are also located in Goroka and offer contemporary forms of traditional crafts including bilums, a colorful netted bag prominently made and used throughout the Highlands. The markets and festivals are avenues that have been established for Eastern Highlanders to showcase the rich diversity of their material culture.
(Starting Fire) (Figure 2.19): “[This painting] is about a traditional lifestyle. It’s really interesting because previously if we [did not] have matches, we would start [fire] the traditional way. This painting is about remembering this tradition.” Throughout his artwork, Pax carries a close stylistic relationship to his father’s use of enveloping geometrical patterns, flat expressionism, and figurative and imaginative narratives.

The process of creating his artwork and choosing subject matter is unplanned process for Pax, but he says, “Most of my work are masks… I put it in a simple form, and simplify everything.” Pax’s use of masks are similar to the imaginary faces his father created, which were composed of simplified line work, embedded geometrical shapes, and bold colors exemplified in the painting entitled Bilas Pes (Beautiful Face) (Figure 2.15). At the same time, Pax also finds inspiration for his mask images from other societies around Papua New Guinea. He explains this:

I see masks from a magazine and other photos of traditional masks, baskets, and the tambuna market (art market). Sometimes for myself when I put it on the canvas, it’s all from my imagination.

Pax goes on to say:

Most of masks are from Morobe or coastal areas. When I put [it] in the painting I change it all together. So people might see it as part of traditional life… probably most people can’t tell it is from Goroka, but the colors don’t look like they are from the coastal region either. So the whole idea is to change it.

The act of appropriation is inherent in his process of creating the mask images, where he borrows and adopts visual elements and cultural property belonging to other societies. In the past, there were attempts by PNG artists to create shared cultural symbols in PNG contemporary art, but creating images representing the nation as a whole have been the focus of vigorous criticism by many commentators, including visual artists. For example, the issue of copyright is a recurring topic among visual artists who produce artwork utilizing appropriated symbols from
other regions without consent from traditional owners, thus raising questions of individual and communal ownership. For Pax, however, issues of authenticity and cultural appropriation do not seem to be a concern. Instead, he sees his work as a contemporary art project of re-visioning and re-interpreting coastal PNG masks in a way that is unrecognizable to anyone from those areas. He states, “I see these abstract paintings are very contemporary. When I look at them I think they are inspired by contemporary art.” His creative forces are behind the image-making process, he explains:

When I see an image I want to paint, it doesn’t need to be the same thing and put in on paper or canvas exactly how you see it. You have to use your own imagination. It asks, ‘what do you think about this?’ You think about it and tell people from your point of view. As an artist, it’s got to be you, and what you think about that thing.

He states, “Most of the time, I change it in my mind. A few figures I paint as I see it. But most is from my imagination. That’s what I like to do. You got to be yourself.” Pax’s imaginative spirit is visually inspired by his father’s work. Ako and Pax are not inspired directly by tradition or their own culture. Rather, their imagery is a result of creating and imagining their own creative environment.

2.3.2 Negotiating Aesthetics: Global and Local

After Pax enrolled in the art program at University of Goroka, he began to evolve his style. In 2003, he was selected as recipient of the Commonwealth scholarship and traveled to University of South Pacific as artist-in-resident. This experience was influential on his work. He worked with Epeli Hau‘ofa and traveled to Melbourne, Australia where he visited museums and galleries and was exposed to a larger sense of global art trends. In Melbourne, he met the curator at Alcaston Gallery (a gallery devoted to Aboriginal art), who began to present his work and has hosted two solo exhibitions. Pax states, “I learned a lot things. I changed and developed. When I
went there I saw a lot of different things. When I came back I thought about a lot of things, and I changed my work. The more I visit the place, the more I change, and the more my mind develops.”

Although his narratives and simple schemes (rooted in genealogy, land, and nature) have primarily remained the consistent throughout his art career, the way he visualizes stories began to significantly evolve. He adapted an exaggerated flatness and a hard edge to his images. His images became bluntly representational. For example, in the painting entitled *Wanpela Meri* (Figure 2.22), Pax alters mask images into a highly minimalistic and bold face. He broadens typically open figures into equal and linear forms. He simplifies his color schemes by combining blues and greens.

He began to remove his subjects from contextualized background schemes to fill in the empty space and open figures with patterns of alternating hues of blues and greens. His use of colored patterns is a visual way to make deeper links to land and resources site-specific, as green and blue are highly emblematic of his location in Goroka. Goroka is known as bilas ples (a beautiful place) surrounded by mountains birds, rich soils, and clean air. The town center of Goroka is encircled by layers of magnificent mountains, and from afar these mountains in the distant make a stratification of blues, greens and purples. The same system of color stratification is brought into Pax’s paintings clearly referencing connections to the magnificent natural beauty of his hometown. He explains further:

Most of my work on canvas, the figures I do, the background paintings, is always in green or blue. That’s it. I think, the environment I live in is green. The environment is full of plants, leaves, and trees, and when you look further back in the mountains you see that the mountains are still blue… this is the environment we are in. That’s the sort of thing I try to capture.
His paintings are open to the beauty of the surroundings of the environment and offer a new poetic visualization. The colors set an idyllic tone for his work and are reinforced by his narratives and stories about life in Goroka. He explains how his narratives are also particular to Goroka:

[My paintings] basically represent Goroka. If I am sending my work, for example to Luk Save Art Competition in Port Moresby, I do something about Nokondi, a spirit figure from Goroka, or I do birds. I think these things represent Goroka. It’s a story about this place... Its inspired by contemporary art.. but its moving. I need to move on, and paint the way I see it, how I saw things with my eyes. The way I live with it and how I see things everywhere...

Pax’s most recent work produced for art exhibitions in Goroka during 2011 took another major turn. Pax began experimenting with painting techniques, compositions, and color balance. In many ways, he has succeeded by doing the opposite to what he normally does. Instead of relying on flat and geometrical patterns, he began approaching the canvas with a new kind of expression: looser strokes and a less structured use of color.

In September 2011 at the Pacific Garden Hotel in Goroka, Pax had a solo exhibition that showed a variety of styles and imagery. Compared with his previous stylistic approaches, Pax layers the bodies and faces to give the image depth. He uses small quick strokes that blur the image and gives a three-dimensional effect. One of the most striking images was one entitled My Family (Figure 2.26). Pax describes this image in his own words,

It’s a family portrait, but the picture isn’t really clear. The way I moved the brush, it’s abstract but you can only see [the image] from a distance. There’s something, there’s people, it’s a family portrait. Things are coming out of the canvas. If I wanted to do the same old story or same old people [I could]. But this is really new stuff.

Coinciding with his solo exhibition, Pax was also included in the Live Lave Art Competition held at the University of Goroka. For this exhibition, he submitted a painting called My Life (Figure 2.27). Pax continues his signature mask image and transforms the design to a
new level. He creates a detailed pixelated effect, as if the image has been digitally manipulated. Blue tones dominate his color scheme, paired with an unlikely use of yellows, oranges, and pinks. Pax intricately layers and shuffles blocks of colors and creates a uniquely distorted mask.

Breaking away from his usual narratives of everyday life in Goroka, Pax decided to paint his life.

In discussion about this painting he says the following.

*My Life*, It’s a new painting. It’s a distorted figure and it talks about myself. I thought, my life is a bit unbalanced, so the figure is distorted. Its abstract and something like the masks, but it’s a new technique that I started. It’s a really new work.

This image is a radically simplified representation of his personal struggles during his pursuit of a career in art. As part of his artist statement written in the exhibition catalogue, he says the following about this painting, “Life living as an artist is not easy for me. Trying to do different things but still cannot figure out what to do, so life feels incomplete.” For many years Pax has contemplated a career as teacher because he is finding it hard to make a steady income from painting sales in Goroka, where there few opportunities to exhibit his work. Living in the Highlands region creates harsh circumstances for artists and staying networked within local and international art communities has proved to be a trying experience for him. In many ways, his most recent work is a reaction to the struggles he has faced in recent years. *My Life* is unlike the others does not rely on concepts of traditionalism. It is a personal story and extends his aesthetic approach in a more radical and global direction.

2.3.3 Conclusion

There are several important points to make about Pax Jakupa’s work. Pax’s artwork is in constant flux and, as an artist, he seems to continually seek artistic inspirations that are both local and global. His use of colors and narrative schemes are rooted in ideas about land, place, and genealogy. Whereas, his use of patterns are constantly in a state of motion that traverse spatially
and acts as an endless source for innovation through inherent transformability. His most recent work shows a strong aptitude and consciousness for contemporary digital aesthetics but stay true to his immediate environment in the Highlands district.

Images, patterns, narratives, colors shifting constantly between boundaries of family lineage, regional perspective, between traditions, and, most recently, reaching to a more expansive terrain around the globe. His imaginary mobility juxtaposing worlds and concepts is what reveals a truly cosmopolitan mindset, in which he is “at home anyway.” “There are promiscuous borrowings, shameless juxtapositions, and strategic enrollments of disparate ideas, actors, and practices from many sources circulating in the developing world, and beyond” (Aihwa Ong 2011).

2.4 Kawai Yai Pupu

Kawaiwan Yai Pupu identifies herself as an “Engan Contemporary Artist.” Currently, she works as the IT Helpdesk Manager for the cell phone company Digicel, and, unlike, other artists she does not depend on art sales as primary form of income.

In discussion with Kawaiwan Yai Pupu about her upbringing, she talks about the privileges she had growing up primarily in Port Moresby, and how she has maintained a strong relationship with her family and Engan cultural roots. Yai Pupu, is originally from Enga Province in Highlands district of PNG and comes from a family deeply-rooted in their culture. Her father, for example, has maintained what has become a stigmatized tradition of polygamy. She states, “There are thirteen children in our family, which is a product of my father’s nine wives.” She was raised by her mother who is a health promotion officer, and by her father, who “is an entrepreneur and like most Highlanders, he is a business-minded person.”

Important to her artistic roots, is her father’s earlier career as an art gallerist. She has
strong childhood memories of her father’s gallery called “Tribal Art,” which sold rare artifacts in Port Moresby. She states:

I grew up in a very fortunate home. I had a lot of things that other people didn’t have in PNG. [My father] sent us all to Australia for school. Me and my brothers and sisters had a privileged life. [My dad] actually got me into art.

She goes on to say:

I grew up around a lot of art... My dad was the biggest influence for me. I started drawing and getting really into it when he owned a t-shirt company. He had a number of artists working for him. So after school I would go, and fold t-shirts and watched how they did it. And that’s really how I picked up [art skills].

Yai Pupu grew up in unusual circumstances: a family environment that fostered her creative spirit. She had no particular mentors but she states, “I think through the encouragement from my family and friends that encourages me to paint more. That tells me I can paint.”

When Yai Pupu first graduated high school, and moved back to Port Moresby to begin looking for a job, her mother encouraged her to start painting full-time. She states, “I came back from Australia and studied Information Technology at a local collage for two years, and after finishing my studies I painted while waiting for a job opportunity.” Her dad gave her an office space to use as studio, and bought her the paints and supplies she needed. She, then, met Esso Kewa, a senior artist based in Port Moresby, who persuaded her to enter her work in the Annual Luk Save Art Competition. She explains:

I think it was in 2006, that’s when I first really started to notice that I did actually have a talent, when I had Esso there saying you have talent and you should get into the show. I actually painted a bird of paradise, which sold. [It] was surprising. I sold it for 500 Kina and yeah, and it sold to a New Zealand woman. She is going to hang it in her house, I was like ‘wow, are you seriously going to buy it?’ and she was like ‘yeah I love it!’ so when I first started exhibiting, I was really shy and embarrassed about my paintings.

For the last five years, she has submitted work to the Luk Save exhibition. Every year,
her work has evolved and become more popular amongst the expatriate patrons. In 2010, she submitted nine paintings and sold every piece on the opening night. She states, “I’ve gone from having my paintings in the back with the beginners, and now my paintings are in the front with Jeffry [Feeger’s].”

Yai Pupu’s paintings serve a variety of functions at personal and social levels. She takes two stances in her narrative constructions that I argue are components of cosmopolitanism. Firstly, she takes an autobiographical approach, through which she negotiates the complicated terrain of her tribal, urban, and creative identities. Secondly, she reflexively and discursively explores various social issues through the perspective of a female. Her paintings examine and discuss feminist issues relating to her generational perspective.

2.4.1 Production of Engan Creativity

One of the strongest cosmopolitan elements in Yai Pupu’s artwork is her ability to “push and pull” between art, life, and cultural identity. Her work is sincerely painted, drawn from her own life experiences, and simple in its composition. On a larger social level Yai Pupu significantly heightens visibility of perspectives of a “working middle class woman” and a woman empowered by her own intellectual capabilities.

The color and compositional theories in her work are true to her, but simultaneously alludes to her Engan cultural identity. She explains, “My art is an expression of my feelings and how I see things in modern day society and in a cultural context as well; the issues that we go through here in PNG [from] a female point of view. It’s more of a feminist painting style.” Primarily working in multiple hues of browns, her application of color asserts an emotional and personalized expressionism. She says, “Whatever colors I use, those are the emotions that I feel, so I just put it on the canvas.” Additionally she states, “I’m not into bright colors. I’m trying to
portray things the way I see things. I put a few colors, most are dark and gloomy.”

In the painting entitled *Deep in Thought* (2009) (Figure 2.28), she emphasizes an autobiographical approach employing a “cubist” style, with dominant use of browns and blacks, juxtaposed with oranges and yellows. Yai Pupu creates a simple, elegant, yet reductive composition of a woman’s profile. The profile is easily discernable and expresses a sense of femininity, in which she pays close attention to nuances of the female face, including the broad forehead, elegant chin line, and soft eyes. The outline of her profile and facial features are precise and bold, whereas the colors and contours presented inside the lines of the face are geometrical, loose and jagged. Through this, she beautifully exposes an inner dialogue to convey a sense of emotion and deep contemplation. Yai Pupu stresses the importance of cubism in her work. She explains her use of this style:

> I love cubism. I express a lot of my feelings and emotions in my art, everything that I feel goes into my art. What I see, it all goes into my art ...[Cubism] is just an easy way to express myself. I find that every cube means something. It’s different. It’s not the same coloring. It’s not the same shade.

In this way, Yai Pupu’s use of “cubism” offers precision to her paintings to assert color distinction and shading that reflect her moods, thoughts, and aesthetic intuition. Each geometric shape within the face can stand on its own; it is a personalized neuroimage showing a complex set of values or moods, whether anger, disgust, fear, happiness, or sadness.

At the same time, Yai Pupu prioritizes her Engan cultural connections. She states, “I love everything about being an Engan woman. My mom and dad taught us to appreciate our selves, our culture and identity. I am very proud of being Engan. I try to portray that in my art.” Yai Pupu draws visual parallels with Engan cultural aesthetics. There are some similarities to Engan sand painting, such as figures demarcated by dark outlines and shading delineated by bands of altering colors. Although she mainly uses acrylic paints, she seems to mimic similar line-work
and color-balance, by adapting the cultural aesthetic of her artistic disposition to the material she is working with. In fact, this approach is not new for PNG artists who, since the emergence of contemporary art in PNG, have often drawn from their cultural traditions. However, what Yai Pupu is doing differently, is using this aesthetic space (one that is cultural and individualized) as a way of deconstructing tensions and complexities of contemporary life in Papua New Guinea. Without losing sight of her strongly rooted Engan identity and the production of her creativity, she moves freely and comfortably, discussing various topic affecting her evolving position as a Papua New Guinean female in society. For example, in a recent painting entitled Wanting Both (Figure 2.29), submitted in an exhibition called Re-thinking Women (2011), she discusses the social dualities of women in society. The young woman featured in the image is painted with an expressive mannerism looking solemnly past the viewer. She wears a simple white pearl necklace and earrings, juxtaposed with an Engan headdress directly signifying her Engan identity. The brush strokes are rough and raw, but the image itself is highly simplified. Yai Pupu comments:

She had a sad face because, you know, here in society you want to get dolled-up and be modernized, but you still have people thinking ‘why is she all dress up’? That’s sort of the mentality. That was my driving force when I painted that. That was what I was thinking clearly at that time when I painted that, with the pearl earrings and necklace. Actually it got sold that night [at the exhibition]. The EU ambassador bought it.

This painting gestures towards dualities and tensions between her inner feelings, outward appearance, and tribal ties. These opposed identities, one rooted in her Engan identity and the other rooted in her urban identity, are presented as paradoxes in a deceptively simple painting.

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43 Although she chooses to dress the young woman in the painting with an Engan headdress, the image and message are not specifically about women from this region. She says, “I’m Engan and Engan women, I tend to stick to that region more to promote my province, and my culture through my art... That’s important for me. That’s my signature.”
Like her other images and similar to Engan sand painting, she outlines the figure of the woman with thick dark lines, but more so relies on the juxtaposition of blues, pinks, and yellows to fill in the negative space. The colors are like an aura, and as a viewer we can read into the inner content that suggests individuality and creative freedom of a so called “traditional” Engan woman.

Yai Pupu’s image also suggests a shifting terrain for women in PNG society today.

Taking on a role as an artist and commentator, she states:

[This painting is] personal and in general too, because that feeling is still here today. I mean, I got educated in Australia and went the best schools in Port Moresby, but I still feel cautious about what I say and what I wear, depending on who I’m around. You still have people saying, ‘She’s PNG not white, or mixed race, why is she acting like that?’ You know, it’s still around. I don’t think or see, or feel like that towards other people. People do think that way, and it’s hard to come out of the shell, cause it’s still there. That’s why a lot my paintings are about that. Most of my paintings are a reflection of myself.

Where new boundaries of class, capitalism, and culture merge, Yai Pupu boldly maintains a dialogic relationship with the social and shifting terrain in Papua New Guinea. At a personal, autobiographical level, her paintings are rooted in a desire to express feelings and thoughts about life and society in PNG. She states:

I don’t [paint] for people to buy my work... I’m trying to tell a story, of my own personal life, experiences, or feelings. I just paint. I don’t focus on selling it to a particular audience.

She goes on to say:

Most of my work is just paintings done on my own, its just a reflection of myself, its more oriented with me and what I feel and what I see.. my work is nothing to Jeffry’s art. Even though we are the same age, his work is just so amazing, I could never paint that. I appreciate his art and work, and its mind blowing but I don’t compare my work with other artists, because its mine. Its unique and it belongs to me, and that theirs.

Her paintings are honest and real. In many ways, she is projecting her self-identity through painting but it also reflects larger trends of what is happening in Papua New Guinea. At the same
time, her work has been a method for negotiating her place in society. It is this aspect of her work that reveals a cosmopolitan impulse in which she sees a world of cultural and personal autonomy as a precondition for her creativity and freedom to explore multiple issues that affect the nation as a whole.

2.4.2 Discursive Concepts of Society and Feminism

Her images deal with the role of women in society. They offer an understanding of PNG contemporary issues pertaining to women. She explains, “My paintings are mostly about women’s issues, like what I explained earlier, a lot of women-they don’t have the opportunity to go to school, they just go get married and have kids, and live a household, family life. In a society where everything is changing and you do have the opportunity to further your education, but they don’t take that opportunity.”

In 2010, she painted a bold image entitled *There is More Than That* (Figure 2.30). Yai Pupu describes the painting, “The painting depicts an Engan woman in four stages of her life; as a young girl, pregnant, carrying a baby with a big bilu on her back, and then the last stage with the baby on her head and big bilum load.” She goes on to say, “A lot of women, are still taking that path, the same path that our grandmothers and great grandmother took. Now you have opportunity to get educated and live a better life. Some of them, I still see that they don’t take that opportunity.”

In a similar style to her portraiture, she describes multiple stages of a young woman’s life through geometrical shapes. This image is easy to read, but she packs her canvas with abstract and culturally-specific content. Each geometrical shape in the background seems to

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44 Excerpt from Australia Radio program *In the Loop* interview with Kawaiwan January 2010 (http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/ra/podcast/intheloop/20110111.mp3)
allude to different life experiences. Still, the woman portrayed in the image is walking down a single line, without sight of other options that may come her way. Yai Pupu suggests, “You can break free. You can do anything. You don't have to follow your grandmother or mother. It comes down to the case of a lot of women in PNG.”

In the public sphere, women face conflicting social binaries and counteracting circumstances in the pursuit of success. Particularly in urban societies, women face an antagonistic dual-reality. Women are expected to go to work, maintain the house, look after the children, and in many cases hold responsibilities with their family residing the villages. In a male dominated society, and through her painting, Yai Pupu boldly suggests alternative routes for women in society, who she says are often the victims of violence, poverty, and disease.

You get lied to or heartbroken and all of this kind of stuff. It’s more [inflicted] on females than men, especially in PNG. That's what I am trying to show. You shouldn't let that kind of stuff happen to you. [Women should] not go through this sort of pain and should get away from it. With AIDS women are more inflicted because of their husbands and stuff like that. They are in a more vulnerable position. I want to show this through my paintings.45

In 2009, she painted an image entitled AIDS Raun Raun (Figure 2.31) telling a story about rape and AIDS in PNG. “It [is] a story in a big painting of a young girl/ school girl being seduced by a young man who was in a suit and tie... She asks, ‘Is this light going to have a better life for me?’ She has AIDS, and she is in a nightclub.” Her painting is a timely story because the HIV/AIDS epidemic is rapidly spreading in PNG today, partly due to the lack of awareness and education about the disease.

45 Excerpt from Australia Radio program In the Loop interview with Kawaiwan January 2010 (http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/ra/podcast/inttheloop/20110111.mp3)
Another painting entitled *The Beggar Family*, depicts the life of a rich family based in Port Moresby.

It’s a rich couple in a society where people with land, they have money and they go wild. They don’t care what’s happening, what happening back home in the village. It was a big begging family and rich family. They are fat and healthy. This family was skinny and laying on the floor, begging to the family. They had big plastic bags and jewelry. Its little stuff like that. It’s what I see, what I feel, I like to paint. You don’t have to agree with it 100% it’s my own views.

2.4.2 Conclusion

Her paintings are important and complex social documents. Yai Pupu’s particular strengths lie grounded in an unavoidably personal response to her own social environment. Her paintings evoke a sense of truth and empowerment for young women in PNG, particularly for those living in urban areas. Caught between lines of contemporary economies and socio-cultural stigmas, she asks: “what are our roles as women in constantly shifting society?” She not only asserts her point of views, she is a role model for young women seeking equality in cultural climates, education, and the workforce. Yai Pupu states, “I’m not much of a public speaker,” but she says, “I hope people get something out of my paintings.”

In this way, like the work of Jeffry Feeger and Leonard Tebegetu, she maintains a reflexive relationship between art and society. Her intent is a cosmopolitan one, through her paintings she offers a space and time for viewers to reflect on their place in the world and also imagine another world through everyday depictions. Yai Pupu’s paintings successfully mediate everyday situations. She states:

I find that a lot of my friends see my paintings, and actually see themselves in the paintings. That’s what I want most of all, [for people] to actually see the emotion in the painting. I don’t want them to like it, I want them feel something and see something for themselves.

Yai Pupu has built a contingent of followers in Port Moresby through media exposure, which has
helped her disseminate her images and messages. In October 2010, Yai Pupu’s friend created an artist’s page on Facebook called Kawai’s Gallery, which has become a forum for her to actively post images of her recent paintings. She also began posting images and stories about artists that have inspired her work (including Mathias Kauage and Mexican artist Frida Kahlo). Facebook has become a platform for her to disseminate information, and stay updated on current issues, and learn about her peers’ views on such topics. In January 2010, Yai Pupu was featured on an Australia Radio program called “The Loop” in a twenty-minute interview. In September 2011, Yai Pupu was featured in a magazine called “The New Age Woman” that featured stories about empowering women through creativity.

Yai Pupu’s work is ground-breaking for women artists in PNG. She has courage in a male dominated society. At the same time she has support from her family, financial support from her job, and has gained a great deal her ability to reach out to people on the Internet. These aspects of her life have encouraged her to grow bolder as an artist.

46 When I interviewed Yai Pupu in October 2011, she had just bought an iPhone 4. Since she works for Digi, she has access to free and unlimited use of the Internet which gives the best opportunity to interact through social media websites.

47 It should be noted that Yai Pupu’s perspective about the role society is considered a timely, yet controversial one. For example, in the past year PNG has celebrated the passing of the Equality and Participation Bill implemented in November 2011, which have given women a greater say in the country's political life by creating female-only seats in parliament (http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2011/s3374727.htm). Women around the country have been celebrating the passing of this bill, but more largely the passing of this bill has signified the changing notion of women in society. Agreeingly with Yai Pupu’s perspective, Carol Kidu, the only female member of Parliament states, “I don’t find it acceptable to say that the women’s role is in the home. I don’t want my daughters and my granddaughters confined to that. The role is in this house of parliament. But we know that the opportunities are not equal.”

Still, there many members of PNG society that feel this movement of women in politics is “culturally inappropriate.” The PNG governor of Western Province, Bob Danaya stated “In culture men are warriors. They go and protect women. We go and die for woman Mr Speaker - not a woman going to the war. No, we go and fight! And we support them and provide what they need also at the same time.”
2.5 Conclusion

In the previous stories, I have tried to understand the actual the lived experiences, aesthetic codes, and artistic statements of the four young artists. This chapter focused on the ways in which the new generation of artists from PNG has constructed individual concepts of aesthetics, indigeneity, contemporaneity, spirituality, customs, and politics. Although their backgrounds and ideas are quite different, there are numerous commonalities between all four artists. Their artwork simultaneously crosses multiple boundaries of meaning and communities. Still, these artists present confident assertions of PNG identity, while asserting the importance of PNG identity in a global context. Young artists are proving that global dialogues are directly applicable to local dialogues, and vice versa. They are adapting the language of “global contemporary” and directly relating it to the time and place of PNG. In the next chapter, I address some of the common themes and dynamics in order to understand the greater significance of this generation.
Chapter 3

The New Generation: A *Cosmopolitan Turn*
The guys, like Jeffry, are more in the sense of PNG contemporary art. The stuff that these guys are doing is more radical in a way. We are trying stuff that hasn’t been done yet, when we are trying that, we are being considerate of our traditional designs and custom. The traditional ideology, that communicates this and that, but we are also trying to integrate with what is on the wider market. Hopefully try and find a place for these pieces on the market, instead of just concentrating on the local market. (Leonard Tebegetu 2011)

Throughout the history of contemporary art in Papua New Guinea, the production of paintings has moved and flowed with economic, socio-political, and cultural happenings in the country. As discussed in chapter one, social commentary and political critiques in art emerged rapidly in PNG art starting in the 1970s and 1980s. It sparked realization that the “promise” of a new nation and new government was not fulfilling the basic needs of a new nation and its people with over 800 diverse cultures. Artwork directly attacked the role of government. Arguably, the simultaneous backlash of government entities, including national art institutions, through decreased funding created an emerging need for artists to use their own resources and networks to survive and find their own ways of exhibiting in international galleries and museum exhibitions. Social commentary and critiques, through the 1990s and early 2000s, explicitly express despair, frustration, and discontent towards malfunctioning government systems, but artists also began adjusting to the demands of international markets.

In some ways, new artists are not straying far from previous trends because they are negotiating the international/domestic art markets, and their art is often situated within post-colonial conversations. More generally, art practices are symbolic engagements with spaces produced by interactions with the local, global, traditional, contemporary, personal, and political. For the new generation, however, negotiations of such complex spaces have become more rapid, simultaneous, far-reaching, and interactive. This generation of artists is distinguished from
previous generations mainly in the ways that they utilize new technologies and interact with new communities who otherwise would not have access to contemporary visual art.

As stated in chapter two, Jeffry Feeger, Leonard Tebegetu, Pax Jakupa, and Kawaiwan Yai Pupu have emerged in the art world in what there are new tools available to artists and new socio-political agendas have created different situations to consider. This means that a new generation of artists are making attempts to expose their art to grass-root communities in Papua New Guinea and new audiences across the globe. This would not be possible without new technologies and expansive communication systems (and the skills to use these systems), but also adapting aesthetic systems to communicate ideas across expansive borders. For example, Yai Pupu creates individualized perceptions of her Engan identity within a urban context, merging elements of cubism and abstraction. Pax creates an assemblage of aesthetic elements, drawing from other locales in PNG and contemporary digital elements. Tebegetu reinterprets local stories through graffiti aesthetics, while reimagining his own urban community through borrowed schemes from New York-based artist Justin Bua. There is little ambivalence towards juxtaposing structures of identity within a cosmopolitan frame which artists freely accommodate multi-cultural forms into single images.

These traits express an aesthetic cosmopolitanism: a globally-oriented approach combined with locally-grounded ways of seeing. This means, artists have opened themselves through a concept, discussed by Meskimmon (12), called “imaginative engagement” in which they are not necessarily assimilating with global/local forces, but actively engaging with them. The aspect of cosmopolitanism that is important to note is: new artists show that contemporary art has the potential (in the context of Papua New Guinea) to engage in critical and collaborative dialogue, which translates across borders and barriers, and acknowledges their place in the world.
and responsibility for it.

In this chapter, I use information from the artist’s profiles (chapter two), additional information from interview data, and visual analysis of the artists’ work to discuss cosmopolitanism. I identify general themes presented by the artists and argue that aspects of their lives and artistic approaches project a new sense of cosmopolitanism. I define cosmopolitanism as it is related to the time and place of Papua New Guinea today. I describe four artistic themes that make-up cosmopolitanism and are expressed by a new generation of artists. These are related to concepts of indigenous narratives, mobility, connectivity, and reflexivity.48

Firstly, it is important to address the ways artists commonly focus on indigenous narratives stemming from their individual cultural background, whether they come from Eastern Highlands, Enga, New Ireland, or Papua Gulf Region. Artists prioritize indigenous narratives of time and place and “socially transmitted beliefs, values, signs, and symbols that populate individual’s mental life and shape his or her behavior”(Appiah 2005, 99). These “concepts of space”49 wherein artists expose rootedness in a common culture and coalesce agency through Papua New Guinea knowledge systems.

Mobility is the second concept that I will explore, in which artists’ ideas, aesthetics, and envisions of the world are diverse and fluid. Appiah describes a state of cosmopolitanism that takes “account of the ethics of identity without losing sight of the values of personal autonomy” (Appiah 2005, 268). In varying degrees these artists come from privileged backgrounds, yet they are still rooted in their cultural identities. In this way, mobility is an important element of their

48 These terms are adapted from theorists who have discussed cosmopolitanism previously including Nikos Papastergiadis, Kwame Appiah, and Marsha Meskimon.
49 Their artwork in this research is understood as what Linda Tuhiway Smith calls “concepts of space,” in which their images are visual articulations through which people organize their homes and towns, conduct business, organize warfare, and in general describe human.
cosmopolitanism. I discuss issues of “access” that enable artists to interact with diverse assemblages of society.

Connectivity is the third concept of cosmopolitanism that describes the way artists are interacting with the world. In the case of PNG artists, this aspect of cosmopolitanism is dependent on their access to information, education, professions, and recreational associations. The newly integrated Internet system has been transformative for artists in Papua New Guinea, and reinforces an element of their artistic identities in the public sphere. The existence of the world wide web of information means not only that people can affect lives everywhere and they can learn about life anywhere, too (Appiah 2006, xiii).

To conclude, I discuss the evolving role of social commentary and reflexivity within society. Historically, artists’ discussions of society during 70’s, 80’s, and 90’s took on different roles. However, a new generation offers new understanding of how visual articulation enforces awareness and social function within society.

3.1 Pasin blo Papua New Guinea: Time, Place, and Cultural Memory

Feeger, Yai Pupu, Tebegetu, and Pax offer different forms of visual storytelling rooted in personal experiences with references to cultural legends, spirituality, and cultural symbols to present narratives imbued with history. It seems that wherever these young artists live they attempt to maintain a connection to cultural roots, family, and ancestors. They set out to express the importance of culture through visual codes entangled in current conditions but engaging with notions of an idealized past. Papua New Guineans, who were raised in urban areas or even received Western education, still acknowledge the spiritual and cultural elements within their
environment. It is also the ‘cosmological’ and ‘spiritual’ aspects of life that PNG philosopher Bernard Narokobi associates with Melanesian identity\(^50\): “As Melanesians, we are spiritual people. Even before Christians came onto our shores, we felt and knew the forces of a source greater than ourselves. That was our divine power, the Melanesian way” (1983, 6).

The concept of magic realism that Feeger developed is important in understanding how artists prioritize Melanesian cultural worldviews and knowledge systems. Feeger defines magic realism as an “ordinary world seen through a magical lens.” In his images Transition (Figure 2.4) and Behind the Petals (Figure 2.3) he creates layers of vivid visual metaphors of magical and spiritual elements into realistic portraiture of young children to suggest that notions of magic are present in everyday situations. Feeger’s performative paintings are also enlivened by magical elements. Feeger describes moments when he is on stage: “I am channeling a different level and I am communicating at a different level.” Feeger is a good example of someone who grew up in an urban setting and attended an international school, but reinvents a Melanesian and spiritual identity through contemporary art practice. There is an acknowledgement of the spiritual realm or the magical powers (drawing from various cultural roots) even in today’s cosmopolitan setting.

Tebegetu, on the other hand, offers reference points to his New Ireland identity. The paintings Malangan Identity III (Figure 2.10) and Identity II (Figure 2.11) are examples of how Tebegetu merges motifs and vignettes of material culture from New Ireland. Different from Feeger, Tebegetu creates a new type of aesthetic, incorporating of graffiti styles and his New

\(^{50}\) Narokobi was wrote The Melanesian Way in the early 1983. This was during the post-Independence period. This period saw the emergence of a middle-class and educated elite who were raised in traditional village settings but moved to urban areas for education and enter the workforce. These Papua New Guineans were in the process of negotiating their converging identities. The Melanesian Way played a large part in localizing a national narrative of nation-building, no doubt inspired by immediate challenges and experiences of post-colonialism.
Ireland identity. In this way, he creates an interesting duality between his culture and urban connection, but seems to suggest that urban/rural constructs of identity and place cannot be viewed with one another.

In a different way, Pax Jakupa creates imagery that draws a direct link to the Eastern Highlands region. When Pax Jakupa began his painting career, he mimicked the artwork of his father. As he progressed throughout the years, he changed his aesthetic conceptions to incorporate elements of global trends, but always prioritizing his Highland artistic lineage. For example, he states:

[My work] is inspired by contemporary [ideas]… It’s moving. I need to move on and paint the way I see it, how I see with my eyes. The way I live with it and how I see things. Sometimes I do work about what is happening right now. I did a painting about betel nut. It happens everywhere. At the back of the canvas, I did a village-scene, also incorporating our important legends.

His paintings give agency to what constitutes the socio-cultural life in Highlands through the use of colors and narrative schemes rooted in ideas about land, place, and genealogy.

Yai Pupu’s use of color and compositions convey personal and creative visions about local communities in PNG, but simultaneously alluded to expressions of her Engan female identity. She states, “My mom and dad taught us to appreciate ourselves, our culture and identity. I am very proud of being Engan. I try to portray that in my art.” Most of her paintings draw direct parallels to Engan aesthetic systems, in particular, to Engan sand painting where figures are demarcated by dark outlining and hues of browns. Her paintings often tell stories about contemporary events and highlight shifting roles for women in rural and urban areas. She relies on Engan aesthetics systems, patterns, and colors as vehicles to tell new stories, which, in turn, provides ways for her to sustain culturally-specific methods of seeing.

Paintings of all four artists are strongly informed by contemporary experiences with
culture and offer windows into varying understandings of epistemological and cultural worldviews. These artists are rooted in cultures belonging to particular regions of Papua New Guinea and convey these ideas through complex layering systems of the physical and historical spaces. Such metaphors are visual implications of places and commonly express a self-assured cultivation of multiple times and places. This understanding of time and place is also commonly understood within an Oceanic perspective and a cosmopolitan framework. Epeli Hau‘ofa (2008) expresses the grounding notion of Oceanic time as the “past is present”. He explains:

That the past is ahead, in front of us, is a conception of time that helps us retain our memories and be aware of its presence. What is behind us cannot be seen and is liable to be forgotten readily. What is ahead of us cannot be forgotten so readily or ignored, for it is in front of our minds’ eyes, always reminding us of its presence. Since the past is alive in us, the dead are alive- we are our history. (66)

Furthermore, he states:

“The past is going ahead of us, leading the future, which is behind us… from this perspective we can see the notion of time as being circular. (67)

On the other hand, Appiah defines a cosmopolitan as one who values the variety of choice, without losing sight of where he/she comes from. Appiah recognizes that “inevitably and naturally humans are social” and develop into “full persons” firstly via their “cultural morals, practice of language, and education” (Appiah 2005, 268). He suggests that cosmopolitan cultural and family values are at the “heart of human life” (Appiah 2005, 268).

Hau‘ofa and Appiah suggest an understanding of culture that embraces and depends on imaging the world via multiple, and layered, times and place that co-exist in cosmopolitan and Oceanic ideas. In comparison Homi Bhabha (1994) developed his own understanding of hybrid

51 Hau‘ofa spent his formative years in Papua New Guinea until he was eight years old (from 1939 to 1947) (Thomas 2012, 121)
identity within conditions of colonial inequities. He posits hybridity as liminal, in-between, or a ‘third-space’. He states, “The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with ‘newness’ that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of culture translation” (Bhabha 1994, 10). This concept of hybrid culture is different from what Hau’ofa and Appiah understand as multiple (past-present) times and places that are understood simultaneous. Importantly, artists are also experiencing, understanding, and translating cultural identities and values through multiple systems of aesthetics, signs, and symbols from varying places in time.

In the context of Papua New Guinea, enforcing concepts of past is present counters outsider views (via tourism or colonialism) that have presented Papua New Guinea in strategic ways for economic profits. The way these artists reconstruct the past, history, or present moments, is a “political act” (Hau’ofa 63). In many ways, their work is important because it is an intervention of Western practices of looking to legitimate their personal insights and histories apart from mainline histories. Artists suggest that art is never linear and is not bound to a single fixed time or place. This notion of time differs from modern or Western conceptions of time that stress linear progression that contend the past is behind us and the future is ahead. This notion moves us in the direction of progression, which is an evolutionary process leading to more advanced systems. PNG artists engage with history and stories with little regard for “linear timeline” of history. Rather they use visual methods to reconstruct pasts through Oceanic historiography, while maintaining the depths of their rooted identity. They are historicizing representations of storied places to confront hegemonic approaches to understanding the land and history of PNG (Bacchilega 55).
3.2 **Mobility: Emergence of Middle Class and New Artist Positionality**

In a contemporary socio-economic system, the urban/rural divide is enormous; traditional wealth and capital accumulation have few common priorities. However, the new generation of artists who, for the most part, are accustomed to both systems are able to move fluidly between lines that disconnect communities. These artists have come from middle class families, which privilege their positions, and enables them to maintain flexible positions in society. On the one hand, they demonstrate mobility through visuality and semiotic relations, but, on the other, mobility has to do with ways in which the new generation interact with new ideas and societies.

In some cases, artists make direct comments about the growing tensions between the rich and the poor and the growing gaps between the urban and rural communities. But, more strikingly, artists are making new connections through webs of interconnections that once seemed as opposite ways of seeing and being. These artists are merging notions of contemporary/traditional, urban/rural, high art/low art, individuality/communal, and global/local. For example, Feeger’s hyper-real urban portraiture (Figures 2.5 and 2.6) elevate grass-roots subjects to high-art commodities. Tebegetu’s newer painting called *The Botanist* (Figure 2.13), adapts disparate scenery from New York City and Papua New Guinea by creating a layered composition where “east meets west.” Pax, on the other hand, layers symbolic imagery belonging to his father, his homeland (in the Eastern Highlands), various PNG regions, and global trends. In effect, he seamlessly coalesces notions of personhood, family, village, nation, and global into a single image. Similarly, Kawaiwan generates representations and new ways of understanding notions of “creative traditionalism” through personalized narratives of a modern day Engan woman in an urban context. They are enacting aesthetic borrowings, interrelated juxtapositions (between cultural, personal, and political dispositions), and strategic applications.
of practices from sources circulating on the World Wide Web with more mobility than ever before. They are visually addressing “paradoxical but inextricable relationships” and in doing so reconfiguring new ways of envisioning their communities, identities, and social happenings (Papastergiadis 187).

Cultural theorist, Papastergiadis states that this expanded vision of aesthetic practice is part of a paradigm shift in the understanding of mobility. He states, “Through this new prism, it is possible to rethink their relations between local and global through a cosmopolitan frame” (Papastergidiyas 187). In this way, artists are engaging with the global and local as interrelated paradigms, while also disturbing boundaries of outsider/insider perspectives. These mobile gestures play an important role in the make-up of cosmopolitan identities of PNG artists, which has to do with “inhabiting the world at a distance” (Szerszynski and Urry in Tomaselli 6).

The social status of these artists is crucial to understand their artistic identities and the ways in which their socio-economic identities enable them to interpret, envision, and communicate multivalent levels of life in Papua New Guinea. The artists have grown up in urban areas, but maintain strong cultural roots. These life experiences have enabled them to adapt “mobile” identities and they are able to read and move in between lines of urban/rural and rich/poor. Artists have developed flexible notions of citizenship and have developed strategies to maintain social mobility. Aihwa Ong explains, "Flexible citizenship refers to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political economic conditions” (Ong 1999, 6). Artists favor practices of flexibility, mobility, and have repositioned in relation to markets, governments and social and cultural communities. Feeger discusses this exact point.

I’m in a privileged position [so] that I can choose to paint anyone I want. With that, I had to make clear choices as to whom I deal with and so that I can just not paint anyone,
but paint someone I can actually develop a relationship with. And I can benefit that
person and their social well-being through some donation of money, perhaps, through the
sale of my work and voicing their issues and opinions, and things that they face. These
stories can be told through my work.

Feeger makes distinct choices, including aesthetic choices that enable him to reach out to
multiple communities including Papua New Guineans, expatriates, and international art markets,
and communities. Importantly Feeger integrates his position in society as an artist into a
localized understanding of community: one that blurs the lines between middle class/lower and
urban/rural.

In a similar way to Feeger, Tebegetu’s recent work attempts to transcend boundaries of
class systems. For example, many of his recent paintings are inspired by adapted perceptions of
people and places of Boroko (a suburb and commercial center in Port Moresby). Tebegetu often
sits in Boroko for several hours at a time, taking notes and drawing sketches of people. While he
sits on the streets, he immerses his mind into the positions of the people he paints. As discussed
in chapter two, in one instance he visited Boroko and pretended to be a beggar, in order to paint a
beggar. He states, “[This experience] totally shifted my perspective of street people. Being a
human being, [the beggar] demands a lot from within, and it takes a lot to spread a laplap and ask
for money. After that experience, I saw, it in a different light.” These Boroko images are meant
to reveal cross-section of everyday life and socio-economic attitudes from the point of view of
everyday people in the Boroko area.

The emergence of the middle class in Papua New Guinea, I argue, is a crucial in
understanding mobile identities of a new generation of artists. In the 1999 publication entitled *Emerging Middle Class in Papua New Guinea*, Gewertz discusses a shift in 1996 that influenced the reclassification of interests and identities and advanced the distinguish qualities between classes in Papua New Guinea. But, Gewertz explains, that middle-class developed with particular consequences. People became more and more disconnected to the poor and their problems. The elite were able to distinguish from grass-roots through superior access to money that, in turn, provided them with a restricted and sought-after lifestyle. “Progress” became synonymous with “development.” The newly emerging middle class of the 1990’s demonstrated a “natural desire for affluence” and a transformation to affluent lifestyles in PNG; it further propagated exemplars of “ideologies and lifestyles” conveyed in mass advertising as "normal" (Gewertz 8, 14).

A recent documentary film entitled *Moresby Modern: A New Middle Class?* (2010), discusses and questions new morals of a younger middle class that has emerged in Port Moresby. There are some notable differences to Gewertz’s description of the 1990s emergence. *Moresby Modern* tells the stories of seven people (business people, professionals, managers, and artists) as

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52 In interview with Yai Pupu she explained her privileged upbringing. She says, “I grew up in a very fortunate home. I had a lot of things that other people didn’t have in PNG. [My father] sent us all to Australia for school. Me and my brothers and sisters had a privileged life.” Similarly, Jeffry Feeger came from a fortunate home and was raised by his father who was a teacher at several international schools and now owns a printing company. Feeger states: “... I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to go to an international school, which offered an international curriculum. I was around students from foreign countries. So I guess in a way that helped me to make me who I am today and make it easy for me to assimilate into different cultures.” Leonard Tebegetu also came from a middle class family. His father worked as officer for an Oil Company and mother worked as a Laboratory Assistant in Goroka. Although there are ideological and class distinctions between urban and rural areas in PNG, Pax Jakupa grew up in a family environment that moved between Port Moresby and Goroka. His father was educated and was exposed to outside socio-economic and cultural forces.  

53 It was during this time that a new middle class emerged and changing ideologies of development and progress were coveted for various reasons. The notion of development had been used by colonialist and first world to distinguish them as superior at an individual and collective level (Gewertz 12). European money systems were rationalized as reasonable, fair, and naturally leading to progress, whereas PNG’s indigenous systems of wealth were portrayed as fundamentally unproductive (for example, indigenous systems channeled wealth into ownership of pigs and the staging of feasts) (Gewertz 3-14).
they work in the challenging environment of a developing country, learning to balance the traditional expectations of their culture with the demands of modern society. The film presents their, mostly optimistic, perspectives on PNG society and their hopes and dreams for a better Papua New Guinea.

In a similar way, the new generation of middle class artists participate in middle class systems. They have access to good education and a world wide web of information. This access has had significant impacts on the way in which they see and interact with their communities and engage in relationships with tok ples (cultural language), cultural knowledge, religious influences, and political changes.

Szerszynski and Urry discuss this aspect of mobility as a predisposition of cosmopolitanism. They state, “This need not be physical or corporal, it could be virtual and imaginative. It involves curiosity about many places, peoples and cultures; a willingness to take risks by encountering the “other”; semiotic skills to interpret images of various others; and an ability to “map” ones own society and its culture in terms of historical and geographical knowledge, to have some ability to reflect upon and judge aesthetically between different natures, places, and societies.

3.3 Connectivity: The Role of the Internet and Information Dissemination

Tebegutu’s interest in graffiti and urban aesthetics is a good example of how the Internet has enhanced transnational understanding of art and aesthetics. Prior to his introduction to Internet technologies, Tebegetu located art resources from a missionary bookstore. He explained how he was introduced to modern concepts of abstraction, in particular the work of Wassily Kandinsky and Pablo Picasso. When he gained access to the Internet, he began researching topics on urban realism in art, which then led him to the work of New York-based artist Justin
Bua. The abundance of information available on the Internet, has offered choices for the artists. They choose genres according to specific objectives and messages.

Tomlinson, Appiah, and Papastergiadis all state that cosmopolitan needs to have a sense of wider cultural commitment and actively experience “of belonging to the wider world”, and an identity “that embraces a sense of what unites us as human beings, of common risks and possibilities, of mutual responsibilities” (Tomlinson 1999, 7). Tomlinson states “to have a global identity, to think and act as a ‘citizen of world’ literally as a ‘cosmopolitanism’ (Tomlinson 1999, 7). The emergence of new technologies in Papua New Guinea are indicative of the way artists are participating as ‘global citizens.’ This pertains to the way artists are able to receive new information, and, in return, disseminate their own information anywhere.

The Internet has allowed artists to receive and research information, and immediately and rapidly engage with other Papua New Guineans, expatriate, and international communities. In particular Jeffry Feeger, Kawaiwan Yai Pupu, and Leonard Tebegetu have engaged with the medium of the Internet. Pax Jakupa has not yet been able to fully utilize the Internet since it is too expensive and inaccessible for him at this point living in Goroka. In 2011, he purchased a new Macintosh computer, but he is still slowly learning his way around the new device.

Internet research has become an important tool for young artists to research contemporary art from around the world and fine-tune their artistic identities. Through the Internet, people are able to research in the broadest sense, looking up terms such as contemporary art, realism, and abstraction. Compared to the Internet, printed books and journals seem limiting. Most libraries in Papua New Guinea struggle to raise funding for updated library resources, art books are
particularly “outdated” and not prioritized in library collections.\textsuperscript{54} For artists learning more about specific contemporary or historical moments in art is nearly an impossible activity without the Internet.

The fundamental thought of Appiah’s cosmopolitanism is the importance of the “freedom to create yourself” (2005, 268) and it sees a world of cultural and social variety as a precondition for the self-creation. But he also states, “Imagining ourselves at home in world, where our home are no fixed object but processes of material and conceptual engagement without people and different places, is the first step toward becoming cosmopolitan.” Through the Internet, the elastic tensions and relationships between global/local become stronger. Artists are able to participate actively through reflexive production and reproduction of art and society (Ong 1999, 6). This newly emerged generation of artists in Papua New Guinea is the first to take advantage of the Internet and the first to have the skill set to use its most advanced capabilities.

Social networking is also reflective of a new generation of Papua New Guineans. Social networking through blogging is an experiential, interactive mode of information dissemination, and has increased networking with like-minded younger generations of Papua New Guineans and a global audience. More than ever, this creative medium is at their disposal to generate awareness about issues affecting their society.

Kawaiwan Yai Pupu has her own Facebook page, where she has received comments from her peers about her images. She says, “I find that a lot of my friends see my paintings, and actually see themselves in the paintings, and [get] something out it.” Her Facebook page currently has 550 subscribers; she says, “Half of them I don’t even know who they are. A lot of

\textsuperscript{54} During my stay at University of Goroka in the Eastern Highlands, I browsed the art section in the library and found most of the books referencing art were at least 20-30 years old.
females, they see my paintings, and comment ‘my god I actually feel that emotion. I feel it’. Its good, it’s what I want.”

Jeffry Feeger, has utilized this tool more than other Papua New Guinea artists. He has a personal Facebook page and an artist Facebook page that now exceeds over 4,500 fans (or “friends”). Feeger particularly uses his page to promote his new artworks, projects, exhibitions, festivals, and other PNG contemporary artists. In January 2012, Feeger created a new Facebook group called *PNG Contemporary Arts*. The Facebook group intent is the following:

A platform for discussion and sharing for followers of Contemporary Art in Papua New Guinea critics, writers and artists practicing in the various fields of the arts, encompassing visual arts, literary arts and the performing arts (Music, Dance, Drama, etc).

With hundreds of members, this forum continues to grow as each day passes. This PNG arts forum is becoming a valuable new medium for rapid dispersal of information and is a much needed platform for upcoming artists in PNG.

Feeger describes his abilities to utilize the Internet as a strategy for connecting with everyday Papua New Guineans, and transforming their understandings of PNG art. He states:

I understand technology, which is something in the Western world [where] everyone knows how to use a computer. But back home, probably 5% of the population has had any experience using a computer. So I’m in a position that I can try new ways of communicating and through social Media, like Facebook. Just in the past two years, really in the past year, the onset of Internet access to mobile phones and mobile phone coverage is really revolutionizing the way people are communicating, especially with the younger generation. Now all of a sudden my works are accessible to all these young people who are part of this social revolution... I couldn’t see it before because of the disconnect in the marketplace, having art exposed to an elite group, which really disconnected a lot of young people, and what art is, and what it could be. But now all of a sudden it is integrating with social media. For example, I just recently posted my most recent series of painting of Port Moresby street vendors selling buai (betel nut). And I got a lot of responses, like, ‘when I look at this person it reminds me of me.’ This is making people think and ask what art is. It has always been a pretty picture of a landscape or a portrait on a wall. It’s never been about anything else [in Papua New Guinea]. And now, all of a sudden, it is about the everyday, the mundane. It’s all about you, and the people
who are here today. This is the advantage I have and this is groundbreaking. Things that I do, and representing things in a new way, to a different audience.

The impacts of the malleable nature of the Internet for a new generation are astounding as different ideas and imaginations of the public traverse from being simply “imagined” to “materialized” (Sheikh). Posting stories about recent arts initiatives has general benefits of promotion and advertisement for events and art, but more importantly it increases immediate networks for young contemporary Papua New Guinean artists and other interested in Papua New Guinean art. Social networking sites such as Facebook have become an essential tool and space for journalists, artists, curators, and citizens alike to dwell, network, interact, and exchange information on local and translocal levels. The Internet also allows individuals, to research extensive topics according to their own broad imaginations. The Internet is also a vital tool that connects people and stories.

3.4 Reflexivity, Social Critiques, and Mindset Change

There is a changing notion of political life and the way it is embodied through art. For example, Tebegetu states “The media forgets to look beyond the struggles and what causes them.. so I’ve realized that I could take on the task.” Yai Pupu, on the other hand, takes on a much more personal stance and states, “I want [viewers] to feel something and see something for themselves. I paint not to attract people.” I argue that the previous generation used painting as a way of highlighting, informing, and representing injustices and personalized stories of corruption and discontent with government agencies. However, the focus of a new generation is to use a new kind of portraiture and image making by way of ultra-realism, distorted realism, or an autobiographical approach. Their art is not meant solely for the sake of aesthetic pleasure, but as
Miwon Kwon states acts as a “verb/process, provoking [the] viewer’s critical (not just physical) acuity regarding the ideological condition of their viewing” (Kwon 26).

Starting in 2008, the emergence of a new generation came with fresh perspective towards the country of PNG, its people, and their own responsibility as artist in it. Feeger affirms this exact point:

In PNG there is a lack of role models. Politicians are seen all corrupt. People who have succeeded in the business world are all corrupt... Because of this lack of role models and leadership, a lot young people feel disheartened and don’t have vision. What I’m doing, on an abstract level, is creating hope and vision. By doing rather than talking so much.55

In general, young Papua New Guinean artists want to make a difference in society as visual communicators and role models. In this way, their new paintings are meant to create reflexive relationships with their audiences, in which the images are reflective of the viewer, and not just the painter.

This reflexive relationship with communities is also understood as an essential component of cosmopolitanism. Papastergiadis (2012) calls this component of cosmopolitanism “Reflexive Hospitality” in which, “Viewers adopts an active role in shaping the whole environment, their subjectivity in perspective towards the object of the artwork, and the heightened attitude towards the consciousness of the viewer in the artwork, also amounts to redistribution of agency. It stimulates a relationship of co-production. The viewer is no longer a passive and detached observer” (Papastergiadis 113). Similarly, Tomlinson suggests that the cosmopolitan predisposition is having an awareness of the world, but also a reflexive relationship with “your own community and culture” wherein people open questions to their cultural assumptions and myths” (Tomlinson 1999, 7). Additionally, he writes that cosmopolitans are

55 Interview Nov 13, 2011.
given the right to information, but use it to promote solidarity with others and taking
responsibility for community. Further affirming the notion, Appiah states that cosmopolitanism
entails, “moral obligations we have to our fellow human beings” (Appiah 2005, 221).

Through visual articulations, artists today are not using their art to criticize the downfall
of institutions or government agencies, rather they institute change within viewer’s immediate
perceptions of particular topics. Moreover, and crucial to cosmopolitanism, a new generation of
artists are anticipating diverse audiences and create images that can connect to viewers on a
human level whether they live in the Papua New Guinea or abroad.

They engage in a visual methodology that is meant to enforce a new way of thinking
about issues such as corruption, ill-represented demographics, and urban development. Feeger
uses aesthetic tools to mindsets change. His ultra-realistic portraiture of market sellers and
grass-roots citizens clearly and dramatically capture the imaginations of ordinary Papua New
Guinean viewers. His paintings offer effective transparency on pressing issues and build
dynamic bridges between communities that rarely interact with each other. As an artist, he has
become an agent for social change, developing greater civic responsibilities.

Tebegetu builds upon his own experiences living on the streets, attending law school, and
everyday lived-experiences in an urban region. Tebegetu believes that national development
schemes have led to an increasing marginalized class of citizens in PNG, where the rich gets
richer, and the poor gets poorer. He states, “I think people should look at development from the
eyes of the grassroot people.”

Yai Pupu’s perspective of women is particularly important, simply because it is rare that
women speak out about the subjugation of women in contemporary PNG society. In the world of
Papua New Guinea, male artists hold a remarkable dominance in the public art domain, Yai Pupu
boldly depicts changing notions of feminist social criticism and discusses the dilemmas of gender, culture, and class including the undoing of hegemonic understandings of female roles. Yai Pupu, in many ways, is a role model because she comments on her own lived experiences as a woman and her paintings depict the ways in which she thinks women should be perceived. Her honest depictions reflect a changing society of women, and her peers relate deeply to her stories.

A common priority for new artists is to use their art practice to engage with society in a positive way. Through their art, they tackle pressing social issues, and rely less and less on the governments system to tackle everyday problems. Social change, means attitude change, starting with themselves. The meaning of art and practice is not just simply to sell (as many of the artists started out), but to maintain a reflexive relationship with societal issues, and challenge hegemony as a means for social change.

The visual narratives and biographies of the artists reveal a sense of mindset or attitude change (Kaiku 90). The concepts of mindset or attitude change have been a discussion point in recent blogs and national media. There have been ongoing campaigns for civic-minded citizenry to exercise personal responsibility. In the blog post entitled Change Starts With Me Ganjiki D Wayne (November 2, 2011) explains this point:

The theme of changing ourselves before demanding change in others is slowly gaining a footing in the mindsets of our people. Slowly we are starting to realize that in order for real change to happen in our land, “I must change”. From adamant cynics—who blame the system, the unstable social structures, the ineffective legislation, weak procedures, inadequate funding, bad planning, corrupt leadership, foreign dominance/influx, noneducation, and a whole list of social evils, etc.—to self-evaluating citizens, questioning their own contribution to society and who are now taking responsibility. A soft breeze of self-change is blowing through our country.

Artists are facing such issues and challenging accepted behaviors within society or groups in society. Their social/visual critique and dialogue enables people to think of their home and
identities as open to change and societal differences. “Art is a significant mode through which cosmopolitan imagination emerges and is articulated” (Meskimmon 8). The importance of this aspect of the cosmopolitism attitude is that it serves goals of communities and not governments or hegemony.

All three artists are socially active when generating artistic schemes. They are not just state the problem, but they are using their practice to assert change within the viewers’ mind about the situation.

3.5 Conclusion

In Papua New Guinea, the sense of cosmopolitism relies on the way in which artists see and interact with the world around them. They collectively generate aesthetics that operate at the interface of “materiality and imagination, the individual and the social, the local, and the global” and the artists offer insights into emerging visual dialogues of the nation of Papua New Guinea (Meskimmon 8). There is a shared ideology based on shared morals and socio-economic positions. Their artworks embody situated knowledge, ethics, and politics. Their aesthetic projects are no less significant than a wave of activism enforced through their positions as artists.

In conclusion, I contend that artists generate aesthetics and messages that move between boundaries of local and global, urban and village, rich and poor. Art of a new generation, challenges previous divides between art and politics. Their art is not merely a representation of issues, because they create situations through which strangers can enter into dialogue with each other.
Conclusion
This research has argued that the new generation of artists has emerged in a world with diversifying economies and stronger connections to both local and global communities made possible by new modes of communication, specifically the Internet. Artists of the new generation, highlighted in chapter two, demonstrate how art has become more complex and presents more rapid interconnections between local, national, and global. Pax Jakupa and Leonard Tebegetu, exemplify how there is little ambivalence towards cultural borrowing, appropriation, and hybridity. Jeffry Feeger and Kawaiwan Yai Pupu both maintain flexible relationships with society, and use particular visual codes that communicate between local, national and global dialogues. All four artist use these strategies to cross boundaries and open discussions about new ways of thinking about relations between local, national, and global.

To construct my ideas around the global influences on contemporary PNG artists, this thesis begins with a quote by Feeger. The following describes a desire to communicate on a human level, as a global citizen not necessarily belonging to one particular society or culture. He states, “I am no longer bound to my society, but I can step out of that and think creatively without having to define my identity so much.” The four artists highlighted in chapter two demonstrate ways in which they are using art to increase intercommunication amongst Papua New Guineans and international communities. As stated at the end of chapter three, “They create situations through which strangers can enter into dialogue with each other.”

This is a crucial aspect of the emergence of the cosmopolitan mindset in Papua New Guinea. The difference between cosmopolitanism and globalization is an important part of this discussion. Globalization can be defined as “the integration of economies and societies around the world” (Dollar 2004). Cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, is an ideology, and is an approach for dealing with the current status of globalization, politics and culture. This does not
mean artists are adapting a universal language to discuss issues of the everyday, but rather, they are assuming new roles of reflexivity, mobility, and connectivity in order to negotiate emerging spaces created by globalization. Creating situations “through which strangers can enter into dialogue with each other” means that art functions as a platform for open and divergent discussions. The immediate purpose of art of the new generation is to create bridges between communities that were previously disconnected.

The cosmopolitan mindset is contingent on numerous factors that I have described throughout this thesis. Firstly, the use of the social media is now an important part of everyday life for many people living in Port Moresby. Artists like Feeger and Yai Pupu, for instance, showcase their paintings and exchange their ideas on Facebook group pages. This, in itself, extends Papua New Guinean art beyond the shores of PNG and puts faces to the names of emerging artists. This is evidence that the role of the social media should not be underestimated.

Another aspect of cosmopolitanism is the education system and available opportunities for artists in PNG and internationally. The four artists highlighted in this project have attended international high schools or public high schools. Opportunities for artists including travel, exhibitions and artist-residency programs (in PNG and internationally) are limited and depend on the negotiating skills of the artists. However, such opportunities have acted as launching pads for artists’ careers. Education and professional opportunities have helped to broaden perspectives about their roles as artists, and have encouraged them learn more about global art trends, gain exposure, and create healthy motivation to pursue an art career.

Thirdly, the multi-billion kina Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) project\textsuperscript{56} has created an

\textsuperscript{56} The PNG LNG Project is a 6.6 million tonne per annum (MTPA) integrated LNG project operated by Esso.
influx of foreign workers to PNG. In a way, this provides opportunities for artists to showcase their work. Foreign workers and corporations involved in the LNG project in PNG are also driving the demand of PNG contemporary art. Hence, when we seek to define how the four artists are part of cosmopolitanism, the most immediate changes and interconnectedness that Papua New Guineans are experiencing domestically need to be accounted for.

It is questionable how representative the four artists are of a “new generation of artists”. On the one hand, the artists are not necessarily representative of a new generation since a collective appreciation of their work amongst a national audience is still limited. It is usually the foreign art dealers and commercial entities that appreciate the art produced by the four artists. I suggest, however, that the four artists indicate the future trend in PNG contemporary art, in which PNG’s contemporary art is increasingly integrating into global discussions through new mediums for promoting art. This may not be representative of the “new generation” as a whole; rather, these four artists are part of a movement that is connected through social media, educational qualifications, urbanization, inter-marriages, and so forth.

Moreover, the content of Papua New Guinea art discussed is a vital source of social commentary, and not simply an extension of cultural expressions. While Papua New Guineans continue to acquire more access to capital and technology, paradoxically the government’s role in social development remains staggeringly low. This is the stark reality that serves as the backdrop to what these young artists paint. The images they generate are responses to the political turmoil and everyday economic injustices, and reflect developmental issues that their societies are confronting. Artists in the 1960s and 1970s including Kauage, Akis, and Jakupa

Highlands Limited, a subsidiary of Exxon Mobil Corporation (http://www.oilsearch.com/Our-Activities/PNG-LNG-Project.html).
identified their practices as bound to tribal and cultural affiliations. Art drew clear connections to village, land and cultural elements. In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s artists broadened their approach to larger national affiliations, but still imagined national identity rooted in Melanesian traditions. 1990s and 2000s, there was more emphasis on understanding the stance of PNG contemporary art within an international art market.

The romanticism and social criticisms projected by previous generations is not displaced by the new generation, rather it is framed as a continuum of previous historical legacies. Artists of this generation, however, clearly identify themselves as contemporary artists belonging to a larger global context. Furthermore, it is now political corruption, domestic violence, cultural hybridity, and so forth that are featured in the work of all these artists. The artists are generational in the sense that the immediate experiences of a post-colonial society are projected to their audience.
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