EXHIBITION OVERVIEW







TATATAU MARKS OF POLYNESIA

THE WORK OF TRADITIONAL TATAU MASTERS ALONGSIDE THAT OF YOUNGER PRACTITIONERS AND ARTISTS

> AN INDIGENOUS ART FORM WITH A HISTORY THAT DATES BACK 2,000 YEARS

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**Our Bodies, Our Voices, Our Marks* opening event at the Immigration Museum, images by Xavier Smerdon Photography, courtesy of Museums Victoria

AN EXHIBITION ON SAMOAN TATTOO PRACTICE

An Important Indigenous Tradition

Samoa's *tatau*, along with Japan's *irezumi*, is one of the world's most distinct living tattoo traditions. Tatau is an indigenous art form with a history that dates back 2,000 years. It has played a pivotal role in the preservation and propagation of Samoan culture, having survived multiple attempts at eradication. In Samoa, *tufuga tā tatau* (master tattoo artists) are granted high status in society, and acquiring *tatau* is considered a powerful affirmation of national identity, particularly for young men, for whom it is an important rite of passage.

The Artists

Among the artists featured in *Tatau* are Su'a Sulu'ape Alaiva'a Petelo, Su'a Sulu'ape Peter, Su'a Sulu'ape Paul Jr., Su'a Sulu'ape Aisea Toetu'u, Sulu'ape Steve Looney, Tuigamala Andy Tauafiafi, Mike Fatutoa, and Sulu'ape Si'i Liufau. An important focus of the exhibition is the influential Sulu'ape family and their disciples; the legendary Petelo Sulu'ape and his deceased brother Paulo are credited with spurring the resurgence of Samoan tattoos worldwide. Additional photographs taken in New Zealand, Hawai'i, California, and Nevada demonstrate the spread of the art form outside of Samoa and some of its newer interpretations.

The Organizers

Tatau is organized by the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) and curated by Takahiro "Ryudaibori" Kitamura, the master tattoo artist and author who previously curated the successful exhibition *Perseverance: Japanese Tattoo Tradition in a Modern World* for JANM in 2014. Kitamura is collaborating with John Agcaoili, photographer; Sulu'ape Steve Looney and Danielle Steffany-Looney of Pacific Soul Tattoo in Hawai'i; Sean Mallon, author and Senior Curator of Pacific Cultures at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa; and Sulu'ape Si'i Liufau of A-Town Tattoo.



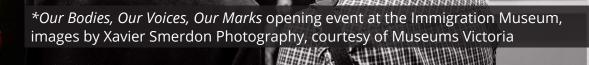
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Exploring the World of Tatau

Through photographs taken in the studio and on location in Samoa, *Tatau* showcases the work of traditional *tatau* masters alongside that of younger practitioners and artists who are adopting *tatau*'s motifs and styles for new media and art forms. Viewers are able to appreciate the sheer beauty of Samoan tattoos while learning about what they signify in Samoan culture, and how they help Samoans and other Polynesians living abroad stay close to their identity and their heritage.



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Exhibition Physical Description

175 PHOTOGRAPHS (Unframed sizes— add 6" for frame/mat)

- 87 photos (21" x 15")
- 70 photo (15" x 21")
- 7 photos (38" x 54")
- 2 photos (42" x 54")
- 2 photos (30" x 22")
- 2 photos (24" x 30")
- 1 photo (54" x 38")
- 1 photo (54" x 42")
- 1 photo (30" x 27.5")
- 1 photo (30" x 24")
- 1 photo (14" x 13")

PAINTINGS/DIAGRAMS (Unframed sizes)

- 5 paintings
- 4 template boards (8" x 8")

ARTIFACTS

- Taupou headdress
- To'oto'o (orator's staff, 66" long)
- Fue (orator's whisk, 40" long)
- Traditional tattoo tools (2 sets)

VIDEOS

- 10-20 interview videos (DVD format) with the exhibition curator and artists, offering insights into the exhibition
- 1 documentary film (DVD format) shot during the production of the JANM exhibition by cinematographers John Agcaoili, Alexander Bauzon, and Jon Ugto. Directed by John Agcaoili. The film takes viewers to Samoa, the birthplace of tatau. Focusing on the legendary Sulu'ape family, the film documents the tatau process, Samoan cultural ceremonies, and the rarely seen Sulu'ape family tomb. This footage is paired with candid interviews with the Samoan Head of State, the Samoan Prime Minister, and fautasi skipper Zita Martel. The cultural importance of tatau is further explored through interviews with artists and clients alike, providing an in-depth analysis of the contemporary Polynesian tattoo scene.

TEXT PANELS

• 2 primary, 10 secondary text panels

AUDIO FILES

Featuring voices of the curator and artists — available for use as an audio tour.

→ EXHIBITION PUBLICATION

The companion book *Tatau: Marks* of *Polynesia*, (268 pages, 220 photos, softcover, 8 1/2" x 11") is published by the Japanese American National Museum. Written contributions by Sean Mallen and working tattoo artists. Foreword by former United States Congressman Eni F.H. Faleomavaega. Photography by John Agcaoili.

→ VENUE REQUIREMENTS

Space Required	2,000 - 4,000 sq ft
Minimum Ceiling Height	10 ft
Production Time	4 working days for installation, 3 working days for deinstallation
Venue Preparations	Painting and minor graphics as needed per agreed floor plan. Objects require cases. Hanging fixtures.
Inbound Freight	1 x 20 ft truck



Tatau: Marks of Polynesia is produced by the Japanese American National Museum and toured internationally by Flying Fish.

Contact Us For Exhibit Hosting Information! +1.651.207.8877 / info@flyingfishexhibits.com



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Flying Fish services include:

- Exhibition Design
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