

Pacific Printmaking

What is tapa?

Tapa cloth is made from the inside bark of special trees, like the paper mulberry or breadfruit trees. The bark is soaked and pounded until it is flat, then it is dried before being decorated with dye.

Each Pacific culture has its own way of using colour, pattern and pictures in their tapa design. In Samoa, tapa is called siapo. Can you find out some other names for tapa?

Tapa is an important part of Pacific culture and is used for clothing, costume, wall decorations, masks, blankets, room dividers and as part of celebrations.



Find out more about tapa



Take a look at some more works from Christchurch Art Gallery's collection

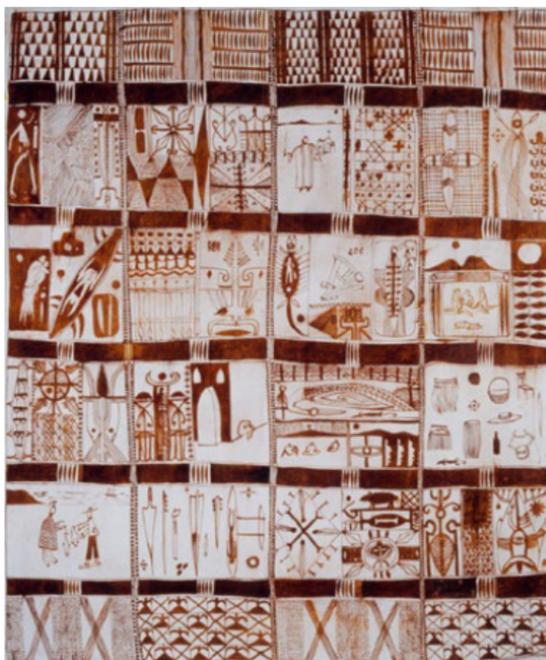
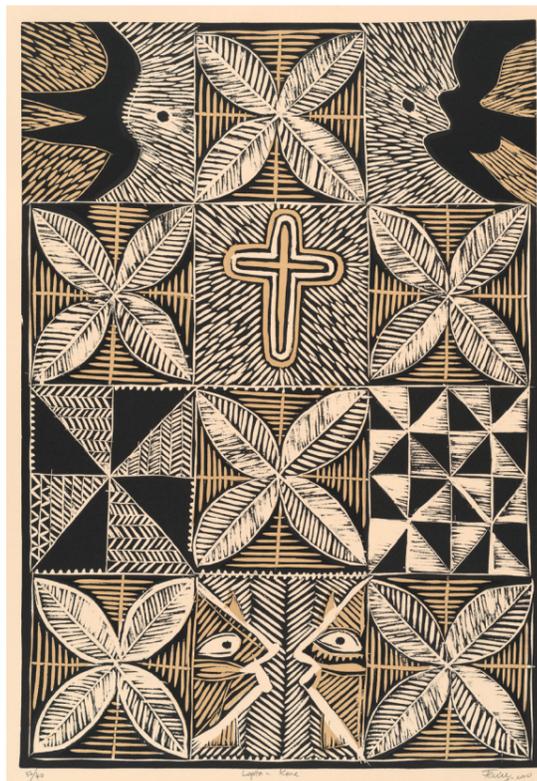
**CHRISTCHURCH
ART GALLERY
TE PUNA O
WAIWHETŪ**

Artists inspired by tapa

Fatu Feu'u

Fatu Feu'u was born in Western Samoa in 1946 and immigrated to Aotearoa New Zealand in 1966. Feu'u uses tapa to tell us stories about his life and what is important to him. In his art we see flowers, fish, people, masks and other symbols and patterns that reflect his culture, journey from Samoa to New Zealand, his ancestors and religion.

Right: Fatu Feu'u *Lapita - Kone* 2010. Woodcut. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 2019



John Pule

John Pule was born in Niue in 1962. His family came to Aotearoa New Zealand when he was two. He returned to live in his home country as an adult in 1991. Pule's work reflects both his cultures – he creates the earthy colours, lines and patterns of Niuean hiapo (tapa) using European materials like oil paints on canvas. The figures and geometric symbols in his art tell stories of journeying from Niue to New Zealand, as well as the frigate birds which were seen as guides for Polynesian travellers, accompanying them on their voyages.

Left: John Pule *On Another Man's Land* 1997. Oil on unstretched canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 1997

Your turn!

Tapa designs often include patterns and images that reflect what's important to the people of each Pacific Island. What images and patterns could you use to show who you are and what is important to you? Brainstorm your ideas in the space below.

What next?

Create a tapa design of your own using a sheet of paper and felts, pencils, crayons or paints.