

onespace



Samuel Tupou  
Lanu Lanu: The Colour of Language

7 November – 6 December 2025

### ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

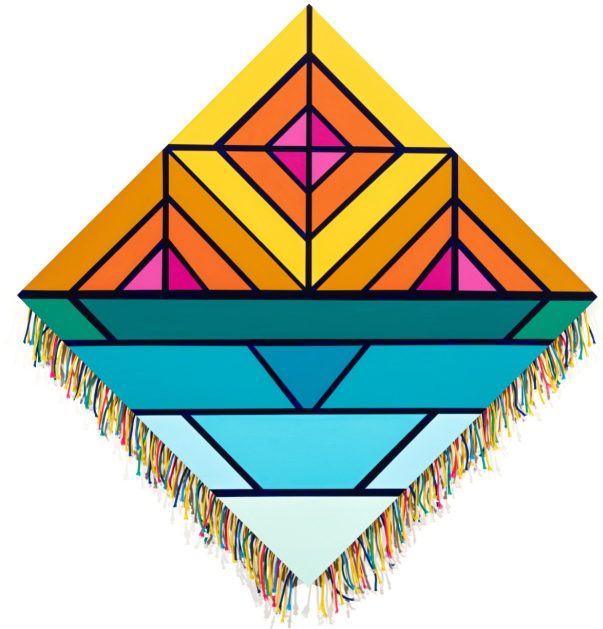
Exhibition Dates | 7 November- 6 December 2025

Opening Event | 8 November, 4 – 5pm | Artist Talk, 4 – 5pm

Onespace Gallery Hours | Tuesday to Friday 10am – 5pm, Saturday 12pm – 5pm

In *Lanu Lanu: The Colour of Language*, Samuel Tupou extends upon his ongoing dialogue with Tongan heritage, language, and migration through the lens of colourful abstraction. Engaging colour as a universal mode of communication, Tupou reinterprets the structural motifs of tapa cloth, tattoo, and Lapita pottery into compositions that balance intuition and formal precision. His vivid geometries chart a space between cultural memory and modernist inquiry, revealing abstraction as both a site of displacement and reconnection.

Essay writer David Broker, states that, "*Lanu Lanu: The Colour of Language* is the result of the twists and turns that artists who have multicultural influences might experience over a lifetime". The hanging fringes, inspired by the brightly coloured threads of Tongan fala mats, articulate a point of cultural convergence where natural fibre meets synthetic material and tradition meets adaptation. In this body of work, Tupou transforms inherited forms into a contemporary visual language that speaks to resilience, hybridity, and the evolving nature of Pacific identity.



Samuel Tupou, *The Returning*, 2025, Acrylic on plywood, polypropylene rope, 135 x 125cm. Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Photo: Courtesy of the artist and The Museum of Brisbane.

b. 1976 – Dunedin, New Zealand | Lives and works in Cairns, Australia.

Samuel graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW, in 1997. and is currently based in Cairns (Queensland, Australia). Specialising in screen-printing, he creates artworks that respond to his Tongan and Polynesian heritage, incorporating patterns derived from and inspired by traditional Pacific Island Tapa cloth design.

Colour segments act as oversized pixels that combine to form a recurring pattern and an overall image which is shrouded by pixilation. The photograph's original details and subtleties are removed leaving the viewer with a series of colour structures which when pieced together allude to the original image. The works use proximity and distance to alter the viewers perception. Up close, the works appear to be an abstract assemblage of geometric shapes and colours, whilst at a distance an 8-bit halftone image takes shape.

His recent works draw inspiration from mathematical geometry and 80's arcade game imagery as well as Pacific Island Tapa cloth design and fine mat weaving. These works have been exhibited in several solo shows in recent years including TROPIC ARCADIA, Home of the Arts, Gold Coast (2023); Low Resolution Dreamz, Onespace Gallery, Brisbane (2022); and *Observing Patterns*, Logan Art Gallery (2021).

Samuel's work is collected in numerous public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Artbank (Sydney), the Print Council of Australia, Cairns Base Hospital, Mater Hospital (Brisbane), the State Library of Victoria, (Melbourne), Artspace Mackay, City of Yarra (Yarra, VIC), Tweed River Regional Gallery, NSW, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery (Wagga Wagga, NSW), Christ Church Grammar (Perth, WA), Southern Cross University (Lismore, NSW), and St. Kevin's College (Melbourne, VIC).

Samuel's major public art commissions include Queensland Wharf Brisbane, Lungfish Dreamz (2024); Aria Property Group, Sunshine of your love (Rise & Pine) Fish Lane, South Brisbane (2022), Queensland Health, Surgical Treatment and Rehabilitation Service (STARS), Herston Quarters, Brisbane (2022); SANDT Developments, Utopia Apartments, DIVE IN (Sunset to Sunrise), Fortitude Valley, Brisbane.

Samuel Tupou's practice consistently acknowledges the trials of coming to terms with disconnection from his Tongan ancestry, and how reconnection in the colonial territories of Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Australia may be creatively imagined. Pasifika artists' ironic blend of "traditional" motifs with trappings of contemporary popular culture first captured my attention some 25 years ago. I was impressed by the ways they discussed and critiqued the stereotypical colonial mythologies emanating largely from the United States through "Tiki culture", overly romanticised Hollywood movies, or South Seas kitsch. Having developed a characteristic brand of satire, Tupou challenges the seductive misconceptions of popular culture and its misappropriation of motifs and myths for profit.

Although Tupou's practice might be considered as ultra cool contemporary, it has never been a definitive departure from traditional arts and can be more accurately assessed in the context of continually evolving traditions. Aside from being interested in the designs of tattoos and the geometric designs of ancient Lapita pottery, at the centre of Tupou's work are the motifs found in Pacific Island tapa cloth. While the tools may have changed, the versatile cloth made from hand-processed pandanus leaves has changed little, and today tapa continues to occupy a significant place in Tongan customs, used as decoration, clothing, and furniture, as well as in significant ceremonies and the exchange of gifts. Its distinctive designs provide a stable symbolic backdrop for Tupou to pursue ideas acknowledging the wayfinding skills that enabled ancient explorers to populate the Pacific Islands, the impact of colonialism, and challenges faced by Pasifika diaspora as they acclimatise to new homelands.

*Lanu Lanu: The Colour of Language* is the result of the twists and turns that artists who have multicultural influences might experience over a lifetime. This exhibition comes after a year spent in Poland with Tupou's partner's family. He compares growing up among Tongan relatives who speak a different language to being in Poland, where the new family's language is equally elusive. In both instances, communication is often reduced to a "vibe" of the discernible tones and body language evident in the room.

From this somewhat uncomfortable place, Tupou focuses on colour as a universal language, stripping back the tapa- and pottery-influenced designs of his ancestors to blocks of colour that veer boldly towards hard-edged geometric abstraction. This approach cements Tupou's place in the pantheon of modernist practitioners, exploring an ostensibly more objective, non-representational way of understanding and expressing a continuing sense of dislocation.

In this way, the artist takes on the role of a silent but active observer. Without the guidance of customary motifs and techniques, the audience must also consider the raw vibe of colour and form. Geometric abstraction is defined by the artist, fuelled by intuition, producing an overall ambience of rhythm and harmony drawn from the adept combination of colour, line, and form. Lanu Lanu effectively mines aspects of everyday observation that, for Tupou, portrays feelings of resilience, fluidity, and the constant change that defines all human cultures.

The threads we see hanging from the underside of Tupou's diamond-shaped pieces are a succinct example of the change that defines his work. Made from parachute chords, these fringes mark a strong contrast with the natural plaited pandanus fibres of fala (woven mats). The addition of fringes, however, refers to the introduction of colourful polyester/wool blends to Tonga's "traditional crafts" as long ago as the nineteenth century, and marks the first appearances of European industrial materials. Fascinated by this early use of foreign materials, Tupou notes a point of cultural convergence, an open-ended hybridity, through which he feels a sense of his own story and history being told.

**David Broker**





Samuel Tupou  
*Voyage Voyage, 2025*

Acrylic on plywood, polypropylene rope  
77 x 40cm

\$1,500

Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Ocean Size, 2025*

Acrylic on plywood, polypropylene rope  
77 x 40cm

\$1,500

Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Threads of Time, 2025*

Acrylic on plywood, polypropylene rope  
77 x 40cm

\$1,500

Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Freshmint dreams*, 2025

Acrylic on plywood, polypropylene rope  
50 x 43cm

\$1,000

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Green Horizon*, 2025

Acrylic on plywood, polypropylene rope  
100 x 56cm

\$1,000

Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Into the Night, 2025*

Acrylic on plywood, polypropylene rope  
77 x 40cm

\$1,500

Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Lament for Sugar, 2025*

Acrylic on plywood, polypropylene rope  
72 x 64cm

\$2,500

Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

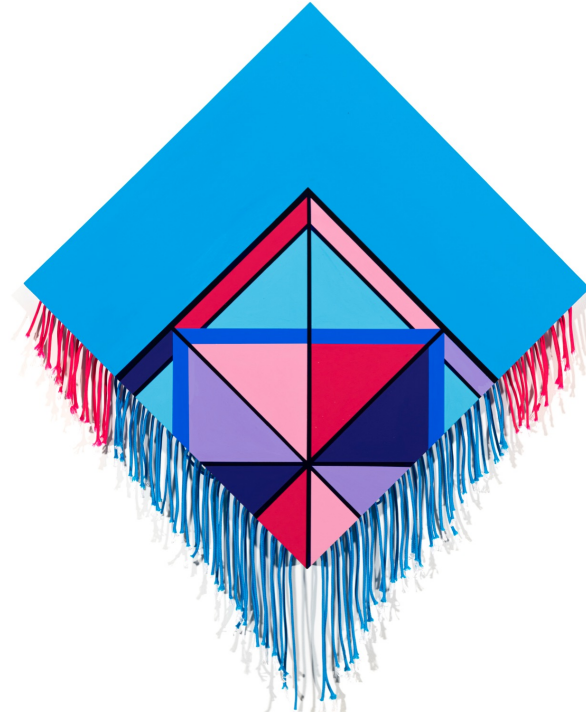


Samuel Tupou  
*Horizon Dreams, 2025*

Acrylic on plywood, polypropylene rope  
79 x 64cm

\$2,500

Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



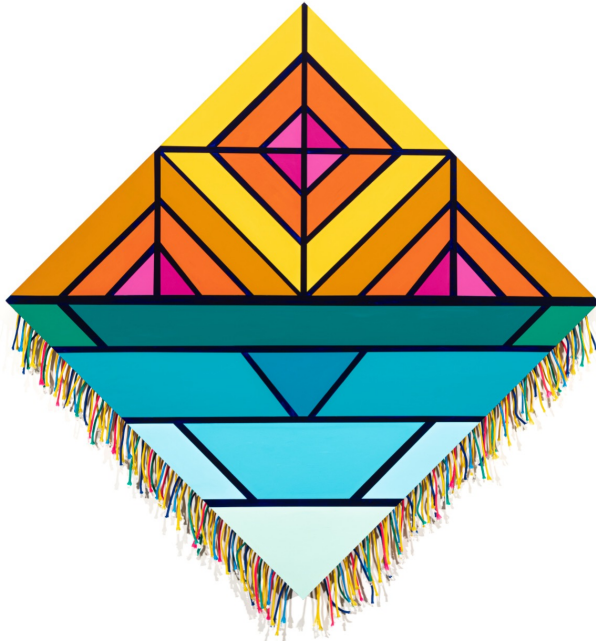
Samuel Tupou  
*Blue Void, 2025*

Acrylic on plywood, polypropylene rope  
105 x 84cm

\$3,500

Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



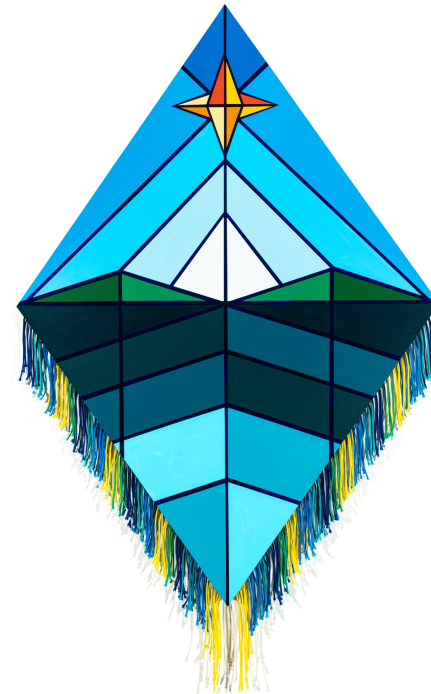


Samuel Tupou  
*The Returning*, 2025

Acrylic on plywood, polypropylene rope  
135 x 125cm

\$5,500

Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

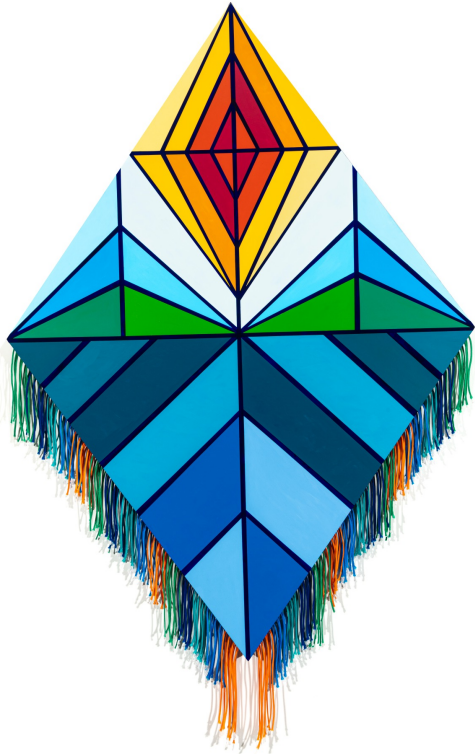


Samuel Tupou  
*Guided by Stars*, 2025

Acrylic on plywood, polypropylene rope  
207 x 125cm

\$6,000

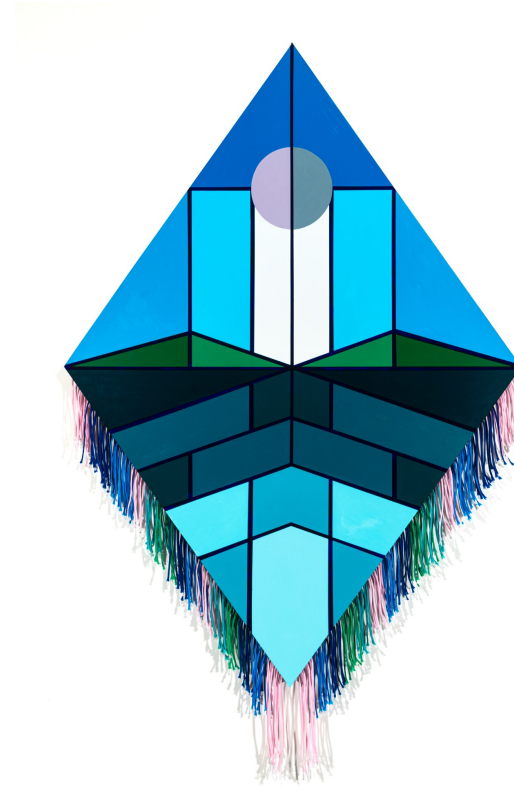
Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Set the controls for the heart of the Sun, 2025*  
Acrylic on plywood, polypropylene rope  
207 x 125cm

\$6,000

Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Moon Patrol, 2025*  
Acrylic on plywood, polypropylene rope  
207 x 125cm

\$6,000

Photo: Michael Marzik. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Samuel Tupou

*Lanu Lanu: The Colour of Language*

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# STOCKROOM WORKS



Samuel Tupou  
*Riding on the Wing of a Cosmic Owl, 2024*  
Acrylic on linen  
90 x 60cm

\$4,000

Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Heptagon Landscape (yellow thru blue), 2024*  
Acrylic on canvas  
90 x 60cm

\$4,000

Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.





Samuel Tupou  
*Atolou/Orion's belt*, 2025

Acrylic on linen  
85 x 85cm

\$3,500

Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Star Travellers (Tola/Crux)*, 2025

Acrylic on canvas  
85 x 85cm

\$3,500

Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Sunshine of your love, 2022*  
Digital prints on Hahnemule paper  
82 x 37cm

\$450 (unframed)  
\$650 (framed)

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Rise & Pine, 2022*  
Digital prints on Hahnemule paper  
82 x 37cm

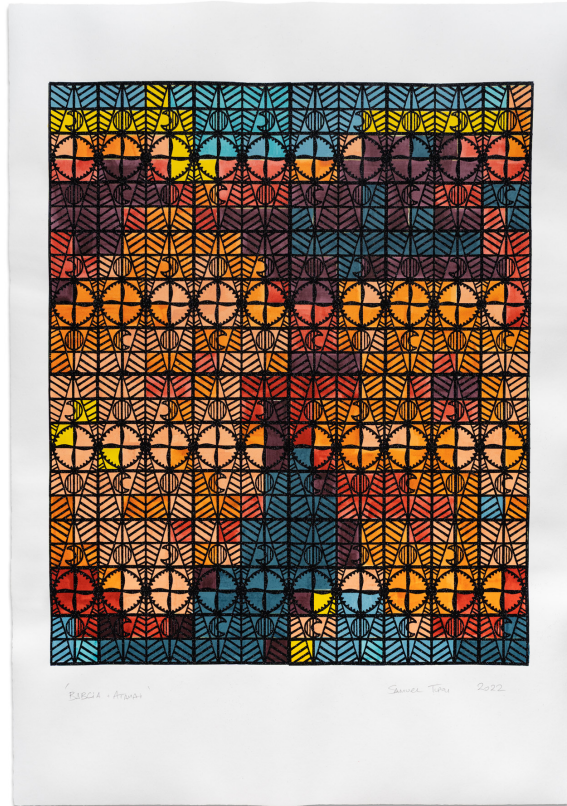
\$450 (unframed)  
\$650 (framed)

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

# Samuel Tupou

## *Lanu Lanu: The Colour of Language*

7 November – 6 December 2025

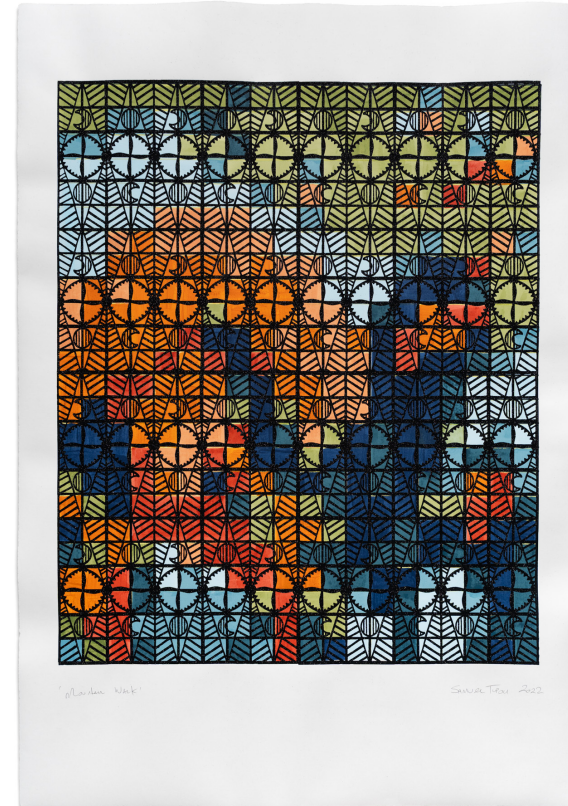


Samuel Tupou  
*Babcia & Atamai*, 2022

Hand coloured serigraph, glitter on paper unique state print  
Paper: 100 x 70cm, Image: 72 x 60cm

**\$2,500 (unframed)**

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Mountain Walk*, 2022

Hand coloured serigraph, glitter on paper unique state print  
Paper: 100 x 70cm, Image: 72 x 60cm

**\$2,500 (unframed)**

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.





Samuel Tupou  
*Untitled Skull*, 2015  
Serigraph on paper Artist Proof  
50 x 34cm

\$400 (unframed)

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Sam Tupou  
*Fale Machina*, 2014  
Serigraph on paper Artist Proof  
57 x 38cm

\$350 (unframed)

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

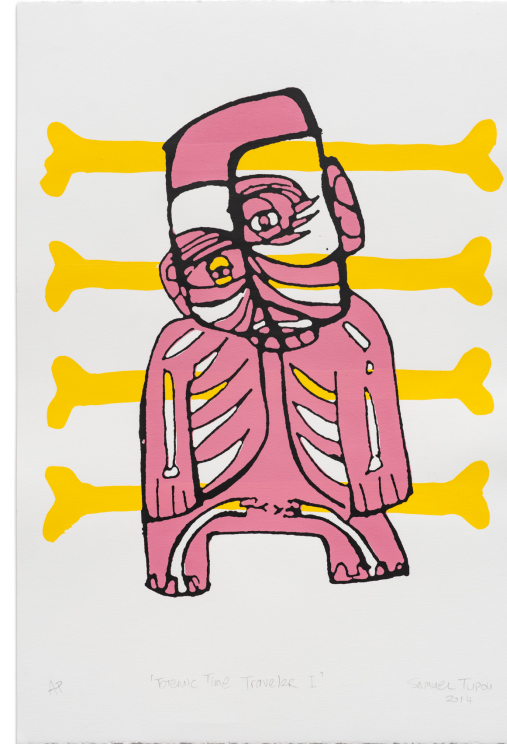




Samuel Tupou  
*Totemic Time Traveller V*, 2014  
Serigraph on paper Artist Proof  
56 x 38cm

\$450 (unframed)

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Totemic Time Traveller I*, 2014  
Serigraph on paper Artist Proof  
56 x 38 cm

\$450 (unframed)

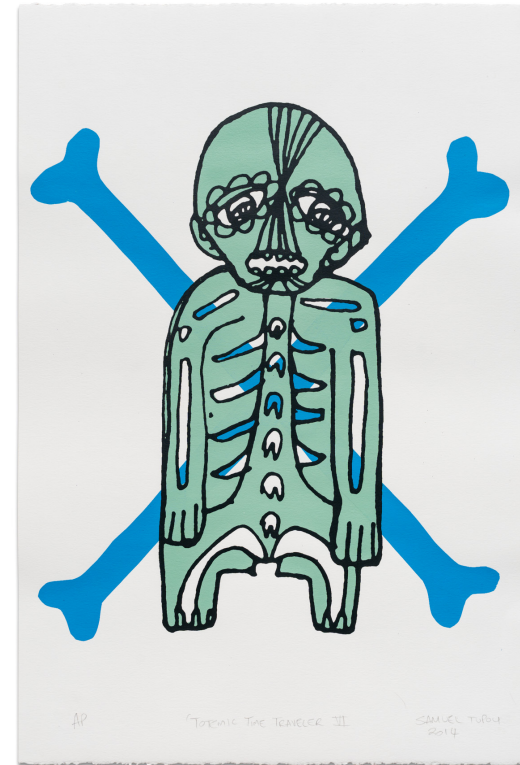
Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Totemic Time Traveller II*, 2014  
Serigraph on paper Artist Proof  
56 x 38cm

\$450 (unframed)

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Totemic Time Traveller VI*, 2014  
Serigraph on paper Artist Proof  
56 x 38cm

\$450 (unframed)

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

# Samuel Tupou

## *Lanu Lanu: The Colour of Language*

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Samuel Tupou

*Persistence of time*, 2020

Serigraph on paper, 2AP + Edition of 10

Paper: 50 x 40cm, Image: 41 x 30cm

\$450 (unframed)

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou

*Frangipani Head*, 2011

Digital Print on Paper Artist Proof

56 x 39cm

\$400 (unframed)

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.





Samuel Tupou

*Valu's concern: how to maintain a fashionable hairdo #1 2017*

Serigraph and acrylic on board  
40 x 40cm

\$750

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou

*Valu's concern: how to maintain a fashionable hairdo #2 2017*

Serigraph and acrylic on board  
40 x 40cm

\$750

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.





Samuel Tupou

*Valu's concern: how to maintain a fashionable hairdo #5 2017*

Serigraph and acrylic on board

40 x 40cm

\$750

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou

*Valu's concern: how to maintain a fashionable hairdo #8 2017*

Serigraph and acrylic on board

40 x 40cm

\$750

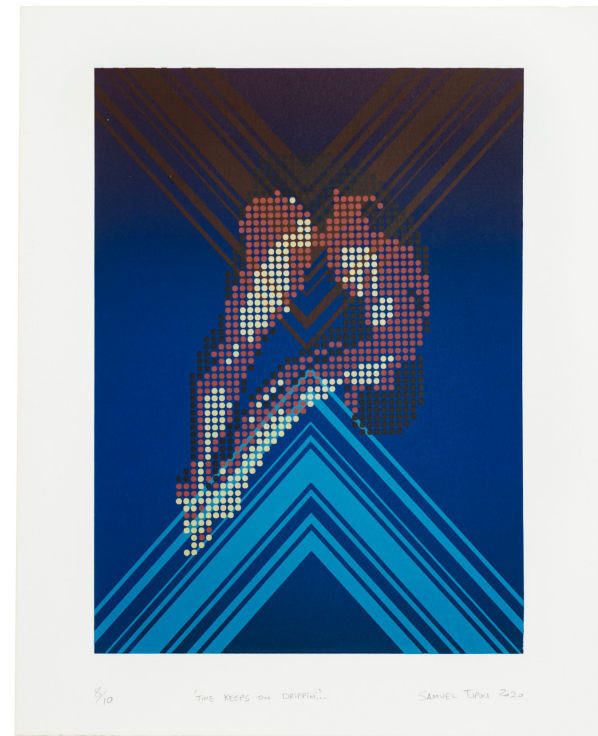
Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Atamai and the expanding multiverse*, 2020  
Serigraph and acrylic on paper  
50 x 40cm

\$550 (unframed)  
\$750 (framed)

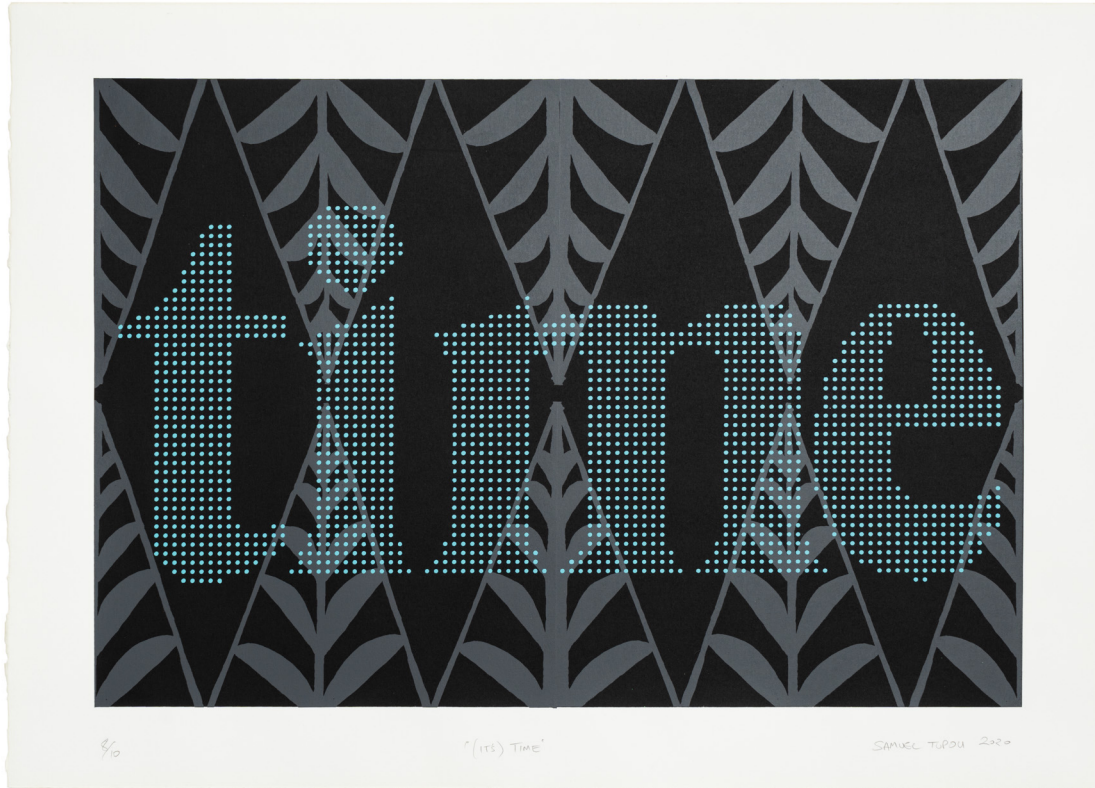
Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou  
*Time keeps on drippin'*, 2020  
Serigraph and acrylic on paper, 2AP + Edition of 10  
50 x 40cm

\$550 (unframed)  
\$750 (framed)

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Samuel Tupou

*Its Time*, 2020

Serigraph and acrylic on paper

50 x 70cm

\$750 (unframed)

\$980 (framed)

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Onespace is a Brisbane-based gallery that presents and sells contemporary art, including work by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

We curate an exhibition program exploring diverse themes and media, showcasing emerging, mid-career and established artists whose works inform, stimulate and challenge. Onespace welcomes you to engage with the artists and artworks we exhibit.

Onespace is uniquely located adjacent to Maiwar (Brisbane river) beneath the Spice Apartments near the Go Between Bridge in South Brisbane. We are proudly surrounded by the dynamic buzz of the Queensland cultural precinct that is significant to this area of Brisbane.

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**Director, John Stafford:** john@onespace.com.au

**Director, Jodie Cox:** jodie@onespace.com.au

**Gallery Manager, Demi Conrad:** demi@onespace.com.au

**Gallery Assistant, Poppy Saines:** poppy@onespace.com.au

**Gallery Assistant, Mae Stanton:** mae@onespace.com.au

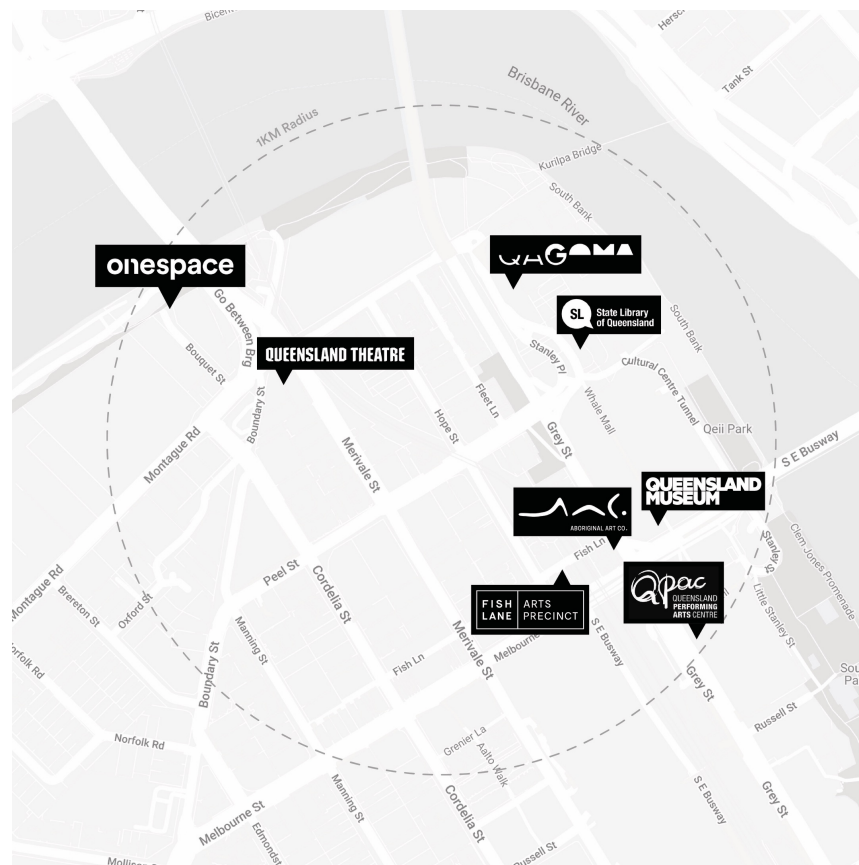
onespace.com.au

@onespace.au

Onespace Gallery Hours:

Tuesday to Friday 10am – 5pm, Saturday 12pm – 5pm

25A Bouquet Street, South Brisbane Q 4101 Australia



Onespace acknowledges the traditional custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters, culture and community. We pay our respects to elders past and present.