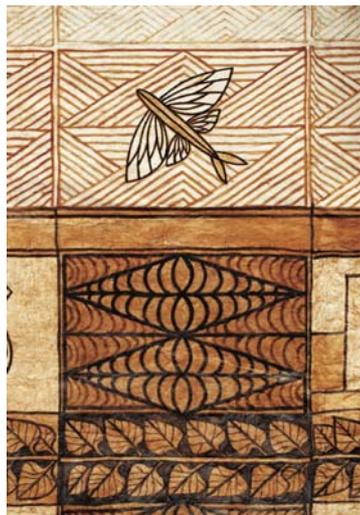




LET'S STOP THE SEA FROM BECOMING A SEWER



Siu i Moana by ROBIN WHITE
- a collaborative effort with Tongan
tapa cloth maker Ruha Fifita.

Uninhabited pristine wildernesses are essential for our collective sanity. Even those among us who have never climbed the highest mountain or crossed the widest desert have an image of them in our mind's eye and take comfort from the fact they exist.

Just imagine how awful it would be if every inch of the planet was tamed, inhabited and exploited to death. Or if the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, that huge rotating morass of plastic detritus, covered the entire ocean. This of course is an extreme case scenario but we need a wakeup call to prevent human greed from doing further irrevocable damage to our environment.

Thankfully there are efforts being made to 'stop the rot'. The Pew Charitable Trusts consist of seven individual charitable funds established between 1948 and 1979 by two sons and two daughters of Sun Oil Company founder, Joseph Pew. The Pew Environment Group focusses on the destruction of oceans, the loss of wilderness ecosystems, and the buildup of greenhouse gases. Presently WWF-New Zealand and Forest and Bird are working with the group to raise awareness of the need to protect The Kermadecs by extending the existing reserve into a massive sanctuary in order to protect its extraordinary diversity of marine life.

On Tuesday, 14 February the Maritime Museum hosted the opening of an inspiring exhibition 'Kermadec- Nine Artists Explore the Pacific'. Phil Dadson, Bruce Foster, Fiona Hall, Gregory O'Brien, Jason O'Hara, John Pule, John Reynolds, Elizabeth Thomson and Dame Robin White travelled to the Kermadecs on board the HMNZS Otago to create a body of work from their impressions of the "last pristine sites left

in the ocean". Pew Environment Director, Bronwen Golder joined the artists in the journey and said, "The exhibition shines a spotlight on this incredible, untouched place in our ocean. Their works of art remind us that our ocean is precious, yet fragile."

More than 300 people thronged into the Maritime Museum where the proceedings kicked off with a performance by the Oto'ota Fahina Cultural Group. The Museum CEO, Murray Reade gave an opening speech, emphasising the great honour it was to host the exhibition "because it complements a primary tenet of the Museum, that is to pursue and protect the sustainability of our seas."

There were further words by Peter Buttle, Deputy Chair of the Edmiston Trust, who gave the museum funds for the event, Jay Nelson, Director of the Pew Global Ocean Legacy, and Bronwen Golder, "we encourage the Government to demonstrate New Zealand's true commitment to the planet by establishing a Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary for this unique area." Last, but not least, Dame Robin White spoke on behalf of her fellow artists. "It was more than a journey, more than an adventure - it was an experience where we united in our commitment to the purpose of the journey and the cause associated with it."

The exhibition is a knockout and a must to view. It was first displayed in the Tauranga Art Gallery and there are hopes it will travel to London, the Hamburg Book Fair and Washington. Should the Government come to the party and sanction the proposal, it would surely do something for our somewhat flawed clean, green image.

Along with the exhibition a beautifully produced book, edited by Bronwen Golder and Gregory O'Brien is for sale. It contains stories by all the artists that tell of the wondrous sea images they observed and vivid descriptions of the flora, fauna and birdlife on Raoul Island. Amusing anecdotes are included about the not always comfortable journey on the Otago and best of all, fabulous photographs of their artworks.

Apart from scientists, to whom the region is invaluable for their research on the extraordinary sea life that exists in its waters, the majority of New Zealanders have very little knowledge about The Kermadecs, or even that they are part of our territorial waters. The exhibition remains with the Maritime Museum till Monday 2 July and will awaken the consciousness of all who view it, on how important it is to protect this national treasure.

Jacques Yves Cousteau has said, "A lot of people attack the sea, I make love to it." Let's do the same! (DEIRDRE ROELANTS) [PN](#)

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