The theme of cultural displacement is a river that runs strongly through the photography of New Zealand born Indigenous Researcher, Curator and Artist Greg Semu. It is a theme close to the heart as the artist embraces Samoa as his ancestral and spiritual home and has travelled the world since his early 20s in search of self. The significance of identity and the exploration of self weave their way into Semu's work, with one of his first signature creations being a triptych created in 1995 of his naked body covered in Samoan Tatau titled Self-portrait with pe’a, Basque Road, Newton Gully. This series of photographs lead to his first solo exhibition titled O le Tatau Samoa, The Tattoo Art of Samoa and were acquired by the Auckland Art Gallery. In 2004 the Queensland Art Gallery also printed and acquired the series. In 2010 Queensland Art Gallery exhibited the works in a touring exhibition titled Unnerved: The New Zealand Project and published them in the accompanying catalogue.

Today Semu is still evolving the dialogue of cultural identity, and the viewing public is noticeably still fascinated, as in 2012 the Auckland Art Gallery commissioned him to revisit the original pe’a triptych and produce a corresponding triptych continuing the conversation. The Samoan Tatau clothes the body from midriff to knees and is a complex cultural icon of Samoan identity that dates back several thousand years preceding Christ.

Semu began his artistic explorations of cultural displacement by osmosis. Himself, autodidact in the art of photography and film, Semu uses these visual languages to create an evocative dialogue to challenge the romanticised colonialist documentation of ‘first contact’ with the tribal worlds. The artist strives to challenge the stranglehold academic historians have on the past (be it fictitious or correct) in order to present new conclusions that break from the generic anthropological interpretations.

By using a medium so synonymous with presenting truth and reality in order to re-enact historic and art historically significant moments, Semu seduces the viewer to challenge any preconceived notions of history and instead make a spiritual or mental connection with the work engaging imagination and provocation. This is much like the many religious institutional dogma of “taking a leap of faith”.

In 2007 Semu was awarded the first artist in residence at the Museé du quai Branly, in Paris. He was commissioned to create an artistic response to the Bonded by Blood Adidas campaign featuring the All Blacks for the 2007 Rugby World Cup. The result was ‘The Battle of the Noble Savage’ series, which references early New Zealand colonial paintings by artists including Charles F. Goldi, Gustavus Von Tempsky and Gottfried Lindauer parallelling European painters Jacques-Louis David, Caravaggio, Holbein and Eugene Delacroix. The piece in particular makes pointed allusions to David’s French history painting Napoleon Crossing the Alps (1800-01).

The battle depicted in Semu’s work is itself fictitious but draws heavily on elements of the land wars between Maori and colonizers for Aotearoa New Zealand. The scene is peppered with historical and cultural references. The lush rainforest visible in the background contains plants only native to New Zealand, the ‘warriors’ are genuine Maori leaders with authentic ta moko (Maori body and facial tattoos) and the weaponry are all colonial war antiques.

By mixing real and fake, past and present, the artist is seeking to promote discussion and break free of “[romanticised] superior attitudes” in which mono linear history is often presented to us. Semu strives to educate parts of the world that might be ignorant to the fact that whilst Napoleon and the Prussians famously embarked on their offensives, the Pacific Islands were also facing their own battles. Similarly, by commemorating the spirit of the Maori and playing on the stereotype of the ‘primitive savage’, Semu succeeds in satirising the historical notion of the ‘noble savage.’ The aim is to reclaim history for the future generations to interpret freely and without prejudice.
In order to help drive alternative interpretations of colonial history Semu draws upon politically historical events, including the dictatorship of Christianity onto 'primitive' tribes. This is evident in his 2010 *The Last Cannibal Supper*, *cause tomorrow we become Christians* series created for the Tjibaou Cultural Centre, Noumea, New Caledonia where the artist takes centre stage as Christ in *Auto portrait with 12 disciples*. The word 'cannibal' is pointedly used to denote the symbolic last supper Pacific Islanders underwent before giving up their traditions and having Christianity thrust upon them. Semu shows off his *Tatau*, which ironically is one of the only Samoan cultural traditions that endured the impact of colonial Christianity. Whilst Semu’s depiction of Christianity may seem austere, he observes that the religion simultaneously "saved and paralysed" the island cultures. "I'm not trying to say who was wrong or right, I'm just saying let's look at it today from contemporary eyes and from contemporary minds."

This meditation on the importance of the contemporary viewer is further expressed in his *Body on the Line, Cultural Warriors 2010* exhibition. Semu captured former and current NRL players of South Pacific and Maori heritage, dressed loosely in customary Islander garb. By featuring familiar, contemporary sports figures adorned in traditional attire the artist promotes, celebrates and nurtures cultural awareness, provoking health and fitness issues and a marriage between the world of art and sport whilst developing relationships with ethnic minorities and mainstream Australia.

In 2012 Greg Semu’s works including *Auto portrait with 12 disciples* (from 'The Last Cannibal Supper...cause tomorrow we become Christians' series) and *Untilled* (from 'The Battle of the Noble Savage' series) were featured in *The 7th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT7)* held at the Queensland Art Gallery. The Triennial is the Queensland Art Gallery’s flagship international contemporary art event and represents the exceptional transformations that have occurred in Australian, Asian and the Pacific art.

In 2013, Greg Semu was named the winner of the People's Choice award for the 62nd *Blake Prize*, with his video installation *Te Upoko o Hoani te Kairirin, The Head of John the Baptist*, 2013. The video runs for 8 minutes and 53 seconds, with images of three heads projected onto a black wall with hidden sacred text. It took Greg Semu five days to paint this monumental wall using acrylic paint and oil crayons. Sporadic interjections of light illuminate the wall and the sacred scrawl is momentarily revealed before disappearing. The hidden text references lost tribes, traditions and potential for rebirth. The video provokes conversation about conflicting desires of two insidious practices: the decapitation of spiritual leaders to achieve religious cleansing and the ritual tradition of 'headhunting' to grant immortal martyrdom.

In 2013, Alcaston Gallery represented Greg Semu at the inaugural *Sydney Contemporary 13* art fair held at Carriageworks, Sydney. Also in 2013, Greg Semu featured in Alcaston Gallery’s annual Sydney exhibition to showcase represented artists titled *All About Art @ Depot Gallery, Sydney.*

In 2014, Greg Semu was awarded the prestigious Creative New Zealand Visual Arts Residency at the Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin 2014-2015. During this 12 month residency the artist will develop the overall theme of the brief yet intense relationships pertaining to Germany and “German Samoa”. Semu refers to this as *die Koloniale Begegnung, The Colonial Encounter.*

In February 2014 Semu was artist in residence at Buku Larrnggay Mulka, Northern Territory, where he continued to research Indigenous Australians and develop portraits of Yolgnu family and friends.

Also in 2014, Greg Semu completed a residency in the Cook Islands granted by Creative New Zealand, as part of his upcoming epic and ambitious project *Symbols of Power,* to investigate and document a major moment in Pacific history and art history. The residency was structured as a community engagement and development project incorporating Cook Island locals as crsi, crew and consultants.

In August 2014, Alcaston Gallery was thrilled to feature Greg Semu at the *Melbourne Art Fair* held at the Royal Exhibition Building, 13 - 17 August.
In 2015 Greg Semu held a solo exhibition titled *Two Bodies, Two Landscapes, Zwei Körper, zwei Lanschafte*, at the Kunstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin, and is an invited artist in the major international exhibition *Personal Structures* at Palazzo Bembo, during the 56th Venice Biennale, 9 May – 22 November 2015.

The National Gallery of Victoria - International will host a major solo exhibition *The Raft of the Tagata Pasifika (people of the pacific)* by Greg Semu from 10 June – 11 September 2016, an immense honour for the artist.

Greg Semu has lived in Sydney since 2009, after residing in a wide range of places such as New York, Paris, London and Sāmoa. In September 2014 he moved to Berlin to complete his twelve month Creative New Zealand residency at Kunstlerhaus Bethanien.

Greg Semu joined the stable of artists at Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne in 2013.

Solo Exhibitions

1995  *O le Tatau Samoa, The Tattoo Art of Samoa*, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand

2001  *Antipodes*, Maison du Livre, de l’Image et du Son (MLIS), Villerbanne, France

2003  *Reflections*, 23 rue des Blancs Manteaux / 57 rue Charlot, Paris, France

2005  *DRAFT*, Gallerie Agnes B, Paris, France

2005  *Music for your eyes*, Artbeatactivate, Auckland, New Zealand

2005  *L’art urbain du Pacifique - Urban art from the Pacific*, Chateau de St Auvent, France

2008  *Strictly Samoa*, Penrith Regional Gallery and the Lewers Bequest, Emu Plains, New South Wales, Australia

2010  *The Last Cannibal Supper*, The Tjibaou Cultural Centre, Nouméa, New Caledonia

2011  *The Battle of the Noble Savage*, City Gallery Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand

2011  *The Last Cannibal Supper*, McNamara Gallery, Manganui, New Zealand

2012  *The Last Cannibal Supper*, Galerie Métropolis, Paris, France

2012  *Better to Give: The Greg Semu Archive*, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand

2013  *Paradise Lost? Contemporary Works from the Pacific*, Vancouver, BC, Canada

2013  *Battle of the Noble Savage*, Two Rooms Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand

2013  *Echo Island Family Portraits*, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

2014  *Greg Semu: The Battle of the Noble Savage*, Te Manawa Museum of Art, Science and History, Palmerston North, New Zealand

2015  *Two Bodies, Two Landscapes, Zwei Körper, zwei Lanschafte*, Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, Germany


Group Exhibitions

1994  *Bottled Ocean*, City Gallery Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand

1997  *Inei/Konei: The Pacific in Photo Art from Aotearoa*, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

1998  *Inei/Konei: The Pacific in Photo Art from Aotearoa*, The John Curtin Gallery, Perth, Western Australia, Australia

1999  *Tatau: Polynesian tattoo*, Museum of Ethnology, Köln, Germany

2000  *Partage d’exotismes*, 5th Biennale d’art contemporaine de Lyon, Halle Tony-Garnier, Lyon, France

2000  *Paris photo 2000*, Salon internationale pour la photographie, Carousel du Louvre, Paris, France

2002  *Citoyens Bohèmes*, Printemps, 69 blv Haussmann, Paris, France

2002  *Oeil pour oeil*, Collection Privée de Lyon, Centre d’Art de la Ville de Lyon, Lyon, France

2004  *Ka kino to pounamu he pounamu onamata*, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand

2005  *DRAFT*, Gallerie Agnes B, Paris, France

2005  *Music for your eyes*, Artbeatactivate, Auckland, New Zealand

2005  *L’art urbain du Pacifique - Urban art from the Pacific*, Chateau de St Auvent, France

© Greg Semu and Beverly Knight, Alcaston Gallery, 2015
2005  *Smoke and Mirrors*, Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
2007  *The Scrum of Cultures*, Musee du Quai Branly, Paris, France
2009  *The Great Journey, In Pursuit of the Ancestral Realm*, Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Art, Kaohsiung City, Taiwan
2010  *roundabout*, Wellington City Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
2010  *Tiaho (To Shine)*, Instituto de Latino Mexico, and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Coyocan, Mexico City, Mexico
2010  *Body Pacifica*, Casula Powerhouse, Casula, New South Wales, Australia
2010-11  *Unnerved: The New Zealand Project*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
2011  *Oceania*, Wellington City Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
2011  *The Fragmented Body*, Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
2011  *Niu Warrior*, Casula Powerhouse, Casula, New South Wales, Australia
2011  *Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Signature Art Prize 2011*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore, Singapore
2012  *Pacifica Power*, Casula Powerhouse, Casula, New South Wales, Australia
2012  *The 7th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia
2012  *So Fukin Native*, Black Dot Gallery, Melbourne Fringe Festival, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
2012  *Home AKL*, Toi o Tamaki, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
2012  *Variable Truth*, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
2012  *The Inaugural Pulima Arts Festival 2012*, Indigenous People Cultural Foundation, Taipei, Taiwan
2013  *2013 Contemporary Aboriginal Art*, Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in conjunction with the Ministry of Culture, National Science Council and the National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan
2013  *Body on the line & Mana Pasifika*, Logan Art Gallery, Logan City, Queensland, Australia
2013  *Auckland Art Fair, The Cloud*, Queens Wharf, Auckland, New Zealand
2013  *Paradise Lost? Contemporary Works from the Pacific*, Satellite Gallery in conjunction with the Pacific Arts Association International Symposium at Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
2013  *Present history: a selection of photographs of New Zealand 1960s to the present*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia
2013  *Sydney Contemporary 13*, Carriageworks represented by Alcaston Gallery, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
2013  *62nd Blake Prize*, Galleries UNSW, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
2013  *All About Art* @ Depot Gallery, Sydney, New South Wales represented by Alcaston Gallery Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
2013  *Headcount*, Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
2014  *International Travelling Exhibition*, South East Museum of Photography in conjunction with the Queensland Centre for Photography, Daytona, USA
2014  *Fish Hooks and Moving Trees: Pacific Transformations in Australia*, BEMAC national touring exhibition, Pero Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville, Queensland, Australia
2014  *Stitching the Sea*, Blacktown Arts Centre, Blacktown, New South Wales, Australia
2014  *Melbourne Art Fair*, represented by Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
2014  *Daegu Photo Biennale 2014*, Daegu Metropolitan City, Korea
2014  *Tino i le Vā*, curated by Jacob Tolo, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
2015  *Personal Structures – Crossing Borders*, curated by GlobalArtAffairs Foundation, Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy
2015  *Sydney Contemporary 15*, Carriageworks represented by Alcaston Gallery, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
2015-16  *Passion: Fan Behaviour and Art*, Künstlerhaus Bethanien Berlin, Kunsthauß im KunstKulturQuartier, Nürnberg, Ludwig Muzeum, Budapest & Stadtgalerie, Kiel, Germany
2015  *All About Art: Brisbane*, White Canvas Gallery represented by Alcaston Gallery, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

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Awards
2011 Finalist, Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Signature Art Prize 2011
2013 People’s Choice Award Winner, 62nd Blake Prize

Collections
Artbank
Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
Casula Powerhouse, Casula, New South Wales, Australia
Hocken Collections, University of Otago, Otago, New Zealand
The James Wallace Art Trust, New Zealand
Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Kaohsiung City, Taiwan
Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, France
Musée d'arts Contemporain, Lyon, France
Museum für Völkerkunde der Stadt, Frankfurt, Germany
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia Capital Territory, Australia
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
Penrith Regional Gallery and Lewers Bequest, Emu Plains, New South Wales, Australia
Private collections in New Zealand, France and Australia
Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
Te Papa Tongarewa, Museum of New Zealand, Wellington New Zealand
The Tjibaou Cultural Centre, Nouméa, New Caledonia

Commissions
2007 Battle of the Noble Savage series, Museé du quai Branly, Paris, France
2010 The Last Cannibal Supper, cause tomorrow we become Christians, Tjibaou Cultural Centre, Noumea, New Caledonia
2010 Art Director and Photographer for Body Pacifica NRL Calendar for 'Body Pacifica: Connecting You to the Islands Festival, Casula Powerhouse Galleries, Casula, New South Wales, Australia
2012 Self portrait with Pe’a front, side and back. Sentinel Road Herne Bay, 2012, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand

Symposiums/Panel Discussions
2013 Panel member, Birds with Skymirrors, Carriageworks, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Artist Talks
2010 Floor talk, regarding the 'Body Pacifica' Exhibition Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Casula, New South Wales, Australia
2010 Australian Museum in house Artist Talks, Australian Museum, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
2011 Greg Semu talks to Reuben Friend, City Gallery Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand
2012 Artist Floor Talk for the Opening Weekend of the The 7th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Gallery of Modern Art and Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
2013 Body on the line with Greg Semu, Logan Art Gallery, Logan City, Queensland, Australia
2013 Leo Tano on Greg Semu, Sydney Contemporary 13, Carriageworks, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
2014 Séminaire sur la photographie à l'ecole du Louvre, Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, France

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2011 Lily Hacking, A fantasy of Paradise, Artzone, Issue no. 42

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2012 David Burnett, ‘The 7th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art’ catalogue, catalogue essay and images, Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Queensland, pp. 196-200
2012 Michael Fitzgerald, Greg Semu – Redefining Cultural Roots, Art Asia Pacific; Nov/Dec 2012, Issue 81, p 66
2012 Artlines – The 7th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, 4-2012 (DEC/JAN/FEB), Cover Photo
2012 Australia puts the art of the region on the table, The Art Newspaper, Number 241, December 2012, p. 27
2013 Asia Pacific Triennial 7, Australian Art Review, Mar/Apr 2013, p. 44
2013 Ji-Shen Loong, Transcending Histories & Disrupting the Present at APT7, Art Monthly Australia, May 2013 n 258, p. 9
2013 Professor Sasha Grishin, AM, FAHA, The 7th Asia Pacific Triennial, Craft Arts International, No.88, 2013, p. 85
2013 Exhibition and Workshop Program August to October 2013, Logan Art Gallery, Cover Photo
2013 Feature Ad for Alcaston Gallery at Sydney Contemporary, Art Collector, Issue 65, Jul-Sept
2013 Self Portrait with pe’a, Photofile, Vol. 93, Spring/Summer 2013-14, p. 108-112
2013 Launching on Troubled Waters, ArtAsiaPacific, Issue 86, Nov/Dec, p. 40
2013 A Research for Representation of Primitivity – Taiwan Contemporary Aboriginal Art Exhibition, 2013, exhibition publication, pp132-135
2014 Feature Ad for Alcaston Gallery at Melbourne Art Fair, Photofile, Autumn/Winter 2014
2014 Beverly Knight, ‘About the Artist’, Special Issue: Global Sport in the Pacific, The Contemporary Pacific - a Journal of Island Affairs, Volume 26, Number 2, pp. ix-x, 280, 302, 324, 346, 368, 388, 409, 433, 445, 457 & 553

Selected Artist Residencies
2007 Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, France
2008 Penrith Regional Gallery and Lewers Bequest, Emu Plains, New South Wales, Australia
2008 Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand
2009 Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Kaohsiung City, Taiwan
2010 Agency for the Development of Kanak Culture Centre, The Tjibaou Cultural Centre, Nouméa, New Caledonia
2011 Elcho Island Arts Centre, Elcho Island, Northern Territory, Australia
2014 Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre, Yirrkala, Northern Territory, Australia
2014 Creative Residency for Symbols of Power, The Cook Islands

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1 Ruth McDougall, ‘Unnerved: The New Zealand Project’ catalogue, catalogue essay and image, Queensland Art Gallery, Queensland, pp. 136
2 Capital Times – We’re all Pacific Islanders, 3 August 2011, http://www.capitaltimes.co.nz/We’re-all-Pacific-Islanders
3 Biography of Greg Semu by Greg Semu
4 Stuff – Art rewards ‘are there’, Steve Kilgallon, 30 October 2011, http://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/arts/5876344/Art-rewards-are-there