



RUKI FAMÉ

FIVE SCULPTURES



HORSE AND WARRIOR 2016

Steel

48 x 76 x 30 cm

\$4,400



WIL WIL BILONG MAN (MAN ON A BIKE) 2016

Steel

62 × 64 × 17 cm

\$4,400



HORSE WITH WARRIOR RIDER 2016

Steel

60 × 76 × 20 cm

\$4,400



TREE HAUS (TREEHOUSE) 2017

Steel

79 × 50 × 45 cm

\$4,400



BIKPELA TRAUSEL (BIG TORTOISE) 2016

Steel

36 × 60 × 51 cm

\$3,300

RUKI FAMÉ—KAMANO MAN

Born in Yohobo village, Eastern Highlands in 1952, sculptor Ruki Famé is arguably Papua New Guinea's most significant living artist. Educated further afield in Finintegu, Kainantu, Asaroka and Mount Hagen, Ruki subsequently found village life too restrictive and left to reside permanently in Port Moresby in 1968.

Working initially as a labourer with a small manufacturing company, Ruki was later trained as a welder; honing his technical skills in the fabrication of steel office furniture. Soon after, Famé had a short stint working with a *wantok* (literally 'one talk'—a person speaking one's own language¹) at Hara Hara Prints, one of the few indigenously owned and operated businesses in the country. Here, he met Georgina Beier, an English expatriate artist who went on to mentor almost the entire first generation of PNG contemporary artists. Thinking that Ruki was wasting his time working on an activity for which he was not suited, Georgina encouraged the nineteen year-old to use his existing skills to start his own business as an 'art' welder.

After a short time operating his own business, making steel security shutters, gates and screens, Famé had a brief stint in 1971 at Goroka Teachers College under the tutelage of Scottish artist Tom Craig. This was followed by a five year fellowship, as part of the first intake of promising and established artists, at the newly created National Art School in Port Moresby. Many of these 'fellows' went on to become the acknowledged 'masters' of contemporary PNG art.

Ruki Famé is one of the two great innovators in the history of contemporary PNG art, which flourished around the time of the country's independence in 1975. The other, Mathias Kauage O.B.E., who died in 2003, spawned a multi-generational school of imitators of his unique naïve painting style; many of whom still operate in the country's capital and beyond. A giant of a man, both literally and figuratively, Kauage's colourful and energetic renderings of contemporary urban life depicted the madness of the twentieth century from the viewpoint of a man with prehistoric origins.

Like Kauage's paintings, Famé's quirky figurative sculptures often reflect upon modern urban life. His wry observations of the peculiarities and effects of colonial subordination on a population largely drawn from the country's rural areas are simultaneously hilarious and poignant. A true innovator, Famé's large-scale sculptural commissions are seen on the facades of significant buildings and in prominent public places throughout the country. His style has inspired and influenced well known sculptors, such as Gikman Kundum, Beni More, Tommy Deko and many others.

Now sixty four years of age, Ruki Famé hadn't worked for a decade prior to this year. The sad and pitiable reason is: In a country which is one of the world's largest exporters of natural gas, the artist simply couldn't afford the bottled oxygen and acetylene he required for cutting and welding the steel from

1. PNG has more than 700 separate languages.

which his sculptures are made. Sadly, in PNG, bottled gas, like so many other commodities, is imported from overseas. This puts it well out of the reach of ordinary people.

Comprising eighteen extraordinary sculptures, the works in this exhibition are constructed from the detritus of modern life: steel from burned-out cars, empty fuel drums and whatever the artist can salvage. The subject matter covers disparate human activity, from customary subjects such as an Assaro mud man, a trio of Tolai Duk-Duk dancers and a highlands warrior holding his dead son, to an enchanting portrayal of modern city life with a man riding a bicycle.

'Sexy lady', depicting a naked woman running with a cup of 'grog' in one hand and her underpants in the other, is the most recent in a long line of Famé's well-known *pamuk* (prostitute) works. This penetrating rendition of modern city life comments upon the demoralizing effects, upon some, of daily existence in a post-colonial world.

At the same time, Famé's observations of bestial life are simultaneously charming and shocking. Comprising superb characterizations of both domestic animals and wildlife, the works include a pair of horses with men, a pig, a tortoise and a *pukpuk kaikai meri* (woman-eating crocodile).

Having exhibited over many decades in Asia, Australia, Canada, England, Europe and PNG, this will be Ruki Famé's first solo exhibition in Australia.

RUKI FAMÉ

BIOGRAPHY

Born	15 September 1952
Country	Papua New Guinea (PNG)
Province	Eastern Highlands
Village	Yohobo
District	Henganofi
Tribe	Kafe'
Clan	Jofa
Language 1	Kamano-Kafe'
Language 2	Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin)
Language 3	English

CHRONOLOGY

From 1959	Attended Lutheran Primary School at Finintegu followed by schooling at Kainantu, Asaroka and Mount Hagen where he completed Standard VI
1967	Ran uncle's trade store in Yohobo for 6 months
1968–70	Arrived Port Moresby, PNG—employed by Allied Enterprises as a grass cutter, painter, brickmaker and welder
1970	Worked at Hara Hara Prints, Port Moresby, PNG
1971	Worked for four months as an artist at the Centre for New Guinea Cultures, University of Papua New Guinea, Boroko, Port Moresby, PNG
1971	Goroko Teachers College, Goroko, PNG
1972–77	Fellowship at the National Art School, Port Moresby, PNG
2016	Lives and works, Port Moresby, PNG

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2016	<i>Kamano man</i> , Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane
2004	<i>Ruki Fame: Man of Steel</i> , Alcheringa Gallery, Victoria, BC, Canada
1978	<i>Ruki Fame</i> , National Arts School, Port Moresby, PNG
1977	<i>Ruki Fame</i> , National Arts School, Port Moresby, PNG
1976	<i>Ruki Fame</i> , National Arts School, Port Moresby, PNG
1973	<i>An exhibition of new sculpture by Ruki Fame</i> , National Arts School, Port Moresby, PNG
1971	<i>Ruki Fame: Screens and lamps</i> , University of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, PNG

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2016	<i>No.1 Neighbour: Art in Papua New Guinea 1966–2016</i> , Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
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- 2008 *Altogether: Contemporary Papua New Guinea Art*, East-West Center Gallery, Honolulu, Hawai'i, USA
- 2003 *Changchu International Sister-Cities Sculpture Symposium*, Changchun World Sculpture Park, Jilin Province, China
- 1998 *New Colours from Old Worlds: Contemporary Art from Oceania*, October Gallery, London, UK
- 1988 *Pieces of Paradise*, Australian Museum, Sydney

SELECTED COMMISSIONS

Architecture Building, Unitech, Lae, PNG
 Henganofi Council, Eastern Highlands Province, PNG
 Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, Port Moresby, PNG
 National Parliament of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, PNG
 Papua New Guinea Coffee Industry Corporation Ltd, Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province, PNG
 Rural Development Bank Building, Waigani, Port Moresby, PNG
 University of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, PNG

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beier, Ulli. 'From 'Boy Wire to Art—Ruki Fame', *Decolonising the Mind: The impact of the University on culture and identity in Papua New Guinea, 1971–74*, Pandanus Books, Canberra, 2005

Boulay, Roger; Mel, Michael A.; Gama, Henri, Maillot Win-Nemou, Sandra. *La Peinture des Papous*, Éditions Parenthèses, Rochefort, 2007

Cochrane, Susan. *Luk Luk Gen! Look Again! Contemporary art from Papua New Guinea*, Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville, 1990

Cochrane, Susan. *Contemporary art in Papua New Guinea, Craftsman House*, G&B Arts International, Sydney, 1997

Cochrane, Susan. *Contemporary art from Oceania* [ex. cat.], The October Gallery, London, 1997

Preece, R.J., 'New colours from Old Worlds: Contemporary Art from Oceania at October Gallery, London (1998–99)', *ART AsiaPacific*, Vol. 24, p. 92

Specht, Jim R. *Pieces of Paradise* [ex. cat.], Australian Museum Trust, Sydney, 1988

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

ASIA

Changchun World Sculpture Park, Jilin Province, China

AUSTRALIA

Australian Museum, Sydney

EUROPE

Völkerkundemuseum am Münsterplatz, Basel, Switzerland

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery, Port Moresby, PNG

National Parliament of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, PNG

Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, Port Moresby, PNG

University of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, PNG

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