

SHARED ASPIRATIONS

TALOI HAVINI & MARILYN 'TALEO' HAVINI

15 SEPTEMBER - 22 NOVEMBER 2025



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Warning

Please be aware that this exhibition contains images of deceased people. Please also be mindful that the content contains documentation of human rights abuses that may be confronting for some audience members.

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Inspired by a line that the late Bougainvillean statesman Moses Havini (1947 – 2015) wrote in a love letter in the 1960s, *Shared Aspirations* revisits an exhibition of work by his daughter Taloi, presented at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in 2023. At Taloi's request, this exhibition included works by her mother Marilyn, the recipient of the letter.

An Australian by birth, Marilyn was adopted into her husband Moses Havini's clan in 1970. Marilyn supported Moses as representative of the Interim Government of Bougainville during their exile in Sydney. The couple played a key role in the Bougainville Peace Process enabling them to return to live on ancestral lands in 2000. Throughout her life, painting remained at the core of Marilyn's identity and her artworks provide personal and deep insights into a wider story of what

shared aspirations mean for her and the people of Bougainville.

Her daughter Taloi was born in Arawa, Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Taloi graduated from the Australian National University School of Art in 2003 and since then has created an award winning, international reputation for ambitious and often site-specific work informed by her matrilineal ties to land and communities in Bougainville.

Bringing together archives, video, and paintings, *Shared Aspirations* is presented at a critical juncture in Bougainville's journey towards Independence inviting us to share the art of two women whose lives have both contributed to - and been shaped by - the Bougainville's people's pursuit of cultural, economic and political self-determination.

Words by Ruth McDougall.



An invitation to see



MARILYN HAVINI

Rose, Ruth and Lilian, Kessa, 1978

1978

Oil on canvas

75 x 108cm (framed)

Collection of Taloi Havini, Brisbane

When Marilyn arrived - newly wed - in Bougainville in the early 1970s, she carried with her the desire to embark on a life defined by love, faith and art. In the headiness of first love, Marilyn joyfully embraced the opportunity to support Moses and his journey to better the lot of his people. Tied to the daily rhythms of gardening and preparing food, there was little time for art and when there was, there was always the question of with what authority she could speak.

In a talk that she recently gave at NorthSite Contemporary, Marilyn recalls that it was in the families *kaukau* (sweet potato) garden, sitting injured on the ground listening to Moses female kin working around her that she realised that what was in front of her, was precisely what she could share. She could contribute by making others aware of the beauty and love that existed in the everyday world of the people who had adopted her as theirs.

While undeniably Australian in their artistic inheritance, Marilyn's early paintings departed from those of her artistic forbears and contemporaries. Separated from and unencumbered by the prevailing art discourses in Sydney and fully immersed in the world view of her husband and new

family, Marilyn began to understand the spiritual importance of their connections to the land. As she began to paint, it was less to capture the physical features of the landscapes before her or to intellectually engage in a conversation around aesthetics or abstraction, rather, her practice became a means of feeling and participating in a deep love of people and place.

In *Rose, Ruth and Lilian, Kessa, 1978* the informal stance of a young Tassero (Ruth) watching her cousins leaning into the baskets they are weaving, captures perfectly the intimacy and ease of family life that Marilyn sought.

Sites of significance



MARILYN HAVINI

Rainbow over Ngalkobul

2023

Oil on canvas

64 x 94 x 6cm (framed)



MARILYN HAVINI

Embarkation, Pororan Island

2022

Oil on canvas

64 x 94cm (framed)



MARILYN HAVINI

Mt Bagana from Premiers Hill

2023

Oil on canvas

60 x 89cm (framed)

Painted for the *Shared Aspirations* exhibition at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery this group of works flows from a road trip that Marilyn and Taloi took across Bougainville on one of Taloi's visits home in 2023. Visiting sites of both historical and personal significance the trip enabled both artists to reconnect with landscapes and individuals that had shaped their lives and that of the Bougainville people.

Marilyn returned to her studio in Ngalkobul village on Buka Island with photographs to paint. The display at NorthSite features a selection of these landscapes.

As you enter the exhibition, there is a view from Marilyn's home across the village to the Tsuhana or meeting house in which leaders of the Nakas clan meet to discuss matters of culture and law and at which the community gathers to mark important occasions such as marriages and death.

This painting documents family members walking across the mudflats as they set off from Pororan Island where they had been attending a family event, back across Queen Carolla Harbour to Kessa point on Buka Island.

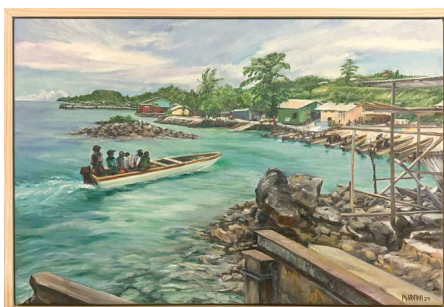
The sunrise view from Premiers Hill has made this a popular site on the Kieta Peninsula in Bougainville. Renamed from the previous District Commissioner or DC hill, this point acknowledges the first Premier of Bougainville, Dr Alexis Sarei and the volcano is visible rising behind the town of Arawa – the former administrative seat the North Solomons Province. From here on a clear day it is possible to look north towards the peak of Bougainville's most active volcano Mount Bagana as it sends puffs of smoke into the atmosphere. Marilyn has chosen to paint this scene to communicate the potential for explosive destruction amongst the quiet, beauty of South and Central Bougainville's landscape. Almost to prove this point, Mount Bagana violently erupted the week that these works were first hung in Dunedin.



MARILYN **HAVINI**

Kangu wharf, Buin
2023
Oil on canvas
46 x 50cm (framed)

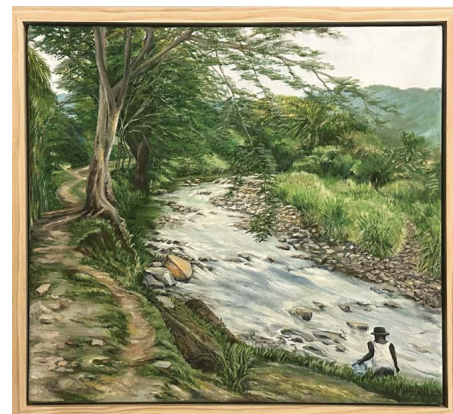
This painting documents the Kangu wharf in Buin. A small Methodist Mission school was located next to the Buin primary school at Kangu beach. It was attended by Moses and many boys from other parts of the island. In his memoir Moses remembers the hours he spent with other boys exploring the relics, tunnels and dungeons left behind after the Japanese military's occupation of this area in World War 2. The beach further up near Malabita was also a key defensive position during the Bougainville conflict and only a short distance from the Solomon Islands Province of Choiseul provided a launching and landing site for boats seeking to run the blockade.



MARILYN **HAVINI**

Kokapau, Buka Passage
2023
Oil on canvas
60 x 89cm (framed)

Deep, with crystal clear fast flowing waters and strong currents, the narrow stretch of water that separates Buka from Bougainville once had ferries that enabled easy passage and the maintenance of relationships between families, individuals and clans on both sides. This freedom was taken away after a confrontation in 1990 at the Buka Passage between the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), after which the PNGDF forces controlled Buka Island keeping the passage as a barrier. Today, the passage remains a natural boundry between the two islands, crossed only by small banana boats.



MARILYN **HAVINI**

Tupukas River, Arawa
2023
Oil on canvas
46 x 50cm (framed)

Speaking to Taloi's *Habitat* series this painting of a Central Bougainvillean man collecting water from the Tupukas river, documents Bougainvilleans ongoing attempts to live within their devastated natural environment. Tupukas river runs through the Central Bougainville, coastal town of Arawa, where Taloi was born and the Havini family lived prior to their exile in Australia. The river flows down from the Crown Prince Range where the Australian mining company Rio Tinto began prospecting for copper from the early 1960's. A large open-pit mine was brought into operation in Panguna in 1972 but closed in 1989 following a secessionist uprising on Bougainville. Today the headwaters of the Tupukas are used by local landowners for prospecting the abandoned mine tailings and benches. Despite warnings, from the recording of high levels of mercury, this river remains a major water source.

Sites of significance



MARILYN HAVINI

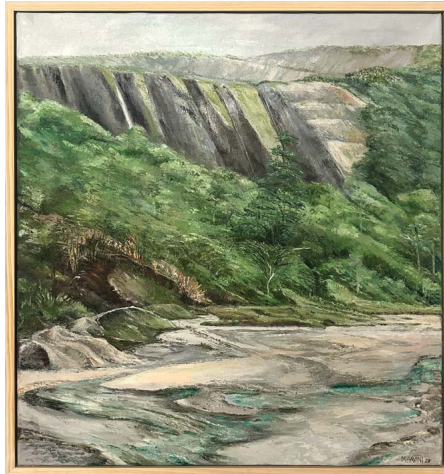
Bel Isi (Peace Park), Buka

2023

Oil on canvas

60 x 89cm (framed)

In this painting Marilyn captures the bustle of activity that greets visitors to *Bel Isi (peace park)* in Buka town. The site of local markets, music and festival events as well as large community gatherings the park is also a space for peaceful reflection and mourning. Marilyn communicates these two contrasting functions documenting groups gathering under a large spreading shade tree on the right-hand side with open sky and three tall verticals on the left. One of the verticals, a single tall coconut tree marks the site of the mass graves that were dug by members of the Papua New Guinean Defence Forces for the Buka civilians who they mowed down with machine guns as they invaded the island in the 1990s. Nearby is a cross, on which a sculpture of a black Christ is nailed, a memorial to martyrs.



MARILYN HAVINI

Tailings wall, Panguna

2023

Oil on canvas

97 x 89cm (framed)

Tailings are a major legacy of the Panguna mine in Bougainville, with nearly a billion tonnes of mining waste released directly into local rivers between 1972 and 1989. Today large walls of the fine-grained waste material left over after the valuable minerals have been extracted from ore have become a landscape feature in themselves and are prospected by landowners for ore.



MARILYN HAVINI

Pit Bottom, Panguna

2023

Oil on canvas

97 x 89cm (framed)

The large open-cut pit created by Bougainville Copper Limited whilst its Panguna mine was in operation was abandoned in 1989 when conflict erupted with local landowners. As the forest attempts to return to this deeply scarred landscape, the site has become a local attraction.



TALOI HAVINI

Tsomi wan-bel

2017

3 channel video, 9.42 min

Installation view, *Shared Aspirations*,
Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2023.

Photo: Justin Spears

Commissioned by Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney
for Myuran Sukumaran | *Another Day in Paradise*.

Exhibited in the corner of the Gallery, Taloi Havini's video triptych *Tsomi wan-bel* (win-win situation) invites viewers to sit and connect with an intimate portrayal of the people and customs of Bougainville. Across the three screens are images of village life, of people talking and drinking tea, of a pig being prepared for a feast. We are in fact witness

to preparations for a traditional mediation ceremony where customary justice will be applied to a dispute between villagers.

As Taloi allows these interactions to gently unfold, the audience bears witness to the collective event and is invited to consider the centuries old systems of reconciliation and justice that exist within this context.



Bearing witness

During the years living exiled in Australia, Moses and Marilyn worked alongside, supporters in the Bougainville Freedom movement to raise awareness about the impact that the war was having on the regions people. In 1995 Marilyn compiled and published the first of two publications documenting the *Human Rights abuses against the peoples of Bougainville 1989 - 1995* that Moses' contacts in Bougainville updated them of daily. Without visual evidence, it remained difficult however to capture an international publics hearts and support. Amongst the strategies explored was the sending of instant cameras over the military blockade and into the hands of the community on the frontlines in the hope of getting some visual proof back.

Miraculously in December 1996, Marilyn received a Christmas card from the Solomon Islands with the negatives from one of the cameras. These haunting images, documenting the massacre of women and children in Malabita, Buin provided undeniable proof of the extent of the human rights abuses occurring and turned the tables, revealing the Australian involvement in the crisis.

It wasn't until after the Peace Agreement had been negotiated and Moses and Marilyn were preparing to move home to Bougainville to build the rest of their life that Marilyn was emotionally able to engage with the war years as subject for her painting. Created between 2003 and 2005 in Sydney and titled the *Bougainville: Revolution Evolution* series, these paintings bear witness to key events of the past decade from the Malabita massacre to the signing of the peace agreement in Arawa in 2001. The two paintings from this series on display here, mark Marilyn's turn towards 'history' painting and provide insight into the key role that the Havini's played in raising awareness of the human rights abuses against the peoples of Bougainville.

Following the ceasefire of 1997, Marilyn and Moses travelled by helicopter high in the mountains of Central Bougainville, above the mine tailings, for a two-day meeting with the

Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom. They continued to Pipipaia Village, to meet with Chief Arivura who had approached the Papua New Guinea and Australian governments with the question 'why are you killing my people.'

After listening to Arivura's account of the PNG defence forces massacres of his people in 1991 and the murder of his only son (after torture by fire), Moses asked 'what do you want us to do?' Arivura's replied 'Let my people go.'

Marilyn responded to way in which this message reflected the mandate that Moses had himself lived his life by – from the very early instruction from the Buka chiefs in 1972 to appeal to Chief Minister Michael Somare for independence through to his international roles to Australia and the United Nations. Playing with scale and message, Marilyn, describes this painting as a story within a story. She recounts that

One of the banners we used to have said 'Medicine not mortars. No blood for copper'. Streaming from this banner the blood of the Chief's son becomes like the spirit of his father trying to hold on, but it turns into bullets.

In 1996 the children of Malabita, Buin were killed with their families by PNG Defence force mortar fire during their early morning worship in a bush shelter church. Images of them laid out for burial had been seared into Marilyn's memory since she had received the first photographic evidence of deliberate abuses conducted by the PNGDF in a declared 'peace zone' in Bougainville.

To this grim scene Marilyn adds the faces of a group of children peering through the grass, a vision that met her and Moses as they arrived by helicopter in a jungle clearing as they returned to Bougainville after the ceasefire in 1998. Drawing on her own grief and trauma, Marilyn imagines the impact that such scenes would have on the innocent minds of the young presented in her painting as looking eagerly toward the future.



MARILYN HAVINI

Go tell it on the mountain to let my people go (from Bougainville Evolution Revolution)

2004

Oil on canvas

162 x 160 x 3cm

Collection of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville Government



MARILYN HAVINI

For the Children (from Bougainville Evolution Revolution Series)

2004

Oil on canvas

140 x 180cm

Collection of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville Government

Home away from home



MARILYN HAVINI

TV lounge installation

2023-25

Single-channel video of archival footage

Archival ABC Footage: Scratching the Surface; Blood on the Bougainvillea; 7:30 Report and My valley is changing.

Footage: Moses Havini (1947-2015): Inauguration of the Bougainville Reconciliation Government, Arawa 2001 and 2005

Commissioned by the Dunedin Public Art Gallery with support from Creative New Zealand

Within this corner we encounter an installation inspired by the Havini families suburban Sydney lounge room. On the walls hang family portraits and beloved landscapes, painted by Marilyn as she fell in love with place and people. In the centre of the space Taloi has placed a lounge where visitors can sit and watch a compilation of archival footage relating to Bougainville she has curated from reels about the conflict during the 1990's as well as Moses super 8 footage of the inauguration of the Bougainville Reconciliation government in 2001 and 2005.

This was the period, when Taloi, her parents and siblings, were exiled to her maternal grandmother's home in Sydney. During this time, Moses and Marilyn worked from Bettie's home to translate stories received via mission skeds and shortwave radio into the co-ordinates and lists that they would engage media and attract international awareness about the ongoing conflict. The ensuing stories, aired on the families TV on the nightly news formed an intimate part of Taloi's childhood and her families dislocated connection to Bougainville and its people.



MARILYN HAVINI

Mangrove Beach, Kessa

1982

Oil on canvas

89 x 58.5cm (framed)

Collection of Solomon Havini and family

Mangrove Beach, returns to Kessa, the landscape in which Marilyn's 1978 painting of Rose, Ruth and Lilian was completed en plein air albeit on the northern side of Kessa Point. We see the first inklings of her interest in the drama of the cloud formations that race from the Solos mountains, across Queen Carolla Harbour and out towards the islands of Malulu and Pororan that have become such a strong focus of more recent paintings. In this deeply atmospheric work, the clouds appear to be racing the tide as it runs out from the beach.



MARILYN HAVINI

Rikha asleep on wapu

1974
Oil on canvas
55 x 54cm (framed)

Painted as birthday present for Moses, this intimate portrait is of the couple's first born Rikha as a toddler asleep in Papa Havini's home in Tanamalo. Rested in sleep Rikha's face almost fills the frame as indeed his presence must have felt like one of the central anchors in her life at that time. Marilyn painted the portrait by tilly lamp, capturing the soft, warm flush of gentle light across her child's features and imbuing the portrait with a sense of tenderness and love.



MARILYN HAVINI

Chief Jonathan Havini in Tanamalo Tshana

1977
Oil on canvas
71 x 69cm (framed)
Collection of the artist, Buka

Pivotal to sense of belonging that Marilyn felt amongst Moses family was the close relationship that she developed with her father-in-law, Chief Jonathan Havini, who had adopted her into his own clan to ensure her (and her children's) ongoing connection to land and people. Marilyn shares that in the early days

The women were still too shy, only Papa would really relate to me.... He taught me to weave. ... Papa and I were best buddies.

In her 1978 portrait of Papa Havini, Marilyn paints him in his own Naboin clan's centre of governance and culture, the meeting house or Tshana in Tanamalo. At ease and resting in a soft laplap Jonathan Havini looks directly at the viewer. His look is one of wisdom, strength and confidence, tempered with compassion and - in the gentle upturn of his mouth - humour. Papa Havini's chiefly power resides - as Marilyn's portrait directs us - in his magnificent hands which rest gently on his knee and the bench on which he rests. Marilyn's sensitive foregrounding of the strength and vulnerability of Chief Havini's hands, captures the combination of humanity and hard work that goes into being a Chief - in more than name.



MARILYN HAVINI

Hutjena clifftop

1982
Oil on canvas
56 x 50cm (framed)
Collection of Torohin Havini and family

Marilyn painted this view of Hanahan sitting outside of the local level government office on the Hutjena cliff top. This site was significant to her as the first place in which the colonial government recognised the authority of Buka's traditional chiefs, creating the office for them to meet and engage in government matters. On his graduation and return to Buka from Port Moresby, Moses presented himself to the chiefs in this building to ask them how they would like him to serve his people. Their response 'Go back to Port Moresby and tell those people to let our people go'.

Sitting on this site Marilyn looked up the East coast to Moses ancestral land in the North. With sky occupying over half the canvas her painting explores a growing interest in clouds. There is also the beginning of Marilyn's exploration of scale, foreground and background with the tall grass against the big bush.

Habitat



TALOI HAVINI

Habitat

2017

Three-channel HD video: 10:40 minutes, colour, 5.1 surround sound, 16:9

Installation view, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2017. Photo: Felicity Jenkins

Commissioned for *The National 2017: New Australian Art*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

The *Habitat* series flows from the commitment that Taloi has made to exploring the intersections of history, the environment and nation-building within the matrilineal social structures of her birthplace, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

The second of three films dedicated to this commitment, *Habitat*, 2017 takes viewers over and through the ruins of the Panguna copper mine and its residues in the environment and in people's lives. The eleven-minute video is a mesmerising

evocation of place, sound and water and centres on the former extraction of mineral resources on the massive scale associated with industrial globalisation. Even 30 years after Panguna's closure, the pollution from the tailings into the rivers is still obvious. Featuring wide landscape shots of the now ruined mine infrastructure and the devastation of the landscape it inhabits, *Habitat*, 2017 records how local landowners - now mining for gold as well as harvesting food - attempt to survive on wreckage of their ancestral lands.