



TATTOOS

Story Lines

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Logan City Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways across the City of Logan. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. They hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of Australia's First Peoples.

TATTOOS: STORY LINES

Tattoos are an artform that span centuries, transcend borders and speak across generations. A tattoo can be your message to the world, an acknowledgement of your heritage and cultural roots, an emblem of identity, a playful souvenir for a memory, a declaration of love or processing of grief. Tattoos are a statement of self.

Tattoos: Story Lines shares the journeys and stories of the people of Logan through tattoo lines. Featuring 8 stories and portraits, this exhibition captures the essence of the voice, power and pride tattoos bring to the people who choose to adorn them.

Cover image: Taitu'uga Kitch Wesche, 2024, Photography by Genya Baikaloff.

Left image: Sally Terare (Butchulla, Bundjalung), *Wander Free*, 2021, Stencilled StreetBond™. *Wander Free* is a contemporary design that shows how the flora, fauna and environment of the area are interconnected. It also shows how each of us connect with nature.



TAITU'UGA KITCH WESCHE

Carseldine

Could you share about your background and what has led you to where you are today?

Talofa Lava, my name is Taitu'uga Kitch Wesche. I'm so honoured I was bestowed the Tulafale Alii title Taitu'uga, high talking chief title from Sapunaoa Falealili from my clan Manusamoa Isamaeli. I'm an artist and a cultural facilitator, meaning I try to pay it forward to our next generation to make sure our culture is intact. I'm a musician, I work in theatre, song writing and film. I'm also a son, a father, and a cultural ambassador for my country.

Could you talk about how being brought up in Logan has influenced your path?

Logan has a special place in my heart; (in) 1996 we made the migration to Australia, and we lived in Logan. Logan has been such a big stepping stone for me as a young man. There are 3 different areas that Pasifika people move, so you either go to Logan, Deception Bay or Ipswich because a lot of communities congregate to where your people are. Our family moved close to our church, which was the LDS Samoan Beenleigh Second Ward, which played a massive part in my upbringing as it was in my native language. We grew up not knowing how important language was. Logan has a place in my heart for growing as an artist and recognising my cultural identity.

What does tatau represent to those that adorn these tattoos?

I'm so honoured and privileged that our elders held onto the ceremony, as we were the only ones that held onto this traditional way of Au or the tattooing comb, which means the strike. We were very lucky that the families Su'a and Tuluega were the two clans that kept the tradition going and kept the knowledge and practice alive throughout all of colonisation. It's more than just a tattoo, it's a rite of passage, it's connecting with your ancestors, for me, connecting with my culture.

I saw my grandfather Taitu'uga Esau Rokeni and his brother Taitu'uga Tuiloma Fa'alolou, all my uncles, my aunties, and my grandmothers, they all got tatau. Seeing that gave me power that I wanted to receive tatau too. Those who have tatau know that it means to serve your community, your people and your family. It's not just a tattoo. For me it's about reconnecting to who you are as a Samoan, you have to wear it with pride and serve your community. It represents my clan, my ancestors, my village, my people. I have a lot of tattoos, and this is the main one – the final one.

Can you share the process of having tatau done? What was it like for you physically and emotionally?

It's not just you involved; it's your whole family. It's a big ceremony where family can come watch, food is cooked, and people sing. It's about uniting together to support the person who's getting tattooed in that ceremony, it's called a journey. It's a long painful process, mine took 6 days. For me to have my family there supporting was so important.

I crossed over to the spiritual realm, my partner said I was losing a lot of blood and started hallucinating. One session, I was in the spirit world, and I remember seeing someone who told me to stop. In our culture to not finish tatau is taboo; it's a bad omen for you and your family. Then I remember turning and seeing these dark old ancient people who I've never met before, they were all in their traditional wear with their weapons and they all had tatau. I knew straight away they were my ancestors, for me seeing this as a vision when I was in the depths of the pain, it was support from the spirit world. You can watch as many videos as you want to prepare for tatau, but when you feel the first strike that's when it sinks in, because you know how big the tattoo is. But I was so determined, you need to be 100% ready.



Image: Genya Baikloff, 2024

DEANNE HUDSON

Greenbank

Can you tell us about you, Dee? What led you to settle here for the last 30 years?

I'm 56 years old, and myself and my husband Glen have lived here since July 1995, which is 30 years this year. We've raised 2 children in this house. We were living in Sydney just after we got married in the early 90s. We moved back up here and were living with my parents near Springfield, but we wanted to buy our own property. I knew the family that lived here at the time, I had worked with the mother of the family that lived here. She was like a second mum to me. She just mentioned to me one day that they were thinking of selling. I mentioned it to my husband, and we came down to have a look at the house, we loved it. We made them an offer and that was it. So that's how we came to be here, and we've been here ever since.

Did you intend to settle in this house when you first moved do you think?

We're not the sort of people who plan things; we just go where life takes us. We've never really had a plan; the plan is now that we can't bring ourselves to move from here. We love it and can't think of being anywhere else.

How do you feel being a part of the Logan community and what does this community represent to you?

I do try to involve myself in the community, for example I have a street library on my fence so that brings people together a bit and I've had an article about it in Logan West News.

Can you share with us how you started getting tattoos yourself?

My first tattoo was in the late 1990s, it's a little teddy bear; it was really just a fun thing. I used to work for Surf Life Saving Association, and I was in my late 20s with a group of friends, hanging out at Surfers Paradise. There was a little tattoo shop and we just all rocked up there. I really didn't think at the time that it had a lot of meaning but now 30 years later it really means much more. It relates to that quote "life is what happens to you when you're busy making other plans" and the meaning at the time that I had it done for me was that I was with a really great group of people, having fun and that's what I relate this one to.

Can you tell us about the osprey wing that you have tattooed on your arm?

So, this is a cover up, not because I didn't want the tattoo anymore but because I had the name of a young man who was very close to our family who took his life in 2018. Last year I had in my mind that I'd like to re-do it in his honour, so I still have his initials underneath, and I absolutely love osprey birds. They scour the seabed for their prey, and they dive down under the surface of the water. There's this amazing moment where you don't think the osprey is going to resurface, he's just completely disappeared. Then he will resurface with a fish or 2 in his mouth or claws and he's still struggling to get out of the ocean and the surge of the waves, and they just do not give up. There's some footage where they lose the fish, but only in the circumstances where it's been hit by another huge wave, and they just can't hold onto it. To me it's an analogy, it's not saying that it's bad to give up but it's that little bit of hope and resilience and not losing yourself when you're presented with obstacles in life. I come from a pretty straight and practical family, so it's been a big thing me having this tattoo on my arm. For me, I love it because my tattoos raise conversations with people, it can be about an osprey or who drew it for me, or mental illness. I love that part of it.

I also have my dash tattoo, which relates to the poem 'the dash'. It represents the dash between your birth date and death date and it's important what you do in between. For me, my dash is just about living a life of values that are important to you. These 2 tattoos send out a message of hope to people.



Image: Genya Baikloff, 2024

SU'A FAAMANATU SULUAPE AND LOLO SULUAPE

Can you tell us about yourself, and your connection to Logan?

I'm Faamanatu Suluape, from Samoa. I was born and raised in Samoa. I came to Australia in 2013, I came to Australia to work and help my family in Samoa. We migrated straight here to Logan.

Lolo: He's born of the Suluape bloodline, they're the traditional family of the Samoan tatau. The Suluape family is well known because they've continued to pass down the practise from father to son – the gift. They basically have no other option in life but to serve Samoa. He's been tattooing since the age of 16, learning, but they have a ceremony where they're given their tools. He didn't have his ceremony until he was 29, and he took it very seriously. Logan has been a good base, it's been Su'a's home base since he was welcomed to Australia in 2013, we moved straight to Kingston. This is a celebration for our family. Logan's our home.

What does tatau represent to you?

It represents my culture. It's a stepping stone to manhood.

Lolo: Back in the day kids were tattooed as young as 13, and done the traditional way, with hot wax. Su'a was the last tatau that his father did the traditional way. Su'a is the only one who lives outside of Samoa, he works for his family, he supports his family on his own. It's been an incredibly successful and emotional journey, and his father would be so proud. It has its days, but if anything, I think tatau saved his life. Because he always says to me, he doesn't know where he would be without tatau. Overall, tatau is a stepping stone to manhood, that's why your belly button is the last piece done, because it's the separation from your mother's umbilical cord.

This is a tradition that has remained strong within Samoan culture, how has it remained strong or how has it changed?

Back in the day traditions were followed, now that we've been colonised and we live more in the European world the Samoans have lost their native tongue, their values, and the culture.

Lolo: A lot of things change, you can see work done in Samoa with the traditional culture and values, the Chief or Orator are the only ones on the same rank as the Tufuga (Tatau Master). In Australia, there is less respect for the Tufuga. It's good that we can showcase this for our youth in the community, in Logan. It has its ups and downs doing this work in Australia but if anything, it's been the most rewarding experience for us, and especially me – I was born in New Zealand, raised in Australia. I never thought this would be the way of life I'd be living.

You very much work together, you're a unit. You both share the same values and mission for the work you do.

Lolo: Everyone says that! We get told this by every creative we work with. We love this, and we've always been about educating the youth about tatau, big time. Especially in Australia, because slowly along the way, we're going to lose this. My son he's learning how to stretch holding the skin taut for the Tufuga, you'll see my son is now going through the process of being a Tufuga. Su'a is very strong on education, education first.

Do you have any messages you want to share with people about your art?

May they be enlightened by the world of tatau, when you carry your markings, you're embarking on a journey of service and reverence. You carry your family, you carry your country, you carry your village. I hope people can be enlightened by our culture and embrace it. This is where tattoos started from.



Image: Genya Baikloff, 2024

LINDA ORCHARD

Can you tell us a bit about you, Linda?

My father's family immigrated to Australia in 1968, I was born in '78, south of Wollongong. I lived there for the first 30 years of my life, I loved it there – beaches, sand, mountains. There's not much more you can ask for as a kid.

And your father immigrated from Wales?

Yes, so the Rhondda Valley in South Wales, it's a mining town. I've visited before, it's small. The kind of place that you don't really get out of. So, for my grandparents to leave, was huge. They left everything, they came here with a suitcase each.

What do you enjoy about working at Kingston Butter Factory and the community and audiences that come here?

It's the different events that we have here, you can have Pinoy Day which is a Filipino celebration, and then the next week you have Pasifika fire dancing on the stage. It's great, you always learn something from someone else, something from their culture instead of your own.

Can you share with us about the tattoos on your calves and what they signify to you?

So, the Davy lamp, it was designed by Sir Humphry Davy. It's a self-contained light, so they can take it into the mines, they've got a lamp on one side and a canary on the other side. If the canary died, you'd get out of the mines because obviously they'd hit a gas pocket. But the flames wouldn't ignite, so it was like their safety lamps. My nan had a Welsh one on her mantelpiece, she would polish it and really look after it. When my grandfather passed away, there was a bit of chaos and my nan told me you can take whatever you want from the house, and I told her I only want the Davy lamp, she turned around and took it off the wall and gave it to me and that was such a moment. I had to tell my dad she had given it to me, he had always wanted it for years. I offered it to him, but he said "no, she gave it to you" so the tattoos relate to the village my dad is from, it's a coal mining place. My father was 17 when they moved here, my grandparents said they moved here because they didn't want him working in the mines. Once the mines are all closed, there's no work in the village where he grew up.

What about the other calf, can you tell us about that tattoo?

This tattoo is for my mum. She was born in Camperdown in Sydney, she loved trains, ferries, all that kind of stuff. This tattoo is of a tram going over Sydney Harbour Bridge. Camperdown isn't too far away from there. I've picked things that connect to them personally, and from around the area that they were born.

If you want to get tattooed, get tattooed. Do what makes you happy, you can take them with you. Your tattoos die with you, it's the only thing you can take with you, it's mine.







MATTHEW HAMPTON

Can you please start by telling us about you, Matt?

I'm Matt Hampton, I'm 36 years old, I work as a court transcriptionist by day, I write novels by night and collect tattoos. I was born in Cairns and moved down to Logan when I was about 8. I've spent time in Ipswich, Perth and Germany but mostly Logan, pretty much my entire life.

What genre of novels do you write?

I write science fiction, thriller, and action. There's a specific book I want to read, but no one's written it so I have to write it so I can read it. I've got my chest tattoo that says "let's just go" because that's something I say in every one of my books, usually when things are going their worst they'll say "let's just go" like let's just get out of here. I have it in all my stories. I get pieces whenever I finish the first draft of a story, just as a reward.

Would you say that your tattoos are a representation of your identity?

I have 40 and counting. Yeah, they expand on my identity, it's a way for me to express and customise myself. Some are just for fun, like a pizza slice, or my skull tattoo. But then when my mother took me to hospital when I was having a medical emergency, I got her favourite bird which is an owl, and it's holding the key to wisdom. Some are to show off what I'm into like comic books or science fiction, or the tattoo I got for my cat. I got this (frangipani tattoo) after the second date with my then- girlfriend, now wife, she put a frangipani behind my ear, so we got matching frangipani tattoos. They customise me and they put what's on the inside, on the outside.

So, you'll be starting on your other sleeve do you think?

Yeah, I think I have to. Once I start seeing the gaps you start seeing things that you could add, and I start feeling more and more like myself the more I add.

Could you tell us a story about a particular tattoo, maybe you have a favourite?

One of my favourites and maybe the most painful is the tattoo I have on my calf. It's a tattoo of three firebombs that says "so it goes" which is a reference to the novel Slaughterhouse Five by Kirk Vonnegut. In the book, he has an incremental repetition of "so it goes" after any character dies. The book is about the firebombing of Dresden during World War II. So, when I was in Dresden in Germany, I got this tattooed just as a nod to some great literature.

As someone who has a lot of tattoos, would you say that societal views of people who are heavily tattooed is shifting, or what's your experience with this?

It's only been in some retail work that I've had issues with having a lot of tattoos. I now work in a professional environment in the city, doing legal work and I've got finger tattoos, and everything is visible, and no one cares, it's beautiful. I think everyone should be more tattooed; people don't care as much anymore. I think I could dye my hair pink and go into the office, and no one would mind, it's good to feel like yourself – it's the most important thing. Everyone should be able to feel like themselves. If it makes you feel more like yourself, then get it done.



PHIL BLUNT

Can you start by telling us how you got into the art that you do, where did you start out?

I was born in Brisbane, (and) within 12 months my parents bought a house in Kingston and that's where I grew up. I met my wife quite young; I was 18 and we moved in together fairly quickly. I always drew through high school, because my dad is an artist, a pencil drawer. I was always watching him draw, so there was the aspiration to do what he was doing and be as good as he was. In 2003 when I started travelling on the train to and from work, I started drawing on the train in that commute time.

By about 2013 I started buying paint pens and started playing with the idea of painting. I was posting it online a little bit, then I randomly had an artist send me a friend request and I ended up connecting with some Brisbane-based artists and ended up getting into the street art scene around that time. With street art, people talk about styles and creating something that is individually yours. It's very hard to pick a style, or I haven't found mine. Yet, people will see things I've done and recognise it. Sometimes people see it more than you see it yourself I guess; most artists are their own worst critics. But if you love doing it, then as they say "if you love what you do then you don't work a day in your life" so if you see it as something enjoyable or a learning curve then you definitely put more of your soul into it and end up with a better outcome at the end of it.

Do you feel that growing up in Logan has influenced the work you do in any way?

I did find a lot of the street art was city-based, but you saw a lot more of it out in the suburbs. Maybe that's because they clean the cities more. The thing is with figures is that the more you're looking for them, the more you notice them. Once you start creating them yourself you start seeing them everywhere. In Logan there's a lot more wildlife and colour, it's much more interesting in the suburbs so there's much more opportunity for inspiration. There's also been a lot more opportunities for creating with Logan City Council. There's been a lot of community-based opportunities for me in Logan.

You have a few tattoos, can you tell me about how you started getting them? What was your first tattoo?

My first one was for my son, I'd always wanted a tattoo. So, I got a small one on my chest for my son, and it didn't really hurt that much so I thought let's get some other ones. I'd always wanted to have my art on my body, so I created an image that I was going to wear for the rest of my life, so I did that for the 2 love birds and sacred heart on my back. I incorporated a few things that I love into the design, like the Triforce of Power for my love of Nintendo and Legend of Zelda. I just had fun creating something that I'm proud of, and still am to this day, I have no regrets with my tattoos. It was when it got to my fourth or fifth one when I thought I'd like to wear another artist's artwork on my skin and it's also a nice representation of art styles that I love, so that's when I got the tattoo from the Brisbane artist, Buttons. I really love the style and colours of the 2 flowers on my shoulder and elbow, and the portrait is her style.

Would you say your tattoos are a representation of how you like to present yourself to the world?

Yeah, the idea of wearing something that I created was what got me started with thinking about getting a tattoo. Back in the early 2000s, when we didn't have mobile phones, we couldn't really carry something on you to show someone your artwork if it came up, so it was the idea that you could just show someone your tattoo and share your designs, a bit like a walking portfolio. Then also I have the crow on my calf, because I've been painting crows the past 5 years and I've been really enjoying it, so it's that connection that I can share with people as to why I got it done. Then the same idea with the viking tattoo, just a representation of that time in my life.

Photograph taken at the Springwood mural painted by Phil Blunt



MADHU KHANNA

Daisy Hill

Can you tell us about you? Your life and working as an artist in Logan.

I was born in New Delhi, India. I got married into a family of great traditions, and the appreciation of art and culture was an important part. My father was an artist, poet and dancer, so I think it's in my genes and I learned many things from him unconsciously. Since my childhood I was inclined towards the arts, I think if you are an artistic person at heart, it keeps you alive and you are always enjoying life through art. I like to dabble with different forms of traditional art which are seen in rural areas of North India like rangoli, lippan and warli batik art. I immigrated to Australia in 2001 and studied a Master of Special Education at Griffith University, I teach them in a fun way. When I moved to Australia it was an eye opener. Within society it was a beautiful example of multiculturalism, in my classroom they welcome everybody. I am a mixture of everything, I am a special education teacher, then I am an artist, Hindi writer, and I also speak regularly on Australian and Indian radio.

You do your art in the community with workshops and different events, can you share about this side of your work as an artist?

Absolutely, it's a wonderful experience working in the community. People are so amazed to see Indian art, they are so full of questions and have a great interest. As an artist it is very rewarding. When you are doing workshops in the community, you have to show them respect and create a bond between you and them.

When you have mehendi/heena done, how does it make you feel? What does it represent to you?

I feel great joy and happiness as it connects with my childhood memories of festivities when we always would get mehendi done on our hands. It's a time of laughter and celebration. It also connects me with my wedding day especially. It's a unique experience, it's all about festivity and special occasions. In India when a girl gets married, it is customary a day before the marriage she has mehendi done on her hands and all the friends dance, sing and everyone has mehendi done on their hands, it's a beautiful and very colourful experience. Another festival is Karva Chauth when once a year women gather, have mehendi done and pray for their happy married life. Heena also represents good luck and prosperity. In India in villages when a newlywed bride enters the house, she puts an impression of her wet hands on the wall of the entrance door as it's considered to be a symbol of prosperity.

Can you share the importance of mehendi/heena to your culture? It has many uses, how has it evolved?

The art of applying mehendi has been an age-old tradition spanning thousands of years. It started as being used purely for medicinal purposes, it's a potent medicine for skin and hair ailments. We used it as a substitute for air conditioning in India because of its ability to bring down the temperature of the body. In the world we live in today everything is artificial and chemically based, heena/mehendi is all natural and has many uses and medicinal values. From being purely traditional, it has transformed into an art over time as women began to use it creatively.



Image: Genya Baikloff, 2024

LEANNE MACNAUGHT

Can you start by telling us about yourself?

I'm Leanne Macnaught, age 50, I've lived in the area nearly 40 years. I enjoy travelling, spending time with my family, fishing, and just exploring the outdoors.

Can you tell me about how you started getting tattoos, what was your first one?

I got it at the age of 41, it was some butterflies on my back, then I got my parents' and grandparents' messages from cards they had given me. After that was when I got the poppy for Remembrance Day because my dad was in the Vietnam War. When we went to Vietnam, we had the idea to do the band of his ribbons he was given, we got them tattooed while we were there. After that, I got the bluebird tattooed, which is a replica of what my grandfather had on his arm. My dad is taking us 4 kids back to Vietnam to do a trip with him, to go to the memorials with him. We've been planning to do it for a few years, it's just the time to go now when everyone can come. He goes back to Vietnam every year with his army mates, there's a group of about 10 of them that go.

What does your dad think of your tattoo of his ribbons?

He loved it. He just thought it was a great idea. My best friend also went and got one for her father who has passed. It's a very unique tattoo.

Do you feel it's a conversation starter when people see it?

Yes, I get pulled up all the time at the shops. Even widows from Vietnam veterans have stopped me and it brings them to tears, because you just don't see them like that as a band, normally you just see the medals. Both this one and the poppy are conversation starters, especially the medals about 3 times a month. I got it done on my arm in that position because when you hold up your arm it goes across your heart.

What made you want to start getting tattoos at age 41?

My mum wasn't very keen on them, but I thought, 41, let's do something way out there. I've got 3 grandchildren so I thought I'd get a butterfly for each of them, my mum and my nan to sweeten her a little bit. So that's how it started, I'm still going. In a few weeks I'm getting a Scottish flag for my dad's side of the family.

My tattoos explain important people in my life, what people have been through, remembering the past.

Genya Baikaloff is a Brisbane-based artist whose work explores themes of family, memory, and truth through visual language which has been described as introspective and reflective. Baikaloff specialises in photographic and related processes, blending analog methods with contemporary applications to create works that connect history with current cultural narratives.

In 2024, Baikaloff graduated with a Bachelor of Photography majoring in Documentary and Advertising from the Queensland College of Art and Design. He found his interest for the arts during his teenage years, influenced by the creative output of his parents.

Baikaloff draws influence from early 20th-century photographers such as Alfred Stieglitz, Dorothea Lange, and Georgy Petrusov, while also taking inspiration from contemporary voices like Alexander Gronsky, Hiroshi Sugimoto, and Sally Mann. Outside of photography, Baikaloff is influenced by classic fiction, in particular Russian authors, which further informs the cultural and historical contexts of his work.



Image: Rhianna Phillips, 2022



Image: Genya Baikaloff, 2024

***Tattoos: Story Lines* exhibition credits**

Curator: Alice Hinton

Photography: Genya Baikaloff

Graphic design: Matt O'Sullivan

The Living Museum of Logan would like to thank and acknowledge the people of Logan who participated and shared their stories for this exhibition.



Living Museum of Logan

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Open Tuesday to Saturday, 10 am to 4 pm and when events and performances are held at the Kingston Butter Factory.

Entry is FREE.

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