

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Thursday 22 April 2021

Te Uru is delighted to announce a special project taking place across 2021, culminating in a summer presentation, *Te Kaneati*, an exhibition that honours Aotearoa's Banaban diaspora. This will be displayed alongside *Project Banaba*, a major solo exhibition by Katerina Teaiwa.

Presented by the West Auckland Banaban community based in Ranui, this special project will be taking place in the lead up to Te Uru's summer exhibition season. It will include a Banaban cultural revitalisation master-class workshop series, developed to strengthen Banaban cultural identity, language and creative arts in the diaspora. Led by Banaban elder Maggie Corrie-Kaipati, the workshop series has been generously supported by Creative New Zealand and will be guided by Banaban scholar and contemporary artist Katerina Teaiwa. Support also comes from Te Uru, curator Yuki Kihara, filmmaker Robert George, photographer Herman Aviu, and the wider community including the West Auckland Kiribati community, Reverend Suamalie Iosefa, the Kiribati Aotearoa Diaspora Directorate, Dr Lisa Uperesa at the University of Auckland, and Pacific Dance New Zealand.

Exhibition co-curator Yuki Kihara says: "*Project Banaba* has gone from strength to strength since it was first presented at Carriageworks Sydney in 2017 and subsequently presented at MTG Hawke's Bay Tai Ahuriri in 2019. It is a testament to Teaiwa's work that we are able to include *Te Kaneati*, the Banaban cultural revitalisation workshop series, alongside *Project Banaba* presented at Te Uru later this year."

Katerina Teaiwa says, "I'm excited that *Project Banaba* has helped inspire *Te Kaneati* led by Banaban elder Maggie Corrie-Kaipati with the Banaban diaspora in Auckland, a significant site of Banaban and colonial phosphate mining and fertiliser history."

KADD co-founder and young community leader Rae Bainteiti says: "These workshops will significantly benefit the Banaban diaspora of Aotearoa, especially the young people who are struggling to keep up with the culture and traditions which are important elements of identity and self-confidence. The Kiribati Aotearoa Diaspora Directorate is so proud to be supporting this project because of the intended impacts that will foster social, mental, spiritual and cultural wellbeing and development for the people of Banaba in Aotearoa."

"We are excited to be bringing *Project Banaba* to Auckland for a new presentation at Te Uru and to connect it with the local Banaban community here in West Auckland," says Te Uru Director, Andrew Clifford. "We are delighted to offer a rare opportunity for this community to come together in the lead-up to the exhibition through a series of community-led workshops that will support the revitalisation and resilience of the Banaban diaspora."

*Project Banaba* and *Te Kaneati* open at Te Uru on Saturday 4 December, 2021.

\*ENDS\*

For more information, interview requests with the artists or high res image requests, please contact:  
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Te Kamari, a traditional Banaban ornament worn mainly by women and girls during special cultural occasions.  
Image courtesy of Maggie Kaipati

Exhibitions: *Katerina Teaiwa: Project Banaba*  
*Te Kaneati: Banaban cultural revitalisation workshop series*

When: 4 December 2021 – 20 February 2022

Event: Saturday 4 December, 4-6pm

Where: Te Uru, 420 Titirangi Rd, Titirangi, Auckland

Cost: Free

Contact: [info@teuru.org.nz](mailto:info@teuru.org.nz) +64 9 818 8087

## The Banaban Story

From 1900-1919 companies owned by British shareholders with headquarters in Sydney and Auckland mined the small Pacific island of Banaba for phosphate rock which was valuable for agriculture. The governments of New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom took over between 1920-1980, collectively owning and running the phosphate mining company. This was shipped to towns and cities all over Aotearoa, to be manufactured into superphosphate fertiliser – enhancing our country's economic interests at the cost of another's ultimate destruction.

Vast quantities of fertiliser transformed much of New Zealand from native forest into farmlands and green pastures through the practice of aerial topdressing. Meanwhile, because of mining and World War II, Banabans were forced to relocate to the island of Rabi, Fiji, as their homeland was rendered uninhabitable. 15 December 2020 marked 75 years since relocation and was a time to reflect on the resilience of the Banaban people, a minority Pacific community that have shown strength in their advocacy for socio-environmental rights through activism, legal campaigns, diplomacy and knowledge sharing.

Today, Banabans live all over the world, from Kiribati, Fiji, Aotearoa, Australia and beyond. Their small population often mean the Banaban cultural identity is obscured within the wider Pacific diaspora in cities like Auckland, but in the last 20 years, Banaban communities have enhanced their presence through their own connectivity and drive to celebrate their unique culture and history.

## Te Kaneati, a presentation

Banaban elder Maggie Kaipati and young Banaban community member Lilian Corrie, are together facilitating a series of targeted master-class workshops on Banaban customary weaving, storytelling, song and dance with the aim to transmit ancient cultural knowledge between Banaban generations to strengthen and empower Banaban identity, language and culture in the diaspora. Members of the Banaban Christian Fellowship will provide their expertise and commit time to learning and making. The outcome of this unique community-led series will be a display in Te Uru's Learning Centre Gallery, shown alongside Katerina Teaiwa's *Project Banaba* exhibition.

## Project Banaba, an exhibition

Banaban artist and scholar based in Canberra, Australia, Katerina Teaiwa draws on the history of Banaba in a major multi-media exhibition titled *Project Banaba*. Co-curated by Yuki Kihara, the exhibition was first commissioned by Carriageworks, Sydney in 2017 and has since been shown at MTG Hawkes Bay in 2019. This 2021 iteration at Te Uru will again weave together film, photography, archival material and sculptural installation pieces by Teaiwa to bring the experiences of the Banaban people to the fore. Teaiwa's exhibition highlights the significance of Banaba in Kiribati and its once abundant phosphate resource to Aotearoa New Zealand's fertiliser production and agricultural development for much of the 20th century. For decades, phosphate mining company headquarters were based in Auckland which now hosts a small but growing number of Banaban families. The exhibition explores the imbalanced nature of colonising societies, premised on the domination of the environment and indigenous peoples. The exhibition leaves us with a vital question: for the sake of all people, how can balance be restored?

Learn more about *Project Banaba* from Teaiwa: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTiUOfTaXI>



#### About Te Uru

Te Uru is a regional gallery based in scenic Titirangi, gateway to the Waitakere rain forest and en route to Auckland's famous west coast beaches.

We are locally rooted in West Auckland but globally minded. As a destination gallery, Te Uru operates from an award-winning purpose-built building, which opened in November 2014 as part of the redeveloped Lopdell Precinct.

The gallery originally began in 1986 in the historic Lopdell House building as the Waitemata City Arts and Cultural centre, later known as Lopdell House Gallery. Now sited next-door, we continue to present a diverse programme of contemporary exhibitions, events and activities, complemented by exceptional architecture and spectacular views of the surrounding area.

Te Uru receives core funding from the Waitakere Ranges Local Board of Auckland Council.

[teuru.org.nz](http://teuru.org.nz)