

# WATERSHED

SEPT 19 - NOV 3 2008

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Henri

From 1966 to 1996 the French Government exploded over 200 atomic bombs surrounding the atolls of Moruroa in the South Pacific colony of French Polynesia. Getting it right seemed to have taken them some time. France never officially acknowledged the health effects from nuclear fallout on local populations. Henri was a Tahitian, who among many was diagnosed with cancer. For most native Tahitians, the options were few: see a native healer or the local French army doctor fresh out of training from Paris. He was one of the lucky ones sent to New Zealand for treatment.

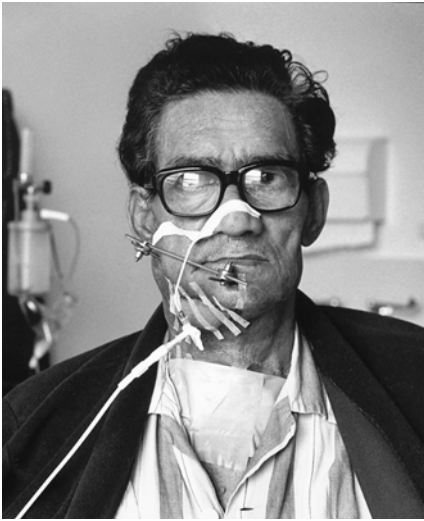
As a recently graduated photography student in 1980, I wanted an image to show Henri's situation. Here was an elderly man alone in a foreign country, unable to understand its language and undergoing extensive medical treatment. The image now looks harsh and aggressive. This at the time aimed more at documenting the reasons he was there rather than the gentleness of his character. The generosity of the native Polynesian Tahitians is overwhelming. He was open to be photographed, share his life story and describe his island paradise. As I took his picture, he fumbled with his woolen mittens on the side of his hospital bed. He complained how cold New Zealand was compared to Tahiti and how one shouldn't eat bananas until they turn black and are at peak of sweetness. Looking back, he reminisced how bananas used to grow in greater numbers unlike the vanilla beans that have stopped growing in the jungle since the late 60's.

Waiting for Sunday service

This image, like Henri above, is from a series called Pacifica. A series of images exploring paradise and what that means to different people in the Pacific area. On all islands life travels very slowly. Some call it island time. If that's true, then on Sunday in Independent Samoa time possibly goes into reverse. This is the day where strict demands are placed on every villager to observe - fa'a Samoa (the closely guarded and preserved "Samoa way"). The nation's official motto - Fa'avae i le Atua Samoa, translates into "Samoa is founded on God". Without a doubt, the missionaries did a good job here and every Sunday morning is dedicated to the church and your absence will be surely noticed.

My visit to the Mormon service necessitated the traditional sparkling white shirt and to practice my - tulou (excuse me) before the service as I would surely disrupt their established seating arrangements and rules of etiquette with my - palagi (white person) actions. This image of my white shirt was taken 25 years after Henri and is hopefully subdued in style. It captures the thin surface texture of the material in a crisp early morning light. This transparent European costume is about to be used in a society that just

## CLIVE CRETNEY



below its surface hides a complex code of traditional ethics and behaviour. A costume that, no matter how appropriate, may never be part of the fa'a Samoa on Sunday morning. texture of the material in a crisp early morning light. This transparent European costume is about to be used in a society that just below its surface hides a complex code of traditional ethics and behaviour. A costume that, no matter how appropriate, may never be part of the fa'a Samoa on Sunday morning.

## BIOGRAPHY

All of Clive Cretney's photography explores the innovative ways of using a medium in constant evolution. His work looks beyond photography's traditional forms and incorporates innovative ways of reinterpreting time and space. This fascination with photographic technology has led to projects investigating obsolete and antiquated processes. Through a series of themes he expands the essence of these techniques and with a modern eye adds his own visual vocabulary. The images seek to question our reliance on past imagery and challenge our view on contemporary issues.