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Australian Catholic University Gallery 2 December – 11 December 2016

Introduction

Sampari, meaning morning star, is a three part exhibition and series of events celebrating West Papua's culture while exploring the nation's environment, ecology, politics and History. The main aim of the exhibition is to raise awareness of the West Papuan peoples wish of self determination.

Selected works from a local and international call will be along side a wall of art prints from Melanesia that stand breathtakingly in solidarity with the people of West Papua.

Sampari Essay Ruth McDougall

The Sampari exhibition invites us to learn more about the history and the ongoing plight of the West Papuan people.

In December 2015, a group of West Papuan and non-Papuan activists and supporters set up an overnight vigil across from the Indonesian consulate, Melbourne after the arrest of hundreds of Papuan Student of Alliance (AMP) in Jogjakata and shootings in Yapen that claimed the lives of another four. Timber, straw, bark and rope were collected and lashed together to erect the iconic circular form of a honai or hut traditionally created by the Dani peoples of the Highlands of West Papua. Created in the round with a steep roof to hold in warmth and to quickly shed rain, the honai has become a symbol of West Papuan traditional culture. Constructed thousands of miles away from Dani lands, on a blistering Australian summer's day, this icon of ingenuity and environmental understanding was erected to create a very different type of shelter. Referencing in part, the famous Aboriginal Tent Embassy, the Melbourne honai has become the symbolic makeshift home of the displaced people of West Papua. (1)

The sculptural model Lober Wainggai has created for the Sampari exhibition, of a 'Traditional West Papuan Hut – Honai' mobilises the importance of the architectural form of the honai as well as its new symbolic and political role for the peoples of the West Papuan diaspora. One of 43 West Papuans who in 2006 made the dangerous canoe crossing from Sorong to Cape York to seek refuge in Australia from persecution in their homeland, Lober is passionate about using art to raise awareness of the plight of the peoples of West Papua under Indonesian occupation.(2)

Drawing together over seventeen works by artists from across Australia and a spectacular wall of solidarity featuring artworks by Melanesian brothers and sisters, the Sampari exhibition seeks to provide a similar form of shelter and to embody a similar educative function. First staged in 2015 by the Women's office of the Federation of West Papua's Department of Immigration, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Sampari strives to engage Australians in a conversation about the culture and recent history of West Papua in order to secure a more humane future for its peoples. Works reference traditional cultural forms, symbols of strength, resilience and freedom, as well as the social and political aspirations of present-day West Papuans.

Kubi Vasak's hauntingly beautiful collages, 'Forgotton Birds of paradise 1 & 11' for example, reference the importance of this bird as a sign of solidarity for Papuans. These painstakingly detailed works also speak to a long history of economic exchange, stretching back over thousands of years to plumes gathered in Papua to be worn by the Kings of Nepal, Janissaries of the Ottoman Empire and warriors manning ships depicted on 2000 year old Dong son drums.(3) Histories of expansionist colonial occupation including the foreign appropriation of

the West Papua's land and natural mineral resources continue to threaten the lives and wellbeing of the indigenous peoples of West Papua just as surely as the trade of plumes and destruction of natural habitat has that of the Bird of Paradise.

The Bird of Paradise has 42 species and is found across West Papua, Papua New Guinea and Eastern Australia. It seems particularly apt to have this motif in an exhibition of equally diverse and visually enticing works from across this same geography. Nestled amongst strong works in many different media, Vasak's 'Forgotton Bird of Paradise 1 & 11' reminds us here in Australia of our proximity and shared connections to the peoples of West Papua, inviting us to further engage in order to develop stronger understandings and support for their plight.

1. United struggle project, 'West Papua Honai Embassy Vigil – Melbourne', <https://freedomflotillawestpapua.org/2015/12/01/west-papua-honai-embassy-vigil-melbourne/>, viewed 20 November 2016.
2. 'Freedom Flotilla. Land and Sea convoy for Peace and Justice' <https://freedomflotillawestpapua.org/>, viewed 20 November 2016.
3. See Pamela Swadling 'Plumes from paradise: trade cycles in outer SE Asia and their impact on New Guinea and nearby islands until 1920', Papua New Guinea National Museum with Robert Brown Associates (QLD) PTY LTD



Isobel Brown

Blood on your hands

Medium: Photograph transferred on silk

A photo taken from a protest in Darwin during the West Papuan freedom forum in 2015 against the joint Australian, Us, New Zealand war games.



Jair Pattipeilohy (Netherlands)

Connected Series of nine

a. *Cultural Transmission*

b. *Identity*

Medium: Photograph

Jaïr Pattipeilohy (Tiel, 1985) is of mixed Moluccan-Dutch origin, born and raised in the Netherlands. In search of his roots he traveled several times to the Moluccas - an archipelago west of Papua. In 2010 and 2012 Jaïr portrayed *kapitan* (traditional warlords) on the islands of Saparua and Nusalaut. Back in the Netherlands he organized several educational activities with the portraits. Nowadays Jaïr and two of his friends are working on *Mahina*, a cultural project about the important role of women in the Moluccan culture.

Cultural Transmission

Frank Berhиту and Marlehu Berhиту.

Grandfather with his grandson playing *tiha*, a Moluccan drum.

Identity

Nel Tutupoly and Sigal Likumahuwa.

Sempe sempe is traditional pottery. The village Ouw - Saparua Island, central Moluccas -s well known for this pottery. Even in the Netherlands the pottery is a part of the cultural identity of descendants from Ouw.



Peter Woods

Ghost Gum Morning Star

Dimensions: 1340mm x 910mm

Medium: Oil on Belgian Linen

In 2013 my wife and I visited this magnificent tree in the East McDonnell Ranges out of Alice Springs, Central Australia. We were truly filled with awe - it is a tree over 300 year old and measures 33 metres tall – and I knew I had to paint it. While it is popularly called a Ghost Gum the tree is technically *Corymbia Papuana*, originally named for the specimens of the tree found in the land of West Papua/ Papua New Guinea which once shared an undivided land mass with north Australia.

The Morning Star flag is an emblem of resistance and celebrates the nationhood West Papuans claim and so far have been denied. My painting morphs the *Papuana* tree into the star of the flag, reminding Australians of their linked geographical history, and a symbol of the responsibility of Australians to help resolve the injustice north of our shores. I have included a distressed red-tailed black cockatoo, also indigenous to the area, alerting us with its cry.



Skye Williams

The morning star

Dimensions: 30 x 40cm

Medium: Archival marker on paper

Skye is a Melbourne-based visual artist. Her preferred medium of marker pens allows a speed of drafting that embraces “mistakes” to inform the next mark. Thus, stream of consciousness is sought for exploration of pattern work and creating colour contrasts, while seeking the next figurative form to draw out. Skye graduated with her Bachelor of Fine Art from RMIT in 2012 and since has been included in shows internationally, including the EKKM/Estonian Museum of Contemporary Art and locally, at spaces including Kings ARI, Fort Delta and Off The Keb.

The West Papuan flag with the red rising star glows in a morning sunrise. The morning star reflects 6 white bands of light across the blue water. Distinct West Papuan reef biodiversity is depicted underneath. The banned West Papuan flag isn't being hidden pictorially. This image speaks of embedded culture of people in a place, as represented by this nationalist symbol actually depicting the environment of West Papua.



Helen Andre
Yarra Dreaming
Dimensions: 16 x24 “
Medium: Photograph

The Women’s Office of the Federation of West Papua is a collective dream, or a collection of dreams, endeavouring to provide a basis to make their dreams a reality...freedom for West Papua and its people to live their own lives.



Babuan Mirino

Shell necklaces

Medium: Shells, thread

The three shell necklaces belong to Babuan, she purchased the necklaces here in Australia after longing for home. Traditionally women wear the shell necklace as an accessory to attend church or parties, and dances. The men wear two longer shell necklaces across their bodies to dance the war dance. Shells are used domestically as room dividers. Children in West Papua are taught to make the shell necklaces at an early age and often take pleasure in making them with their parents.



Barbara Hendricksen

Tribes Man

Dimensions: 28cm x 32cm

Medium: Ink original

The Tribes Man portrays the pride and dignity of the West Papuan native people.



Faye Gregson

Blessed are the Liberators

Medium: Lino cut print

This lino cut “Blessed are the Liberators” was based on dream of Louise Byrne, of the women in the Women’s Office for West Papua, where a ring on her finger dramatically metamorphosed into an elaborate gold headdress. This spiritually symbolic sign encouraged her perseverance when Indonesian intelligence activities across Australia were at unprecedented levels of intensity.

(*Triptych- was the symbolic use of the flags colours so close to WP self determination and spirituality and an allusion to the altar / church which is also at the heart of WP self determination, hopes, beliefs and reason for courage , determination and faith.- Due to space in the gallery we will only be exhibiting one of the pieces from the triptych)



Alejandro Aguanta

A moment of serenity

Dimensions: 50 x70cm

Medium: Oil on canvas

I wanted to capture a moment of peace. This strong yet calm native woman from West Papua represents hope and tiny fire that burns bright amongst the dark struggles of the province.



Emma Thurlow

West Papuan Warrior

Dimensions: 12cm x 11cm -

Medium: Computer vector illustration on wood

Inspired by Photographer Andrey Gudkov who visited West Papua and was granted the privilege to photograph and spend time with the Dani and Asmat tribes of New Guinea Island, Indonesia. The illustration of a West Papuan warrior is a reflection of the deep-seeded culture and beauty of the people and traditions of their world. The warrior is a comment on the current crisis of genocide taking place in West Papuan with indigenous people being the victims of mass murder. A target is constantly around their heads for just being the rightful landowners of the place they call home. The leaves not only portray and reflect the landscape but also hint and reference organisations that sit idle and do nothing whilst these atrocities take place.



Bunny Carver

Spirit of Liberty

Dimensions: 100 x131 cm

Medium: Acrylic on canvas

A warrior woman from the PNG highlands stands in possession of her inner strength and in solidarity with her West Papuan sisters. The simple majesty of her 'bilas' (traditional adornment) is a reflection of the fundamental right to dignity and autonomy of the people of West Papua.



Amos (West Papua)
Untitled
Medium: Etching print



Rebecca Langley

Triple Threat

Dimensions: 30cm x 75 cm

Medium: Collaged posters, paint.

These three Revolutionary leaders have become symbols of Nationalism in the Congo (Patrice Lumumba), Mexico (Emiliano Zapata) and West Papua (Thelys Eluay) All were assassinated for standing up for the rights of their people.



Pauline Sedgwick

Palm cockatoo an emblem of WP

Dimensions: H 30cm x w 33 cm x D 2 cm

Medium: Terracotta base relief, glazed

This splendid palm Cockatoo is an emblem of West Papua and its unique culture and environment. A symbol of the strength and uniqueness of West Papua and its people.



Humphrey King (New York)

In the rubble of divinities

Dimensions: 10 x10"

Medium: Canvas Print

ITS (Identity Transduction Systems) is an art collective. Who make politically-motivated art in support of basic human rights. We believe in art by any means and strive to do work that's visceral, bold and immediate. Our hope is to broaden the scope of what can be politically useful art.



Adele O'Conner

Mama Yosepha versus the TNI

Dimensions: 91cm x 121cm

Medium: Acrylic on canvas

The painting is a representation of one of the most highly regarded female pro-independence advocates, Mama Yosepha. The expression on her face tells her own story one of relentless lobbying and protesting against Indonesia's occupation of West Papua. The numerous Indonesian military personnel is indicative of the number of Indonesian military personnel she and other West Papuans are facing. They remain in the background because it is Mama Yosepha who is the central focus and subject of the painting.



Barbara Tipper

Ephemeral

Dimensions: round wood block approx. 4cm thick and 50cm diameter; 9x canvasses each 30x30cm

Medium: mixed media: painted and raw natural found objects arranged on slice of tree trunk in front of a backdrop collection of prints of photos of the same concept in natural settings.

Ephemeral art as a metaphor for life applies generally to us all, but most specifically to West Papua. West Papuans face dilemmas with ephemerality at many levels: the destruction of the natural environment; the transiency of an indigenous culture being lost to genocide, transmigration and exiling; the loss of political prisoners' legacies of struggles and gains through the passage of time and inadequate records management. The heights of their cycles are not always being captured, preserved, and the messages shared.

I honour and acknowledge the strength, resilience and faith of West Papuan freedom fighters and political prisoners past (such as Manuel Johan Watofa) and present. May they know they are not alone or abandoned but will live on as their stories are told and their legacies preserved and honoured through the arts.



Lober Wainggai (West Papua)

Traditional West Papuan Hut- Honai

Dimensions: 30cmx 20cm x20cm

Medium: Bark, wood, straw, paint

The Honai is a traditional West Papuan Hut from the highlands.



[Ona Filloy](#) (Brisbane)

One people One soul

Dimensions: 841 x 594 mm

Medium: Digital Art (printed on Hahnemuhle Photo rag using Epson UltraChrome K3 inks and printed by the best quality printer in Brisbane and is a limited edition.)

A portrait of Dani a tribesman from the West Papuan Highlands. This image illustrates the clash of cultures between the Papuans and their Indonesian overlords.



Cherry Piper (Sydney)

Freedom ties

Dimensions: H 100cm x W 43cm

Medium: Macramé Wall-hanging - drift wood and cotton sash rope

Cherry Piper is an interdisciplinary artist whose work explores memory in connection with object and places. Her interest in nostalgia led her to explore macramé techniques of textile making combined with found driftwood from Australian beaches and express this connection to the landscape.

Freedom Ties references the tradition of weaving and textile making which West Papuan's continue to use to create practical and cultural objects. The macramé knots are loosely based on the natural curves of the landscape and suggest a pair of eyes, like those found on war shields and masks.



Kubi Vasak (Sydney)

Forgotten Birds of Paradise I & II

Dimensions: 210 x 297mm

Medium: Collage

Cutting and splicing images together, Sydney collage artist Kubi Vasak combines found images from secondhand books, creating an uncanny world where the sequencing and division of time, space and memory are forgotten, leaving only the subject present within their surreal, dreamlike surroundings.

'Forgotten Birds of Paradise' is influenced by a 2012 documentary of the same name. The ongoing struggle for freedom being fought by the West Papua people against Indonesian colonial rule is ever present.

For many Papuans the Bird of Paradise is a symbol of solidarity. These works aim to celebrate the unique vibrancy of their cultural and natural heritage.



Alejandra Diaz Garcia

Few

Dimensions: 60cm x 45cm

Medium: Mixed media on paper

A celebration of culture and mysticism.



Solomon Island Weavers

String Bags

Dimensions: Various

Medium: String

Various traditionally woven antique string bags. Made 50 years ago and donated by the makers in support of their Melanesian Kin.

Melanesian Wall

The Melanesian Wall of Art is a special feature of the exhibition, with artworks from the Solomon Islanders, ni-Vanuatu, Fiji, West Papua and Papua New Guinea.

These prints were submitted by email after an open call out was advertised on social media, radio and by word of mouth for artwork that would show solidarity with West Papua. The result is a vibrant and diverse cry of support from artists throughout Melanesia.

Art and solidarity: The Melanesian Wall of Art Ella Mudie

Solidarity is a powerfully loaded term. Deriving from nineteenth-century French, the word describes a “unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest.”¹ It is a notion that stirs, binds, and resonates perhaps most strongly during moments or events of crisis. Since taking temporary control of West Papua in 1963, and following the further consolidation of its unlawful rule through the UN-sanctioned and now discredited Act of Free Choice 1969 ballot, Indonesia’s brutal occupation of West Papua has been responded to with complex lines of solidarity and resistance, as well as complicity, among the diverse nations and cultures of the Asia-Pacific region. Today, Indonesia continues to solicit geopolitical support for its territorial claim to West Papua with its charge of non-interference and the assertion that the sovereignty of nations should be respected. Citing the national interest, the Australian government turns a blind eye to the Indonesian military’s violations of human rights in the name of unwavering solidarity with its regional ally.

Yet the beliefs of citizens are not always in accord with the questionable actions of their governments. The Sampari Art Exhibition and Sale for West Papua is an expression of the solidarity many Australians feel for the plight of our West Papuan neighbours. Further afield, an “agreement of feeling or action” that West Papua should be accorded the human right of self-determination unifies individuals across the Pacific. While this sense of regional solidarity is shared by every artist contributing work to the Sampari exhibition, it is especially prevalent in the Melanesian wall of art, established as a feature of Sampari 2016 to celebrate the sympathy and unique political support of artists and cultural producers from Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu, New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands, for their Melanesian kin. Indigenous West Papuans strongly identify as Melanesian and for nearly two decades lobbied for inclusion in the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), founded in 1986 to promote economic growth among Melanesian countries. In June 2015, the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) was finally granted observer status, an important step towards gaining political recognition in the region. The fate of West Papua’s application for full membership, however, is complicated by the MSG’s recent recognition of Indonesia as an associate member. At the time of writing, the outcome of the ULMWP’s bid hangs in the balance.

Notes

¹ *Oxford Dictionary of English*, third edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, p.1698.

In the world of contemporary art, the question of whether artists can, or should, wade into the arena of politics is a vexed one. It is a debate that frequently involves heated discussion over the recuperation of critique and protest by the broader framework of neoliberal capitalism. In this environment of passionate disagreement over the role of the artist, the organisation of cultural events like Sampari along lines of solidarity, the bringing together of diverse artistic works in the name of a single cause – freedom for West Papua - provide an important outlet for expressing desire for change at a community level. Contributions to the Melanesian wall such as Monica Gunawan’s vivid painting of a strong Melanesian woman rebuking tribal traditions by raising her bow and arrow to hunt, *The Dream Hunter*, speak to the power of solidarity that runs along gender lines. This is especially poignant in *Hope*, an empathic photo-portrait of a West Papuan woman in Indigenous headdress, submitted by a photographer based in West Papua whose identity must remain anonymous to protect his safety. Solidarity with and between women acts as a subtle mode of resistance as it manifests not only in art but in everyday life, the realm wherein the personal becomes political and grassroots change often begins.

Humour and satire is another means through which solidarity is expressed as in Campion Ohasio’s contribution to the Melanesian wall, a cartoon titled *Heroes or Traitors of West Papua*. First published in the Solomon Islands newspaper the Islandsun in 2015 on the day the leaders of the Melanesian Spearhead Group met in Honiara to vote on West Papua’s membership, Ohasio’s drawing depicts a man flailing in the sea. With the West Papua morning star flag in one hand, he reaches out to the MSG leaders seated in a canoe to raise him from the clutches of the great white shark of Indonesia. This liberty to express a strong point of view through satirical humour without threat or fear of retribution, no matter how provocative the message, is one of the hallmarks of a free society and a point of solidarity that unites artists across cultures.

By contrast to the satirical cartoon, craft work is often characterised as apolitical in the discourse of western art. Yet the exchange of art and craft objects in regions like Melanesia have long been implicated in complex political and social relations. Writing about the role of tapa bark cloth in Oceania, Nicholas Thomas observes how “connections between kinship, affinity, rank and elaborate forms of cloth persist.”² The inclusion of fibre arts in Sampari’s Melanesian wall of art, specifically the bags of Alice Kaloran of Vanuatu, are reminders of how the production and exchange of objects forge points of connection between Melanesian cultures. For writers such as the late Epeli Hau’ofa, recognising such connections provides a politically transformative corrective to the notion that Island cultures are somehow separated and isolated by the sea, pointing to how Pacific Islanders belong, rather, to an oceanic community based on voyaging.

Other submissions suggest the project of decolonisation in the region is far from over. Allan Mogerema and Tony Wesley Evernett’s *Free Paradise* speaks to the concern for environmental sustainability and autonomy over natural resources in administered territories. Identity politics is explored in submissions by Kingston Uyassi and Patrick Tonga while the fate of future generations is invoked in works by Lamert Ho, Martin Lance, and Mere Rasue. In 2018, there will be renewed international focus on Melanesia’s future when New Caledonia votes on the question of its independence by referendum. For West Papua, the struggle for recognition as an independent nation remains ensnared in a complex geopolitical situation. Yet the feeling of solidarity that events like Sampari convey for Papuans reveal that beneath the official rhetoric of governments that nothing can be done there simmers a deep sympathy and passionate desire for justice among ordinary citizens that seeks an outlet in real and meaningful action.

² Nicholas Thomas, *Oceanic Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1995, p.150.



Alice Kaloran
Vanuatu

Woven bags

An image of traditional crafts from Tongoa-Shepherds Women's Association, which has been driving West Papua's independence throughout Vanuatu since 2006.



Martin Lance

PNG

Freedom

My work is about West Papuan Freedom. My art was inspired by Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King and Benny Wenda who were all freedom fighters. As an artist I tried to illustrate the hearts and minds of these great leaders. The facial expressions of the three clearly reflect their heart's desires. Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King are smiling because they have achieved freedom for their people but Benny Wenda's heart and mind is troubled because he is still struggling for freedom.

The future of the next generation, the killing of innocent people and finally the hope of the independence of West Papua are the cries are expressed by a freedom fighter in the foreground. A widow with four amputated fingers and her orphan child symbolises the hardship the mothers are going through after the husbands are killed in the fight to freedom while the child is showing courage for freedom. This is all in the name of FREEDOM.



Mere Rasue

Fiji

For My Freedom

My photography is about a child, face painted (with the West Papuan Flag) who is proud of his origin, lest we forget that the young ones of West Papua have seen the torture and hardship their people go through. This child is seeking peace and a better future for the young generation like him. We need to build a better life of freedom.



Lambert Ho
Fiji

Drowning Sorrows

This work is about the sorrow and anguish the children of West Papua face on a daily basis. The suffering inflicted by the armed forces of Indonesia shows on the faces of these beautiful children.



Anonymous for artist's safety
West Papua

Hope

The West Papuan woman's cry has now been heard by the Melanesian family. They have hope. Family is a gift from heaven that is bound by the power of love. It is the strongest team that always has each other's back. The family bond can never be broken, even though so many obstacles can try to brake it apart. Forever to eternity, we are family.



Monica Gunawan

PNG

Dream Hunter

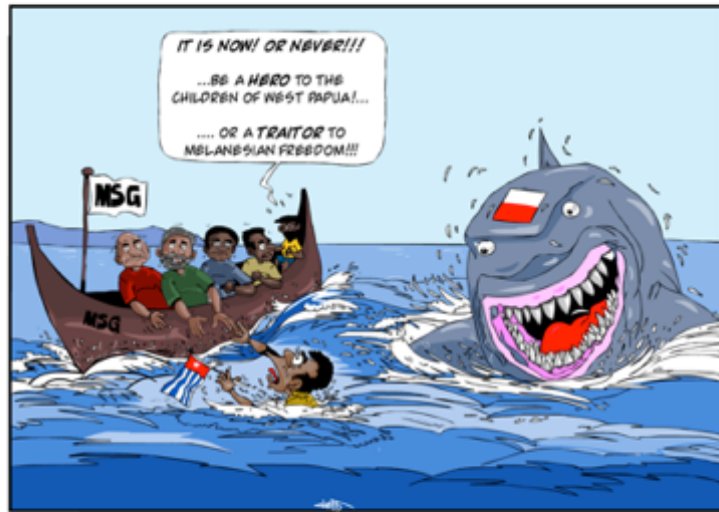
This is about a brave and strong Melanesian woman that is not afraid to lift a bow and arrow to hunt her dream. She is standing up against her tribes traditions, that do not allow women to hunt and fight.



Patrick Tonga
PNG

No Hope and Homeless

This print is about the hungry and homeless children of West Papua who live on the streets. They are losing hope as there is no one to help them.



Campion Ohasio
Solomon Islands

Heroes or Traitors for West Papua.

This Cartoon was published in the Islandsun Newspaper last year on the day the leaders of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) met in Honiara. West Papua was pushing for full membership of the MSG family. I wanted to express that West Papua's hope for freedom lies with her Melanesian brothers and sisters. The cartoon was challenging the MSG leaders and the whole of Melanesia to do the right thing and rescue their brothers from Indonesia depicted as the great white shark.



Kingston Uyssai
PNG

Hela Wigman Warrior

This piece shows a Hela Wigman warrior in a rich display of timeless Papua New Guinean Culture. Just across the border West Papuan cultures are having to fight for survival.



Allan Mogerema

PNG

Free Paradise

This work is about the West Papuan fight for freedom. In the world you rarely find the Beautiful Bird of Paradise, its only found on one big Island off West Papua and PNG. For so long the Indonesian's have held our Western Bird of Paradise in captive in a "Cage" built by humans. This is why I titled my painting *Free Paradise*.

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