

Professor Roger Neich, Ethnologist and Anthropologist (1944-2010)

With the death of Professor Roger Neich on 27th September 2010, the Pacific has lost a great friend and mentor. Roger was Curator of Ethnology at Auckland War Memorial Museum (1986-2009) and a Distinguished Professor in Anthropology at the University of Auckland.

Educated at Victoria University, Wellington, Roger's first degree was a BSc in Geology. He gained his interest in Anthropology and his love of the Pacific while pursuing geological field work in Papua New Guinea. Returning to Wellington, he undertook his MA degree in Anthropology in 1976, with a thesis entitled 'Historical change in Rotorua Ngāti Tarawhai woodcarving art'. Following employment at the National Museum of New Zealand (now Te Papa Tongarewa, Museum of New Zealand), Roger completed his PhD thesis in Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, writing on Māori figurative paintings (1986). These were the blueprints for his books; *Carved Histories: Rotorua Ngāti Tarawhai Woodcarving* (Auckland University Press 2001) and *Painted Histories: Early Māori Figurative Painting* (Auckland University Press 1993).

Roger took up his position at Auckland Museum in 1986. He undertook extensive field work in New Zealand and the Pacific focusing on ethnic arts and material culture. At Auckland Museum, he designed the Pacific Masterpieces and the Pacific Lifeways galleries, and curated the prestigious Waka Moana exhibition, which was exhibited widely. His activities are documented in

his many books on Pacific traditional and contemporary culture, including *Material Culture of Western Samoa: Persistence and Change* (National Museum of New Zealand 1985), *Pacific Tapa* (David Bateman and Auckland Museum, written in collaboration with Mick Pendergrast, photography by Krzysztof Pfeiffer, 1997) and *Pacific Jewellery and Adornment* (David Bateman, written with Fuli Pereira, photography by Krzysztof Pfeiffer, 2004) and many others. Sadly, his books *The Māori Collections of the British Museum* (Thames and Hudson, written with Starzecka, Dorota Czarkowska and Mick Pendergrast) and *Taonga Māori in the British Museum* (Te Papa Press, written with Starzecka, Dorota Czarkowska and Mick Pendergrast, 2011) are being published after his death. In 2005, Roger Neich received the Manu Daula Award from the Pacific Arts Association in recognition of his outstanding contribution and dedication to the arts of the Pacific. Roger Neich possessed the finest personal and professional qualities. He was a humble and quiet achiever, ever ready to share his great knowledge and enthusiasm for things Pacific with visitors and students. His presence will be sorely missed and it is with affection and sorrow that we wish him safely on his journey to Hawaiki. Haere ra, e rangatira, haere, haere, haere.

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Photograph by Krzysztof Pfeiffer

