

*In 1988 we went to Niue for four months during which time the French were giving conditionally, large aid packages to the Pacific Islands against the background of New Zealand's antagonism toward nuclear weapons testing. I saw this as an insidious infiltration, manipulation and exploitation of the naivety of the various island states. The children in their vast lagoon become the islands and weaker countries of the world and the usually harmless, but actually deadly, banded sea krait makes a most appropriate metaphor for the nuclear powers and the eight or so strongest industrialised countries that continue to manipulate and manoeuvre the rest of the world. Mark Cross*

Born in Auckland in 1955. In 1978 Mark Cross moved with his family to his wife's village, Liku, in Niue. During these early years Cross developed a strong philosophic and stylistic foundation. There was disillusionment with the institutional oriented nature of the art scene in New Zealand and the isolation provided both the inspiration and lack of distraction needed to develop his work in an individualistic way.

Having achieved this he returned to New Zealand in 1982 seeking a market for his work and since then he has developed a reputation as one of the South Pacific's leading realist Artists.

Cross now divides his time between studios in Niue and New Zealand and although the work is very specific in its detail, reference to these countries is restricted to the use of local elements for the creation of a timeless, lateral world where his figures act out and question the foibles of humanity but never try to proffer answers.

The linear perspective of history has been replaced by a cyclical understanding of time, an understanding that the Artist has achieved by his closeness to nature while in Niue. Cross's figures are totally integrated with the landscape and there's never a feeling that nature is dominated by human kind. This is the basis of a complex philosophy that the Artist transfers into his images and in their ethereal, visionary way the works warn of the dire ecological imperatives that face both a small island and a planet.

Mark Cross has achieved through his work a uniqueness that avoids the trappings of regionalism, so often associated with realism, and replaces them with an acutely perceptive world view. During the nineties however the artist has ventured into other areas of art production with the establishment of a sculpture park in the rain forest in the east of Niue. A collaboration with his wife and several other artists, crafts people and musicians saw the creation of the Shrine to Abundance, an installation inside a shipping container that toured Australia, New Zealand and Rarotonga. His paintings however are his main focus and are to be found in many private and corporate collections in Australasia, America and Europe.