

VI. CreatiVITI

CreatiVITI is a registered charity formed in 1993 to promote the development of the arts in Fiji and to assist those making a living from their creative talents. The CreatiVITI Arts Centre is located in Martintar, Nadi, Fiji.

Vision and Mission

The organisation's vision is empowering *mana* in the arts and developing arts and crafts in Fiji through training, promotion and the enjoyment of original creative expression in a setting accessible to the community.

Values

We are a people of integrity, respecting each other and learning, sharing, and caring in a diverse culture.

Objectives

- To encourage, develop, and coordinate artistic expression in Fiji on a multicultural level, with particular emphasis on the needs of the local community
- To contribute to the preservation, promotion, and understanding of indigenous cultural traditions unique to Fiji while simultaneously encouraging the development of contemporary arts and crafts forms
- To foster the role that arts and crafts play in nation building through reducing poverty, enriching educational and social development, fostering self-expression, and strengthening cultural identity.
- To endeavour to make opportunities in the arts and crafts sector accessible to everyone, especially those who are economically disadvantaged. To support artists and crafts people in obtaining a fair return on their creative work.
- To encourage Fijis' children to develop and make use of their creative talents.
- To act as a support network for those involved with creative arts, and to promote membership in CreatiVITI, which is open to anyone who

enjoys creativity or makes a living from arts and crafts because CreatiVITI is a colourful collection of people from many walks of life involved in a wide range of art forms both traditional and contemporary

- To promote excellence in the arts by providing incentives for artists and recognising the work done and artistic achievement
- To further cultural and artistic exchanges between the people of Fiji and other nations
- To encourage the support of the arts by international bodies, the government of Fiji, local statutory bodies, the educational sector, corporate organisations, and individuals

**Notes on a New Case of Illegal Commercial Use Of Original Artwork
Created by Fiji Artist Maria Rova of Sigavou Studios Ltd, Nadi**



Pirated designs

One of my local artist colleagues alerted me early in September to the fact that a shop in Sigatoka was selling sulus with my designs on them. The shop in question is Dev Chand Boutique, located near to MH"s on the street that runs parralel to the Sigatoka River. Here is their business card:



When we visited the shop, we found that they are selling sulus featuring two of my original barkcloth art designs, each design appearing in several different colour schemes. The sulus are made from a silky, synthetic material, and the printing appears to be commercially done, not screen-printed. Borders have been added around my design, along with the words „Bula Fiji“. A man who said he was Dev Chand the shop owner told us that they make the sulus themselves, in their factory in Sigatoka. Whether this is true, or another dubious “made in Fiji” story told to people they thought were tourists (I was with a family guest from overseas when I visited the shop) is yet to be established.

Here are photos of my original barkcloth artwork that was copied by the person who designed the sulu material:



“Ocean Stars I” by Maria Rova
The original design for this numbered edition of 250 was created in 2005.
The edition is now sold out.



“Pacific Starfish I” by Maria Rova
The original design for this numbered edition of 450 was created in 2010.

These paintings are part of a series of small, hand-stencilled Limited Edition Originals, each one individually numbered, that are made in our home-based studio in Nadi. They belong to a range of unique, Fijian-Made art products created and sold by our family-owned company, Sigavou Studios Ltd. We sell these through a number of retailers in various local resorts and gift shops.

Here are photos of the sulus featuring this design, taken at the Dev Chand Boutique on September 10th. As can be seen, the fabric designer has digitally converted my design, (the original is a multi-media piece featuring fabric paint, metallic gold and silver acrylic paint and beach sand) in order to print it commercially on thin, synthetic fabric. The only difference between the front and back of the sulu is that on one side, the starfish are outlined in a shiny gold pigment (mechanically printed).



Below is an image of another of my original barkcloth paintings which is featured on a further set of sulus in this shop:



I created this barkcloth painting, called “Vonuu Ni Cakau II” for the rooms of the Outrigger on the Lagoon resort when it was redeveloped in 1999. There are still originals in this hand-painted Limited Edition in circulation. In the meantime, in response to requests from clients, I have painted two variations of this design: “Turtles of Tavueni” (in shades of brown and bronze) and “Turtles of Rainbow Reef” (below) with brighter colours. Anyone who knows our family and the story of my art, will know that the turtle is of special significance to us, being the „ika“ of my husband’s people and playing a special role in our family life. It is therefore especially upsetting to find a painting such as this splashed about in the commercial arena without any regard for the artist or the traditional significance it bears.



Here are photos of the sulus featuring this painting, on sale at Dev Chand Boutique in Sigatoka, Sept. 10th, 2012: Again, the artwork has been digitally manipulated to get various versions of the base design, which have been commercially printed on to synthetic cloth.



We found four versions of the same turtle print, each in a different colour scheme. As with the sulus bearing my starfish design, my signature was removed from the artwork before it went to print. These sulus were being sold for \$14.95 each. I bought two samples from Dev Chand Boutique, so that I would have concrete evidence to help resolve this case.

Since taking photos of these sulus in Sigatoka, we have now come across two shops in Nadi which are selling exactly the same product! They are:

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| Kwality Store PO Box 288 Main Street, Nadi Tel 6700 615 | Bula Mate Ltd Main Street Nadi Mob 9692780 |
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We have not had a chance to check other shops yet. Those attending these shops are vague about the source of the sulus, saying they were “Made in Fiji”. One shop assistant explained that they bought the material from somewhere else and sewed it into sulus at the back of their shop. The sulus were being flogged for upwards of \$20 each.

CONCLUSION

The exploitation of Fiji's visual artists through theft of our images by others for the purpose of commercial gain has been an ongoing problem over the years, experienced here and there by a range of local artists. However, the public conversation about copyright issues in Fiji has been dominated almost entirely by the music and entertainment sector to date, with very little awareness existing as to how visual artists can protect the images and concepts which are our livelihoods, in a practical and affordable way.

To date, this is the most blatant and unscrupulous of all breaches of copyright that I have personally experienced – all the more worrying as it appears that the images shown above were stolen, then reproduced commercially overseas before being sold back into the country by a yet-to-be identified wholesaler (all without my knowledge or consent). I understand that significant quantities would need to be involved for this to happen.

Ours is a small, family-run company, completely reliant on my own creative designs as a practicing visual artist. This enterprise feeds not only our family, but half a dozen other households as well. We have worked hard over the last fifteen years to build up a reputation as a producer of quality, original, Fiji-made artwork. (We were recently accredited with “Fijian Made” certification.)

Ironically, part of our growth plan for the near future actually includes an exploration into licensing a range of my artwork for use on commercial products, clothing, soft furnishing etc. Looks like someone beat us to it!

When my original works are splashed around on other cheap, sub-standard products, and modified distastefully by someone who has no rights to those images, then sold for a profit of which the artist has no part, it undermines the value of my own art, and the way my customers feel when they see cheap replicas of a work of art they have invested in or are considering investing in, freely available all over the place!

Fiji’s creative industries have much potential, yet anyone out there making his or her mark as an artist, be it in fashion, visual arts, product design, performance, or other creative pursuits, is fair game to pirates, it seems.

My family and I would greatly appreciate advice in working out what options we have to address this particular situation, and how we might do so affectively so that a clear message to these and other would-be culprits may be publicly proclaimed. (We do however request that in regards to any action that may be taken by any authorities involving this specific case, we are informed /consulted ahead of time).

Many thanks for your consideration.



Maria Rova

Artist / Managing Director

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