

## Sepik spirit houses to feature at APT7

*By William Natera*

Waikua Nera's laughter is infectious. An elderly man from Abelam in the East Sepik Province, he has me chuckling over the phone as we converse in Tok Pisin. I'm in Port Moresby and he is taking my call in Ambunti where he is waiting for a PMV truck for the trip back home, and our telecom revolves around another journey he will be taking later this year.

Waikua is part of a group of artists from the East Sepik who will travel to Brisbane, Australia in December to participate in The 7th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT7). The same band of gentlemen from Abelam and Kwoma were in the Queensland capital from last December to this January to create an incredible series of paintings and carvings for APT7. The artwork will be combined into large-scale structures based on the customary spirit houses. Born in 1955, Waikua maintains the importance of his culture and the role of art within it. In his younger years, he worked with his father Nera Janbruku and Narikowi Konbapa to create work on commission for the Australian Museum in Sydney. Decades later, age has not wearied Waikua, and as the team leader of the Abelam men on this tour of duty, he is excited about the opportunity to represent Papua New Guinea (PNG) at the APT7. Kramer Ausenco (PNG) Limited are the sponsors of the 'New Guinea Structures' exhibit at the Triennial which will be hosted by the Gallery of Modern Art. The South Pacific's leading engineering and project management firm is happy to show its commitment to the PNG community by supporting the artists. Kramer Ausenco's Ambassador, Mal Meninga (current Queensland State of Origin coach), Chairman (and former Prime Minister of PNG), Sir Rabbie Namaliu, and Chief Executive Officer, Frank Kramer, were among a number of visitors to the Gallery last year to see Waikua and the other artists – including the Kwoma team leader, Anton Waiawas – at work. Anton of Tongwinjamb Village was born in 1952 and like many senior Kwoma artists has a great interest in educating the young. He has played a major role in Tongwinjamb teaching younger men the stories and skills necessary to create work for Koromb (spirit house). He carved new works for



*Sepik artists meet with board of Kramer Ausenco (including Chairman Sir Rabbie Namaliu), Sepik Workshop, South Brisbane, Feb 2012 (photograph mark sherwood)*



*Frank Kramer (front left) and Kramer Ausenco board meet Sepik artists, Sepik workshop, South Brisbane, Feb 2012 (photograph mark sherwood)*

the Tabacco and Salt Museum in Tokyo Japan as well as the Kashiwaraki City Museum in Niigata and is as thrilled as Waikua to be a part of the APT7. The Triennial – the twentieth of the APT series – will run from 8 December 2012 to 14 April 2013, and will feature new and recent work by over 140 artists from 25 countries across the region, including the major presentation by the PNG artists.

In business, Kramer Ausenco has a proud history of bringing together people from across PNG and around the globe to work together to achieve exceptional results, and as sponsors of the 'New Guinea Structures' the company is pleased to see the remarkable work on the project. Judging by Waikua's merriment over the phone, it's a project the man from Brikiti Village is enjoying working on, and one he cannot wait to show off to the world.



*Kramer Ausenco Ambassador, Mal Meninga with Kwoma artists Nelson Makamoi and Rex Maukos, Sepik Workshop, Feb 2012 (photograph mark sherwood)*

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*The author is the Government/Public Relations & Business Development Manager with Kramer Ausenco (PNG) Limited.*