

Speeches by the Governor-General of New Zealand The Honourable Anand Satyanand

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Governor-General of New Zealand

At the opening of *Kamaka: The Ceramics of Bruce and Estelle Martin*
Japan Cultural Centre
Wellington

31-Aug-2006

Your Excellencies, Mr Masaki Saito, Ambassador for Japan to New Zealand; Your Excellency Miss Seetoh Hoy Cheng, High Commissioner for Singapore to New Zealand; Foreign Affairs Select Committee Deputy Chairperson, Honourable Georgina te Heu te Heu Your Honours Chief District Court Judge Russell Johnson and Judge Coral Shaw; Dr Seddon Beddington Chief Executive Te Papa Tongarewa, Mr Te Taru White Kaihautu Te Papa Tongarewa, Mr David Taylor Director North Asia Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Bruce Martin, Peter Shaw; Distinguished guests otherwise; ladies and gentlemen.

I am delighted to have been invited to officially open this exhibition and I greet you in the languages of the Realm of New Zealand, Kia Ora, Kia Orana, Fakalofa Lahi Atu, Taloha Ni.

Kamaka: The Ceramics of Bruce and Estelle Martin tells a wonderful story about two gifted New Zealanders whose passion for Japanese aesthetics has led to the undertaking of a forty-year career in ceramics.

This story, which begins with the late Estelle Martin attending Ikebana classes in Napier, and then turning with her husband to pottery and ceramics is well-known by those who have followed their work.

To me, it illustrates two common traits of a New Zealand kind. One is tenacity and a determination to succeed against the odds. In this case, tenacity and determination led the Martins to build their own kiln using an old vacuum cleaner as a blower and to set up the Kamaka Pottery.

Tenacity and determination saw them, years later, build a full-sized anagama kiln – something of a first in the New Zealand pottery tradition.

The second trait, which the Martins' story illustrates, is the admiration many New Zealanders hold for things Japanese. Certainly New Zealand and Japan have enjoyed a treasured friendship at a diplomatic and business level for many years. And both our countries are seen as desirable holiday destinations for the other. Our countries both support sister-city relationships and there are many examples of students from each country studying and working in the other. The remit of the Asia New Zealand Foundation which is a partnership of government and private sector interests extends to supporting this kind of initiative.

Beyond all this is something less well known and that is the fascination many New Zealanders possess for Japanese aesthetics and culture. There is much to learn from the cultural influence of Japan, one significant example being the seemingly effortless way in which Japanese culture can integrate art and beauty with every-day life.

It seems the Martins characterised this appreciation of Japanese aesthetics and culture. It is evident in the beauty of their work which we are celebrating here today. And may I add what an interesting amalgam word there is between Maori and Japanese in the word "kamaka" which can now take its place in the lexicon. As a New Zealander of Asian origin may I say that there are several good precedents to follow – words like verandah, shampoo, and mandarin being just a start.

That Bruce and Estelle Martin, along with Japanese potter Fujii Sanyo, were invited to exhibit at the Mitsukoshi Gallery of Fine Art in Osaka in 1984 shows that their interpretation and application of Japanese form was appreciated as much in Japan as in New Zealand.

May I also say that this exhibition helps recollect other strong artistic links between New Zealand and Japanese potters during the time span which the Martins' work covers and enables proper mention of such well known New Zealand practitioners as Barry Brickell, Doreen Blumhardt, Len Castle and Jim Gricg.

This is a singular and exciting exhibition and I encourage Mr Martin to feel rightly proud of his and Estelle's work today. I would also like to acknowledge Peter Shaw who has not only curated this exhibition in an expert manner but has husbanded also the handsome book of which I have had an early copy. Peter, your ability to sight and explain things in memorable fashion is again displayed here and we are grateful to you.

I would now like to declare this exhibition officially open.

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.