

Artist Biography and Statement



Juliette Pita is currently the most well-known artist in Vanuatu. She was born in 1964 on Erromango Island, the third of eight children, and is now a widow with three children and an adopted niece.

Her talent was discovered early on. With no school on Erromango, she went to boarding school in Tanna, and was always the best in art classes. She then moved to Efaté to attend Lycee. A family friend paid her fees and took her in. Juliette was the first woman to graduate from the Institut National de Technologie du Vanuatu (INTV). She never imagined making money from her art but believed God had plans for her, and now gives what she earns to anyone who needs help.

With the independence of Vanuatu in 1980, Juliette felt that she had to show with her work that her country was mature enough to be independent. In 1994, she had her first exhibition in Paris, and later exhibited in Sydney, New Caledonia, and across Europe. Her motifs are taken from the traditional culture of Vanuatu and from her current life. She works part-time as a fabric painter for sarongs that tourists can buy in the city centre. She also sells her paintings to those who come on cruise ships to Port Vila. Her children and nieces and nephews are also artists and sell paintings to pay their school fees.

“Cyclone Pam II: 13th of March, 2015” shows a mother bending and praying over her child. The waves crash, but a palm tree bends protectively over them. The woman's skirt is modelled after the traditional clothing on Erromango. On the horizon, small crosses represent the lives taken by cyclone Pam. During the cyclone, Juliette and her neighbours took refuge in a container. They could see nothing and could only pray. In the morning they climbed out to see that almost everything was destroyed. A hut behind Juliette’s studio, built traditionally using palm trees, withstood the cyclone with big trees above it deflecting the wind. Juliette believes God heard their prayers and that nature protected them that night.

