



Title of the Work: Fiji 101: Building Materials & Components

Type of Work: Creative Scholarship

**Interior Design Educator's Council Pacific West Regional Conference
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Abstract

This creative scholarship explores traditional Fijian building materials by evaluating a traditionally constructed Fijian Grand Bure on Vorovoro Island, Fiji. Bures, small structures traditionally used as houses for men (not families), are built using what is on hand; often this is wood, straw, leaves, and sand. The bure has been adapted by the tourism industry and is often what comes to mind when one imagines a waterfront Fijian resort. Vorovoro Island, however, has been untouched by the tourism industry, and is home to the Mali tribe, who also have villages the nearby island of Mali Island and Vanua Levu. The Grand Bure on Vorovoro Island was built as gathering and ceremonial space for the Mali Tribe. The Grand Bure is the most special place on the island and was built with care and intention—intention to tradition, intention to materials, and intention to its role in the tribe.

Various methods used in the construction of the bure will be examined, including weaving with leaves from the Pandanus plant, thatched roofing, the use of wood for posts, sand as a flooring material, and coconuts. Tali kato, the act of weaving traditional baskets in Fiji, will be demonstrated, along with the process of making Fijian mats used for flooring, sleeping, and wall hanging. Hand fans, the original air conditioning, are also made using the leaves of the Pandanus plant; methods will be presented. Tactile examples of woven mats and fans, as well as sand, are provided for a hands-on experience. Photographs of the building process and finished bure are also included. This creative scholarship highlights the importance of preserving traditional building techniques and materials. It also addresses sustainability, which is not a new concept: its inherent in the traditions passed from generation to generation and is especially significant from the perspective of island-dwellers, who depend on the earth to give water, food, and shelter, and who don't throw things "away" because there is no "away." Future generations will be affected by the choices we make today, and no one understands that more than the people of Vorovoro Island.