

# Sail Away With Your Brush: Brushes and Bonds - Sharing Art in Fijian Villages

by Roxy Podlogar

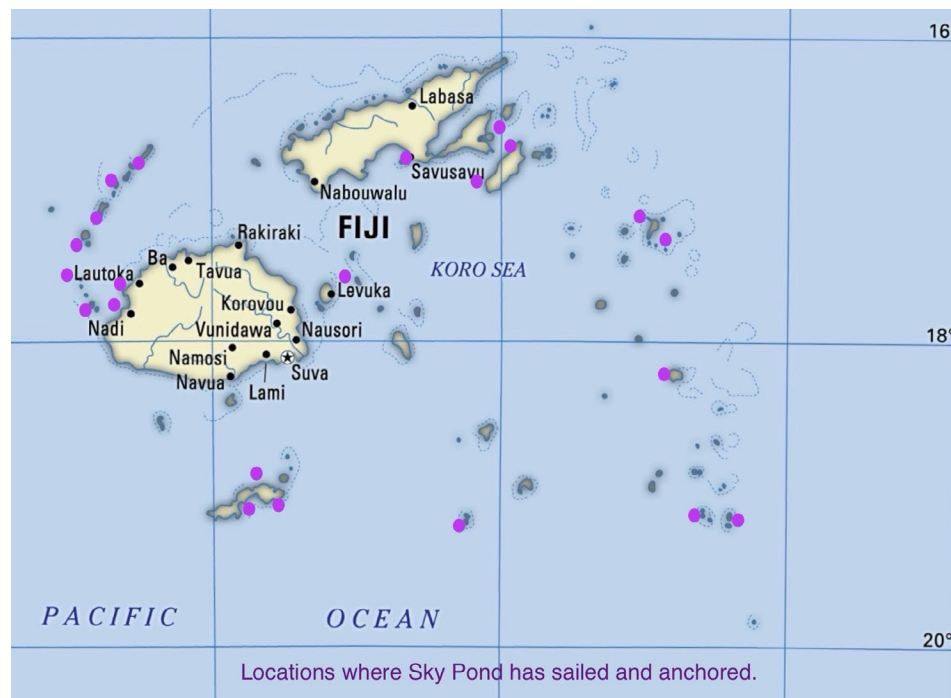
(#3 of 4-part series: for Parts 1 & 2, see Spring and Summer Hot Press 2024)

## Bula from Fiji!

As sailors, we have the unique opportunity to explore some of the world's most remote places and engage with diverse cultures. As an artist, I have been pleased by the opportunity to create lasting connections with Fijians through shared art.

Fiji is a country in the South Pacific Ocean with just under one million people. It consists of an archipelago of over 330 islands, one-third inhabited by one or more villages. Each village averages 100 people, and a chief leads each village.

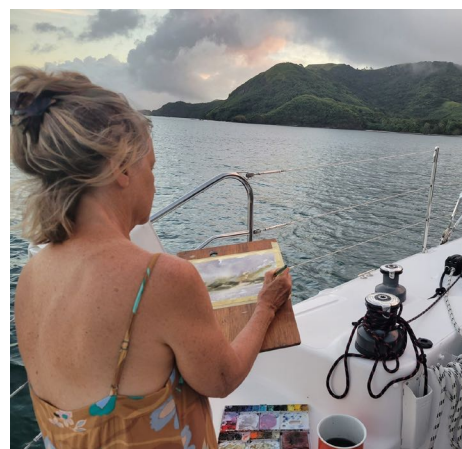
Since sailing to Fiji from Mexico in 2022, we have anchored adjacent to more than 20 remote villages. To drop our anchor and be accepted into the village, we must first gain permission from the chief by presenting Kava, the intoxicating pepper plant root, and participate in the Sevusevu ceremony. Once the chief has accepted the Kava, the root is pounded and mixed with water into a grog. He recites a traditional



ceremony in Fijian and then shares the grog from a coconut shell. It is our honor to respect the chief in this ceremony and receive his guidance and protection while anchored in his bay. This formality is necessary to paint and photograph his village respectfully.

(See <https://www.tourismfiji.com/fiji-culture-religion.html> for Fijian customs)

Painting the Fijian islands comes in several forms. The tropics produce dramatic and colorfully charged skies as a backdrop to the dense jungle islands and white



sandy beaches. My brushes and paper are always ready, so I can quickly capture evolving phases of the landscape from our boat, Sky Pond, especially during twilight or as a squall passes.

Continued on page 9

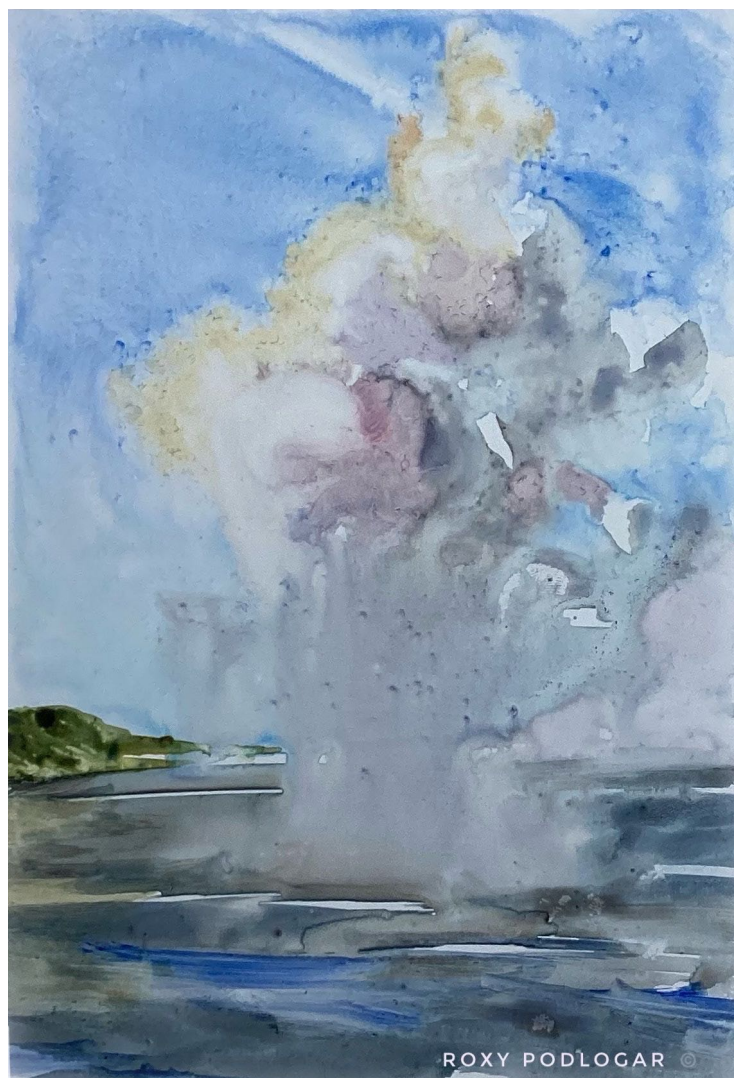
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*Octopus Cove Resort Beneath Bula Peak*

Painting on a beach or in a village can be quite a challenge. The villagers are very friendly, and the children are politely curious; they are always interested in my equipment and work. Pieces completed on shore usually consist of simple sketches. Thankfully, Fijians kindly agree to be photographed in their daily lives, allowing me to capture reference photos for future paintings.

To honor the Chiefs and the villagers, I share prints of my artwork with them, fostering connections and preserving memories of their homeland. Each print cites the location of the painting, which they usually recognize. For example, Fijian women leave their birth island to marry in distant villages to diversify the gene pool, so in some cases, they know my subject as their family home. Many women have never returned home due to the distance and the cost of travel. My gift of a familiar print stirs their nostalgia, which warms my heart.



*Passing Squall*



*Dawn at Malakati Village*

*Continued on page 10*



## TALES & ADVENTURES

Continued from page 9



To my surprise, one gentleman adopted the image from my card depicting a local marina to use as both artwork in his home and on the packaging of dates he sells at the local market!



I am especially fond of our relationship with the school headmaster and his wife on the island of Kadavu. We were anchored in their village bay for two weeks while waiting out a storm. Over that time, they befriended us and shared time on board Sky Pond. I learned he loved to draw, so I was happy to share charcoal, pencils, and paper to fuel his passion. In return, he gifted me an original small group drawing, which I cherish.



Our friendship often extends beyond art and includes our mutual families. I connect with my Fijian sisters through social media to share family news. When our family and friends visit Sky Pond, we are delighted to introduce them to the village. This journey has gone beyond my artistic endeavors by teaching me the profound impact of shared creativity in transcending cultural barriers and building lasting connections. Vinaka! Thank you!

## GEAR & GIZMOS

### Get to Know Your Silver Brush

- **Toe/Tip:** The very end of the brush head
- **Belly:** The widest part of your brush where the most color is held
- **Heel:** Where the bristles meet the ferrule
- **Ferrule:** Holds the bristles and connects the head of the brush to the handle
- **Crimp:** An epoxy sealed crimp holds the ferrule to the handle and helps keep moisture out
- **Handle:** Made with renewable hard wood, finished, sealed and perfectly balanced for effortless strokes

