# ON RETURNING TO THE SEA:

## TOWARDS BELONGING THROUGH LAND, LANGUAGE, & TACTILE STORYTELLING

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Exegesis in support of practice-based thesis
Master of Visual Arts, 2020
Auckland University of Technology

*To my family, and all the storyweavers:*

*this is for you*

# ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly indicated), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

ARIELLE WALKER
May 21, 2020

# ABSTRACT

Stories are intrinsically connected to acts of making with fibre. Customary knowledge is passed down in stories, songs, conversations held over the extraction of muka, the spinning of wool, the weaving of harakeke, the waulking of tweed: narratives woven into the fibre, textiles and text in one. These shared histories of craft and language tie cultural memories and communities together and are irrevocably bound to cultural identity.

Through systematic colonisation, migration, and the industrialisation of making, stories and craft traditions have been altered, shifted, and lost over time. I seek to reconnect with these taonga through *On returning to the sea*. My art practice is positioned in the spaces that have formed through the interweaving of language and craft, engaging hand-crafted textiles, poetic writing, drawing, lens-based media, being-in-place, and non-linear narrative as methods of making. I reference lines of my tūpuna wāhine – female ancestors – and look towards my ancestral homelands.

Embedded in indigenous methodologies – whakapapa, whatuora, pūrākau – this research explores how cross-disciplinary, process-driven, relational practices might enable new relationships to form with these traditions and homes. By looking to the past, returning to the waters from which we came, we can untangle the threads that bind us to our traditions; and in the act of re-weaving, find new pathways to reciprocal belonging.

# MIHI

Ko Ranginui kei runga
Ko Papatūānuku kei raro
Ko ngā tāngata kei waenganui
Tihei mauri ora!

Ko wai au?
I te taha o tōku pāpā
Ko Taranaki, ko Whakatere Manawa Kaiaia ngā maunga
Ko Waingongoro, ko Waima ngā awa
Ko Tongaporutu te awa te rū nei taku ngākau
Ko Kurahaupō, ko Aotea, ko Ngātokimatawhaorua ngā waka
Ko Taranaki, ko Ngāruahine, ko Ngāpuhi ngā iwi
Ko Ngā Mahanga, ko Kanihi-Umutahi, ko Mahurehure ngā hapū
Ko Puniho, ko Kanihi, ko Otatara ngā marae
He uri anō hoki au nō Shetland, nō Alba, nō England, nō Hūraitanga
Ko Maire De Thierry rāua ko Robert Elliot ōku tūpuna
Ko Chris Elliot tōku pāpā

I te taha o tōku māmā
He pākehā au nō Alba, nō Éire hoki
Ko Faith Muldoon rāua ko Johnny Walker ōku tūpuna
Ko Lynne Walker tōku mama

I tīpu ake au kei Tāmaki Makaurau,
nō reira kei te mihi ki ngā tāngata whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau
E rangahau ana au kei AUT University,
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and always, *always*, to the land and waters that form us:

Ngā mihi nui, aroha nui ki a koutou katoa

I thank you all, with all my heart and from my very bones.

The story of our relationship to the earth is written more truthfully on the land than on the page. It lasts there. The land remembers what we said and what we did. Stories are among our most potent tools for restoring the land, as well as our relationship to land. We need to unearth the old stories that live in a place and begin to create new ones, for we are story makers, not just storytellers.

~ Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass,* 2013

# CONTENTS

# LIST OF WORKS

## ARTWORKS



## EXHIBITIONS



## APPENDICES



## POEMS/TEXTWORKS

# LIST OF IMAGES

(All images by Arielle Walker unless otherwise noted)

## UTA

### *Meeting the Maunga: Taranaki viewed from Ruapehu*

2 Grandmama's thread box

3 Lace bobbins from my collection, some with beaded weights already added

4 Material examples: blankets, a sprig of heather, a kawakawa leaf

5 Detail image of kahu huruhuru woven by my tupuna Te Paea Hinerangi (now held in the Puke Ariki collection)

6 One of my early attempts at muka extraction in progress

7 Koru Pā, Taranaki

8 *distance measured by a mountain's grief* (2019), 35mm film, digital photographic print on hemp fibre, hand-embroidery in cotton thread, audio recorded poem, installation at The Barrel Store

9 *distance measured by a mountain's grief*

10 Detail of embroidery

### *The Bones of the Fish: textural detail of Taranaki coast -clay and black sand*

12 & 13 Stills from Arielle Walker and Emily Parr, *whatuora* (2020), cotton & wool threads; haerenga, conversation/audio recording; HD video, 12 mins

14 *whatuora* (2020), installation image of as part of Speaking Surfaces at ST PAUL Street Gallery. Image by Sam Hartnett and courtesy of ST PAUL St Gallery

15 Alpine plants: image taken on a hikoi to Ruapehu, retracing tupuna journeys

16 *ko au te awa ko to awa ko au (2019)*, found fibre silk chiffon patchwork, abstract detail image

## AWA

### *The Guidestones: rocks and cliffs on the Northern Taranaki coast*

18 Maureen Lander assisted by Mandy Sunlight, Mākareta Jahnke, Janie Randerson, Jan Barratt, Tira (weavers group), *Kit-Set Whanaungatanga* (2017) harakeke and teri dyes, Govett Brewster Gallery, collection of the artist, image by Mark Tantrum, sourced from https://govettbrewster.com/exhibitions/maureen-lander-flat-pack-whakapapa, copyright of Maureen Lander, shared with permission of the artist

19 Maureen Lander assisted by Mandy Sunlight, Mākareta Jahnke, Janie Randerson, Jan Barratt, Tira (weavers group), *Kit-Set Whanaungatanga* (2017) harakeke and teri dyes, Govett Brewster Gallery, collection of the artist, image by Sam Hartnett, sourced from https://govettbrewster.com/exhibitions/maureen-lander-flat-pack-whakapapa, copyright of Maureen Lander, shared with permission of the artist

20 Maureen Lander, *Flat-Pack Whakapapa* (2017) harakeke and muka, Govett Brewster Gallery, collection of the artist, image by Arielle Walker, copyright of Maureen Lander, shared with permission of the artist

21 Mata Aho Collective, *Kiko Moana* (2017), Polyethene tarpaulin and cotton thread, coproduced by Creative New Zealand, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Kassel, image copyright of Mata Aho Collective, shared with permission and courtesy of Mata Aho Collective

22 Mata Aho Collective, *Aka*, (2019), Marine rope, collection of The National Gallery of Canada, image copyright of Mata Aho Collective, shared with permission and courtesy of Mata Aho Collective

23 – 26 Mairi Gunn, frame-grabs from *Common Ground* (2014), copyright of Mairi Gunn, shared with permission and courtesy of the artist

27 – 30 Charlotte Prodger, *BRIDGIT* (2016), Single channel HD video, installation stills, images copyright of Charlotte Prodger through Hollybush Gardens, http://hollybushgardens.co.uk/?page_id=11108, shared with permission of Hollybush Gardens

31 & 32 Roseanne Watt, *Raaga* (2018), Single channel HD video, stills. Images copyright of Roseanne Watt; shared with permission and courtesy of the artist, from https://kishiewife.tumblr.com

33 Roseanne Watt, *Saat i de Blöd* (2018) poem, from *Moder Dy* (Edinburgh: Polygon Press, 2019) by Roseanne Watt. Image by Arielle Walker, copyright of Roseanne Watt, shared with permission of the artist

34 Lehua M. Taitano, *Shore Song*. (2018). Poem, from *Inside Me An Island* (Cincinatti: WordTech Editions, 2018) by Lehua M. Taitano. Image by Arielle Walker, copyright of Lehua M. Taitano, shared with permission of the artist

35 *kahukupu: selkie skin* (2019-2020), hand-knit colourwork cloak, 35mm film; detail image

36 & 37 *kahukupu: selkie skin* (2019-2020), hand-knit colourwork cloak, 35mm film. Images by Liam Mullins on behalf of Arielle Walker

38 screen-print tests

39 – 41 stills from moving image sketch, 2019

42 *kahukupu: selkie skin* (2019-2020) image courtesy of Liam Mullins on behalf of Arielle Walker

### *Te Haerenga/The Journey: fog over the Tongaporutu River, Taranaki*

44 A collection of early relational works, in a multitude of materials: plant-dyed wool, hand-knit and machine-knit merino, screenprint on watercolour, felted wool, photographic image, hand-twined raffia string

45 Hand-twined raffia string, made-in-conversation during the Travelling Places non-symposium

46 & 48 *Tongaporutu River map* (2019), plant-dyed woollen blanket, cotton thread, digital photography in-place at Tongaporutu Beach, Taranaki

47 Installation at ST PAUL Street Gallery Three

49 Taranaki at sunset, taken from Tongaporutu Beach on a studio haerenga

50 *Te Pūrākau o Taranaki, a re-remembering* (2019), Machine-knit merino wool, hand embroidered cotton, poetic text. Two pieces, each 500 x 700mm, documentation of ceremonial moment

51 *kahu-kupu: Taranaki* (2019), Hand-knit wool, 1400 x 800mm; being-in-place, 35mm film, image by Liam Mullins on behalf of Arielle Walker

52 *ki uta, te awa, ki tai* (2019), hand-knit/embroidered wool badges; detail

53 *kahu-kupu: Taranaki* (2019) and *ki uta, te awa, ki tai* (2019), installation image courtesy of Weasel Gallery and Maddie Gifford

54 *ko au te awa ko to awa ko au* (2019), detail image

55 *Ka haere au ki te tōwenetanga o te rā,* (2019) digital video projection onto *ko au te awa ko to awa ko au* (2019), installation images

56 *Te Pūrākau o Taranaki, a re-remembering* (2019), image courtesy of Zoe Black

57 *Te Pūrākau o Taranaki, a re-remembering* (2019), detail image

58 Nana's bobbin-lace in progress - scan of a photograph (undated)

59 A finished edge - Nana's bobbin-lace

60 Detail of a piece of Nana's needle-lace

61 Hand-knit muka, (size variable), progress image

62 *if I knit enough lace into blankets we'll keep warm for generations to come* (2019-present), Hand-spun, hand-knit wool, in-progress image

63 – 65 Stills from *whatu* (2019)

66 Small sample squares of knitted lace

## TAI

### *Returning to the sea: the water's edge at Karekare, Tāmaki Makaurau*

68 – 71: Pieces of Nana's textiles I have been looking after

72 *distance covered, stitch by tiny stitch* (2020), 35mm film, digital photographic print on hemp fibre, hand-embroidery in cotton thread, drawn-threadwork in hemp

73 Detail of drawn-threadwork embroidery

74 Detail of Nana's embroidery sampler

75 Plant-dyed woollen blanket pieces in progress

76 Lichen and lupin dyes on silk

77 *first soft light of the rising sun* (2020), installation at The Barrel Store – also visible are artworks by Debbie Harris and Makyla Curtis, image by Emily Parr

78 detail image, courtesy of Emily Parr

79 *first soft light of the rising sun (2020)* at Tongaporutu, Taranaki (the maunga in the distance obscured by cloud); taken on 35mm film with the assistance of Emily Parr and Makyla Curtis

## *On returning to the sea: the final exhibition*

80 *first soft light of the rising sun* (2020). Foraged plant dyes (angiangi/feusag a' gobhair/goats beard lichen, dock/copag, gorse, harakeke, iron sulfate, kānuka, lupin, onion skin, tanekaha) on handed- down silk, cotton muslin, and linen; Grandmama's threads. 1820 x 4700mm.

81 Installation of works in the ST PAUL Street Gallery foyer space; from left:
*first soft light of the rising sun* (2020),
*tūpuna guide us to weave in any way we can* (2019– ongoing); muka gathered from Taranaki and Tāmaki Makaurau, hand knit into the Shetland lace pattern Print o da Wave. Currently 100 x 290mm;
*distance measured by a mountain's grief/distance covered, stitch by tiny stitch* (2019-ongoing).Hīkoi; 35mm film; dye-sublimated print onto hemp canvas; embroidery, drawn-thread/cutwork in hemp thread, velvet embroidery fabric prepared by Nana. 600 x 1000mm;
*distance rewoven from the roots to the stem* (2020- ongoing). Hīkoi;35mmfilm;dye-sublimated print (of Tongaporutu harakeke and gorse) onto hemp fibre unravelled by hand; whatu in plant- dyed (gorse, kānuka, harakeke, lupin, tanekaha) wool yarn. 600 x 1000mm.

82 – 95 Installation images and closer details of artworks installed in the gallery foyer

96 & 97 Details of *first soft light of the rising sun (2020)* in gallery foyer window

98 Installation of works in ST PAUL Street Gallery One, as viewed from entering the gallery door; from left:
*embodying my roots, skin, and leaves: a map (2020-ongoing),* foraged plant dyes (acorns, angiangi/feusag a' gobhair/goats beard lichen, dock/copag root, gorse flowers and spines, harakeke para, kānuka bark, kawakawa, lupin leaves, mānuka leaves, onion skin, pōhutukawa bark, pōhutukawa roots, tanekaha bark, yarrow, woad), aluminium sulfate, ferrous sulfate, sodium carbonate on vintage and handed-down woollen blanket. Currently 2000 x 3720mm;
*if I knit enough lace into blankets we can keep warm for generations to come* (2019-present);
*rongoā* (2020) Audio, headphones. 8 mins 22 seconds (loop); *thirty-one hand-turned wooden lace-bobbins in various hardwoods, gifted to me by Nana and made by my uncle; beads made from river clay, ochre, and black sand, gathered from Tongaporutu, Taranaki; beads made from seaweed and pumice, gathered from Oakura, Taranaki; beads made from river stones, gathered from Tongaporutu Beach and the base of Taranaki maunga; Hawaiian faux-pearl beads from Grandmama's necklaces; quartz, amethyst, malachite, shell, and glass beads gifted to me as a child; muka; fish skin leather* (2004 - ongoing). Hand-made and passed down beads; wooden lace-bobbins; repurposed electrical wire. Dimensions variable. Placed on Nana's embroidery sampler;
*gather river bank clay / to make a bowl, shaped in the palm of your hand, to find again a lost and tender tongue* (2020) river clay, ochre, black sand (gathered from Tongaporutu, Taranaki); various beads for *thirty-one hand-turned wooden lace-bobbins* [..]

99 – 114 Installation images and closer details of artworks installed in Gallery One

All images from the final MVA graduating exhibitions are courtesy of Emily Parr, taken on behalf of Arielle Walker and ST PAUL Street Gallery

UTA

# MEETING THE MAUNGA

*Or an introduction to the storying of this research project & the core concepts that underpin it*

*Please take a seat, e hoa mā, make yourself comfortable: I am going to tell you a story. This is a story of retraced footsteps and rewoven threads, a journey to meet tūpuna, a haerenga to come full circle, to return to the sea. This is a story of distance & longing, reconnection & healing; a story measured at times through a mountain's grief and at others through a thousand small moments of synchronicity. Most of all, this is a story about the relationships that pull, stitch, and bind everything together.*

# A KŌRERO INGOA, ON NAMING THE PROJECT

I grew up surrounded by stories. As a child, I lived on a staple diet of pūrākau, 'myths', and fairy tales: timeworn retellings of traditional narratives, and new inventions concocted by my family. Textiles were always close at hand, in tales of patupaiarehe nets, Arachne's weaving arrogance, the spider silk of the Daoine Sídhe; and in the blankets wrapped tight around me as I listened or read with rapt attention.

British textiles scholar Jessica Hemmings writes: "Textiles remember. [...] Moments of joy and tragedy are recorded onto the surface and embedded in the structure of the cloth [...] because the textile is a record keeper, it provides us with often unexpected, even forgotten memories."[1] Memories of story and fibre are embedded in clothes and objects knitted and stitched by hand and the delicate lacework and embroidery that existed around me, made by my mother, my grandmama, and my nana.

Traditionally, storytelling and textiles have always been intrinsically interwoven.[2] Customary knowledge is passed down in stories, songs, conversations held over the extraction of muka, the spinning of wool, the weaving of harakeke, the waulking of tweed, the beating of aute, the twirling of poi: narratives woven into the fibre, textiles and text in one.[3] These shared histories of craft and language tie cultural memories and communities together and are irrevocably bound with cultural identity.

Through systematic colonisation, migration, and the industrialisation of making, stories and craft traditions have been altered, shifted, lost over time.[4] I seek to reconnect with these taonga through *On returning to the sea*. My art practice is positioned in the spaces formed through the interweaving of language and craft. I reference lines of my tūpuna wāhine and look towards my ancestral homelands. Embedded in an indigenous paradigm of relational accountability grounded by whakapapa, whatuora, and pūrākau, this research explores how cross-disciplinary, process-driven, relational practices might enable new relationships to form with these traditions and homes.

I work with textiles, writing, drawing, lens-based media, and non-linear narrative as methods to find new tactile/experiential ways of engaging with ancestral stories through making and installation. The work is more than the artworks and poems/textworks resulting from this practice, which should not be considered purely for their aesthetic or functional properties. Rather, the work is in the process of making: the pieces hold memory and their own mauri.

My thesis began under a different name, one that spoke to the forest, to the deliberate act of being lost, of surrender as a method of learning. As the project unfolded, so too did its name and its purpose. *On returning to the sea* moves away from the state of being lost, and towards reconnection. By looking to the past, we can untangle the threads that bind us to our traditions; and in the act of re-weaving, find new pathways to reciprocal belonging.

**kōrero ingoa** naming story | **pūrākau** myth, ancient legend, story | **patupaiarehe** faery folk | **Daoine Sídhe** (Gaeilge) Fair Folk, faery people | **muka** prepared flax fibre | **harakeke** "New Zealand flax" | **aute** barkcloth | **poi** a light ball on a string, swung/twirled rhythmically in time to song | **taonga** treasures | **tūpuna wāhine** female ancestors, grandmothers, great-grandmothers etc | **mauri** life force, vital essence, special nature

# POSITIONING MYSELF IN THIS RESEARCH, A GROUNDING FROM WHICH TO BEGIN

I was born in Tāmaki Makaurau in the summer of 1993. My parents named me Arielle Faith, after the faery from Shakespeare's *Tempest*, and my maternal grandmother.

My mother, Lynne, was born in Bournemouth, England, to a Pākehā New Zealander father and an Irish-Canadian mother. As a child, she moved often: first around England, and then in 1964 to Aotearoa with her parents and siblings. My grandmama Faith, an Irish settler descendant, grew up on the prairies of Saskatchewan, Canada. She always identified firmly with her Irish roots ("of course you like potatoes! You're Irish!"). My granddad Johnny was born in Taupiri to Scottish Pākehā/settler parents, and grew up in Ngāruawāhia, under the care of Te Puea Hērangi.[5]

My father, Chris, was born and grew up in New Plymouth, Taranaki, as did his father, my granddad Robert, whose own parents were of Scottish, English, Ashkenazi Jewish, and Swiss-French descent. My nana Maire grew up at Puniho, Taranaki, of Taranaki, Ngāruahine, Ngāpuhi, Shetland, Scottish, and English descent. I spent many childhood summers travelling back and forth between Taranaki and Tāmaki Makaurau, visiting Nana and Granddad, extended family, beaches and forests; the maunga a constant – if distant – presence.

Through an odd, automatic pronunciation-shift that occurs with almost everyone I meet, I have been given the name Arie or Ari by my friends. As my whānau and I learned more of our whakapapa, including following tūpuna lines generations further back than we had previously known, it came first as a surprise, then as no surprise at all, to find similar names repeated in my tupuna lines. Names, like stories, have power: he taonga tuku iho. Names, like stories, are carried on.

Despite the tūpuna names in our whakapapa, and a few of their pūrākau passed down, I never felt that I knew how to "be Māori."[6] Dad hadn't been back to Puniho Pā since he was a child. I had never been. There was a disconnect that we could never quite bridge – or maybe it hadn't yet been the right time to do so.

I am a descendant of settler-indigenous relationships, the daughter of many peoples who left their homelands by choice or by force – many of whom became, in turn, a cog in the colonial machine,[7] settling other peoples' stolen homelands.[8] No matter whether it was one thousand years, one hundred, or only fifty years ago, it was the sea that first brought every one of my tūpuna, my ancestors, here. Among those I descend from – those whose names I have always known, have recently learned, am still learning, may never learn – there are weavers, drapers, silversmiths, shoemakers, healers, surgeons, scholars, and many, many farmers, crofters, fishermen, miners, labourers (mostly men) and those whose labour and craft history deemed unimportant to note (mostly women).

Layered in my whakapapa are histories of connection and disconnection, of working with fibre and in close relationship with land and sea. It is all of these ancestral threads that I weave together through my practice and through this research project.

**Pākehā** term used for non-Māori New Zealanders, especially those of European/British origin | **reo** language, dialect, tongue, speech | **maunga** mountain | **tūpuna** ancestors | **iwi** extended kinship group, tribe; also strength, bone | **whakapapa** ancestry, genealogy, lineage, descent; also to place in layers, lay one upon another, stack flat

# A WHAKAPAPA OF MATERIALS

The materials I use in my research are taonga with their own histories. Many of those histories directly intersect with my own; it is important to acknowledge a few in particular by way of clarifying their importance within my practice.

The threads I use to stitch together works belonged first to my Grandmama: she brought them with her across the ocean to Aotearoa in 1964.[9] I have been dipping into this box of threads ever since I was a child. These are the threads I learned to sew with, clumsy stitches holding together projects that I considered play. I was unaware then that I was taking the first steps in what would become my craft – or that I was picking up threads of making from generations of my tūpuna wāhine.

Unlike the threads, my sewing machine was given to me new – a years-ago gift from Grandmama, as hers was too worn to pass on. She sewed clothes for my mother, who then sewed her own clothes, and in time, sewed clothes for me. The machine was a way for me to carry on the tradition.

A set of hand-turned wooden lace-bobbins were another years-ago gift, this time from Nana. They were made by my uncle Graeme, although at least one is from Nana's own collection. The bobbins are still waiting for me to learn to use them – waiting in close proximity, and handled often. I have been slowly adding the beaded weights needed to hold the bobbins steady while intertwining threads.

*TOP RIGHT Figure 2: Grandmama's thread box BOTTOM RIGHT Figure 3: Bobbins from my collection, some with beaded weights already added*

The fibres I use are mostly second-hand; pieces of vintage wool blankets, cotton muslins, linen, and silk found in the sewing cupboards at home, first collected by my mother or grandparents. When I need to supplement these fibre materials (which are, like the thread-box, a finite resource), I go to local op-shops, usually close to the site of the artwork. Blankets found in these shops are often identical to the ones I grew up with (even Dad had to check I wasn't cutting up Nana's blankets, still used for guests).

Woollen blankets, in particular, are loaded items. Historically, blankets have been used insidiously in land barter; and conversely as a metaphor for land, whenua considered as a blanket.[10] Many of my ancestors were displaced by lairds and landlords for sheep, but knitting and wool were still of immense cultural importance. I use these materials in acknowledgement of all aspects of their histories.

The plants that I use in my works, either for dyes or as fibres, all hold significance. I follow tikanga I have learned from kaiako for working with any plant materials. Each plant I use holds metaphorical meaning as well as material purpose. They either come directly from the place I am making my work in (around a specific river, for example) or are native to the homeland that I am referencing; many of the latter have become weeds here in Aotearoa.

**kaiako** teacher | **tikanga** correct procedure, protocol, custom, lore, habit, way, method, manner, rule, code, meaning, plan, practice stewardship | **pepeha** introducing oneself: a set structure that identifies who you are, where you're from, where you belong | **akoranga i te reo Māori** Māori language learning | **haerenga** journey | **Te Toka a Rauhoto** in the pūrākau of Taranaki, the stone Te Toka a Rauhoto leads Taranaki to where the maunga is now | **takutai moana** coast | **shoormal** (Shaetlan) the water's edge, where the shore meets the sea | **mita** dialect | **whanaunga** kin, blood relation

*LEFT Figure 4: Material examples: woollen blankets, a sprig of heather, a kawakawa leaf*

# A FEW NOTES ON STRUCTURE

Beginning with pepeha – a pepeha that I am now able to write in detail and complexity, in part due to this research journey – grounds me in my positioning as a researcher.

Integrated throughout are textworks and images of artworks. There are also moments in this document where a description of a project or process is the only remaining trace of its making. Rather than segment these into appendices or separate chapters denoting a linear process, the works are woven through the document in relation to the discussion. Each of my methodologies, contexts, and experiences are braided through my making practice: one cannot be considered without the others. Similarly, synchronicities that occurred during the research are mentioned in parallel text to the main thesis journey, and are further indications of the tūpuna guidance I discuss in a later chapter.

I use te reo Māori terms and phrases throughout the project, as well as Shaetlan/Scots/Scottish Gaelic/Irish.[11] Each word choice from these ancestral languages brings with it its own cultural associations and meanings that cannot be expressed in English.[12] My akoranga i te reo Māori has mostly taken place in Tāmaki Makaurau (where I live), and so my spelling and dialect (for now) reflect the teachings I have had here, rather than the mita of my own iwi/hapū. Rather than interrupting the flow of text with in-text translations, in most cases I include a brief footnote glossary. For a more in-depth translation of the terms used, I provide a full glossary at the end of the document. This is to allow for a bilingual merging of meaning to take place in the reading of the text.

Each main section of the exegesis embodies part of the journey I have taken through this practice-led research. From UTA (land, grounding, looking inward), we move along the AWA (river, waterflow, movement, guidance) to return to the TAI (the sea, connectedness, full circle). Within these sections, my haerenga follows the pūrākau path of Taranaki: from the initial struggle of arrival (my entry into this research, and grappling with the complexities of identity and belonging), to the bones that formed the structure of the land (my methodologies), through the journey led by guidestone Te Toka a Rauhoto (artistic contexts), and finally to this current point in my project, the takutai-moana, the shoormal, the edge of the sea – a foundation, rather than a conclusion.

My pepeha has unfolded in parallel to this research journey, often in the most unexpected ways: I learned my Ngāpuhi pepeha for the first time when I discovered that one of the kaiako at Kura Pō Owairaka (where I have been learning Te Reo Māori) was whanaunga, another descendent of my tupuna Te Paea Hinerangi. A chance meeting – or a guided one.

## MEETING THE MAUNGA: NOTES & REFERENCES

[1] Jessica Hemmings, part introduction to "Memory," in *The Textile Reader*, edited by Jessica Hemmings, (London: Berg, 2012), 57

[2] Shawn Wilson writes: "the words 'text' and 'textile' are both from the Latin textus for 'woven.' An online etymology dictionary says: 'An ancient metaphor: thought is a thread, and the raconteur is a spinner of yarns -- but the true storyteller, the poet, is a weaver. The scribes made this old and audible abstraction into a new and visible fact. After long practice, their work took on such an even, flexible texture that they called the written page a textus, which means cloth.'" - Dawn Hill Adams et.al, *Ceremony at a Boundary fire: a story of Indigenist Knowledge*, (Sydney: Sydney eScholarship Repository, 2015), 6

My original thesis proposal began with this connection, noting that: "The etymological links make particular note of [the connection between storytelling and textiles]: not only in English (the Latin-derived text/textile/techne) but in numerous, otherwise unconnected languages (from Sanskrit to Hungarian to Quechua) where words for language and speaking, vocal chords and fibres all share the same roots." - Victoria Mitchell, "Textiles, text and techne," in *The Textile Reader*, edited by Jessica Hemmings, (London: Berg, 2012)

[3] Refer to Karl Chitham et al., eds., *Crafting Aotearoa: A Cultural History of Making in New Zealand and the Wider Moana Oceania* (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2019); Kassia St Clair, *The Golden Thread* (UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 2018); Jessica Hemmings, ed., *The Textile Reader* (London: Berg, 2012)

[4] As outlined by Jo-ann Archibald et.al, eds., *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*, (London: Zed Books, 2019); and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2012),

[5] Granddad's reo Māori must have retained a degree of fluency as there are untranslated letters between Princess Te Puea and him held in the Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira collection - and his usual greeting to all was "kei te pehea koe?"

[6] Like writer Cassandra Barnett, I felt that: "I had always been 'proud' of my Māori whakapapa, while being aware I did not know that much about it beyond having it all written down. But it had never struck me as a personal identity crisis until I was challenged […] to write a Māori subject position ... a position which in my own way I did feel, but for which on a conscious and linguistic level I had no words, no concepts. I could not get into alignment." Cassandra Barnett, "Kei Roto I Te Whare/On Housing", ST PAUL St 2015 Curatorial Symposium: Practice, Place, Research (2015): 18, https://stpaulst.aut.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/14988/2015-Curatorial-Symposium-papers_ST-PAUL-St-Gallery.pdf

[7] Joeliee Seed-Pihama refers specifically to colonial machine in discussing the misuse of stories "in the service of the imperial project," in "Naming our names and telling our stories", *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*, eds. Jo-Ann Archibald et al (Zed Books, 2019), 113

[8] For example, "Shetland Islanders also arrived in significant numbers in the 1870s, when the Clearances in the Shetlands coincided with the offer of assisted passages to New Zealand." This kind of settler-amnesia is described through Stephen Turner's "Settler Dreaming" which notes that: "Settlement is a programme, or programming of settlers, so that the place they inhabit is one they can in time imagine is their own […] the "intent" of the settler dream is structural, and is the basis of a settler apparatus or memory-machinery." John Wilson, 'Scots - The late 1800s', Te Ara - the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/scots/page-5 accessed 1 May 2020; Stephen Turner, "Settler Dreaming", *Memory Connection Volume 1 Number 1*, 121 http://memoryconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/StephenTurner1.pdf

[9] See Appendix 1

[10] Artist Ngaahina Hohaia (Ngāti Moeahu, Ngāti Haupoto, Greek) references this history directly in Roimata Toroa (2006), noting both the nostalgia woollen blankets hold and the memories they convey, and also the historical contensions: "Te Whiti [o Rongomai, Parihaka] used the blanket as a metaphor for land but also as a reference to the historical imbalance of wealth and power upon the land." Ngaahina Hohaia as quoted by Matt Rilkoff, "Artist has own spin on integrity," *Taranaki Daily News*, June 11, 2009 http://www.stuff.co.nz/taranaki-daily-news/2463265/Artist-has-own-spin-on-integrity

[11] I aim to use these languages authentically to reflect my different stages of learning.

[12] I do so in alignment with the thinking of Irish academic Ruth Lysaght, who writes: "To use English is to admit its power. The colonial traces have left us with nuances and a particular way of seeing and being. And yet, I use English with an awareness of its limitations. When I use words and phrases from the other languages, it is to show that English is not universal. It must make room for these other concepts, for things that it can never fully express." Ruth Lysaght, "Teanga & Tikanga: A Comparative Study of National Broadcasting in a Minority Language on Māori Television and Teilifís na Gaeilge", Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, University of Auckland, 2010, preface.

# Te Pūrākau o Taranaki

Taranaki dragged himself towards the setting sun

*away from the centre of the island*
*led by the guidestone Te Toka-A-Rauhoto, carving*
*Te Awa Tupua in his wake*

*surface tension kept by fish bones*
*firm beneath the andesite*

came to rest against the edges of Te Ika-a-Māui
caressed by the hum
and swell of the sea

and looked back across the distance to Ruapehu.

*Skip forward now, there's no use looking back.*
*Skip across the millennia, past tears river-rushing*
*to fill the space between the lovers,*
*past rocks crushing and grinding to keep*
*Taranaki at his island edge. Slow down*

*let the centuries tick, tick, tick to a halt*
*– no, no,  a little further*
*past the wars and the invasion and the wars and the bloodshed and*

*now.*

Taranaki is granted personhood.

It's all there on paper, signed by a crown
he should never have been beholden to.
He's been given all the rights and burdens of any one of us.
It makes it official, in a world where distance is measured not
by a mountain's grief but by tickertape's digital descendants.

Move out from under his shadow – there's nothing left to hold him back.
He'll raise a storm of fire and ash and retrace
those first furious, limping steps
to challenge Tongariro once again.

The islandfish will writhe and shudder, whenua will scar anew
and maybe
then we'll realise
tūpuna are not ours to own or control.

# DISCOMFORT & JOY IN EQUAL MEASURE: ON MOVING TOWARDS RECONNECTION

In early December, near the middle of this project, I once again took the familiar drive to Taranaki. The journey was ostensibly to view two kahu huruhuru, made by my tupuna Te Paea Hinerangi and donated by her great-grandson, Nana's father, to the Puke Ariki museum collection.[1] Te Paea (more widely known as Guide Sophia) is famed for her skill as a storyteller, but I had not known for sure that she was a weaver of fibre as well as words. Having only just begun learning myself how to whatu, how to extract fine muka from harakeke, I was eager to see a traditional garment formed by my tupuna's own hands.[2]

On the way to the museum, I visited Koru Pā, the first Taranaki settlement where one hapū I whakapapa to, Ngā Mahanga-a-Tairi, lived until the mid-1920s. Stone walls still stand there, terraces carved into the high hills. I could feel the presence of the maunga, obscured by cloud but still so close. Through squinted, half-closed eyes, it was easy to imagine away time. The knowledge that my feet were walking along aho, lines formed by tūpuna almost a millennia before, was both grounding and humbling. I then went from the whenua to the museum, where the kahu huruhuru were unwrapped from their tissue-paper protections, and - with my fingers separated from the threads by clean, white gloves – I traced the aho threads in awe. Again, my body following in lines laid down by my tūpuna.

**e hoa mā** friends | **kahu huruhuru** feather cloak | **tupuna** ancestor (singular) | **hapū** kinship group, clan, subtribe | **whatu** fibre weaving, finger twining; also eye | **kahu** cloak | **aho** line, cord, weft; also line of descent, genealogy | **whenua** land; also placenta

*LEFT Figure 7: Koru Pā, Taranaki Figure PREVIOUS PAGE RIGHT Figure 5: detail image of kahu huruhuru woven by my tupuna Te Paea Hinerangi (in the Puke Ariki collection) PREVIOUS PAGE LEFT Figure 6: One of my early attempts at muka extraction in progress*

I left the museum in a buzz of joy, belonging and assuredness – and yet later, crumbled into familiar feelings of whakamā, and of an overwhelming sense of responsibility to my tūpuna. Worse, I again felt the worry I have seen best described by writer Cassandra Barnett (Ngāti Raukawa) in her text "Kei Roto I Te Whare/On Housing": the worry that "I actually *was* that Westerner who realises she is outside of something […] and immediately wants to know everything about that something." The fear that I was in some way *taking* without reciprocation or right.[3] Was reclaiming this part of myself, connecting to this ūkaipō, these tūpuna, allowed? Was I "Māori enough" to do so?[4] Would I be disrespecting my other homelands, other ancestors? Must I lose a part of myself to belong in any place? *Who am I* to be telling these stories, weaving these threads?

This shift between certainty and doubt, discomfort and joy, fear and certainty, core to the telling of my journey through this thesis project. The navigation of whakapapa and ancestral knowledge through layers of being has been my greatest challenge in positioning myself within this research. As Barnett discusses, the grappling and discomfort of being Pākehā-Māori (and so much more within that), of existing within the hyphen-space[5] and (at times) feeling alienated from one or any of these identities, is impactful in itself. There are additional challenges in seeking reconnection and belonging while engaged in an academic setting, in a position where the intuitive processes that guide me must so often be examined and articulated into language.

Barnett uses the metaphor of dwelling to embody acts of home-making within "rigid, outmoded institutional forms". She unpicks ways to work within and alongside these institutional research/practice frameworks while simultaneously making space for the intricacies of multiple worldviews and perspectives. Importantly, she explains that these multiplicities often exist within a single body - of work, and of the researcher/maker/artist themselves:

> I slid around, during that thesis experience, between various positions: coloniser, decolonising coloniser, Māori, decolonising Māori, and of course many others besides - my Irish, English, Scottish, Rwandan and other whakapapas [sic]… all feeding in and influencing me [...] There are many lines, each with their own memories of domination or subjugation – and no one of them (as a body of mātauranga) holds the single answer to all my questions. So I surrendered to the state of being multiple.[6]

At the close of her paper, Barnett clarifies a set of terms, shifting the hyphen from "coloniser-indigenous" and instead placing a colonising/colonised way of knowing (rational, cognitive etc) on one side, and subjective, embodied knowing on the other.[7] She suggests that the ability to embrace and work across multiples "is only possible if the difference of each worldview is also respected and can continue to evolve in its way too."[8] I began to realise that *On returning to the sea* is my way into that embrace, the one-that-is-many. In embarking upon this research journey, and in order to fully respect the complexities and histories that lie within my research, I, too, surrender to the state of being multiple.

From the beginning of this research, I have been cautious to only think through stories connected to places that I had direct ancestral links to, and which had been passed down to me – the pūrākau of Taranaki, for example, or tales of selkie folk from the isles of Scotland and Ireland. The crafts I work with were passed to me through my mother, my grandmama, my nana; those I wished to learn about all come from their ancestral homelands. I am hyper-aware of the need to protect

knowledge: that the storyteller can only tell the stories that they belong to, or are gifted; I know that some stories are not meant to be told. Always, I consider my own relationship to the ancestral places that these pūrākau originated, and the aspects of time-layering that remove me from them. But I wanted to *decolonise* these stories, reclaim and restore – or *restory* – them,[9] in line with academics Jenny Lee-Morgan (Waikato-Tainui, Ngāti Mahuta), who notes that "reclaiming story-telling and retelling our traditional stories is to engage in one form of decolonisation,"[10] and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Porou):

> Telling our stories from the past, reclaiming the past, giving testimony to the injustices of the past are all strategies that are commonly employed by indigenous peoples struggling for justice [...] the need to tell our stories remains the powerful imperative of a powerful form of resistance.[11]

It took a fundamental shift in perspective to realise that before I could even *begin* to work with telling these stories, I had to learn my own story first. Like Barnett, "I collided with the admission that 'I do not know myself; in this regard, I cannot speak for myself (let alone my people).'"[12]

I had to look inwards in order to speak outwards. I had to return to my own whakapapa lines, and begin to untangle the threads that had brought me here, into this research space. The more I opened up to this realisation, the more I felt a sense of tūpuna-presentness, as if I was being guided forwards: not in a linear way, but as a river moves, with undulations, digressions, moments of re-joining, but ever and always towards the sea.

**ūkaipō** origin, real home | **selkie** (Scots, Shaetlan) seal-being, able to shed their skin and become human on land

## NOTES & REFERENCES

[1] Opened in 2003, Puke Ariki is the amalgamation of the former New Plymouth Public Library (founded 1848) and the Taranaki Museum (1919). Its current collections consist primarily of archives, social history, taonga Māori, and the Swainson/Woods studios collection of vernacular photography from 1920 – 1990. The name Puke Ariki comes from the original Te Ātiawa pā site on the former hill where the museum now stands, which was renamed Mount Eliot by New Plymouth settlers before being largely demolished by 1905. Puke Ariki, "History," *pukeariki.com*, accessed February 20, 2020 https://pukeariki.com/about-us/history/

[2] These two kahu are over 100 years old - I had only learned of their existence a mere few weeks before my visit.

[3] Barnett, 18

[4] Anahera Gildea and Patricia Grace discuss exactly this in the context of writing through their conversation in Sport Journal, with Grace establishing (among other things) that she agrees "with being inclusive, because one thing that can't be taken away is your whakapapa" (Anahera Gildea and Patricia Grace, "He kōrero māori," *Sport 47* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2019), 14

[5] "the hyphen is key to learning not of or about the Other, but learning from difference, where "the orientation is to a relationship — to the hyphen." Alison Jones & Kuni Jenkins, 'Rethinking collaboration: Working the indigene-colonizer hyphen', in Norman K. Denzin et al. (eds.), Handbook of Critical Indigenous Methodologies (New York: Sage Publications, 2008) quoted by Charlotte Huddleston in ST PAUL St 2015 Curatorial Symposium: Practice, Place, Research (2015); also referenced in Barnett, 21, 23

[6] Barnett, 22

[7] Barnett references Eduouard Gliassant, in that 'In relation, elements don't blend just like that, don't lose themselves just like that. Each element can keep its – I won't just say its autonomy but also its essential quality, even as it accustoms itself to the essential qualities and differences of others.' [...] you are not one, you are multiple, and you are yourself. You are not lost because you are multiple. You are not broken apart because you are multiple...' Edouard Glissant & Manthia Diawara, 'Conversation with Edouard Glissant Aboard the Queen Mary II (August 2009)', in T. Barson & P. Gorschluter (eds.), Afro Modern: Journeys Through the Black Atlantic (Liverpool/London: Tate, 2010), 61, 63;

[8] Barnett, 24

[9] Gary Nabhan cited by Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass* (Canada: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 9

[10] Jenny Lee-Morgan, "Decolonising Māori Narratives: Pūrākau as Method," in Kaupapa Rangahau: A Reader, edited by Leonie Pihama, Sarah-Jane Tiakiwai, and Kim Southey (Hamilton: Te Kotahi Research Institute, 2015), 98

[11] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 36

[12] Barnett, 18

# distance measured by a mountain's grief

**(July/August 2019)**

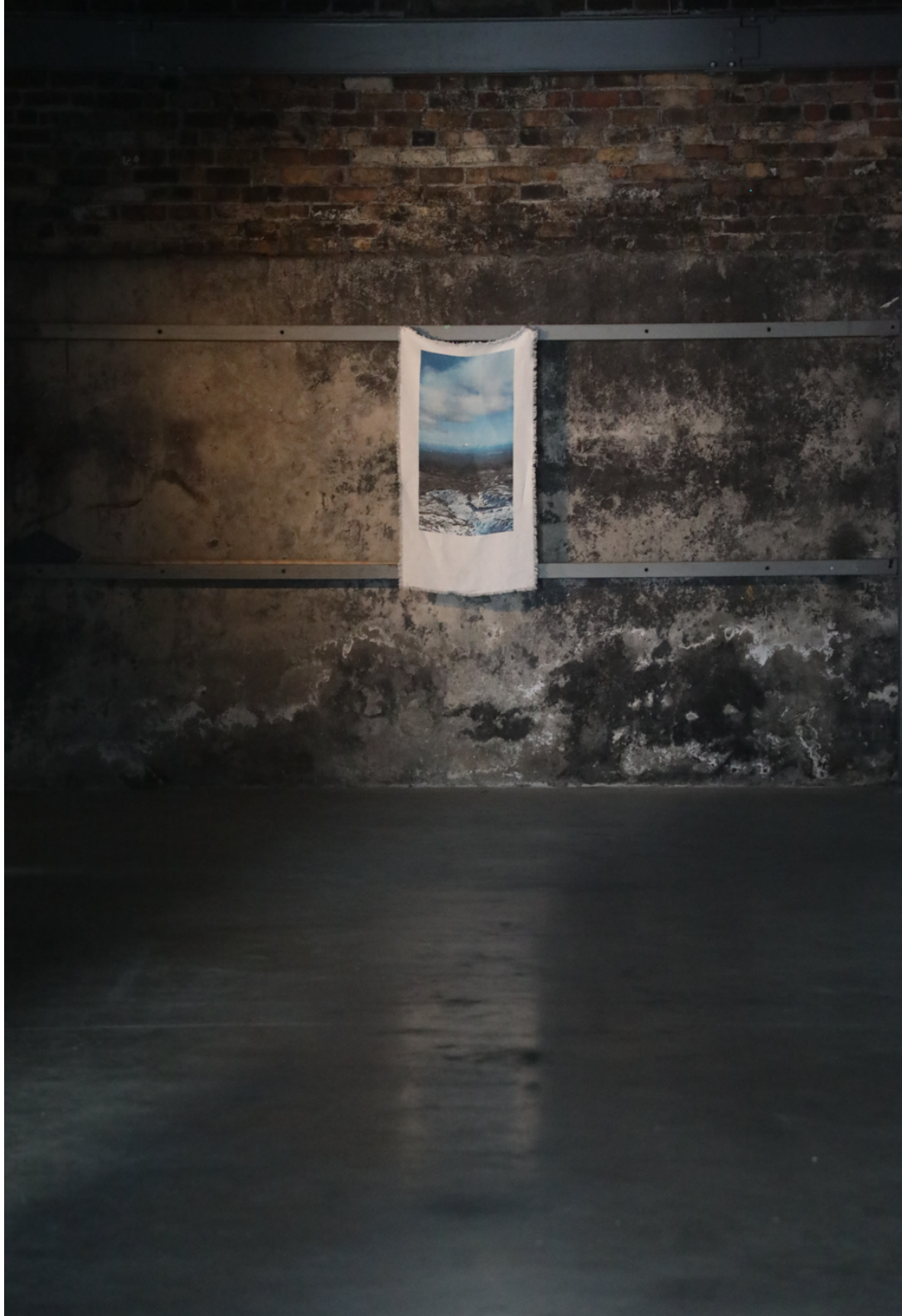
hikoi to Ruapehu, 35mm film, digital photographic print on hemp fibre, hand-embroidery in cotton thread, audio recorded poem, installation

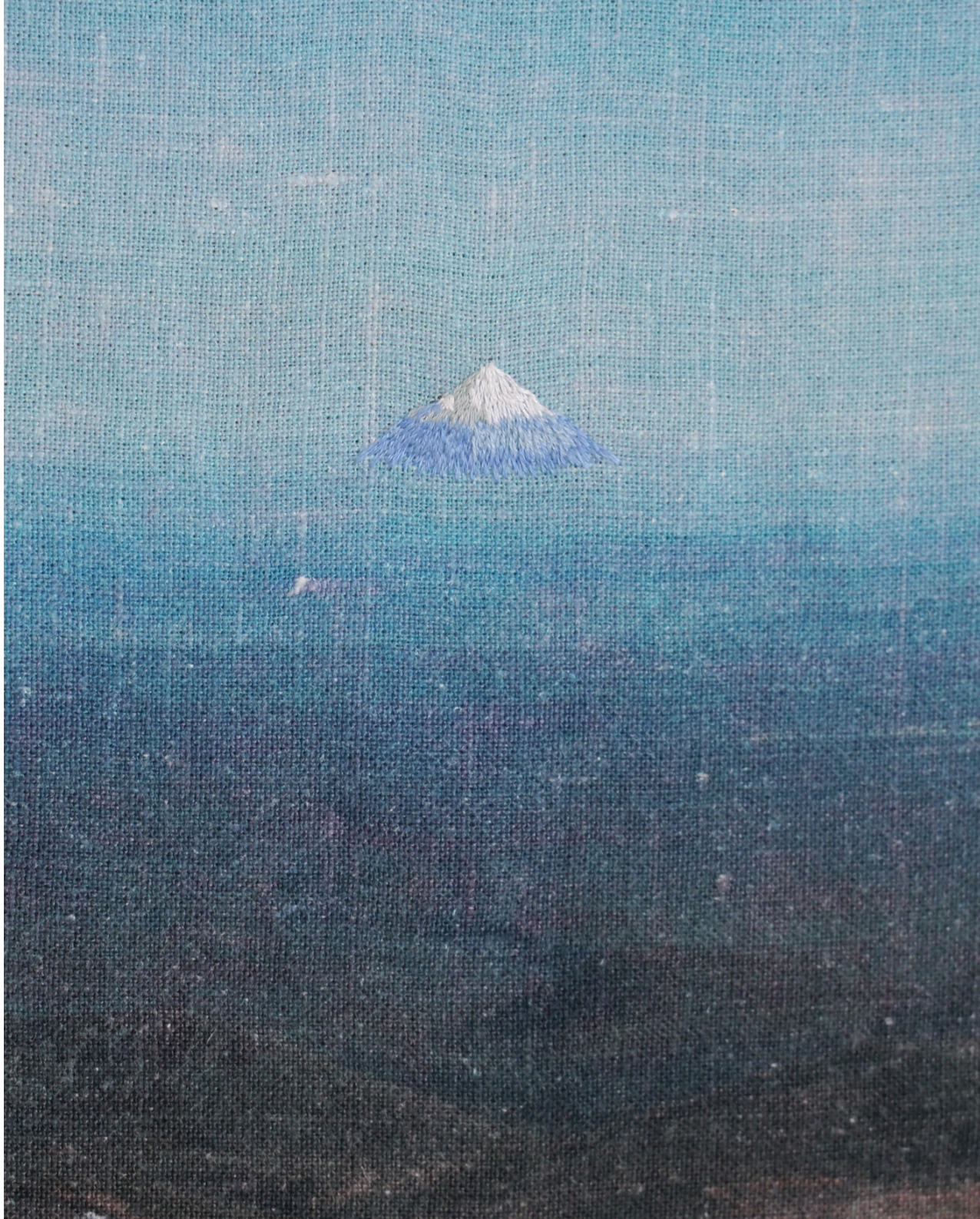
In this artwork, a digital photographic print onto hemp fibre shows the distant view of Taranaki from Ruapehu, referencing the oral history/pūrākau of ancestral maunga Taranaki. The title itself comes from the first poem in this exegesis. Taken as a line on its own, the words begin to ponder on non-physical, non-empirical ways of measuring distance.

I have embroidered Taranaki by hand, back into the image, reflecting on my distance from and connection to this ancestor. The installation purposefully emphasises this distance. The long, narrow space between the viewer and the work must be crossed in its entirety, and the embroidered detail of the maunga only becomes visible from coming intimately close. The fabric-length is in itself an emphasis, with a long, white space at the bottom left clear  signifying the further distance I still have to cover.

Link to audio recorded poem: https://soundcloud.com/arielle-5/te-purakau-o-taranaki-i-te-reo-maori/s-AYvylrunuZU

*RIGHT Figure 8:* distance measured by a mountain's grief *(2019), 35mm film, digital photographic print on hemp fibre, hand-embroidery in cotton thread, audio recorded poem, installation at The Barrel Store NEXT PAGE LEFT Figure 9:* distance measured by a mountain's grief *NEXT PAGE RIGHT Figure 10: Detail of embroidery*





# THE BONES OF THE FISH

*Or the methodological frameworks that hold together this body of research*

*When Māui-Tikitiki-a-Taranga pulled the enormous ika that became our motu from the depths of the ocean, it writhed and shuddered and then lay still, its movement forming the undulating surface of the whenua.*
*It was the bones of the fish that gave it shape, formed the foundations for muscle and skin and stone and soil to build and grow.*
*There are some who say the heart is the most important thing, but it is the bones that shape us, nē?*
*It is our bones that tell us we are home.*

# WHAKAPAPA

Whakapapa is fundamental to my approach as a researcher. One might be tempted to translate whakapapa as 'genealogy' or 'lineage', but the elements of whakapapa as a way of seeing are far more complex. Whakapapa is about whanaungatanga and connection to ancestors, past and future; it is about connecting to the land and to place; and it holds the potential for layering and simultaneity. Academics and artists Joseph Selwyn Te Rito (Rongomaiwahine, Ngāti Kahungunu), Āpirana Ngata (Ngāti Porou), and Cassandra Barnett were central to recognising whakapapa as a framework for my research, and Mairi Gunn's palimpsest methodology broadened my approach.

An understanding of whakapapa as a Māori worldview is key. Te Rito writes on the connections between whakapapa and whenua, noting that as well as familial connections, whakapapa "connects us to the land and the stories and histories;" and is a framework for understanding your own identity. [1] Whakapapa refers directly to the making of layers, laying one thing upon another:[2] the prefix 'whaka-' means 'to make', or 'to cause to be', and papa refers to layers. As Ngata describes it, "if you visualise the foundation ancestors as the first generation, the next and succeeding ancestors are placed on them in ordered layers."[3] Ngata has also stated that of the many ways of speaking about genealogies, whakapapa is one that "may comprise the most extensive relationships and involve the most complicated groupings."[4] As whenua is a direct ancestor for Māori, the term whakapapa refers also to the geological layering of the land over time, and the people buried beneath but still connected to the living upon the land.[5] Whakapapa holds the concept that all of our relations are layered; that our ancestors are with us, mō āke tonu atu, for all of time.

I see whakapapa as the potential grounding for a palimpsestic research methodology, engaging the layering of histories and experiences over time. This approach is influenced by, and influences in turn, my personal connection to the ancestral narratives and homes I carry with me in this research. In her MPhil thesis, "Common Ground" (2014), Scottish-Pākehā researcher Mairi Gunn defines her methodological use of palimpsest as: "a conceptual frame for understanding and expressing erasure and reclamation of identity […] the way connections between people and land may be eroded by time yet maintained through narrative and a sense of generational belonging."[6] She describes how a palimpsestic methodology acknowledges the tacit and subjective nature of stories, bringing "the concrete or conscious into discourse with the embodied and experiential" by understanding that "knowledge and narrative are not fixed." [7] I also see it in a geomorphological sense; the term palimpsest can refer to a layering of land over time, with previous layers visible beneath the surface.

Before I began this research, I had been tracing my whakapapa, uncovering lines that had been buried or misplaced in my family's knowledge. At times it felt as though these lines were in conflict; that there could be no reconciliation of differences. My practice felt much the same: elements of writing, drawing, textile-craft, photography, all were unable to connect. In seeking an approach that would encompass everything, I came back to the full, multi-layered meaning of whakapapa. Apirana Mahuika (Ngāti Porou) argues that "the primary role of whakapapa is to include, not exclude," [8] emphasising that "our strength lies in our diversity as much as the close relationships we share."[9]

**ika** fish | **motu** island | **whanaungatanga** relationship, kinship, sense of family connection | **mō āke tonu atu** forever

Cassandra Barnett supports this understanding in "Kei Roto I Te Whare," describing her own multiple strands of being:

> All my multiple selves, definite in their differences, are only separate and distinct according to my cognitive thought processes. But when I feel (rather than think) my way into their in-most singularities, the sense of embodied knowing that arises is shared across them, becoming a moment's resonance in which the differences connect and fuse.[10]

In returning to whakapapa to guide me, I began to feel that same resonance, the differences connecting. Barnett's perspective reinforced my ability to work through intuitive, tacit means that allow relationships to build between ideas, narratives, contexts, forming a new entity that is at once more than the sum of its parts, and yet still the distinct parts themselves.[11] Moving across my ancestral homelands, different stories and ways of working, I stopped trying to *make sense* of the connections between my materials and my identities. Instead, I began to allow artworks to unfold from and into each other: a hikoi into  a film work into a poem into a hand-knitted blanket into a photograph into a hīkoi into a conversation into a weaving. Each new artwork created connections to my ancestral lines and homelands, and to the stories I hold within them. I let intuitive processes, the felt presence of tūpuna and generational memory,  guide my making.



19

# whatuora

**(in collaboration and conversation with Emily Parr, January 2020 - present)**

cotton & wool threads; haerenga, conversation/audio recording; HD video, 12 mins
https://vimeo.com/394828791/56d007cdc7

Exhibition text from *Speaking Surfaces*, ST PAUL Street Gallery, written by myself and Emily Parr:

There is both tension and wonder in learning about oneself through museums and archives, which hold our ancestors' taonga but rarely their voices. We must come to know our tūpuna wāhine in other ways. As we both begin the long, slow process of learning to whatu, we are in conversation not only with each other [and our various materials fibre, film, sound, place], but also with our tūpuna wāhine in Te Whare Pora. In *whatuora*, we hīkoi to a place our ancestors were simultaneously, Kororāreka. Through kōrerorero, we tease out the threads that brought us together, our connection to whenua as descendants of settler-indigenous relationships, and our belonging to place as women whose ancestors moved across oceans and brought or left behind their stories and traditions.

[Emily and I] have shared a studio and worked alongside each other for the past year. Our practices have been influenced by this relationship: sometimes converging, always buoying […]Together, we reflect on the passing down of knowledge, the repairing of ruptures, and the bridging of time.

*LEFT Figures 12 & 13: stills from* whatuora
*NEXT PAGE Figure 14: Installation image of as part of Speaking Surfaces at ST PAUL Street Gallery. Image by Sam Hartnett and courtesy of ST PAUL St Gallery*


faces
& Ben Thomason
& Mabel Juli

# WHATUORA

In her 2019 paper, "Whatuora: Theorizing "New" Indigenous Research Methodology from "Old" Indigenous Weaving Practice", Māori researcher Hinekura Smith (Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi, Te Atiawa) frames whatuora as a decolonising research methodology grounded by kaupapa Māori.[12] Drawing from the words whatu, both the finger-twining method used to weave garments and a term for eyes; and ora, meaning life or health:

> [Whatuora] helps us to see ourselves, our past experiences and possible future through decolonising eyes. A Whatuora approach does not stop with simply "seeing" the damage caused by colonization, but insists that we actively reclaim and restore, unpick and re-weave, a culturally well and clear vision of our present realities and, importantly, create a vision for the future.[13]

This echoes Linda Tuhiwai Smith, in that "decolonisation must offer a language of possibility, a way out of colonialism," and "that language of possibility exists within our own alternative, oppositional ways of knowing."[14]

Whatuora emerges from the alternative ways of knowing that Tuhiwai Smith describes: embodied, conceptualised knowledge, and generational memory. In counter to Western research paradigms having "captured [...] and duly mystified" the notion of "methodology", Hinekura Smith notes that indigenous practices are already inherently "deeply methodological".[15] In testament to this notion, I first encountered this combining of two familiar but previously unconnected words, whatu and ora, not in academia but through my whatu kaiako, Whaea Rose Greaves (Ngati Tara - Ngati Kahu Te Ngahengahe Ngāpuhi). During whatuora wānanga with Whaea Rose, our group enters into Te Whare Pora, learning to whatu under the guidance of Hineteiwaiwa, ātua of fertility and weaving. Te Whare Pora embodies a house of learning, "customarily a space for obtaining knowledge pertaining to fibre arts […] a state of being as opposed to a physical location."[16]

In the practice of whatu, pairs of aho (weft) threads are twined around the whenu (warp), a constant exchange of fibres that weave together into a strong but supple cloth.[17] The term whenu has linguistic connection to whenua, land; and aho to genealogical lines. When we whatu, we are essentially weaving ourselves into place. Whatuora also draws on histories of storytelling and conversation held over, through, and around textile practices: weaving with both fingers and words.[18]

A recent artwork that embodies my own whatuora approach in practice - also titled *whatuora* (2020) - was made in collaboration with fellow artist and MVA studio peer, Emily Parr (Ngāi Te Rangi, Moana, Pākehā). Early on, we noticed parallels in our research methods, and though our practices are very different, we embarked on similar journeys of reconnection through tūpuna guidance. Sharing our experiences to buoy and tautoko each other through our respective learnings became an essential part of our studio practice. *whatuora* is a natural extension of this sharing, coming together through haerenga, whatu, kōrerererorero and video in a work that also provides grounding for our separate thesis projects.

In initiating this mahi, Emily and I wished to begin in a place that our tūpuna had connection to, but that we ourselves felt distanced from. Emily's own tūpuna lived in Kororāreka at the same time as my tūpuna Kotiro Hinerangi and Alexander Gray (parents of Te Paea Hinerangi). Here, Emily and I descend from similar relationships: Māori women, removed from their tūrangawaewae, married to settler men. We decided to haerenga to Kororāreka, to be in Te Whare Pora together in this place where our ancestors existed simultaneously almost 200 years before we ourselves met. As our thoughts began to unfold, it became apparent that our haerenga was the same week I would be meeting my dad and youngest brother Luke in Kororāreka for an extended whanau hīkoi, a week of connection with other uri of Kotiro and Alexander. Everything felt like it was being guided into place.

In *whatuora,* we tease out "the threads that brought us together, our connection to whenua as descendants of settler-indigenous relationships, and our belonging to place as women whose ancestors moved across oceans and brought – or left behind – their stories and traditions."[19] By working through these conversations under the tapu of a wharepora space, we are able to safely "un-pick, and reweave" our stories, moving toward ways of more reciprocal belonging. Our kōrerorero is generative and enables me to articulate the feeling of embodied knowledge and tūpuna guidance in my research, as in this line from the videowork:

> Working with threads, like this, there feels like… similar to muscle memory but deeper, my fingers seem to know how the fibres should move and twist and knot even when I've never done this mahi before. And it's so humbling, as soon as my brain or ego get in the way I lose it again, because it *isn't just me* working. It feels like the lines of tūpuna, generational memory working through me, histories of weaving all layered up in now.[20]

Whatuora as a metaphor-weighted methodology enables me to not only embrace the physical act of weaving fibres, but other forms as well – weaving stories, experiences, materials, voices. In practice, this metaphorical weaving becomes clear in another recent artwork, *rongoā* (which I discuss more fully in a later chapter). In *rongoā,* I attempt to reconcile and untangle whakapapa threads further through poem-pieces centering on medicinal plants from three of my ancestral homelands: Aotearoa, Scotland, and Ireland. I wanted the poem-words spoken aloud, but speaking them on my own didn't feel right - which led me to ask another of my studio peers, Makyla Curtis (Scots Pākehā), if she would record them with me.

Like Emily, Makyla and I have shared stories and experiences, and found many places where our practices begin to interweave. Through her expertise in poetry and language, Makyla has also helped me to shape my own words with the same attention to craft as I give my textile works. The poem-pieces metaphorically mirror conversations had about our own positionings as descendants of Scottish settlers in Aotearoa. I hoped some of the energy of our conversations would come through in the reading, using both of our voices to bring the words to life.

As we sat together, speaking each part of the poem in turn, a sense of togetherness settled over the experience. We were not working with anything tangible – no threads, no fibres, only our voices and words on a page – and yet our voices began to weave together in perfect time. At one point, the work even seemed to suggest that our voices layer over each other, first in opposition, and then coming together. The wairua of the space held the same feeling as when I work with physical threads in Te Whare Pora. Through the relationships we have built over the past year, we weave our voices in harmony. Our recording experience embodied a different kind of whatuora in practice, a demonstration of how the methodology can perform beyond the territory of textile-work and expand more broadly into all aspects of a making practice.

Just as our pūrākau "are always connected to those that have gone on before, and those that are still to be spoken,"[21] so too are our weavings. The act of weaving with voices and words holds as much strength as weaving with threads.

**wānanga** meet and discuss, deliberate, consider; seminar, conference, forum | **hīkoi** step, march | **ātua** deity | **tautoko** support | **tūrangawaewae** of belonging through whakapapa | **uri** descendants | **tapu** to be sacred, set apart, under ātua protection | **mahi** work, practice, occupation | **rongoā** remedy, medicine | **wairua** feeling, essence, atmosphere

# PŪRĀKAU

As discussed earlier in this exegesis, I have been learning my own stories, how they connect to the pūrākau I grew up with, and how to reconnect with them in turn through my practice. As Jenny Lee-Morgan affirms in *Pūrākau from the inside-out* (2019), "undoubtably the purpose of our pūrākau is to preserve our connection to our tūpuna, through our consciousness of the present and the inevitability of the future".[22] She cites filmmaker Merata Mita (Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāi Te Rangi) saying "We must not overlook the fact that each of us is born with a story, and each of us has responsibility to pass those stories on."[23] Working with pūrākau as methodology as well as material grounds me in this sentiment: it gives me spaces of learning to come back to whenever I stumble, but also holds me accountable to the stories I work with, and those who belong to them.

Indigenous researcher Shawn Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree) centres his 2008 thesis *Research Is Ceremony* on relationality and relational accountability.[24] The fundamental point Wilson makes is the importance of relationships without hierarchy: between people, the environment, the cosmos, and knowledge/ideas. It is understood that intrinsic connections exist between e v e r y t h i n g.

In chapters written as kōrerorero, Wilson and a group of fellow Indigenous researchers, teachers, and academics discuss relational accountability in practice. Each person speaks in turn, and each following speaker builds on what is brought up by those before. I approach my making in the same way, materials and contexts forming relationships that build upon each other. This layering is entirely relational: it *could not exist* without relationships. Working with these layers, this whakapapa, holds me accountable: to myself, my family, and our tūpuna; to their stories; to the places that hold us; to those fellow makers I work with and alongside, and to those yet to come. As Wilson quotes his father, Stan Wilson: "You are answerable to *all* your relations when you are doing research."[25]

Relations are not-only-human and relational accountability is not anthropocentric. Linda Tuhiwai Smith reminds us that "a human person does not stand alone, but shares with other animate and, in the Western sense, 'inanimate' beings, a relationship based on a shared 'essence' of life."[26] In her book *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013), botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer (Potawatomi) laments that "English doesn't give us many tools for incorporating respect for animacy. In English, you are either a human or a thing […] Where are our words for the simple existence of another living being?"[27] Wilson suggests a precedence for rebuilding relationships with "more-than-humans"[28] through traditional language and traditional stories by first understanding that:

> The ground and environment from which we came is what makes us [...] So our continuing connection to the land, and fulfilling our role within that ongoing relationship, is centred on our specific environment and the relationships that it holds."[29]

The pūrākau of Taranaki is one of the many stories that have been framed as 'myths', pinned down by Western standards as having one true or 'correct' way of being told.[30] There are protective practices that must be undertaken when working with any taonga, thus my working through pūrākau was not taken lightly.[31] Some of the protective choices I have made include continued layers of abstraction in storytelling; only working with the stories shared directly with me by my whanau; and only those stories that have been captured and disseminated widely as 'myths' through a colonial lens. Working with whakapapa I recognise Taranaki as one of my many tūpuna. I have

been slowly rebuilding my relationship with Taranaki, and to the land that holds the maunga – this is part of my "specific environment" which I hold myself accountable to in story and in place.

Wilson elaborates on this accountability through the words of his friend Lewis Cardinal, that "when you create something from an Indigenous perspective, you are creating it from that environment, from the land that it sits in. This speaks to [Indigenous peoples], it gives them their responsibility for stewardship."[32] Rev. Māori Marsden (Te Aupōuri) defines 'stewardship' as kaitiakitanga. In explaining how kaitiakitanga functions, he relates first to storytelling, pūrākau as non-fiction. He describes these "myths" as deliberate constructs, employed to encapsulate worldviews, genealogies, and relationships between things.[33] Such stories "imprint on the mind, [act] as pegs to which the finer details could be attached in progressive order to reconstruct the component features of [a] body of knowledge".[34] Not only do pūrākau embody memory as an aid for recall, they also work as a form of camouflage that preserves the integrity of sacred lore, and mediates misuse and abuse of this lore.[35]

By tracing the genealogy of knowledge back through storytelling, it is obvious that there is no difference in the relationships held between people, whenua, and ideas: that "the only difference between human beings and fourleggeds and plants is the shadow they cast."[36] When maunga and awa and moana are our tūpuna, how can we treat them with anything less than care, respect, *love*? Further, "knowing that you love the earth changes you, activates you to defend and protect and celebrate. But when you feel that the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond."[37] Understanding this genealogy of knowledge, our whakapapa in its entirety, gives precedence to kaitiakitanga.

Traditional stories have layers: knowledge to be shared openly, knowledge to be shared *in certain ways*, and knowledge too sacred to be shared with anyone but the initiated.[38] Pūrākau can hold sacred cultural memories *at the same time* as being the means to make sense of relationships, and *at the same time* as being a simple story filled with wonder and narrative. Pūrākau also communicate tikanga, the right way of doing things. In essence: stories have power.

**kaitiakitanga** guardianship, stewardship | **awa** river | **moana** ocean | **karakia** invocation, prayer

# THE BONES OF THE FISH ALL COME TOGETHER IN CEREMONY

In considering pūrākau and other ancestral stories as genealogies of relationships, Wilson and his fellows connect storytelling to the underpinning idea that research is a form of ceremony:

> The purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves. The research that we do as Indigenous people is a ceremony that allows us a raised level of consciousness and insight into our world.[39]

Every time I karakia before gathering materials; every time I enter into Te Whare Pora; every time I seek to untangle further threads of whakapapa and retrace the journeys my tūpuna took that led to this place; every time I am the listener as pūrākau are shared – even now, as I share my own research story with you – I am engaging in a form of ceremony. Approaching research as a ceremony, through methods formed and grounded in concepts of whakapapa, whatuora, and pūrākau, both supports and holds me accountable to the relationships formed through my art practice. Relationships with people, the land, materials, craft processes and stories passed down to me or newly learned (or re-learned) – these are fundamental to everything I make. By approaching research as a ceremony, I am better able to ensure that care, honour, and respect remain at the heart of everything I do.

*LEFT Figure 15: Alpine plants: image taken on a hikoi to Ruapehu, retracing tūpuna journeys*
*FINAL IMAGE IN CHAPTER Figure 16:* ko au te awa ko to awa ko au, *2019, found fibre silk chiffon patchwork, abstract detail image*

## THE BONES OF THE FISH: NOTES & REFERENCES

[1] Joseph Selwyn Te Rito, as paraphrased by Rangimarie Mahuika in "Kaupapa Māori Theory is Critical and Analytical," in *Kaupapa Rangahau: A Reader* (2nd Edition), edited by Leonie Pihama (Te Atiawa, Ngāti Māhanga, Ngā Māhanga ā Tairi), Sarah-Jane Tiakiwai, and Kim Southey (Hamilton: Te Kotahi Research Institute, 2015), 40

[2] Āpirana Ngata, as cited by Joseph Selwyn Te Rito in "Whakapapa: a framework for understanding identity," in *MAI Review, 2007 Issue 2* (2007), 1 http://www.review.mai.ac.nz/mrindex/MR/article/download/56/56-65-1-PB.pdf

[3] Āpirana Ngata, as cited by Joseph Selwyn Te Rito, 1

[4] Āpirana Ngata, Wayne Ngata, "The Terminology of Whakapapa," *in The Journal of the Polynesian Society 128, no. 1* (2 April 2019), 26 http://thepolynesiansociety.org/jps/index.php/JPS/article/view/389/308

[5] Joseph Selwyn Te Rito expands further on this in "Whakapapa: a framework for idedntity", discussing whakapapa back to Papatūānuku (the earth) and stating that: "having knowledge of whakapapa helps ground us to the earth. We have a sense of belonging here, a sense of purpose, a raison d'etre which extends beyond the sense of merely existing on this planet" – this is a concept I discuss further in the section on pūrākau. Te Rito, 4

[6] Mairi Gunn, "Common Ground: a creative exploration of narratives of connection between people and land in Scotland and Aotearoa/New Zealand," (Master of Philosophy Exegesis, AUT University, 2014), 75 https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/8427

[7] Mairi Gunn, 75

[8] Apirana Mahuika cited by Nepia Mauhuika in "'Closing the Gaps': From Postcolonialism to Kaupapa Māori and Beyond," in *Kaupapa Rangahau: A Reader* (2nd Edition), edited by Leonie Pihama, Sarah-Jane Tiakiwai, and Kim Southey (Hamilton: Te Kotahi Research Institute, 2015), 68

[9] Apirana Mahuika, paraphrased by Nepia Mauhuika, 74

[10] Barnett, 24

[11] Barnett, 24

[12] Kaupapa Māori principles have been framed by Graham Hingangaroa Smith (Ngāti Porou, Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Apa, Ngāti Kahungunu), and expanded by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Leonie Pihama (2001), and Taina Pohatu (2005). These principles are outlined as: Tino Rangatiratanga (self-determination); Taonga Tuku Iho (cultural aspiration); Ako Māori (culturally preferred pedagogy); Kia piki ake i ngā raruraru o te kainga (socio-economic mediation); Whānau (extended family structure); Kaupapa (collective philosophy); Ata (growing respectful relationships). Rangahau, "Kaupapa Māori Research", *Rangahau.co.nz*. Accessed 31 March 2019, http://www.rangahau.co.nz/research-idea/176/; Rangahau. "Principles of Kaupapa Māori". *Rangahau.co.nz*. Accessed 31 March 2019, http://www.rangahau.co.nz/research-idea/27/

[13] Hinekura Smith, "Whatuora: Theorizing "New" Indigenous Methodology From "Old" Indigenous Weaving Practice", in *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal Volume 4 Issue 1* (2019), 21

[14] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2012), 36

[15] Hinekura Smith, 1

[16] Mata Aho Collective, "Te Whare Pora," *mataahocollective.com*, accessed February 20, 2020 https://www.mataahocollective.com/#/twp2012/

[17] Margery Blackman, "Whatu: The Enclosing Threads," in Whatu Kākahu/Māori Cloaks, edited by Awhina Tamarapa (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2011), 17

[18] Hinekura Smith, 4

[19] Arielle Walker and Emily Parr, "whatuora," Speaking Surfaces exhibition text, ST PAUL Street Gallery (February 2020)

[20] Arielle Walker and Emily Parr, *whatuora* (2020), cotton & wool threads; haerenga, conversation/audio recording; HD video, 12 mins

[21] Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan in "Pūrākau from the inside-out: regenerating stories for cultural sustainability," in *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*, edited by Jo-Ann Archibald Q'um Qu'm Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo (London: Zed Books, 2019), 161

[22] Lee-Morgan, "Pūrakau from the inside-out," 162

[23] Merata Mita, cited by Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan in "Pūrākau from the inside-out," 162

[24] Relational accountability, "in essence, means that the methodology needs to be based in a community context (be relational) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity and responsibility (be accountable as it is put into action)." Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony* (Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 99

[25] Stan Wilson, quoted by Shawn Wilson in *Research Is Ceremony*, 57

[26] Tuhiwai Smith, 77

[27] Kimmerer, 56

[28] "Robin Wall Kimmerer in conversation with Robert Macfarlane," *Emergence Magazine Podcast* (podcast), April 30, 2020, first accessed via live Zoom link, recording accessed May 14, 2020, https://player.fm/series/emergence-magazine-podcast-2570487/robin-wall-kimmerer-in-conversation-with-robert-macfarlane

[29] Wilson, 88

[30] Lee-Morgan, "Pūrakau from the inside-out,"152

[31] Marie Battiste, "Research Ethics for Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: Institutional and Researcher Responsibilities," in *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, edited by Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Thousand Oaks : SAGE Publications, Inc, 2007); conversation with Monique Mojica at NAISA conference, Waikato, June 29, 2019

[32] Lewis Cardinal, cited by Shawn Wilson in *Research Is Ceremony*, 88

[33] Rev. Māori Marsden, "Kaitiakitanga," in The Woven Universe (The Estate of Rev. Māori Marsden, 2003), 56

[34] Marsden, 63

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[36] Jane Martin, cited by Shawn Wilson in *Research Is Ceremony*, 88

[37] Kimmerer, 124 - 125

[38] Wilson, 98

[39] Wilson, 11

AWA

# all rivers

*(after Airini Beautrais)*

all rivers meet the sea.

*rain collapses* the silt and soil, we made here home
dug in too deep and caused rifts, fall in, e toto ana i te whenua
we have sliced the tìr, *it answers to your blood and bone*
caught in the brackish tang of tides

*drift the coileach an t-srutha*, salt to sweet and back again
*set them to root* in the mountains
there's still more to come, we stopped listening
to our tūpuna *the wavelength*
*never alters* it's just harder to hear

*the problem is the sky* never stopped missing her
they'll pull close again *the wind concurs*
we'll all meet the sea eventually. *Like water does.*
*to gather: Huihui*, all rivers.

# THE GUIDESTONES

*Or a contextual review viewed through the lens of relational accountability*

*Now remember, in this story-shaped-by-other-stories, remember back to Taranaki. My tupuna was not alone in his journey towards the takutai moana and the setting sun. He was led by the guidestone Te Toka a Rauhoto, who was formed from tears of fire and ash and molten stone. In my own story, I too was not alone. I too have been led - and I would like to introduce you to a few more of my guidestones before we continue on our way.*

# "CAN A CEREMONY INCLUDE A [CONTEXTUAL] REVIEW?"

My contexts include the  interconnectedness of isolated islands, the intrinsic ties of language and land, migration across the swell and pull of the ocean, the voices of ancestors carried through generational memory, roots and botanical belongings, textile traditions passed down through generations of tūpuna wāhine. The thought of 'reviewing' these contexts, alongside artworks and academic texts and critical dissections of decolonial methodologies, felt initially discomforting.

Encountering Shawn Wilson's chapter "Can a Ceremony Include a Literature Review?" allowed me to align myself with my contexts in a way that felt right. Wilson writes that: "[…] critiquing others' work does not fit well within my cultural framework because it does not follow the Indigenous axiology of relational accountability."[1] However, a contextual review can, when accomplished "in a style that is not critical, but builds upon the work of others [...] also form the context for relational accountability in working from an Indigenous paradigm."[2]

I intend for my artwork to build upon the foundation created by other artists, writers, makers, theorists, and thinkers, especially those working within and navigating settler-indigenous spaces. Context provides a further layering, a building-upon; an extension of my making practice. The word context "has its own connection to thread, developed from the Latin 'contexere' or 'to weave together'".[3] My contexts, therefore, are threads that weave together the relationships I hold myself and my practice accountable to.

The artists/writers/makers/collectives I position myself alongside in this research have materially disparate practices, but all shape strands from multiple narratives into artworks that exist as a cohesive whole. They work in the shared material languages of poetic textiles, tactile film, woven words. They all pull from personal and universal experiences, and they all relate back to relationships and connections to place. There is an element of tactility, of storytelling through levels of haptic experience, that is present in each practice.

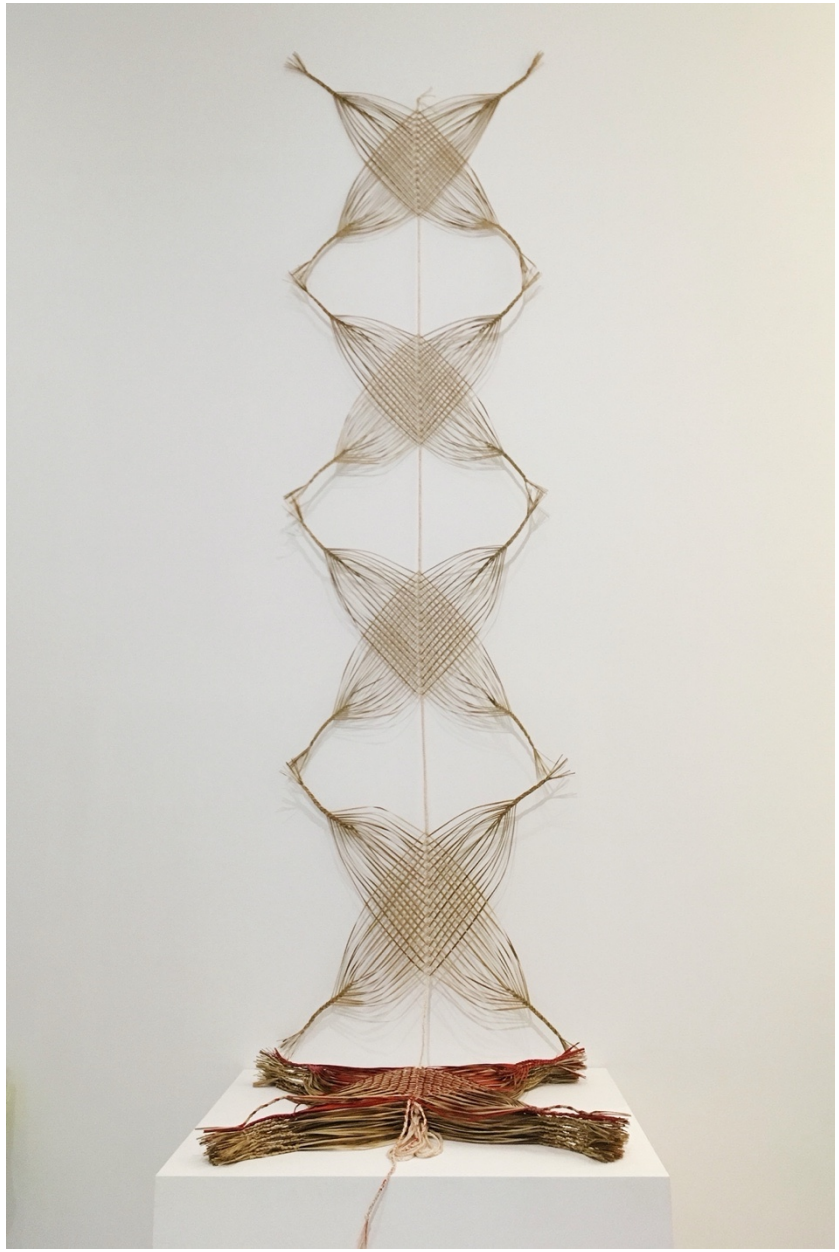
There are some makers in particular whose work has directly impacted this project. Kairaranga, artist, and academic Maureen Lander (Te Hikutu, Ngāpuhi, Pākehā) works with traditional fibre practices, weaving harakeke into embodiments of whakapapa. Her installations are closely connected to place, and often made with in collaboration with other makers and communities. Fibre and collective making are also key to Mata Aho Collective (Aotearoa) who work through modes of wānanga and wharepora. Their immense textile installations are contemporary reimaginings of traditional fibres, using tarpaulins, faux-fur blankets, plastic netting, marine rope to evoke traditional forms and embody multi-layered narratives. Film-makers Mairi Gunn and Charlotte Prodger (Scotland) also work with layered narratives through their film practices. Recently Prodger has used her iPhone as a device to capture every bodily motion in connection to its setting – each breath or hand-tremble or gust of wind evoking sensory memory in the viewer. The stories Prodger shares describe relationships that are deeply personal and yet also somewhat universal, shifting fluidly between the micro and the macrocosm. Gunn works with stories of place, finding connections between the peoples of her ancestral homeland of Scotland, and Aotearoa, through layered multi-channel

installation. The poems of Roseanne Watt (Shetland) and Lehua M. Taitano (Chamoru) are firmly embedded in place too, in the language of the land and seas of their island homes. They evoke the discomforting position of being, in some way, diaspora, or removed from their indigenous places and languages. Like Prodger and Gunn, Watt uses film to further her storytelling through a series of 'filmpoems' created during her PhD (2018). Taitano's poems are at times are embedded within the land itself – as in "Here on the seam" – or quietly reference place in the concrete shape of each word on the page.

*TOP RIGHT Figure 18: Maureen Lander assisted by Mandy Sunlight, Mākareta Jahnke, Janie Randerson, Jan Barratt, Tira (weavers group),* Kit-Set Whanaungatanga, *2017, harakeke and teri dyes, Govett Brewster Gallery, collection of the artist, image by Mark Tantrum. https://govettbrewster.com/exhibitions/maureen-lander-flat-pack-whakapapa*

*BOTTOM RIGHT Figure 19: Maureen Lander assisted by Mandy Sunlight, Mākareta Jahnke, Janie Randerson, Jan Barratt, Tira (weavers group), Kit-Set Whanaungatanga, 2017, harakeke and teri dyes, Govett Brewster Gallery, collection of the artist, image by Sam Hartnett.*
*https://govettbrewster.com/exhibitions/maureen-lander-flat-pack-whakapapa*

*NEXT PAGE LEFT Figure 20: Maureen Lander Flat-Pack Whakapapa,*
*harakeke and muka, Govett Brewster Gallery, collection of the artist, image by Arielle Walker*



# FIBRE & THE COLLECTIVE

My first in-the-flesh encounter with Maureen Lander's *Flat-Pack Whakapapa* (2017) was in Taranaki, at the Govett Brewster Gallery. Seeing whakapapa woven into tangible, tactile yet abstract form just as I was taking the first tentative steps into my research project was both timely and very moving. *Flat-Pack Whakapapa* operates with the understanding that our whakapapa is mobile and something that is always carried with us. Playing on "the multiplicity of meaning when Te Reo Māori and English are juxtaposed", "*Flat-Pack*" is both a literal translation of the word whakapapa, and a humorous reference to the concept of DIY culture. The installation can be packed down into individual weavings: "easily carried around, reconfigured and added onto later."[4]

Lander considers "how whakapapa grows with us, and how our genealogy is inherited by our descendants." By representing whakapapa as a series of connected, portable weavings, she "symbolises the idea that even though whānau migrate away from their tūrangawaewae, hapū, and iwi, they always carry their culture with them."[5] Lander weaves her own whakapapa connections in the making of the work,[6] while the installation allows for the viewer to consider *their* own whakapapa. Each woven element is individual, but together they form an cohesive whole, their layered installation symbolising ancestral layers, older generations beneath newer generations.

Installed alongside *Flat-pack Whakapapa*, the visually similar artwork *Kit-Set Whanaungatanga* (2017) is part of an ongoing project in collaboration with local weavers' collectives. Here, pairs of individual kete are made by the local weavers invited to participate, who each put their own touch within the overall given structure.

My encounter with Flat-Pack Whakapapa was exactly a year - to the day - before I came to visit the two kahu huruhuru woven by Te Paea that now live at nearby Puke Ariki.

When the exhibition moves on, their pieces remain in the site where they were made.

Maureen Lander also acts as mentor for Mata Aho Collective. In describing Lander's "inclusive, intergenerational" work, Mata Aho note that Lander's "logical application of whakapapa results in grounded work that resists dwelling on historical amnesia but provides access to contemporary perceptions of our own histories."[7]

Mata Aho is comprised of four Māori women artists: Erena Baker (Te Atiawa ki Whakarongotai, Ngati Toa Rangatira), Sarah Hudson (Ngati Awa, Ngai Tuhoe), Bridget Reweti (Ngati Ranginui, Ngai Te Rangi), and Terri Te Tau (Rangitane, ki Wairarapa). Their collective practice is informed by customary weaving spaces - wharepora - as "sites of wānanga for sharing and learning, reigned over by the ātua wahine Hineteiwaiwa."[8] Mata Aho works together to create large-scale fibre-based works with a combined collective authorship bigger than their individual capabilities, "founded within the contemporary realities of mātauranga Māori."[9]

Two works by Mata Aho that have particularly resonated for me in my research are *Kiko Moana* (2017) and *AKA* (2019). *Kiko Moana* is hand-stitched from 60 folded pieces of light-duty blue tarpaulin, referencing the rippling surface of water over an 11 x 5 metre fall. While making the artwork Mata Aho collected taniwha narratives from friends and whānau in order to "convey a multiplicity of ideas and experiences around taniwha."[10] *Kiko Moana* embodies the essence of these taniwha narratives, a tough new plastic metaphorical 'skin' for the kaitiaki of our waterways.[11]

**mātauranga Māori** Māori knowledge | **taniwha** water spirit, guardian


*AKA* uses traditional kākahu-making techniques of whatu and māwhitiwhiti, but instead of muka, contemporary marine rope forms a 14 metre high column. The title references the Māori word for vine as a metaphor for gaining knowledge, providing "a space for contemplation and [inviting] the viewers' eyes to journey upwards, to a place of raised consciousness."[12] Seeking to counter the eroding away of women-centred narratives,[13] *AKA* is also inspired by narratives of the female deity Whaitiri, the personification of thunder. Each of these of these artworks are examples of tactile, abstract storytelling, embracing the haptic potential for language and story to be embodied in a tactile/textile form - a potential I explore through my own making.

Through Mata Aho and Maureen Lander, I am reminded that "you don't have to fill a space, to fill a space,"[14] and to consider the entire space as the 'canvas' when installing artworks. I am particularly interested in this potential for dialogue to form between space and artworks. The sense of materiality and impact of scale imparted by each installation is something I am also considering in my own practice. Fibre is often considered as having relation to the body; these artworks break that association. Yet there is still a desire to touch, to hold, to move close and be surrounded by the enormity of these spacious objects. I have been experimenting between the wearable 'body-scale' I am most often drawn to, and physical extremes on either side of that scale – 'too small' to be of use, or 'too big' to comfortably hold. Installed within a gallery context where it is often assumed that touching the work is not allowed, the materiality of the artwork speaks for itself.[15]

*PREVIOUS PAGE Figure 21: Mata Aho Collective,* Kiko Moana *(2017). Polyethene tarpaulin and cotton thread. Installed at the Museum of Hessian History, Kassel, Germany 2017. Collection: Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington. Image courtesy of Mata Aho Collective*
*LEFT Figure 22 Mata Aho Collective,* AKA *(2019). Copolymer fibre marine rope, steel. Exhibited in Àbadakone | Continuous Fire | Feu Continuel, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Collection: National Gallery of Canada. Image courtesy of Mata Aho collective*

# LAYERED NARRATIVES & THE TACTILITY OF FILM

Maureen Lander's description of string games being one of the earliest forms of moving image is particularly striking for me. She describes them as a "pre-runner to moving image for telling narrative – you can flick from one image to the next on your fingers and you've got the next stage of the story."[16] Moving image is not usually associated with tactility, nor by association is film, but I want to draw particular attention to this implication of their roots being firmly in the worlds of fibre and storytelling in describing their alignment within my practice.

Film is also inherently layered. It's in the name, from the Old English 'filmen', meaning "a thin layer covering a surface." Even within digital images that etymology of film allows for the potentiality of layering in form and story. Two favourite examples are films by Mairi Gunn, and Charlotte Prodger.

Gunn's film *Common Ground* (2014) centres on people's stories and their connection to place. Comprising of filmic interviews with six storytellers from Scotland and Aotearoa, exhibited through modes of panoramic video strata, *Common Ground* considers personal tales by tangata whenua as deeply entwined with the land - a palimpsest containing layered evidence of human histories.

*RIGHT Figures 23, 24, 25 & 26: Mairi Gunn, frame-grabs from Common Ground, 2014. From top: dusk over Kildonan; George Gunn; South Hokianga looking toward Motukararaka; Reva Mendes.*
*NEXT PAGE TOP LEFT Figure 27 & 28: Charlotte Prodger,* BRIDGIT, *2016, Single channel HD video, installation stills, images from Hollybush Gardens, http://hollybushgardens.co.uk/?page_id=11108*



The multi-channel installation is quiet and expansive. Scenes shift between Aotearoa and the Scottish Highlands: the land is as much a 'character' as any of the speakers, shown in sweeping, near-static panoramas. The storytellers are positioned on separate screens to these land images, apart but still connected. The layered editing and installation choices in *Common Ground* provide material context for my project; even more impactful for me is how the film centres on perceived commonalities between Highland Scots' and Māori experiences of raupatu, taking of land by the Crown, and in both peoples' continuing relationships with their whenua/tìr.[17] Encountering *Common Ground* a year prior to beginning my thesis research gave me an entry into how I might bring together my ancestral homelands through telling shared stories. In keeping with Barnett's "Kei Roto I Te Whare," the film suggested the possibility of connection, of how layering could embrace the multiplicities I had previously been trying to reconcile *outside* of my practice. How my practice might be a way of finding that common ground.

Charlotte Prodger's Turner Prize-winning video *BRIDGIT* (2016) also explores multi-layered storytelling. Shot entirely on Prodger's iPhone, the single channel installation explores non-linear, interwoven narratives drawn from a range of both found/foraged and artist-written texts, including Palaeolithic goddess myths, Nina Simone lyrics, and Prodger's personal anecdotes. These narrated texts play over slow-moving (often near static) footage that shifts between domestic spaces and the surrounding Scottish land.

Prodger's use of disparate source material and non-linear narratives to tell an abstract but cohesive story has been of particular relevance to my project. As the film progresses, the visual scenes shift (approximately every four minutes: the limit of the iPhone's memory) from personal to ancient histories and back again, blurring the lines

**tangata whenua** indigenous people, people born of the whenua i.e. of the placenta and of the land where the people's ancestors have lived and where their placenta are buried | **raupatu** confiscated, taken without any right | **tìr** (Gàidhlig) land

between interior and exterior landscapes. The narration flows over from where one space or context ends and the next begins: a "transcendental notion of fluid relationships across and through time."[18]

I am especially interested in this way of handling multiplicities within a single form. I see *BRIDGIT* as a suggestion for how personal narratives can be subtly woven into a deeper story and bring to light or create connections that otherwise may not have previously been visible.

There is also something particularly intriguing in Prodger's ability to make a single film projection onto a fixed screen feel both intimate and tactile, through her use of the iPhone as an extension of her body in the filming process. In an interview for Tate Modern, Prodger remarks: "I'm really excited by that intertwined relationship between the body and technology [...] The systems of the body are enmeshed with the camera - it's a kind of symbiosis."[19] Not only an extension of the body through camera, but a "blending of self with one's surrounding environment" – Prodger uses her camera "as an equivalence machine, where everything depicted functions as an alias not simply for the self, but for an endless empathic splitting off of the subject between times and places."[20] My research focuses on tactility and experiential encounters that engage beyond the visual, and thus I find *BRIDGIT* an excellent example of the potential to use a non-tactile medium in haptic methods of storytelling.

One of the first tentative works I made in this research project was a digital film piece inspired in part by *BRIDGIT*. Filmed on my phone while standing chest-deep in the rain-grey waters of the Waitematā near my house, it included a nervous, whispered voiceover where I spoke lines from an undeveloped poem about my understanding of selkie stories.

*RIGHT & PREVIOUS PAGE BOTTOM LEFT Figures 29 & 30: Charlotte Prodger,* BRIDGIT, *2016, Single channel HD video, installation stills, images Hollybush Gardens, http://hollybushgardens.co.uk/?page_id=11108*


The work didn't know yet what it wanted to be: not quite film, not quite poem, not quite *finished*. I was concerned with what I perceived to be the uncertainty of that inbetween space – until I came across the video-works of Shetland poet Roseanne Watt. First made during her PhD "Aa My Mindin: Moving through loss in the poetic literary tradition of Shetland," (2018) Watt's video-works quietly reclaim the space between their mediums. Not films, not poems: filmpoems.[21]

Some of Watt's filmpoems include voice – the narration of a poem; or a 'found' oral history spoken by the poet's great-grandmother – while in others words slip silently across the screen. There is a tension in the languaging of some of these artworks, as Shaetlan dialect seeks balance with English, while others shatter that tension into wordlessness: a striking sequence in *Raaga* (2018) begins with a haze of lines across the screen that could be strings of broken words, or the flight trails of birds or insects caught in time-lapse. We then hear Shaetlan spoken as English is written over the sky, land, and sea, the two languages never quite in sync. Though very different works, *Raaga*, like *BRIDGIT*, evokes the feeling of memory-time, of ancient and current worlds meeting, overlaid.[22]

The possibilities of language, and story being interwoven with concepts of time, memory, and the body-in-place through layered film processes are still unfolding slowly within my practice. Works such as *Raaga* and *BRIDGIT* suggest the power of that potential.

*LEFT Figures 31 & 32: Roseanne Watt,* Raaga, *2018, Single channel HD video, stills, images Roseanne Watt, https://kishiewife.tumblr.com*

# POETICS & THE CRAFTED WORD

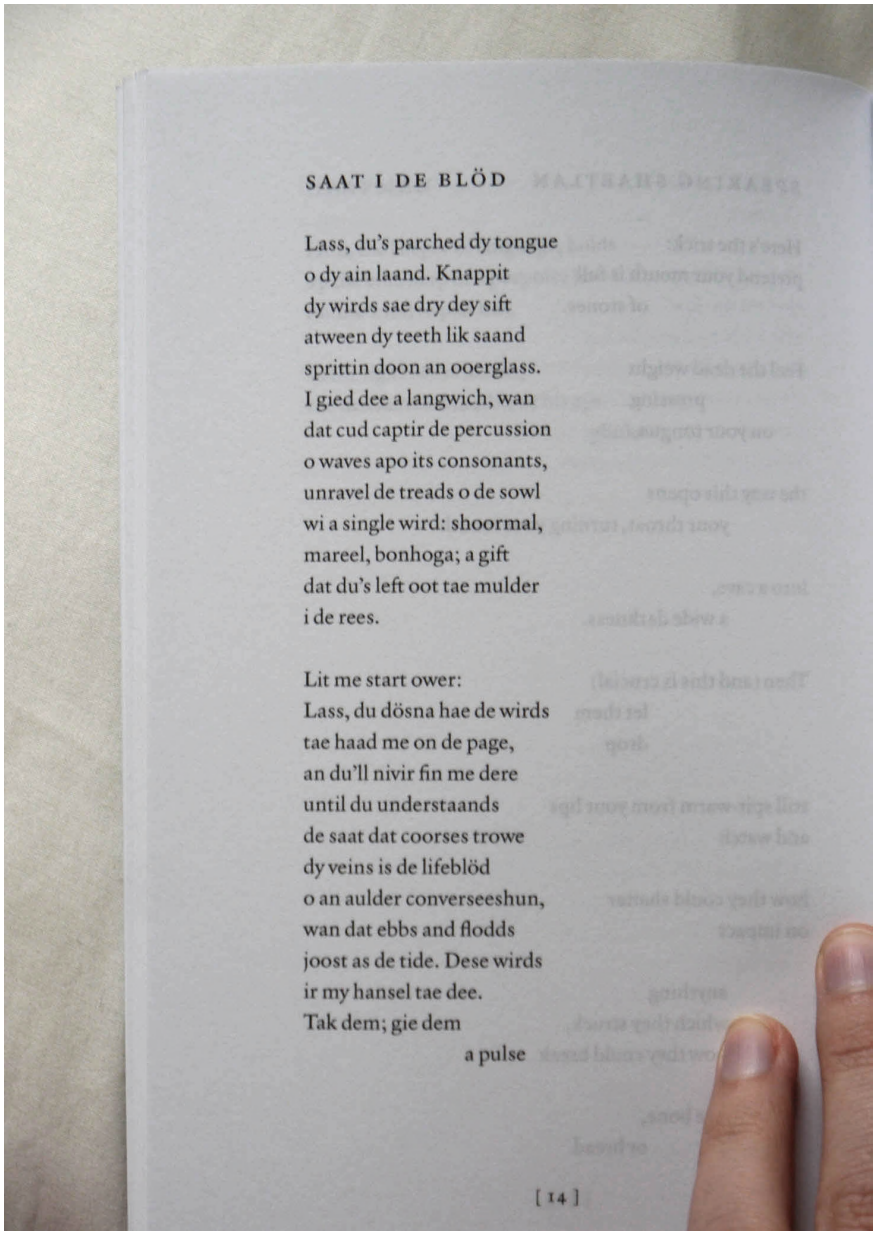
Language is, as I have previously described, a weaving of words. Traditions of story-sharing through oratory can find their closest contemporary resonances in poetry. Many writers use poetic tools and crafted word to disrupt and unravel colonial structures; weaving language like physical material, as poet essa may ranapiri (Ngāti Wehi Wehi, Ngāti Takatāpui, Clan Gunn) describes it: to "access a decolonised tongue."[23] Native American Poet Laurate Joy Harjo (Mvskoke) states that "[poetry] makes a bridge between indigenous spoken traditions and written English texts […] I came to poetry because I wanted the intricate and metaphorical language of my ancestors to pass through to my language, my life."[24] The practice of bilanguaging sits within this perspective. The term was coined by semiotician Walter D. Mignolo (Argentine) to refer to meaning created through code-switching and the interactions *between* languages.[25] It is about more than words: Makyla Curtis proposes bilanguaging is a construct that "blends and fuses cultures and supports fluid identities."[26] As such, each word choice from my different ancestral languages brings with it its own cultural associations and meanings that cannot be expressed in English.

Bilanguaging is an important component of Rosanne Watt's practice. In her collection *Moder Dy* (2019),[27] Watt presents the moment she first began to differentiate between Shaetlan dialect and English as a 'bifurcation', similar to Barnett's image of a "binary fracturing" taking place in her identities.[28] Bilanguaging in poetry such as Watt's feels like another method of re-weaving a fragmented self. I have begun tentative steps towards such bilanguaging in my own practice, as in my poem *skin* (2020). The poem references the selkie myth, and considers the ocean journeys of my tūpuna wahine, and the homes and languages they left behind (or had taken from them). I use Irish, Te Reo Māori, and Shaetlan within the English text, allowing untranslated understandings to unfold through repetition of form and context, as shown in the following excerpts from *skin*:

> she left her words in the old land
> took the sruthán, the sionainn, the tír-dhá-ghlas
> and tucked them away into
> hills and riverbeds
> […]
> she crossed the moana, motu to motu
> i tūhore ia i tōna kahu kekeno
> and stepped onto the shore
> […]
> she locked her words away too
> dialect smoothed like seaglass
> into new vowel shapes
> the shoormal, the skröf, the lönabrak
> forgotten

In bringing my ancestors' languages and stories together, I speak to this fracturing and re-weaving, acknowledging but also hoping to defy, as Watt does, "the narrative of loss"[29] surrounding the oral histories and languages of my homelands.

Watt's poem *Saat i de Blöd* holds the experience of reconnection through language, embodying Watt's grandmother's voice (see figure 29). Written in dialect, and then in a markedly different English structure on the opposing page, the poem sings of loss, but is also a reminder of still belonging. A reminder that through memory, language, and story, we can find our way back. Though I am not yet fluent enough to write a full poem in any language but English, Watt's approach to reconciling her 'bifurcated' languages is one that continues to influence my writing.



SAAT I DE BLÖD

Lass, du's parched dy tongue
o dy ain laand. Knappit
dy wirds sae dry dey sift
atween dy teeth lik saand
sprittin doon an ooerglass.
I gied dee a langwich, wan
dat cud captir de percussion
o waves apo its consonants,
unravel de treads o de sowl
wi a single wird: shoormal,
mareel, bonhoga; a gift
dat du's left oot tae mulder
i de rees.

Lit me start ower:
Lass, du dösna hae de wirds
tae haad me on de page,
an du'll nivir fin me dere
until du understaands
de saat dat coorses trowe
dy veins is de lifeblöd
o an aulder converseeshun,
wan dat ebbs and flodds
joost as de tide. Dese wirds
ir my hansel tae dee.
Tak dem; gie dem
a pulse

[ 14 ]

Chamoru poet Lehua M. Taitano speaks directly to the grief of being unable to write in her ancestral tongue, and has thus been another major influence on my practice. As when I read Watt's poems on language, memory, and loss, Taitano's words caught me deep in the chest, where your breath catches just before a sob:

> Because much more than wind carries so many of us away from our islands. Because we are made to consider our oceans as walls. Because we fumble the jar lid of tongues we have been made to bury […] Because I must write this to you in English.[30]

Tatiano's book *Inside Me an Island* (2018) is described as "a collection of the sediment of displacement, re-placement, and imagined arrival." Her poems roam the pages of the book, as though sifting through that sediment to find spaces of belonging and "what resembles *home*."[31] The collection is defined by *Ma'te (Low Tide)* and *Hafnot (High Tide)*, and the poems too rise with the ebb and flow of water, acknowledging that there is more than one way to be rooted in place.

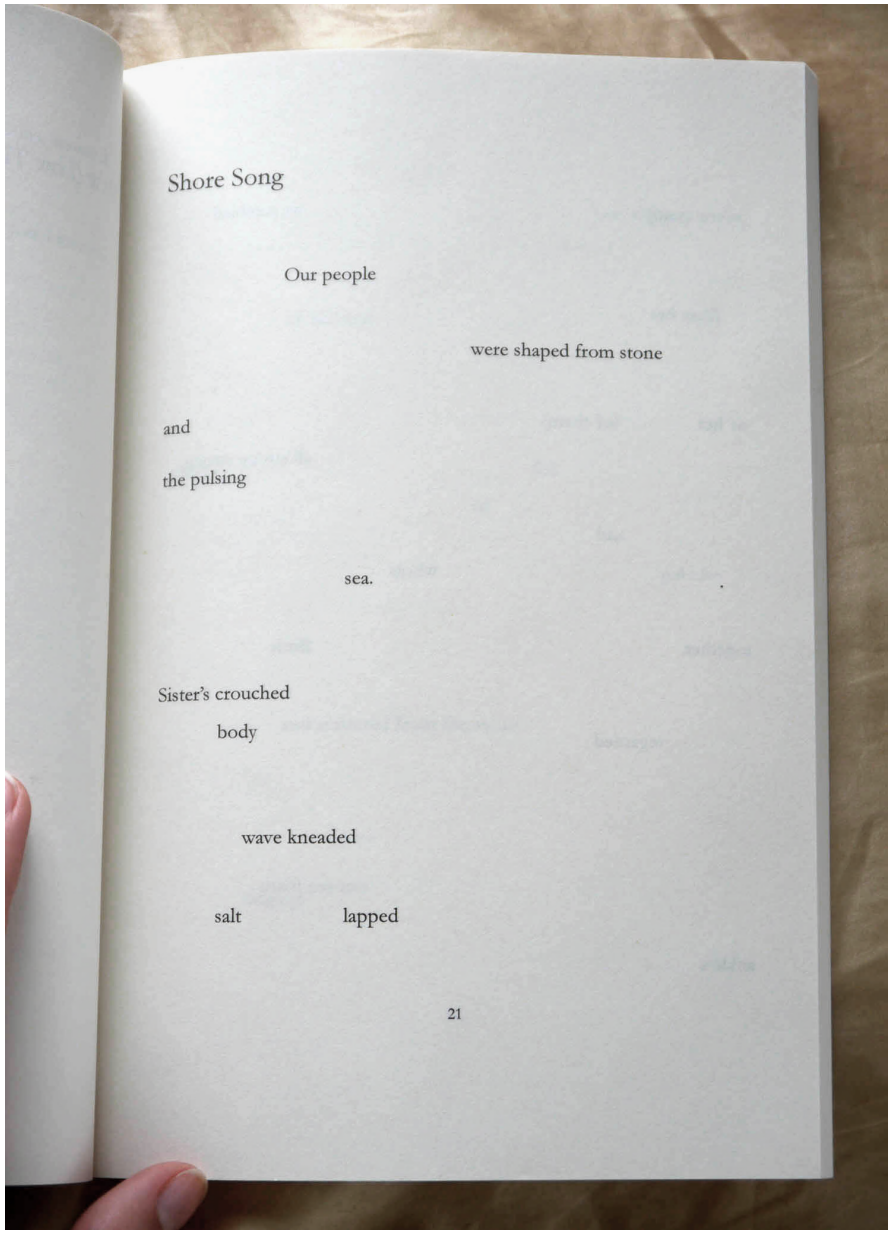
In conjunction with elements of bilanguaging, text layout is also an important factor in the weaving of words. Many of Taitano's poems claim back space on the page, the words clamouring, layered together, as in *from A Bell Made of Stones*:

wavescrashwavescrashwavescrashwavesandwaves
crashintoher.pieceschippedawaybecame
the peopleofguahan.theworldmadebysiblings.
brothersistersubterranean.sisterbrothersub
terranean.
guahan-cum-guam-cum-guahanisthepuncturing
tip
ofamountainprestingsuboceana.
theauroraborealisandspawnsbuiltonguahanguam
ontopofskeletons.brotherssistersdatingfrom400b.c.
(praisemary)
theyhavebeenexhumed,boxed,shipped
awaitingclassification.

32

or sparsely scattered 'islands' in the empty whiteness of the paper, as in *Shore Song* (see image right)

Other poems not only embody place but are written into it, like "Here On The Seam," an earth-poem first etched into sand before being transcribed onto the page: "Here on the seam it is easy to / stitch a poem from debris / […] How delicious the salt suture, the lapping ache."[33] Despite being text-based, each poem finds a way to evoke the sensory. Taitano's poems have encouraged me to be braver with my words, and to find new ways to embody them in form. Examples of this are found in my poem *whatu* (2019), where the format provides a simultaneity of experience across time; and in the *kānuka & mānuka* section of *rongoā* (2020), where the words embody the coming together of the plants. I discuss these works further in later chapters; but it is important to note – along with *skin* – how they show the influence of Taitano and Watt's work on my practice.




*PREVIOUS PAGE Figure 33: Roseanne Watt,* Saat i de Blöd, *2019, poem, from* Moder Dy *by Roseanne Watt RIGHT Figure 34: Lehua M. Taitano,* Shore Song, *2018, poem, from* Inside Me An Island *by Lehua M. Taitano*

# POETIC TEXTILES, TACTILE FILM. WOVEN WORDS

As I navigate my making practice, I frequently come back to the words Taitano uses to describe her long-poem/love letter/elegy *Sonoma*:

> For me, always, there is some quality of being adrift that serves to center. To be afloat is to be at once in and out of control, a condition in which one can drop a plumb line of consciousness into uncertain depths and test the tautness of adaptability, the sway of emotional well being. To be from an island yet to exist off-island is to continually reconcile the waters"[34]

Often during this research I have been adrift, or afloat, but I am always buoyed by the relationships formed at the intersections of methodology, context, and practice. I am most at home in the between-spaces of poetic textiles, woven words, and tactile film, where materials and installation further the conversations my artworks begin. I hope that in aligning my practice with artists such as Maureen Lander, Mata Aho, Mairi Gunn, Charlotte Prodger, Roseanne Watt, Lehua M. Taitano, I can continue to "reconcile the waters", defy the narrative of loss, and bring fragmented elements back into harmony.

*LEFT Figure 35* kahukupu: selkie skin, *detail image*

[1] Wilson, 44

[2] Wilson, 44

[3] Betty Davis, "The Textile Poetics of Cecilia Vicuña and Leigh Davis", Master of Arts Thesis, The University of Auckland, 2019, 13

[4] Maureen Lander, "Flat-pack Whakapapa" (exhibition text), Govett Brewster Gallery (December 2018)

[5] Maureen Lander, "Flat-pack Whakapapa."

[6] In the Taranaki installation of this exhibition at the Govett Brewster Gallery (2018), Lander particularly acknowledges the connection between her Ngati Awa tupuna and the Awa line present through Te Atiawa

[7] Mata Aho, "An Art Matriarch: Why Maureen Lander is a Boss," *The Pantograph Punch* (August 6, 2017), https://www.pantograph-punch.com/posts/ode-to-maureen-lander

[8] Mata Aho have also made reference to their drawing on the experiences of tuakana and teina in the foundations of their practice, stating that this: "enables the work to be sewn into the community, rather than being separate or isolated from it. The collective [see] this as particularly essential with works conceptualised for exhibition outside New Zealand."

[9] "Mata Aho Collective", in *Women Together: a History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand* (2019) https://nzhistory.govt.nz/women-together/mata-aho-collective

[10] These stories are now collated on the website Taniwha Tales. Noting that taniwha are often attributed with the qualities of protection, travel and communication, Mata Aho also "found comfort and security in travelling with these stories from [...] family and friends." Mata Aho Collective, "Kiko Moana," *mataahocollective.com*, https://www.mataahocollective.com/#/kikomoana/

[11] Kiko can be translated roughly as flesh, body, substance; moana as the ocean

[12] Mata Aho Collective, "Aka," *mataahocollective.com*, https://www.mataahocollective.com/#/aka/

[13] The National Gallery of Canada, "Mata Aho – The Stories of Women," December 12, 2019 (video), accessed January 28, 2020 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BN4ZwVUc_0&feature=youtu.be

[14] Mata Aho, "An Art Matriarch"

[15] Despite their immensity of scale, or lightness of installation, each object by Mata Aho and Maureen Lander holds familiar weight. We have an idea of how heavy the twined column of rope in Aka might feel because we know the approximate weight of a single strand of that rope. Conversely, we can also imagine that the weavings in Flatpack Whakapapa feel light enough to carry, just like kete.

[16] Maureen Lander and Priscilla Pitts. "Artist talk at Govett-Brewster Art Gallery," Govett Brewster Gallery (audio recording of artist talk), December 2, 2018, https://govettbrewster.com/media/uploads/2018_12/Maureen_Priscilla_edit_2.mp3

[17] Gunn, 31

[18] Mason Leaver-Yap, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics in Charlotte Prodger's BRIDGIT," *ONLY* (Exhibition document) 2017

[19] Tate, "Charlotte Prodger | Turner Prize Nominee 2018 | TateShots," (video), posted September 6, 2018, accessed February 25, 2019, https://vimeo.com/288580261

[20] Leaver-Yap

[21] Roseanne Watt, "Aa My Mindin: Moving through loss in the poetic literary tradition of Shetland", (PhD Thesis, The University of Stirling, 2018), http://hdl.handle.net/1893/29646

[22] The duration of *Raaga*, at 3 minutes, 3 seconds, also sits in that space of memory-length as the segments of *BRIDGIT*.

[23] essa may ranapiri interviewed by Tayi Tibble, "essa may ranapiri Q&A," Victoria Univerity Press blog, https://vup.victoria.ac.nz/blog1/essa-may-ranapiri-qa/

[24] Joy Harjo, "Ancestors: A Mapping of Indigenous Poetry and Poets," (Blaney Lecture, Poets Forum, New York, October 9, 2015), accessed April 2, 2020, https://poets.org/text/ancestors-mapping-indigenous-poetry-and-poets

[25] Walter D. Mignolo, "Bilanguaging Love: Thinking in between Languages," in *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012

[26] Makyla Curtis, "The Poetics of Bilanguaging: an Unfurling Literacy/Ngā Toikupu o Ngā Reo Taharua: e Tākiri ana te Aroā Pānui," in *ka mate ka ora, a new zealand journal of poetry and poetics, issue 14* (July 2016)

[27] Named for the "mother wave" spoken of by Shetland fisherman – the name given to an underswell which it is said will always travel in the direction of land, of home. Roseanne Watt, *Moder Dy*, (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2019)

[28] Watt, *Moder Dy*, xii; Barnett, 19

[29] Watt discusses this through her PhD, noting that though "Shetland literature is often defined by loss […] of language, of a way of life, of a place within time itself" and "writers have historically responded to this landscape of loss through a stringent need for the preservation of tradition" she seeks "to celebrate the means by which Shetland poetry and oral tradition have actually come to defy the narrative of 'loss.'" Watt, "Aa My Mindin", 64

[30] Taitano, 15-16

[31] Lehua M.Taitano, *Inside me an island*, (Cincinnati: WordTech Editions, 2018) book blurb

[32] Lehua M. Taitano, excerpt from "from A Bell Made of Stones," in *A TransPacific Poetics*, edited by Lisa Samuels and Sawako Nakayasu (New York: Litmus Press, 2017), 130

[33] Taitano, *Inside me an island*, 87

[34] Taitano, *Inside me an island*, 98

# skin

## (March 2020 - present)

Hand-knit colourwork wool, 35mm film,
iPhone video, poetry, screen-print on photographic images,
watercolour, hikoi, ocean swims

In *skin,* I use the metaphor of selkie stories to consider connections between my tūpuna wāhine, ancestral mothers. I respond to their journeys through and across the ocean, reflecting on the changes they faced and the identities they shed in leaving their homes for different, distant lands.

Connected works include:

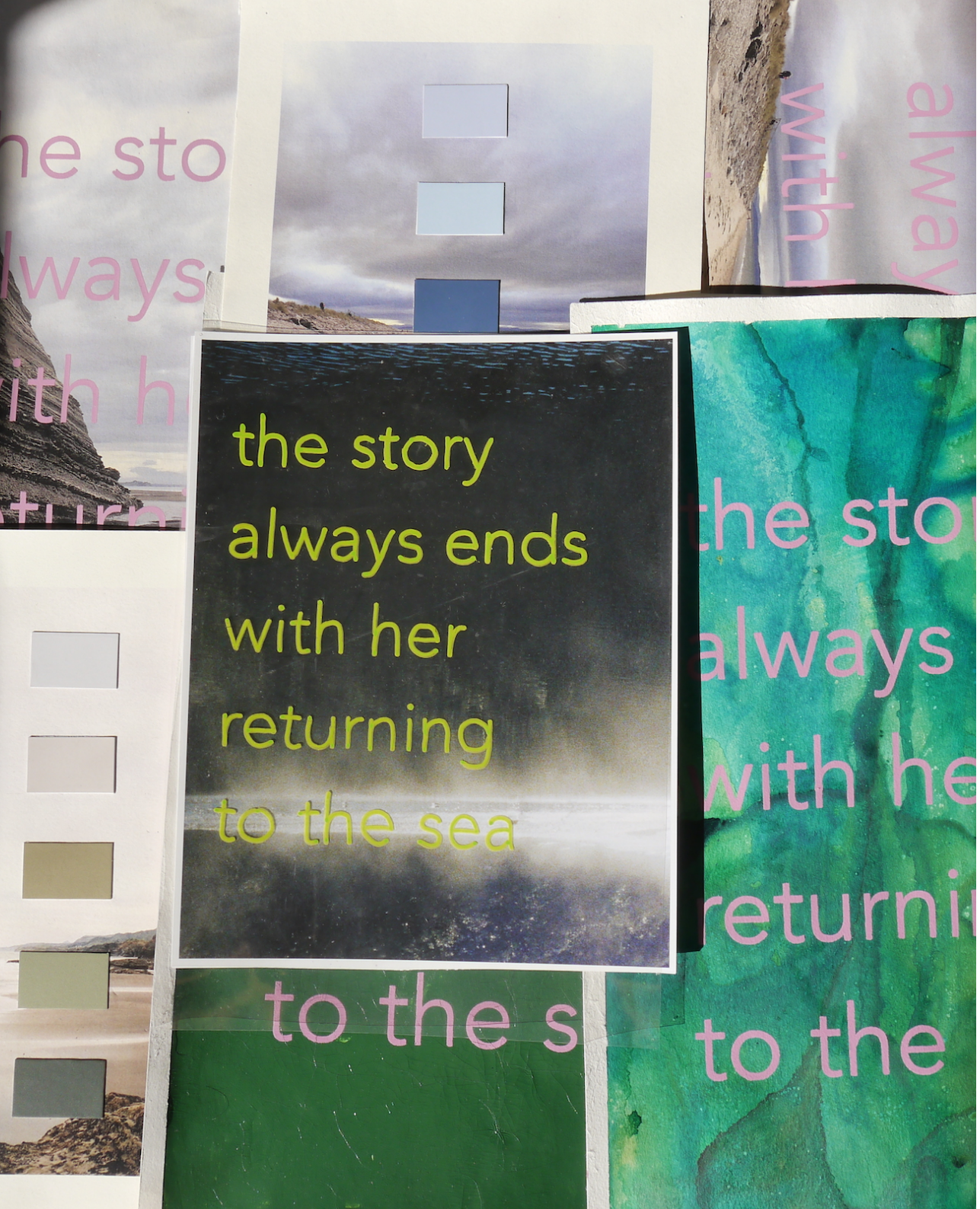
*kahukupu: selkie skin* (2019-2020), a hand-knit colourwork cloak, worked in found wools, SIZE
a poem, also titled *skin* (2020)
a set of untitled moving image sketches (2019 2020): https://vimeo.com/329310692; https://vimeo.com/323131009
a set of untitled screen-printed texts on photographic images and watercolour grounds (2019-2020)

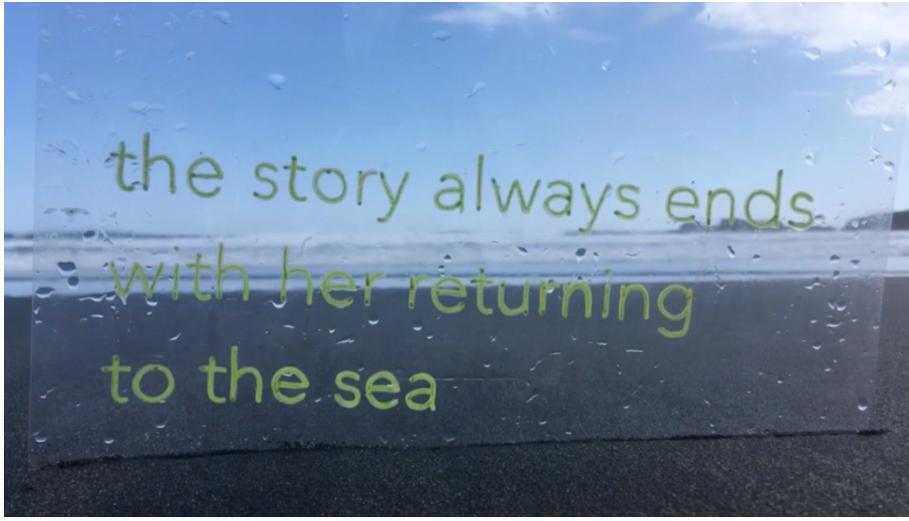
*RIGHT Figure 36* kahukupu: selkie skin, *2019-2020, hand-knit colourwork cloak, 35mm film. Image by Liam Mullins on behalf of Arielle Walker*

*skin* references a history of the selkie stories found in many variations in the coasts and islands of Ireland, Shetland, Orkney, the Hebrides and other Scottish isles, Faroe, and Iceland (resonances can also be found in the epistemologies of other indigenous Northern cultures, and even in the story of Pania from the East Coast of Te Ika a Maui.)

The story always centres on a sea-dwelling being, often in the form of a seal, who take human form on land with the shedding of their seal-skin (or cloak, or cap, or other form of covering). Most often, this being is a woman whose skin is stolen, forcing her to remain trapped on land - often in an unwanted marriage, and unable to speak. No matter the variation, the story always ends with the selkie returning to the sea.

*LEFT Figure 37:* kahukupu: selkie skin, *2019-2020, hand-knit colourwork cloak, 35mm film. Image by Liam Mullins on behalf of Arielle Walker NEXT PAGE LEFT Figure 38: screen-print tests NEXT PAGE RIGHT Figures 39, 40 & 41:* stills from moving image sketch, *2019.FINAL IMAGE IN CHAPTER Figure 42* kahukupu: selkie skin, *Image by Liam Mullins on behalf of Arielle Walker*


the story
always ends
with her
returning
to the sea


the story always ends
with her returning
to the sea


the story always ends
with her returning
to the sea


the story always ends
with her returning
to the sea

# skin

she crossed the ocean, held buoyant by the surface swell
shed her skin in each new land she came to
folded it neatly
into a locked chest
(or had it taken from her)

*without her skin she could not go back to the sea*

she left her words in the old land
tucked away the sruthán, the sionainn, the tír-dhá-ghlas
into hills and riverbeds

she grew accustomed to her new form
learned to exchange salt for soil, built instead
upon another's ocean of grass, her brine beginnings
passed on through memory
and then myth

she crossed the moana, motu to motu
i tīhore ia i tōna kahu kekeno
and stepped onto the shore
her kahu kept close for safekeeping

she grew accustomed to her new form,
and held in an embrace between maunga and moana
she put down roots

until she was stolen away, and stolen again
and her words began to shift
kupu crushed like gravel
into new consonants
the takutai moana, the paringa, the tai
and her skin
taken from her

*without her skin she could not go back to the sea*

she crossed the haaf, shaipit by the waves
shed her skin upon the draa
an folded it neatly
into a locked kist

*without her skin she could not go back to the sea*

she grew accustomed to her new form
learned to exchange salt for soil, built instead
upon the body of a mountain
her brine beginnings buried in the dirt

she locked her words away too
dialect smoothed like seaglass
into new vowel shapes
the shoormal, the skröf, the lönabrak
forgotten

but see, here is where her stories come together into one
for though they all shift in the how-where-why of it

in every telling I've ever heard

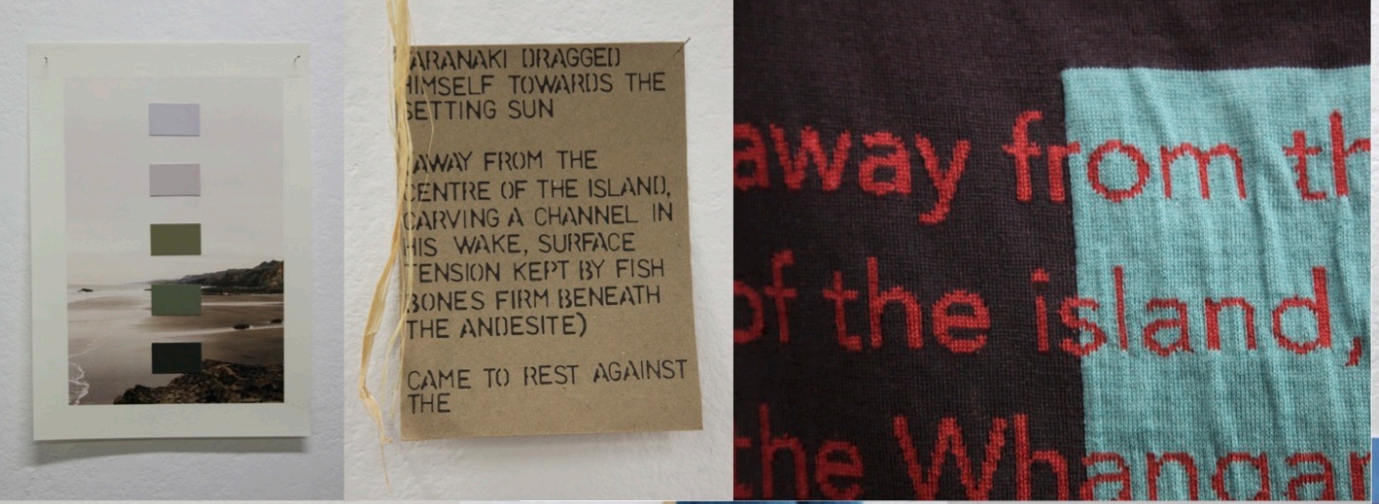
every time
every time
every time

the story always ends
with her returning to the sea

# TE HAERENGA/ THE JOURNEY

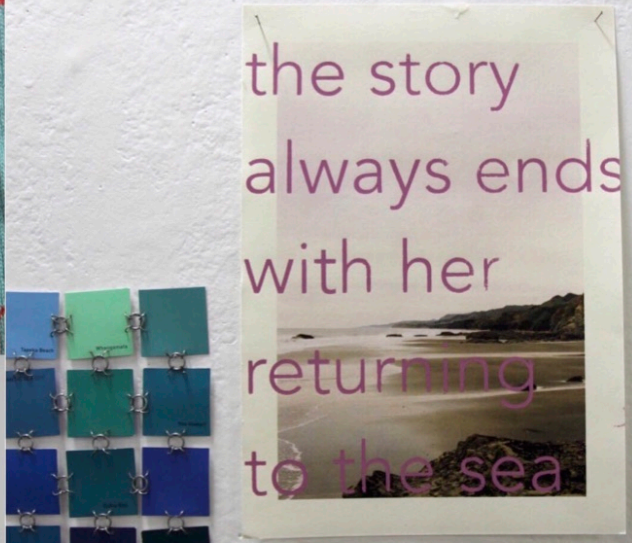
*or the threads of this project that sing of making as we encounter further guides along the way*

*Come, follow me a little further, e hoa mā, a little deeper into the strands that weave this story into being. Let's slip into the river in a linear way, just for a little while. I'd like to take you back to a beginning of sorts, although there are so many to choose from. Look: here. I'll pick up this thread, and that one– the threads that sing of making, and the encounters along the way.*


ARANAKI DRAGGED
HIMSELF TOWARDS THE
SETTING SUN
AWAY FROM THE
CENTRE OF THE ISLAND,
CARVING A CHANNEL IN
HIS WAKE, SURFACE
TENSION KEPT BY FISH
BONES FIRM BENEATH
THE ANDESITE)
CAME TO REST AGAINST
THE
away from th
of the island,
the Whanga


came to re
the ed
To


TE
AWA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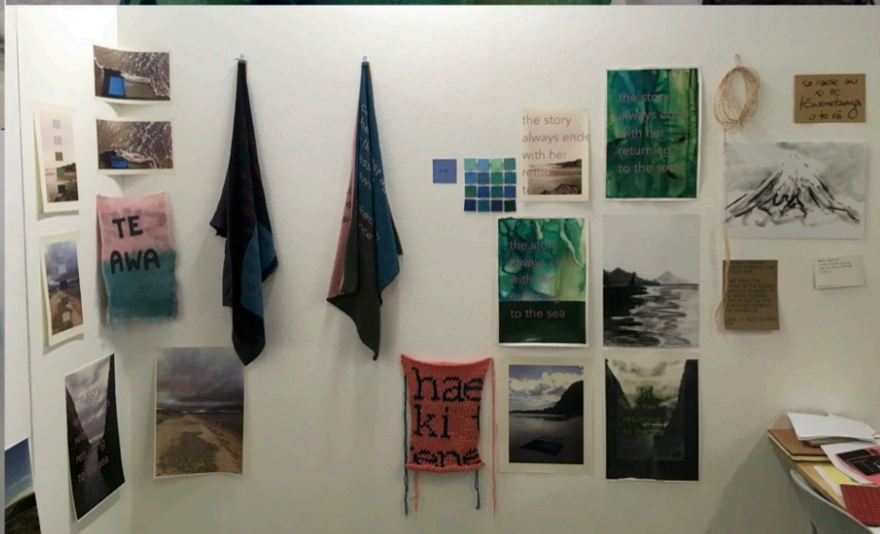
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# MAKING-IN-CONVERSATION

My thesis began with a chaos of intention, tangled storylines, and two works I had made the previous year while working on my research proposal. The first of these works was a poem-scrap, the beginnings of a pūrākau retelling that I wrote on a train from London to Scotland, feeling oddly like I was coming home while missing Aotearoa with a bone-deep ache.[i] The second: a plant-dyed textile "river map" made on residency in Iceland, which kickstarted the making process. From the outset, I began to build up a relational work on my wall around this river map, from all the threads of enquiry I was considering. For a few months, each new idea or exploration was made in response to the existing material conversation, sometimes obliquely and other times in direct reference to/continuation of a previous iteration. I selected those works I found most interesting and added them to the wall, sometimes replacing previous pieces when it felt necessary. Intuitive processes. Layers on layers on layers. Each week, I documented the wall in its current state, leading to an open palimpsest, a kind of non-linear timeline; the whole existing as a single work contained within a multiplicity of ideas.

This conversational space began to act as both a filter and an amplifier. It allowed me to set aside those thoughts and beginnings that were either too tangential, unready, or irrelevant, and focus instead on a disparate whole, and a practice that is more than the sum of its parts. I was left with a wall of figurings and notations that, when translated onto the page, becomes a near-poem:

thinking of how different translations of stories find connection across oceans and across time | The story always ends with her returning to the sea | horizon line – horizontality | middle body | mapping | whakapapa | oral histories – recorded | research trip – Taranaki | stories gathering | ka haere au ki te tōwenetanga o te rā | in conversation | palimpsest | whakatauki – ko au te awa ko te awa ko au | land – spoken – how language shifts with the land – different accents from mountain to ocean | stream of consciousness | time – flow, stretch of | green | ephemera meets takeaway gesture | wai | there is no linear – pastpresentpastfuturepresent | thread | shedding of skin | dehiscence | repetition of process | layering | ways to encourage haptic engagement – non-written suggestion to touch | strange sense of pleasurable threat | domestic - comfort of home | colonial photographic framing may be countering history - contain and claim | TE AWA | given to the tides | please touch this | displacement | translation and translation and translation and | uncertainty | tìr | sand reflection | storytelling rather than mapping? | haptic | the difference of knowing specific location and context, and not knowing | concealment possibilities | belonging

I hadn't realised at the time, but as I was writing my way through the Scottish Borders my train journey was taking me incredibly close to some of the places where generations of my Scottish ancestors had lived, centuries before. Even so, the beginnings of this pūrākau retelling later became Te Pūrākau o Taranaki, a poem about another of my tūpuna lines (and the text work that structures this exegesis document) first written while half a world away in another homeland.

During this early making-in-conversation with materials, ARTSPACE hosted the open event *Travelling Places: A Non-Symposium*. Part of an international indigenous curators' exchange,[1] *Travelling Places* positioned indigenous methodologies front and centre within - and to challenge - the gallery context.[2]

At this point, my research had not-quite found its focus: in the swirl of contexts and first makings, ideas of migration across and causing distance, and further conversational exchange were still hovering at the edges of my thinking. I was still sitting in the discomfort of the hyphen-space, and I wasn't at all sure where I was going. The non-symposium's consideration of indigeneity as "being-in-motion",[3] and exploration of ideas of transnationalism, notions of home, connection to place, and ancestral practices, gave my own thinking sudden clarity. The opportunity to take part in kōrerorero with Indigenous artists from around the world also enabled me to position myself more critically and comfortably in this research space.

Part of the non-symposium structure allowed for breakout sessions of storytelling and conversation, including one with fibre artist Freja Carmichael (Quandamooka). Freja shared a Quandamooka technique for making string by hand from natural fibres, as well as fibre stories and histories from Quandamooka Country. During that conversation, we each began working on a coil of organic raffia string, and I continued this repetitive hand-work during the following discussions and presentations. The final coil of string contains within it a haptic memory of the *Travelling Places* event and conversations. This was another, more literal form of making-in-conversation, one that I was already unconsciously engaging with in my studio practice; most of my time spent in studio is in conversation with my peers, usually (though not always) accompanied by object-making or material-drawing.[4]

*PREVIOUS PAGE Figure 44 A collection of early relational works, in a multitude of materials: plant-dyed wool, hand-knit and machine-knit merino, screenprint on watercolour, felted wool, photographic image, hand-twined raffia string LEFT Figure 45 Hand-twined raffia string, made-in-conversation during the Travelling Places non-symposium*

Realising that this was an active method entirely altered the course of my thinking.

Shortly after *Travelling Places*, a few of my studio peers and I took a shared haerenga to my family bach in Tongaporutu, Taranaki. We were just beginning to navigate our shared studio space, and uncovering newly-found connections between our practices.[5] On the first day, I lost my voice. How do you continue a conversation that has only just begun when you've lost your mode of speaking? I suddenly had to rely on non-spoken forms of communication: gestures, the written word. Not only did this bring me into a different mode of conversation with my peers, it also gave me time to reflect on my connection to this place. Later, I found in scattered notes I wrote during this week, that:

> Having to communicate through gesture and the slightest of whispers is making for a surreal experience. Thinking again of the pull, the pull of the sea, Tangaroa and all the salt within us. I was born North of here but my bones cry home, ache of it […]
>
> Is this belonging?

# Tongaporutu River map
(April 2020)

Foraged plant dyes, pieces of vintage NZ wool blanket, threads from my grandmama's sewing box, digital photography, hikoī

In *river maps,* I gather plant materials from around a specific river. Here, that river is Tongaporutu, in Taranaki, a river of significance to my family; and the pieces were gathered while I had lost my voice on a studio haerenga. Each plant is methodically simmered to extract colour, in (if applicable) water from the river or similar source, and then used to dye fibres. In stitching the fibre pieces together, strange relationships form plants that appear different bleed similar shades, come from the same whakapapa, share roots.

Colonial structures use maps to "map territory, to survey land, to establish boundaries, and to mark the limits of colonial power."1 Counter to the history of maps as political tools, designed to clearly show what is considered to be of material value, and diminish what is not, *river maps* draws instead on indigenous forms of mapping. Maps that tell of "our movements and wonderings (not wanderings) across a space,"2 that are ever-shifting, and based on a different set of values, values of kaitiakitanga and mātauranga.

References: 1 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples,* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2012), 55
2 Natalie Diaz, introduction to "New Poetry by Queer Indigenous Women," Lithub (April 12, 2018), https://lithub.com/new-poetry-by-queer-indigenous-women/

The process for creating each piece of a river map goes as follows:

I begin by walking the spaces beside the river.
I note the plants: endemic, native, introduced. Each of these tells me part of the river's story. Some will be true dye sources  in my walking I might find introduced beech and birch, lupins and nettles, dock and yarrow, alongside native kānuka, harakeke, and seaweeds nearer the river mouth. Others will be "fugitive"  lovely but quick to fade, like kawakawa. Many of the plants I gather also have medicinal uses.
I karakia, asking permission to gather leaves, twigs, bark or roots.
I scour small-ish pieces of woven wool fibre cut from vintage blankets
I mordant half of the wool fibres with aluminium potassium sulphate (the contemporary equivalent of natural plant-derived alum sources), leaving the other half natural
I simmer the plants until they give over their colour, using, where possible, water from the river or similar source.
I add the fibres to the dye bath and simmer them together.
I add some of these to a pot with ferrous sulfate (a contemporary equivalent of the iron mordant found in para or bog mud), which shifts the shades into a deeper, darker version of themselves.
When I have a variety of small fibre pieces that speak to the river in different ways, I begin to stitch them together, choosing placements intuitively by the ways the colours sit together.
I return the completed artwork to the source/ origin site and photograph it in the place it came from.

*PREVIOUS PAGE & NEXT PAGE Figures 46 & 48:* Tongaporutu River map, *2019, plant-dyed woollen blanket, cotton thread, digital photography in-place at Tongaporutu Beach, Taranaki RIGHT Figure 47: Installation at ST PAUL Street Gallery Three*

# PLACE LANGUAGE

What *is* belonging? I whakapapa to Taranaki through my tūpuna wāhine, Heraana Inuwaitai and Kotiro Hinerangi, but to the *other side* of the maunga from Tongaporutu. I was not able to grow up with the whenua my tūpuna lived on – Puniho, Kanihi, places I have visited only a few times or not (yet) at all. In a twist of settler-colonial histories, our family bach at Tongaporutu was inherited through our Pākehā ancestors. The river and the coast I grew up with, and love, are instead within the Ngāti Tama rohe.

My relationship with this whenua is still anchored by Taranaki. My memories of the maunga are almost always as a steadfast but distant presence. I sink my toes into soft purple-black sand, hear the crumbling roar of waves, trace my fingertips along the clay of the cliffs, am held *so close* to the land, and still the maunga is at a distance.

On our shared haerenga, I brought with me a textile work, with the sketched-out beginnings of the poem *Te Pūrākau o Taranaki* knitted into off-cuts of merino wool yarn. This pūrākau-poem was one way I had been trying to speak of my connection to Taranaki. If I couldn't speak aloud now, perhaps I could give to this place in another way? I laid the knitwork near the edge of the water, and watched as the waves came closer and closer, pulling the wool into their embrace and then returning it – in pieces – to the shore. I thought about Taranaki's journey towards the setting sun, and how it mirrored the journeys of my other tūpuna. It only occurred to me later that I had been enacting a subconcious kind of spontaneous ceremony.

For years, I knew almost nothing about my tupuna Heraana – only that her children were born in the Hokianga. A series of unfolding encounters in parallel to this project have led Dad and I into connection with other uri of Kotiro Hinerangi, and Heraana, too. Through meeting other whanaunga, we learned that Heraana and her descendants in fact whakapapa to Taranaki hapū Ngā Mahanga a Tairi, and to Puniho – where Nana grew up, and where Te Toka a Rauhoto, the guidestone of Taranaki, now rests.

Robin Wall Kimmerer notes that "in a colonist society the ceremonies that endure are not about land; they're about family and culture, values that are easily transported from the old country […] to have agency in the world, ceremonies should be reciprocal creations, organic in nature."[6] She tells the story of a similarly improvised – but no less potent for it – ceremony that would take place with her family on canoe trips: the pouring of the first morning coffee onto the earth, a gift of thankfulness.[7] These small acts of thankful communication with whenua (and moana) that sit alongside more obviously 'useful' gestures – gardening, caring physically for the land – had always come intuitively to me. I would place stones at the waters edge, braid broken strands of oioi and leave twigs and leaves interwoven on the sand, sing to the sea when no one else was listening: making up my own rituals, memory-echoes of ancestral invocations I didn't yet know. Looking back, I see these gestures as seeking connection, forming relationship with place through small acts of care. Now I am more attentive to these moments.

I documented that first gentle pulling-away of the wool into the sea (and the return) on film. While I continue to photograph elements of some projects in place (such *as* in *river maps* (2018 – present)), I ceased documenting acts such as this one, choosing instead to be in the moment. To *be-in-place*. And thus began (or more accurately continued, but with awareness) a practice of small makings, small ceremony, that has no trace – except for these words.

In his 2015 book *Landmarks* (an ode to language, and to place, and especially to *place language*), British writer Robert Macfarlane refers to the relationship between tactfulness and tactility – touch and ethics:

> Tact as due attention, as tenderness of encounter, as rightful tactility. Tactful language, then, would be language which sings (is lyric), which touches (is born of contact with the lived and felt world), which touches us (affects) and which keeps time. [8]

I didn't come across Macfarlane's writing - or Kimmerer's - until months after this particular haerenga, but they spoke to the heart of what I have been trying to articulate through experience. Language is as much about touch or gesture or stitch or simply being-in-place as it is about words. I began to see my making practice as another mode of tactful language.

As I sat down to edit my almost-final draft of this exegesis, I got a message to say that Robin Wall Kimmerer had been in conversation with Robert Macfarlane, live on Zoom, that very morning. I went to find it immediately and have been listening to them talk as I edit my own text. Everything they speak of together touches back to the grammar-of-animacy, relationality, and being-in-place.

# Ka haere au ki te tōwenetanga o te rā

**(April 2020 - present)**

machine-knit merino wool, hand-embroidered cotton text, found-fibre silk chiffon patchwork, iPhone recording, HD video projection, 35mm film, audio recorded poetry, small moments of undocumented ceremony

*Ka haere au ki te tōwenetanga o te rā* considers connection to place and migration across the hum and swell of the sea, across distance and dislocation, towards the setting place of the sun.

Connected works include:

*Te Pūrākau o Taranaki, a re-remembering*(2019) Machine-knit merino wool, hand embroidered cotton, poetic text. Two pieces, each 500 x 700mm
*kahu-kupu: Taranaki* (2019). Hand-knit wool, 1400 x 800mm; durational being-in-place
*distance measured by a mountain's grief* (2019), Hand- embroidered cotton on digitally printed hemp, 700 x 1280mm
*Te Pūrākau o Taranaki, a filmpoem*(2019) HD film, narrated poetic text (duration 3 minutes): https://vimeo.com/341787679
*Ka haere au ki te tōwenetanga o te rā,* (2019) digital video projection (duration 55 second loop): https://vimeo.com/339445593
*ko au te awa ko to awa ko au* (2019), found-fibre silk chiffon patchwork
*ki uta, te awa, ki tai* (2019) three hand-knit/embroidered badges
Undocumented small moments of ceremony, hikoi, being-in-place

*LEFT: Figure 50:* Te Pūrākau o Taranaki, a re-remembering, *2019, Machine-knit merino wool, hand embroidered cotton, poetic text. Two pieces, each 500 x 700mm, documentation of ceremonial moment*

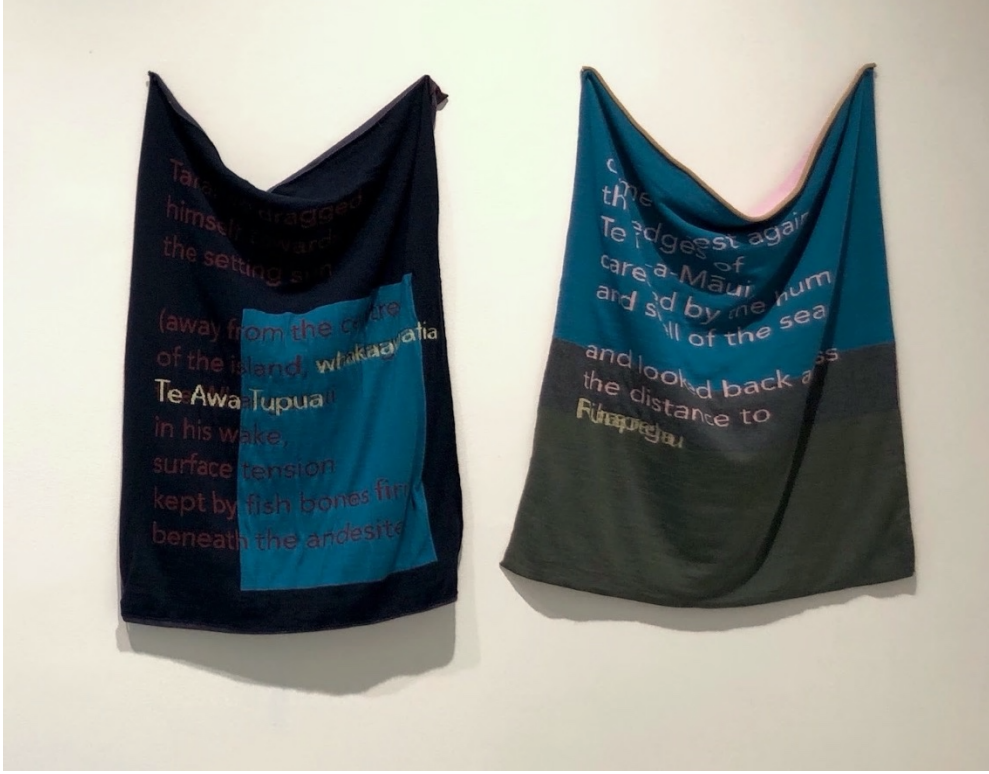
In one telling of the pūrākau of Taranaki, after the fight between maunga, as Taranaki pulls away in defeat he cries “ka haere au ki te tōwenetanga o te rā” “I shall go to the setting place of the sun”. He then is led on his long journey across the island by the guidestone Te Toka a Rauhoto, which now rests at Puniho Pā.

Made between the west coast of Tāmaki Makaurau, and the river mouth and beach of Tongaporutu in North Taranaki, this series of works responds to this cry. The maunga is visible and yet always in the distance, far across the sun-haze of the ocean.

I consider multiple strands of whakapapa while looking out towards Taranaki. How my tūpuna were taken north from Taranaki, but found a way to return, generations later. How my Irish ancestors considered that towards the setting sun was where departed souls would journey, and yet found themselves travelling west themselves, to Ontario, Turtle Island. How every one of my tūpuna, all my ancestors, came to Aotearoa on the ocean.

*RIGHT Figure 51:* kahu-kupu: Taranaki, *2019, Hand-knit wool, 1400 x 800mm; durational being-in-place, 35mm film, image by Liam Mullins on behalf of Arielle Walker*
*NEXT PAGE LEFT TOP Figure 52:* ki uta, te awa, ki tai *(2019), hand-knit/embroidered wool badges; detail BOTTOM Figure 53:* kahu-kupu: Taranaki *(2019) and* ki uta, te awa, ki tai *(2019), installation image courtesy of Weasel Gallery and Maddie Gifford*
*NEXT PAGE RIGHT Figure 54: ko au te awa ko to awa ko au (2019), detail image,*
*FOLLOWING PAGE LEFT Figure 55:* Ka haere au ki te tōwenetanga o te rā, *(2019) digital video projection onto* ko au te awa ko to awa ko au *(2019), installation images (front and back)*
*FOLLOWING PAGE RIGHT TOP Figure 56* Te Pūrākau o Taranaki, a re-remembering *(2019), installation image thanks to Zoe Black. BOTTOM Figure 57:* Te Pūrākau o Taranaki, a re-remembering *(2019), detail image and back*


EXIT


Te Awa Tupua
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and looked back
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# "LIKE A MUSIC FESTIVAL FOR INDIGENOUS ACADEMICS"

One of the most formative experiences in my research held no tangible "outcome", no quantitative result, recorded or otherwise - no skein of raffia string or ceremonial knit - and yet I still consider it an act of making. This was the annual international NAISA (Native American and Indigenous Studies Association) conference, held in June 2019 at Waikato University.

I've seen the conference accurately described as "festival-like" – "an explosion of indigeneity and people taking back control of their indigenous practices and how they express them in the world."[9] It was verb, not noun; a relational space in action.

I listened to Jenny Lee-Morgan speak with Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q;um Xiiem (Stó:lō, St'at'imc) about the principles of indigenous storywork and what it takes to become "story-ready" – and to the two kaumātua in the audience who challenged the panel on terminology, and use of these stories in law and lore.[10]

I pulled up the courage to ask actor, director, and playwright Monique Mojica (Kuna and Rappahannock) how she works through telling stories while keeping them protected. Mojica spoke of practices of abstraction, and how indigenous cultures everywhere tend to use these as a method to protect stories. As well as abstraction, she also spoke of the importance of 'making visible', how her creative process "talks back to colonial erasure. It seeks to transpose the still-legible story narratives and literary structures inscribed on the land and the ancestral knowledge encoded in our bodies,"[11] bringing them into performance, into making. Working in this way "compels us to remember things we never knew and restore them to consciousness."[12] This feeling of remembering things I never knew, of holding ancestral memory somewhere in my bones and my fingertips, was beginning to make itself heard; Mojica offered a way to work with these memories through artistic practice.

The final session I attended had Shawn Wilson in conversation with Margaret Hughes (White Settler American) on reconciliation – a topic fraught with complications and contentions. Together, they emphasised that meaningful reconciliation is complex and requires accountability to past, present and future relationships. It also requires that we hold space for diverse theories of change and creative approaches to strengthening relations with one another.[13] Wilson presented this as a "restoration of harmony". And – to refer to Cassandra Barnett and "Kei Roto I Te Whare" again – how can we restore harmony without first reconciling the self?

Though I made no physical works while at NAISA, a shift in my making occurred through these conversations and discussions, particularly *being-in-relation*. My time there became a further guidestone for my practice, sowing the seeds for future artworks. In *whatuora* (with Emily Parr), *lacing/kōtuitui* (2019-present), and *rongoā* (2019-present), I seek Wilson's "restoration of harmony" directly through material relationships. I found that when Maureen Lander speaks of combining materials in her practice (weaving muka with nylon, for example) she likens it to coming into balance:

> I'm balancing myself - if ancestry is important, then *all* of my ancestry is important. And when I got started I felt like I was out of balance. My Māori side was lost […] and so it felt like

> something I needed to go back and try and get the balance right. And a lot of people just see that I was starting to work with what could be called Māori materials, but I was always trying to keep a balance as I went.[14]

In my recent works, I too make using craft techniques and materials from all strands of my whakapapa: Māori, Scottish, Shetlandic, Irish, European, settler, indigenous; elements that "do not blend or lose themselves in order to be in relation."[15] NAISA felt like the beginning of my practice coming into balance through making, coming into harmony.

# whatu

Nana always wove lace on wooden bobbins, rimu and pine.
I used to watch on holidays as she pinned each strand
hands crossing, crossing, crossing, forming knots
all delicate edges in soft white cotton and silk.
She never made me anything from harakeke

Last time I was in Taranaki, drinking black tea with lemon
in the kitchen, showing Nana something new I had knitted,
she pulled out a pile of photos to share.
Buried in the spill of them were newspaper clippings,
time-blurred headlines still visible,
each one about Parihaka

Nana used to make her grandchildren scrapbooks
Cutouts of tigers-and-hotairballoons-and-jellyfish-and-trains
from National Geographic, glued patchwork another kind of weaving
but the Parihaka articles never made it in

*Tuesday morning, one hundred police move in on Ihumātao*
*and mana whenua send out a call for help:*
*the land needs more people, they say*
*to protect Ihumātao*

*Wednesday evening, one hundred police are still at Ihumātao*
*and mana whenua are holding strong on the front line*
*but it's cold, and we need blankets, they say*
*to continue to protect Ihumātao*

*Saturday and Sunday, there are hundreds of protectors*
*on the whenua but there are still police at Ihumātao.*
*And as long as there are still police*
*there are wool blankets to keep protectors warm, and some*
*of these blankets now say #protectIhumātao*

Dad and I looked it up on a map and found that Parihaka is only
a fingerprintspace from Puniho Pā
where Taranaki's guidestone Te-Toka-a-Rauhoto rests
and where Nana grew up

*Monday afternoon*
I sit by the front line at Ihumātao
sewing wool blankets into cloaks
using skills passed down by my tūpuna wāhine
weaving wool and cotton, not harakeke
and think about Parihaka
how the same winds sweep from the west
across Taranaki and Mangere
how my tūpuna had already been taken up north
before the invasion
stolen along the path of these winds but
how they came back generations later
how history repeats itself

The first time I wove a kahu in harakeke,
I told the story of Nana's lace
and my kaiako told me:
i tuku iho, that's tūpuna guiding your kuia to weave
in any way she can.

# "WEAVE IN ANY WAY YOU CAN"

In July 2019, police moved in on Kaitiaki Village at Ihumātao, intending to evict mana whenua on behalf of Fletcher Building.[16] I spent time out on the whenua, trying to find ways to tautoko the protectors at a time when I could feel my own wairua dwindling. I turned to writing. What emerged surprised me. It was about Ihumātao, yes, but also about my nana and her lace-making. About whenua, and belonging; movement over oceans of distance and *still* belonging. About how, despite generations of dislocation and disconnection and mamae, our tūpuna guide us back across the distances towards reconnection. It's a piece that feels raw and vulnerable to me even now. To soothe that vulnerability as I worked over various edits, word shifts, line-breaks and other technical sculpting, I, too, started to make lace.

I began with Shetland knitted lace patterns rather than the needle or bobbin lace my Nana is so proficient in. This was partly due to my own knowledge of knitting (holding a further level of comfort) and partly through a desire to connect to another whakapapa line. I never saw Nana knit Shetland lace, but something in the traditional patterns felt familiar. I can't help but wonder whether any of these skills were passed down through our Shetlandic ancestors, or if this familiarity is an aulder mindin, another form of generational memory and connection.

**mamae** ache, hurt, pain | **aulder** (Shaetlan, Scots) older; also ancestors | **mindin** (Shaetlan) memory, remembering | **raranga** weaving | crossover stitch used in making kākahu | **tāniko** finger-twined pattern | **kōtuitui** to lace, interlace, connect

*RIGHT Figure 58: Nana's bobbin-lace in progress - scan of a photograph, undated NEXT PAGE LEFT Figure 59: A finished edge - Nana's bobbin-lace FOLLOWING PAGE Figure 60: Detail of Nana's needle-lace*

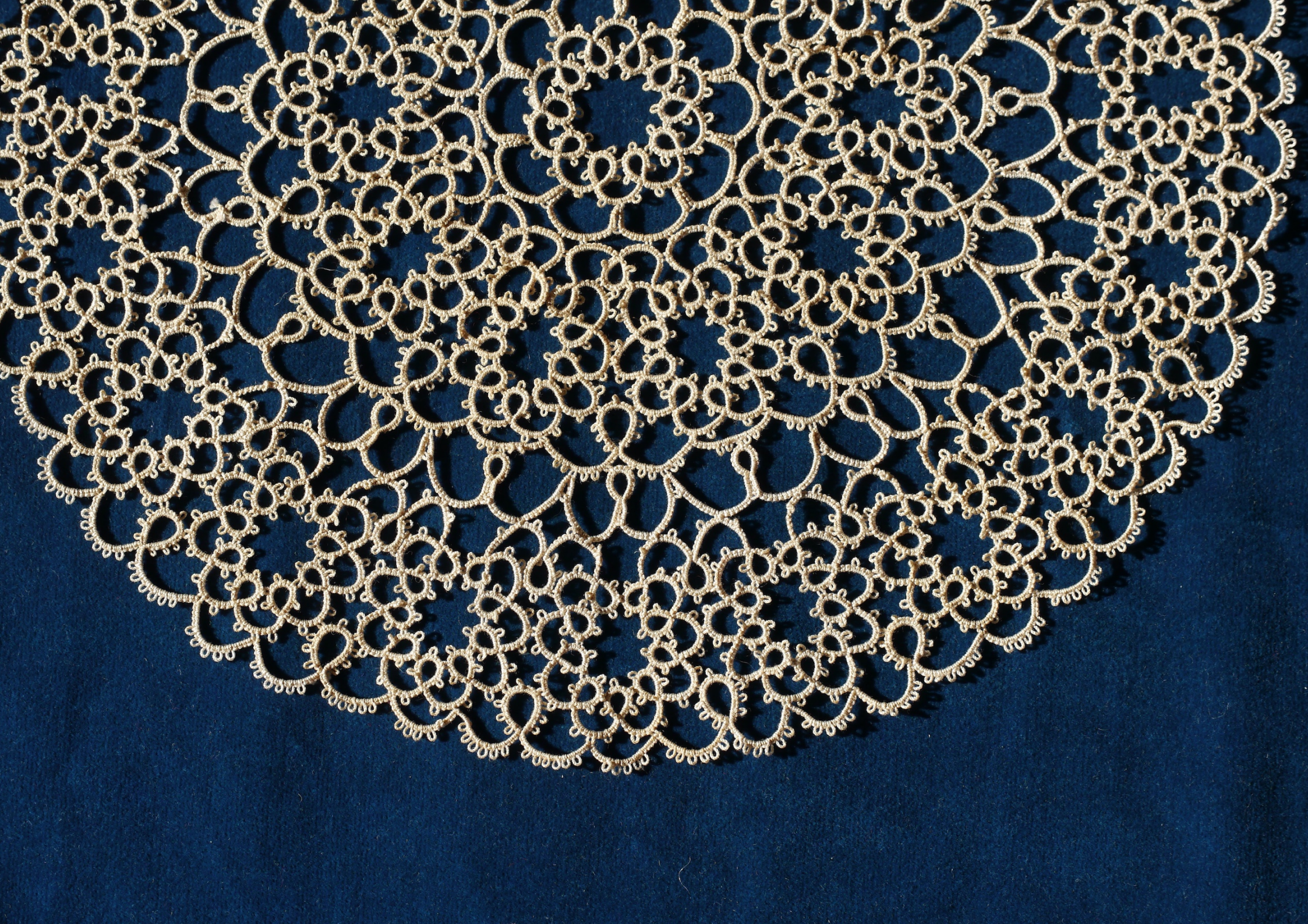
As I struggled my way through complex lines of knit diagrams and errors in gauge that left me with tight, cramped scraps of knitting, or pieces that were much too large and floppy, or lines of pattern that had shifted stitches into something unrecognisable, I felt something missing. I turned back to those first lines of what had now become a full length poem: Nana always wove lace on wooden bobbins, rimu and pine […] She never made me anything from harakeke.

Could I make lace - with harakeke?

I was intrigued at this possibility of bringing aspects of my whakapapa together in tangible form: lacemaking traditions found within my Shetlandic, Irish, European ancestry interwoven with the raranga knowledge held by my Māori tūpuna. This was just before I visited Te Paea's kahu huruhuru at Puke Ariki, before I knew that the spaces between a history of kairaranga and myself were less than a century apart. My fingers had grown accustomed to wool: I had never learned to peel back the skin of harakeke leaves to extract muka, threads fine enough to make lace.

No sooner had this possibility opened up in my thinking than I was offered the chance to take part in muka wānanga with Whaea Rose Greaves, a kairaranga who I met through Emily. Muka wānanga led to whatuora wānanga and the slow, wonderful process of learning to whatu. It was the final push my tūpuna needed to give me, the courage to go into a space I had been too afraid to enter before.

Just after being invited into muka wānanga, my supervisor Monique Jansen sent me a link to a concurrent exhibition at Te Uru, featuring the artwork of Rowan Panther. Panther makes bobbin lace from muka, connecting her English, Irish, and Samoan heritage, stating that she uses "muka in [her] work to incorporate New Zealand; England and Ireland with lace patterning and the Pacific with materials and motifs of Samoa. This way I can create [her] own cultural identity and tradition." [13] It felt like tupuna were shouting to me, crying "see! We told you this was a thing!"



## TE HAERENGA/THE JOURNEY: NOTES & REFERENCES

[1] Travelling Places accompanied the ARTSPACE exhibition Layover, "the second iteration of an ongoing curatorial project which was initiated in 2017 at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane culminating in the exhibition The Commute, with the third iteration called Transits and Returns to open at Vancouver Art Gallery in September 2019 [...] Layover is a collaborative project led by Indigenous curators Sarah Biscarra Dilley (yak titʸu titʸu yak tiłhini Northern Chumash, Chicana), Freja Carmichael (Quandamooka), Léuli Eshraghi (Sāmoa, Irān, Guangdong), Tarah Hogue (Métis, Dutch Canadian) and Lana Lopesi (Sāmoa)." ("Layover," *Artspace Aotearoa*, accessed March 29, 2019, http://artspace-aotearoa.nz/exhibitions/layover)

[2] "As a non-symposium, the event [rejected] the authorial, academic voice in favour of asserting multivocality and openness as imperative to building understanding and collective futures." ("Travelling Places: A Non-Symposium," *Artspace Aotearoa*, accessed March 29, 2019, http://artspace-aotearoa.nz/events/travelling-places)

[3] Artspace Aotearoa, "Travelling Places: A Non-Symposium"

[4] I also align this studio relationship space with the writing of Mata Aho Collective, and Hana Pera Aoake and their peers: "Artwork is hard work but we want our practices to be enjoyable and sustainable […] This means we need to navigate the art world in a way that suits us. It also means knowing why we make art and who we make it for. It means nurturing relationships that are reciprocal and safe while fostering an environment of robust critique." Mata Aho, "An Art Matriarch"; "Building relationships and working with people is a way for me to consider what art can do and how it can bring people and ideas together creating spaces for criticality and vulnerability. I am more invested in this than the toxic individualism that is embedded within colonial models of "success". Hana Pera Aoake, "No Limit: Imagining the boundaries of autonomy in a Post-Fordist colonial settler state." Master of Fine Arts Exegesis, Massey University Te Kunenga Ki Pūrehuroa, (2018), 21-22 http://hdl.handle.net/10179/14412

[5] This trip became the catalyst for a postPILOT exhibition between myself and fellow studio artists Makyla Curtis, Emily Parr, and Luca Nicholas, held in St Paul Street Gallery Three: "Activities included: slow cooking, fernings and foraging weeds, dyeing, photographing, knitting, reading, driving, searching op-shops for wool blankets, drawing, filming, walking the low tide, bathing in sunset orange, and interpreting Arielle's gesturing in lieu of a voice. From this haerenga, a studio practice emerged that is not only collaborative, but interwoven. We explore connection to place, transience and belonging, tacit and embodied knowing, in ways that both coalesce and diverge. Our postPILOT show orbits these explorations, and our haerenga is the launch pad." – text from exhibition roomsheet

[6] Kimmerer, 250. In conversation with Robert Macfarlane, Kimmer also notes that "All settlers were indigenous someplace. It is the land which teaches us this, it doesn't come with a chromosome – it's being open to the land, to being taught by the land, coming into relationship." In leaving behind land-focused ceremonies as well as the land itself, is it any wonder that settler-colonial societies are so disconnected from their 'settled' new homes?

[7] Kimmerer, 36

[8] Robert Macfarlane, *Landmarks* (Great Britain: Penguin Random House, 2016), 35

[9] Te Nia Matthews, "NAISA 2019: a 'music festival' for indigenous academics," *The Spinoff* (July 8, 2019) https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/08-07-2019/naisa-2019-a-music-festival-for-indigenous-academics/

[10] Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan and Jo-ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem, "NAISA Festival Programme," NAISA conference, July 2019

[11] Monique Mojica, "NAISA Festival Programme," NAISA conference, July 2019

[12] Monique Mojica, "NAISA Festival Programme"

[13] Shawn Wilson and Margaret Hughes, "NAISA Festival Programme," NAISA conference, July 2019

[14] Maureen Lander and Priscilla Pitts, "Artist talk at Govett-Brewster Art Gallery"

[11] 1 NEWS, "Fletchers faces off with mana whenua in Ihumātao - one of New Zealand's most historic sites," August 29, 2019, video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cj2-H9L8RE; SOUL (Save Our Unique Landscape), "Ihumatao", https://www.protectihumatao.com/ihumatao.html

[15] "Glissant reminds us that elements do not blend or lose themselves in order to be in relation; Massumi suggests that immediate relational lived-in sense experience is amodal — it is not in any of the different modes that it fuses together." Barnett, 24

[13] Tryphena o Rongomai Cracknell, "Knotting culture: the muka of Rowan Panther," *Garland Mag* (December 1, 2017) https://garlandmag.com/article/knotting-culture-the-muka-of-rowan-panther/)

# lacing/kōtuitui

**(August 2020 - ongoing)**

hand spun & hand knit/whatu & miro muka & wool, poetry, audio recording, film,

*lacing/kōtuitui* documents the process of learning to make lace, to extract muka, and to whatu, following in the path of my tūpuna wāhine (and in particular my nana Maire, grandmama Faith, and many-greats grandmāmā Te Paea)

Connected works include:

small sample-squares of knitted wool lace (approximately 7x7cm);
*tūpuna guide us to weave in any way we can* (2019 – present); a growing length of knitted muka lace
*if I knit enough lace into blankets we'll keep warm for generations to come* (2019-present); wool hand-spun in conversation by my partner's sister Siobhan and myself, knitted into an ongoing blanket-scale lace piece;
a whatu tauira (sampler) in wool and cotton thread; whatu and māwhitiwhiti (taniko and added feathers still to come);
thirty-one wooden lace-making bobbins'
*distance covered, stitch by tiny stitch* (2020 - present), 35mm film, digital print on hemp canvas, hand-embroidery in cotton thread, drawn-thread/cutwork in hemp thread;
*whatu* (2019) a filmpoem. HD video, narrated poetic text (duration 3 minutes, 6 seconds)

*LEFT Figure 61:* tūpuna guide us to weave in any way we can, *2019-present, Hand-knit muka, (size variable), progress image on 35mm film*

*lacing/kōtuitui* is a response to the consideration of how we hold and carry on ancestral traditions, stories and skills. Though we may be generations removed from the stories and lands that first formed those traditions, and though the materials we use to revitalise these traditions may have changed, we are still able to honour the mahi of our tūpuna by continuing their craft.

The lace-works made through *lacing/kōtuitui* are self-taught from memory, and from pattern books gifted to me or borrowed from my nana. As I learn to knit lace in different materials, I have primarily used the traditional Shetlandic knit pattern Print-o' da Wave, which references the ocean.

Later iterations of *lacing/kōtuitui* include drawn-threadwork and needle lace, and also documents my learning to extract muka, to miro, whatu, and work māwhitiwhiti patterns in whatuora and through my whatu kaiako Whaea Rose.

*RIGHT Figure 62:* if I knit enough lace into blankets we'll keep warm for generations to come, *2019-present, Hand-spun, hand-knit wool, current size 1.5 x 0.6m, in progress image;*
*NEXT PAGE LEFT Figures 63, 64 & 65: stills from* whatu, *2019*
*NEXT PAGE RIGHT Figure 66: small sample squares of knitted lace*

TAI

# a poem is a fluid thing
# all wrapped up in fish skin

How can I write a poem that isn't first a body of water?

How can I write a poem unless its surface is formed
from the borrowed skins of seals and salt and seaweed
and its blood runs in the swell and roll of waves and
moon-pull of tides and its bones are pieced together
from the calcified skeletons of a million
tiny
fish?

I cannot write a poem in a drought

How can I write a poem unless it rolls (a readymade
river) out of the side of a mountain and runs gleefully
forward in a rush of eddying currents towards the sea
so that all I have to do is hold out a hand to unravel
the slightest fraying edge of its fluidity, and
spin a new yarn from its depths?

How can I write a poem unless I *become* a body of water?

How can I write a poem when I am still
piecing together the currents that form me still
tracing back along the saltlines that pool in my veins still
searching
for the point
at which my rivers
merge
into
the sea?

I cannot write a poem until the rain returns
and raises the tides and floods the riverbanks and all
those fragments of fish bone and seal skin are pulled
back together into one whole
body of
water

# RETURNING TO THE SEA

*Or where the work now sits, a temporary conclusion, a waiting*

*And here is where I leave you, for now: at the shoormal, the takutai moana, the edge of the sea. This is where our story was meant to take us, after all, though it isn't an ending. How could it be? We just have to find another mode of travel, another story, as we move into a different element. But wait - just a moment longer, as the waves begin to lap against our feet. There's a little further left to go, still a little more to tell…*


Leaves
1 369
2 867
471
504

# THREAD BY THREAD

Late one night near the end of March, Dad called. Nana was in hospital, he said: he was heading straight down to New Plymouth in the morning. She would be ok, he and his siblings would all be there, and we could come down together to see her over the Easter break.

Five days later, reeling from the global effects of the Covid19 pandemic, Aotearoa went into lockdown.

Suddenly we were all confined to a single home, each in a separate bubble. Overnight, "social distancing" and "self-isolation" became common terminology. The four-hour drive to Taranaki was now an insurmountable distance away. The stillness was both burden and relief. I couldn't think clearly, I couldn't focus, I couldn't sleep. I couldn't make anything. I cried, often. I wrote in fits and starts. I spent hours on the phone with each of my parents.

But then, once again, I picked up needle and thread.

Sometime between the chaos-rush back to Auckland, and the banning of all out-of-bubble contact, Dad brought me a few boxes of Nana's taonga to look after. Embroidery books, bobbin lace, unfinished samplers in every embroidery, cutwork, quilt, patchwork technique imaginable. Staring at Nana's tiny stitches gave me somewhere to focus: I started trying to replicate them. Afraid of running out of thread, not wanting to use the precious spools from Grandmama's thread-box in what was surely going to be a series of trials and impressive errors, I went looking for more materials. Instead, I accidentally unrolled an earlier artwork: *distance measured by a mountain's grief*, the work that opens this exegesis.

As the fabric unspooled, I came kanohī ki te kanohī with Taranaki, stitched into place by my own hands nearly a year earlier, suddenly visible across the distance. I had intentionally left the bottom of the canvas empty in the printing, hoping to convey the immensity of distance to traverse. Maybe now I could begin to close that distance.

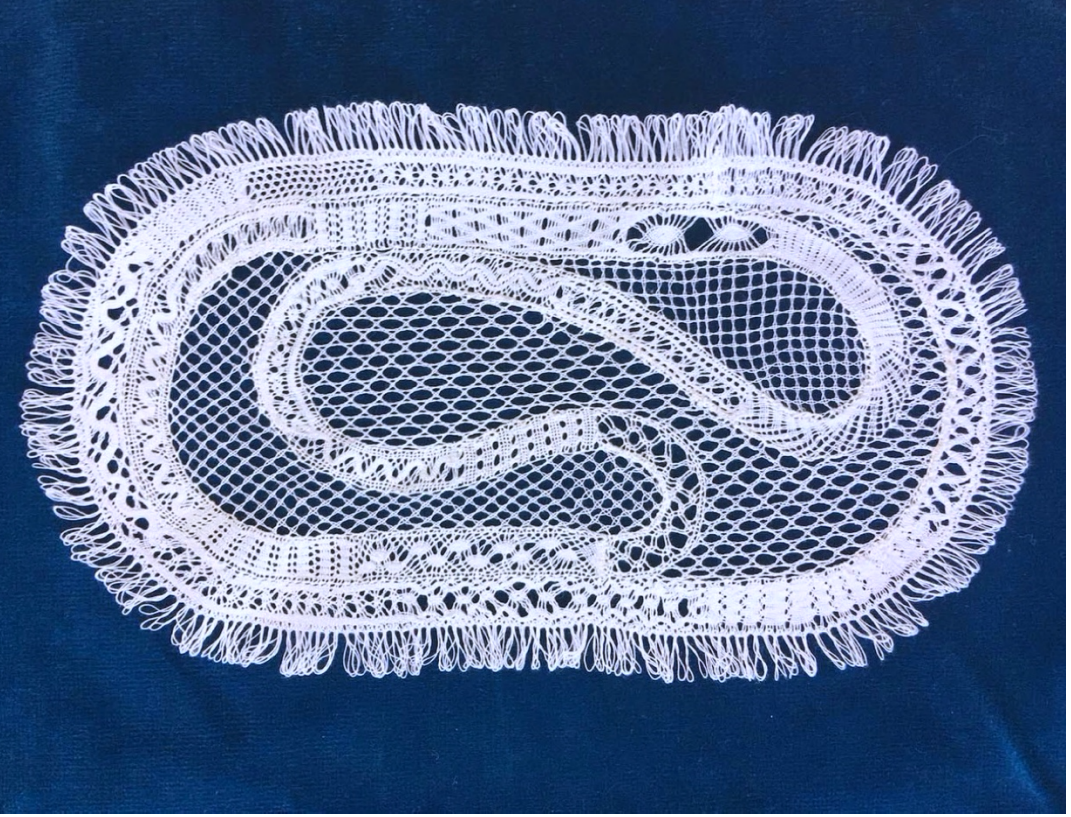
One openwork technique Nana has used involves pulling tight or drawing out threads from a woven fabric, working into the remaining threads in patterns that sometimes look a little like lace – and a little like māwhitiwhiti, or taniko. It brought me back to Hinekura Smith's words on the metaphorical un-picking and re-weaving of threads.[1] This is something that I had been doing in my practice throughout this thesis – what would happen if I did so literally? I would use only threads pulled from the fabric, I decided – threads that still held the physical memory of being woven, small kinks and frayed edges. I would begin the stitches from the bottom of the fabric, mistakes laid bare, learning and improving as I went. Slowly I would fill the distance between myself and Taranaki.

For a moment, the waters reconciled. Yet again I am reminded that the work exists in the act of reconnection, of making, not only in the final "object." For the first time, despite the uncertainty of everything outside, I felt truly settled into this project, into this journey, into myself.

**kanohi ki te kanohi** (Te Reo Māori) face to face

In a pause during my final exegesis edits, I came back to stitch a little more on this work, and opened a podcast artwork to listen to, released earlier that day. Words by Ruby Solly began speaking to me: "You are here/on the path/as we all are/Each of us with a trail/This time not of breadcrumbs/But of long lines of thread/Woven by those who've made us/who we are now"

*PREVIOUS PAGE & NEXT PAGE Figures 68; 69, 70 & 71: Pieces of Nana's textiles I have been looking after (image on right courtesy of Dad)*



# distance covered, stitch by tiny stitch (April 2020 - ongoing)

35mm film, digital print on hemp canvas, hand-embroidery in cotton thread, drawn-thread/cutwork in hemp thread

*distance covered, stitch by tiny stitch* reworks the earlier making *distance measured by a mountain's grief,* in which a digital photographic print onto hemp fibre shows the distant view of Taranaki from Ruapehu, referencing the oral history/pūrākau of ancestral maunga Taranaki. I embroidered Taranaki by hand, back into the image, reflecting on my distance from and connection to this ancestor. I had left a long, white space at the bottom clear, signifying the further metaphorical distance I still have to cover.

That distance has become more than metaphorical as Aotearoa waits under rāhui during a global pandemic. Over the course of this time, I slowly embroider my way back towards the maunga, using stitches learned from my Nana's openwork embroidery samplers.

*RIGHT Figure 72: May 2020 image-in-progress of* distance covered, stitch by tiny stitch, *2020, 35mm film, digital photographic print on hemp fibre, hand-embroidery in cotton thread, drawn-threadwork in hemp*
*NEXT PAGE Figure 73: May 2020 detail of drawn-threadwork embroidery*

# RONGOĀ

It feels ironic to have begun working on a series of connected artworks named *rongoā* in early January 2019, just as the first cases of a new coronavirus were beginning to spread, still outside of my notice. As if I was receiving an early reminder of what would be needed to heal.

Continuing a relational, experiential and tactile practice in the midst of a global pandemic has required another shift in thinking, but the questions that need asking haven't changed. Perhaps there is a broader awareness of them now, though that may be wishful thinking. How do we learn new ways to communicate when those we have relied on are taken from us? How do we stay connected when held at a distance? How do we form truly reciprocal relationships with land, with place, with each other, so that by coming back into balance we can prevent disaster?[2] I do not have definitive answers to any of those questions. However, like Robin Wall Kimmerer, I do know that "on the other side of this moment […] we will be different, we collectively, will be different, and […] we have a role in reimagining what that new world on the other side will look like."[3]

*rongoā* began life as a series of poem-pieces and fibre-fragments, bringing together healing plants from three of my ancestral homelands: Aotearoa, Alba, and Eire. In *rongoā,* I piece together fibres dyed with these plants as I piece together the whakapapa threads and stories that bind me to their places of belonging. Mending the disconnections and ruptures that have occurred over time - and through colonialism in and from each of these homelands - feels again like the active reclaiming and restoring, un-picking and reweaving that Hinekura Smith describes.[4] Back to the metaphorical: another small, quiet act of decolonising the self. Just as each of these plants - kawakawa, yarrow, mānuka - holds the ability to heal the body, so working with them through whatuora, through whakapapa, in close relation to the places and stories they grow from, can begin to heal the ruptures caused by colonialism-driven dislocation.[5]

*rongoā* also has its roots in the textile river maps I had been making earlier in my research, being in itself a kind of map that embodies "movements and wonderings", in the way that non-colonial maps can be a journey "through or across memory, or imagination, across pain or joy or the impossibility of each, across our bodies of land and water and flesh […] ever-shifting, ever-returning, ever-realizing."[6] Maybe this collection of fragments of writing and fibre and plant memories coming together into a relational whole is a new world map, my first reimagining of that hopeful space on the other side of *now*.

*NEXT PAGE Figure 74:detail of Nana's embroidery sampler*

When Dad brought me Nana's taonga to look after, including embroidery samplers, I was stunned to find a piece testing through stitches in various plants. It felt like its own map-key, in a way, a direct link across time from the year following my birth to where I am now, making a piece that also draws from plants


Oyster St
Raised Chain Band
Looped Rings
Lavender Chain St at top & Fly St
Lobster St
Cross St Flower
Bullion Knot Roses
Up + down button hole St & centre of French knots
Gay's Picots
Raised Cup St
Banksia Rose St
Button hole Cups
Bullion Snow drops
Lose French knots or Pekin St
Fly + Satin
Cast on Bullion
M. J. Elliot 25th + 31st Oct 1995.

# TIME IS THE SEA ITSELF (AND SO WE ARRIVE, FINALLY, AT A BEGINNING)

My intent has always been to look inwards in order to speak outwards. I hope that by sharing my process, my navigation through the reconnection of fragments, I add another layer to the discourse of decolonial practice and reciprocity within settler-indigenous spaces. Like Shawn Wilson, my role as storyteller is not "to draw conclusions for another or to make an argument", but rather to "make connections with ideas" - conclusions are, after all, "also relational (or relative)."[7] I leave you instead with a few final musings.

Through the threads of this research I have begun to reconcile some of the disconnected lines of my whakapapa. I have made my way a little closer to Taranaki, and there is still much further to go. I have other homelands that I am still only beginning to unravel my way towards too: to Ngāpuhi, to Shetland, to Tipperary, to Perthshire and Fife and the Scottish Borders, to Yorkshire and many more.

Like the stories they were born from, the artworks that have unfolded throughout *On returning to the sea* do not have an end. There is only a pause in the telling, a moment to take a breath. As with all stories, maybe the storyteller begins again where they left off, or perhaps someone new will pick up the strands and continue to weave the narrative. Though stories shift in the telling, they always carry on, he taonga tuku iho. They are passed down over generations, gather edges worn by time, are sometimes distorted beyond recognition, stolen, and used as tools to perpetuate the colonial myth.[8] By reclaiming our stories, we can begin to heal – and the first stories we must reclaim are those that tell us who we are:

> Reconnecting with [our naming stories] reminds us about where we come from and to who we belong. These stories return us to the waters from which we descend, where we can once again bathe in their healing caress.[9]

As the rāhui begins to lift, and as I close this exegesis, the strands I wish most to pick up again, to move forwards with, are those of healing.

I continue learning to make lace like my nana. When we can move across space again, I will bring her the pieces I have begun, and ask what new stitches and knots she might suggest. I continue to sew with my grandmama's threads, for as long as they'll last, and ask my mother for advice as I go. I replenish the box with new threads, and they in turn will hold their own memories. I continue learning to whatu, in the hope that (in 50 years' time) my fingers, too, will be able to pick out threads of muka as fine as those woven by my many-greats grandmāmā, Te Paea Hinerangi. I learn the stories of my other tūpuna wāhine, and hold them close. I continue to craft my words, and teach my tongue to hold the languages my tūpuna spoke, so that one day I might be ready to tell their stories too.

Robin Wall Kimmerer recounts that:

> Time is not a river running inexorably to the sea, but the sea itself – its tides that appear and disappear, the fog that rises to become rain in a different river. All things that were will come again.[10]

I think about Kimmerer's words, and all the other words I have pulled into myself over this research. I opened this text with a hope that "by looking to the past, we can untangle the threads that bind us to our traditions; and in the act of re-weaving, find new pathways to reciprocal belonging." This thesis became a journey to find reconnection, returning to the sea - but maybe I have been there all along, held in the salt embrace of tupuna moana. It took the journey, the re-searching, to find myself there. If time is the sea itself, then maybe we already hold all the threads we need to find our way. They're right there with us, beneath the surface.[11] All we need to do is find them, and begin to weave again.

The lockdown lifted just as I began to make the final edits on this exegesis. Emily, Makyla and I drove out to Karekare beach, on the west-coast of Tāmaki Makaurau. If you drew a line along the coast, without stopping, eventually you would reach Taranaki. We sat together and watched the setting sun, and in the last glow of sunlight over the horizon we ran to the water's edge and let the waves rush over our feet.
Quite fitting, really, that this exegesis should end with us, together,
returning to the sea.

[1] Smith, 14

[2] Robin Wall Kimmerer, "Windigo Footprints," Braiding Sweetgrass (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013)

[3] Robin Wall Kimmerer in conversation with Robert Macfarlane

[4] Smith, 14

[2] Ruby Solly, "Woven," Artist in Residence Podcast, Pantograph Punch, https://pantograph-punch.com/posts/artist-in-residence-ruby-solly

[5] Joeliee Seed-Pihama, 113

[6] Natalie Diaz, introduction to "New Poetry by Queer Indigenous Women," Lithub (April 12, 2018), https://lithub.com/new-poetry-by-queer-indigenous-women/

[7] Wilson, 133

[8] "Misappropriation, misrepresentation, and misinterpretation characterised the early collection of pūrākau. In turn, these distorted stories contributed to an epistemological confusion and destabilization of our spiritual beliefs, reinforcing the social and structural disarray created by the imposition of colonization on our lands." Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, 152

[9] Seed-Pihama, 117

[10] Kimmerer, 206

[11] "We don't go forward in a line – what we are to do is circle back, to circle back and pick up those things that we left behind, those things that are still present in that lake of time, but we are to retrieve them and take them with us […] because those things are not lost, they are still there. They're below the surface and our capacity as humans to bring them up to the surface again - to wake them up - is part of our work." Robin Wall Kimmerer in conversation with Robert Macfarlane

# rongoā

**(January 2020 - ongoing)**

Foraged plant dyes; vintage woollen blanket, silk, cotton muslin, & linen; patchwork & quilting techniques; hīkoi; poetry, audio recording, film

In *rongoā*, I piece together whakapapa threads and stories through plants that bind me to their places of belonging, thinking back to my ancestral homelands of Aotearoa, Alba, and Èire.

Connected works include:
*embodying my roots, skin, and leaves: a map* (2020 - ongoing) a patchwork quilt-in-progress, made with plant-dyed woollen blankets
*first soft light of the rising sun* (2020); 3.8 x 1.79m (as of May 2020). Foraged and found plant dyes (harakeke, dock root, lupin, feusag a gobhair/goats beard lichen, kānuka, iron, onion skin) on vintage and handed-down silk, cotton muslin, and linen
a fragmented poem, also titled *rongoā* (2020)
a first draft, collaborative reading of poem *rongoā*. 5m 35s. Spoken plant poetics; read with Makyla Curtis: https://soundcloud.com/arielle-5/rongoa/s-CkNCDq9sQb7
a final audio-work of poem *rongoā*. 8m 39s. Spoken plant poetics: https://soundcloud.com/arielle-5/rongoa-1

*LEFT Figure 75:plant-dyed woollen blanket pieces in progress NEXT PAGE TOP LEFT Figure 76:lichen and lupin dyes on silk NEXT PAGE RIGHT Figure 77: first soft light of the rising sun, 2020, installation at The Barrel Store – also visible are artworks by Debbie Harris (left) and Makyla Curtis (behind) NEXT PAGE BOTTOM LEFT Figure 78: installation detail*

# rongoā

## i. harakeke

karakia to Papatūānuku, to Ranginui, to all tūpuna,
give thanks for their gifts
*ngā taonga whakarere iho*

never take the mother or father or child of the plant
trim the edges of the blade and cut away the keel
return the remains to the whenua
make a small slice in the flesh of the leaf
strip back the skin until the fibre is laid bare
take care of this plant body
as if it were your own body
miro the muka against your own skin

steep the remnants in river water
and they will give you the first soft light of the rising sun

## ii. yarrow

to journey safely: search among the rolling hills of Éirinn / find the flowers of the athair thalún growing amongst the seamróg / pull off ten leaves and throw one away / put the nine others in a white cotton cloth and tie with a string around your neck / do not pass an elder tree / take the flowers and simmer them / half into a sunshine yellow / half into a healing tea
drink deep

## III. heather & thistle

go to Scotland as summer is tilting towards autumn
the braes will be kiver'd in lilac
(the heart of the thistle holds the same shade, but the
thorns get in the way)

fold the sprigs into a bed, lie to sleep and dream of home
(the one that holds your heart and the other your bones)

travel the paths around Taranaki, heather is
a weed here – still, take only what you need and no more
don't linger on the missing and the lost, move on

the new shoots will simmer green to gowd
(the thistle leaves no imprint at all)

## IV. kānuka & mānuka

kānuka stands tall
with leaves that don't scratch
or bite or sting (a soft touch)
tiny flowers
and scented leather bark

mānuka has thin skin
that flakes and peels
(and a barbed tongue)
it holds its branches small and close
and its seeds closer

see how they are as alike and not-alike as cousins?
a consistent case of mistaken identity

but they are both healers
honeystarters
firemakers
colourfixers
sheltergivers
teatrees

they prepare dry earth for new growth
they prepare fibre for new colour
they lead the way so that when we later follow
the paths made by their roots
there is already something to come home to

## v. elder & alder

never ever cut down an alder tree (instead)
stroke the catkins, watch the wood bleed *fearnóg* to *ruam*
*let them soothe your weary feet, there's still so far to go*

take only the leaves for green,
the twigs for red,
the fallen bark for brown

never ever cut down an elder tree (instead)
stand under the branches on Samhain and watch
the *daoine sídhe* ride by
*let them lift the weight from your chest*
*let them teach you how to breathe again*

take only the fallen,
the shed,
the ripest fruit
steep the bark into dye and the berries into wine

## vi. docken & iron

go straight to the roots, they hold all the power
they've grown down deep; dig in deeper
tear them from the earth
forget that they're manuhiri too
hack at them until you have only slivers left
let them stand in for your own whakamā
soak them for days, boil them for hours
add iron pulled from slick dark bog mud

you're aiming for the deepest black, but every time
nothing will come out
but grey, grey, grey

## vii. angiangi/feusag a' ghobhair

lichens are born from reciprocity

*(stumble across this knowledge, learn in awe that lichens are not plants, learn how they are not one individual but two symbiotic beings, algae and fungi entwined together, how their relationship could have been a parasitic imbalance of power with one draining the life from the other but instead they learned to give, how each provides what the other cannot create alone)*

they are the ancient ones, they built the foundation for us all to grow upon.

## viii. kawakawa

look first for the leaves with the most holes
(the hearts should be riddled with them, it means they are healthy,
it means that others have already eaten their fill and left you with
only the strongest pieces)

meld the oils into a salve
to soothe the sting of lost words
sliding from your stumbling tongue

the crushed leaves will dye a shade of soft olive green
that fades as fast as summer does
(better to drink it in and hold
the memory of colour instead)

## IX. whatu

karakia to Ranginui, to Papatūānuku,
to Hine-te-iwaiwa, to all tūpuna
give thanks for their gifts
*ngā taonga whakarere iho*

form the whenu from the whenua that holds
your heart and your bones
the whakamā and the mamae
and the joy, too

make the aho from all you have gathered here
harakeke and heather, kānuka and alder,
mānuka and elder
thistle bite and docken soothe
kawakawa and yarrow
the colours that reveal their roots
and yours, too

lay your weaving at the salt-licked ocean edge,
let the waves swell and pull it from you, a joining, a gift in return
and (to bind it, and make it whole) they will give you
the last soft light of the setting sun

# ON RETURNING TO THE SEA

*The final exhibition*

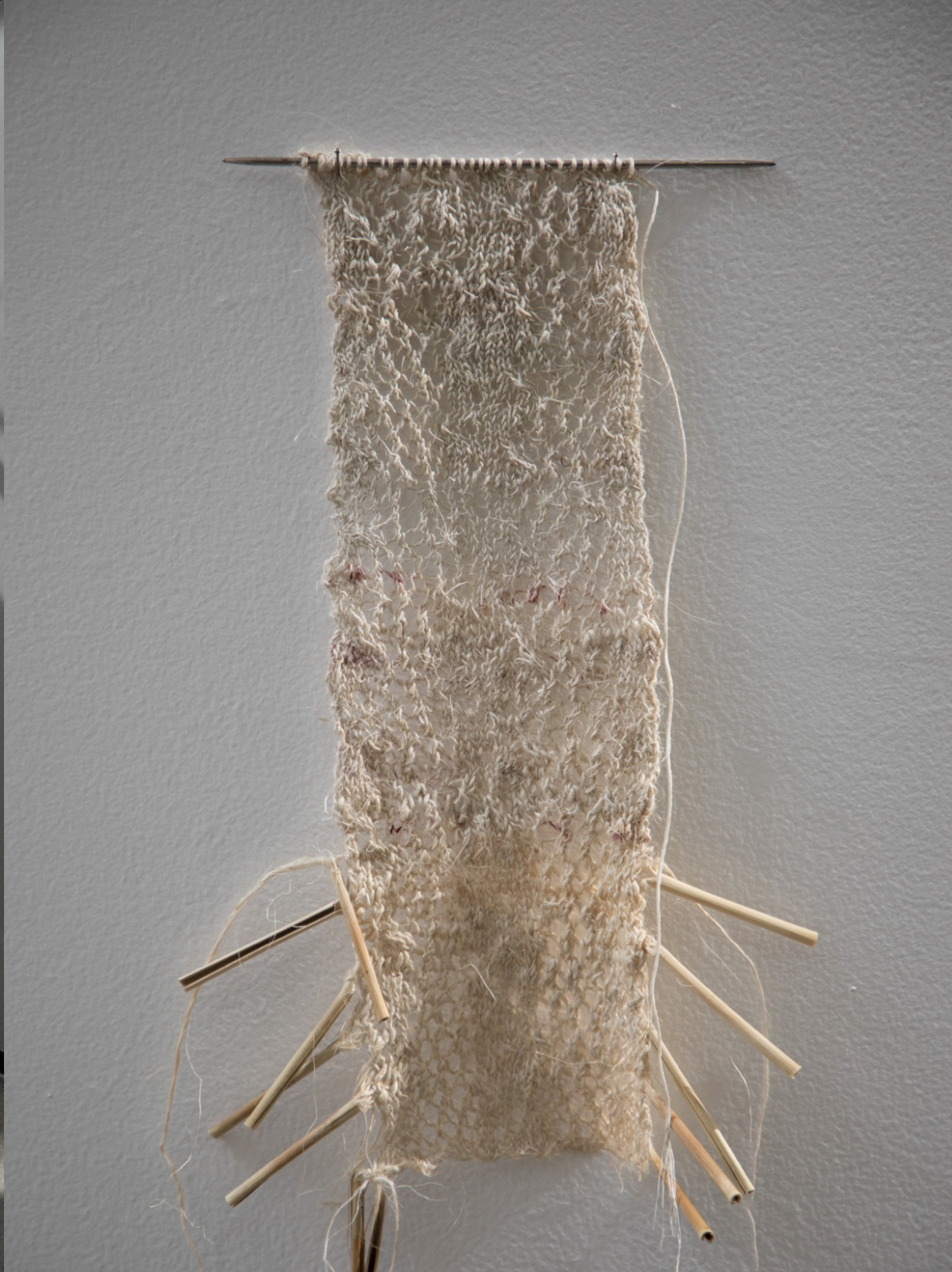
*AUT Master of Visual Art*
*Matariki Graduating Exhibitions*
*ST PAUL Street Gallery*
*August 8th, 2020*

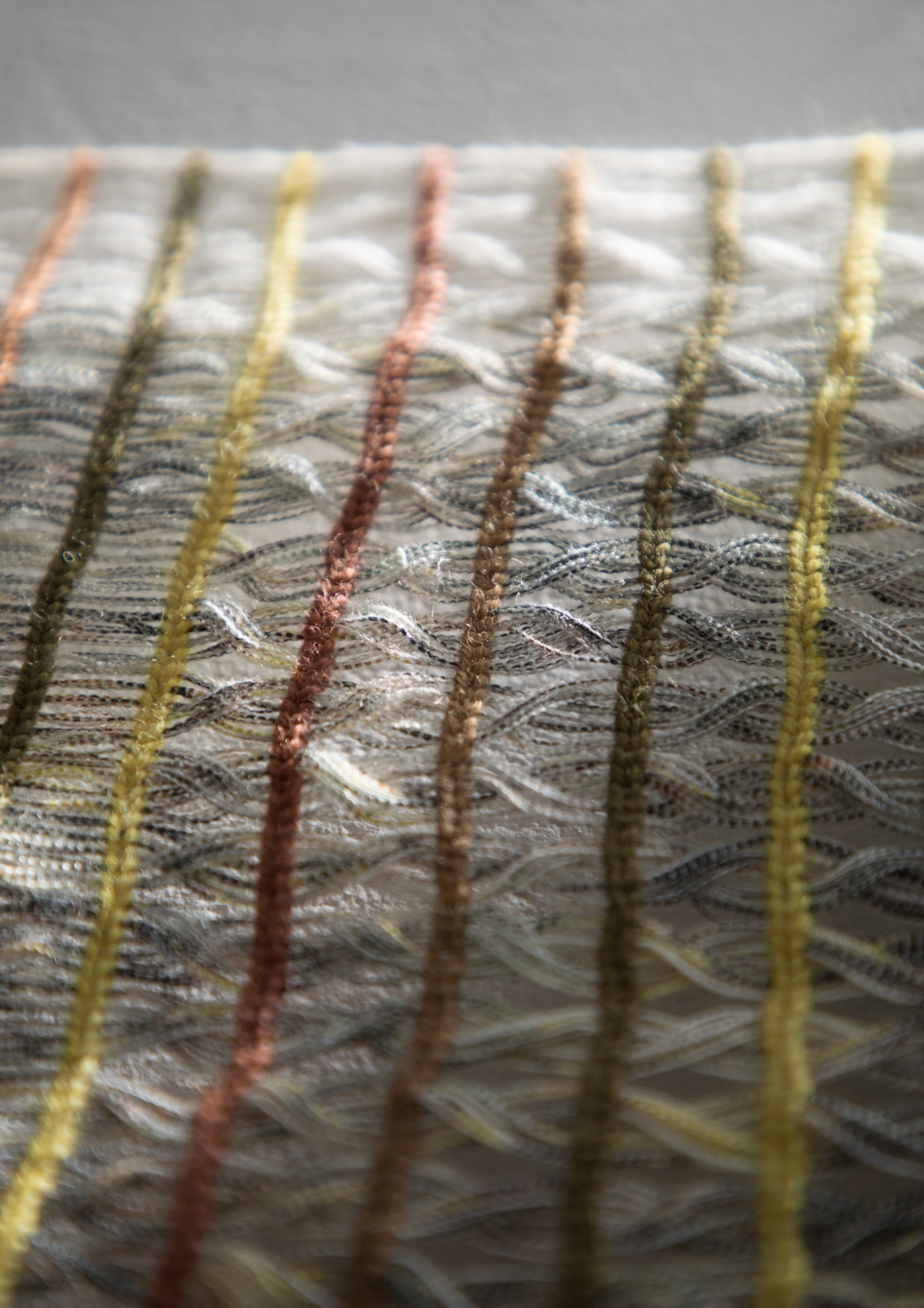
*RIGHT Figure 80: first soft light of the rising sun* (2020). Foraged plant dyes (angiangi/feusag a gobhair/goats beard lichen, dock/copag, gorse, harakeke, iron sulfate, kānuka, lupin, onion skin, tanekaha) on handed- down silk, cotton muslin, and linen; Grandmama's threads. 1820 x 4700mm.

*NEXT PAGE Figure 81:* Installation of works in the ST PAUL Street Gallery foyer space; from left: *first soft light of the rising sun* (2020), *tūpuna guide us to weave in any way we can* (2019- ongoing); muka gathered from Taranaki and Tāmaki Makaurau, hand knit into the Shetland lace pattern Print o da Wave. Currently 100 x 290mm;
*distance measured by a mountain's grief/distance covered, stitch by tiny stitch* (2019-ongoing).Hīkoi; 35mm film; dye-sublimated print onto hemp canvas; embroidery, drawn-thread/cutwork in hemp thread, velvet embroidery fabric prepared by Nana. 600 x 1000mm;
*distance rewoven from the roots to the stem* (2020- ongoing). Hīkoi;35mmfilm;dye-sublimated print (of Tongaporutu harakeke and gorse) onto hemp fibre unravelled by hand; whatu in plant- dyed (gorse, kānuka, harakeke, lupin, tanekaha) wool yarn. 600 x 1000mm.

*FOLLOWING SEVEN PAGES* Figures 82 – 95: Installation images and closer details of artworks installed in the gallery foyer


RECYCLING





*RIGHT: Figures 96 & 97 Details of first soft light of the rising sun (2020)* in gallery foyer window

*NEXT PAGE Figure 98:* Installation of works in ST PAUL Street Gallery One, as viewed from entering the gallery door; from left:

*embodying my roots, skin, and leaves: a map (2020-ongoing)* Foraged plant dyes (acorns, angiangi/feusag a gobhair/goats beard lichen, dock/copag root, gorse flowers and spines, harakeke para, kānuka bark, kawakawa, lupin leaves, mānuka leaves, onion skin, pōhutukawa bark, pōhutukawa roots, tanekaha bark, yarrow, woad), aluminium sulfate, ferrous sulfate, sodium carbonate on vintage and handed-down woollen blanket. Currently 2000 x 3720mm.

*if I knit enough lace into blankets we can keep warm for generations to come* (2019-present) Wool hand-spun in conversation between my sibling-not-in-law Siobhan and myself, knitted into an ongoing blanket in the Shetland lace pattern Print o da Wave.

*rongoā* (2020) Audio (spoken poem fragments, the ocean at Tongaporutu, Taranaki springwater, tones from Granddad's tuning fork); headphones. 8 mins 22 seconds (loop)

*thirty-one hand-turned wooden lace-bobbins in various hardwoods, gifted to me by Nana and made by my uncle; beads made from river clay, ochre, and black sand, gathered from Tongaporutu, Taranaki; beads made from seaweed and pumice, gathered from Oakura, Taranaki; beads made from river stones, gathered from Tongaporutu Beach and the base of Taranaki maunga; Hawaiian faux-pearl beads from Grandmama's necklaces; quartz, amethyst, malachite, shell, and glass beads gifted to me as a child; muka; fish skin leather* (2004 - ongoing). Hand-made and passed down beads; wooden lace-bobbins; repurposed electrical wire. Dimensions variable. Placed on Nana's embroidery sampler.

*gather river bank clay / to make a bowl, shaped in the palm of your hand, to find again a lost and tender tongue* (2020) river clay, ochre, black sand (gathered from Tongaporutu, Taranaki); various beads for thirty-one hand-turned wooden lace-bobbins [...]. (Title formed from lines in Qwo-Li Driskill's poem Tal'-s-go Gal'-quo-gi Di-del'-qua-s-do-di Tsa-la-gi Di-go-whe-li/ Beginning Cherokee)

The artworks are all presented in/on *VĀWĀ* (2020), an exhibition space created by Sapati Mossiah Avei Fina'i with the *Speaking Surfaces* project team at ST PAUL Street Gallery. Assorted basket-works by Ruth Castle are visible in the background, also as part of concurrent exhibition *Speaking Surfaces*

*FOLLOWING SEVEN PAGES:* Figures 99 – 114 Installation images and closer details of artworks installed in Gallery One


TARANAKI
GORSE
ALUM + IRON


Square Chain
Raised Needleweaving
Button hole
Sorbello
Closed Buttonhole
Lavender Chain St at top & Fly St
Bullion Knot Roses
Fox Glove
Button hole rings
Button hole cups
Bullion Snow drops
Loose French knots or Pekin St
Cast on Bullion
Fly & Satin
M J Elliot 25th & 31st Oct 1995


Raised Needleweaving
Buttonhole


Panasonic

# ON RETURNING

# TO THE SEA

"A Whatuora approach […] insists that we actively reclaim and restore, unpick and re-weave, a culturally well and clear vision of our present realities and, importantly, create a vision for the future."[1]

Hinekura Smith, *Whatuora: Theorizing "New" Indigenous Methodology From "Old" Indigenous Weaving Practice* (2019)

*On returning to the sea* gathers artworks made through my MVA thesis *On returning to the sea: towards belonging through land, language, & tactile storytelling*. Beginning with the relationship between storytelling and traditional crafts passed down over generations, I reference lines of my tūpuna wāhine and look towards my ancestral homelands – particularly Taranaki, Scotland, and Ireland. Mending the disconnections and ruptures that have occurred over time - and through colonialism in and from each of these homelands - feels like the active reclaiming and restoring, unpicking and reweaving that Aotearoa academic Hinekura Smith describes: a small, quiet act of decolonising the self.

The first time I learned to whatu with harakeke,
I told the story of Nana's lace
and my kaiako told me:
i tuku iho, that's tūpuna guiding your kuia to weave
in any way she can.[2]

The artworks in *On returning to the sea* come from two particular kaupapa developed through my thesis. More than objects, the work is in the process of making: each piece holds memory and its own mauri.

*karakia to Ranginui, to Papatūānuku,*
*to Hine-te-iwaiwa, to all tūpuna*
*give thanks for their gifts*
*ngā taonga whakarere iho*

form the whenu from the whenua that holds
your heart and your bones
the whakamā and the mamae
- and the joy, too

make the aho from all you have gathered here
harakeke and heather, kānuka and alder,
mānuka and elder
thistle bite and docken soothe
kawakawa and yarrow
the colours that reveal their roots
- and yours, too

lay your weaving at the salt-licked ocean edge,
let the waves swell and pull it from you, a joining
a gift in return
and (to bind it, and make it whole) they will give you
the last soft light of the setting sun.[3]

In *lacing/kōtuitui,* I combine materials and traditional methods – lacemaking, knitting, and whatu – following in the path of my father's mother, Nana Maire, my mother's mother, Grandmama Faith, and my many-greats grandmāmā Te Paea. I prepare lace bobbins (gifted to me as a child) with beaded weights made from Taranaki river clay, knit muka into lace, whatu gorse into harakeke, and stitch my way slowly back across the distance to my turangawaewae.

In *rongoā,* I piece together whakapapa threads and stories through poem fragments, and fibres dyed with healing plants that bind me to their places of belonging, thinking back to my ancestral homelands. Just as each of these plants holds the ability to heal the body, so working with them through whatuora, through whakapapa, in close relation to the places and stories they grow from, can begin to heal the ruptures caused by colonialism-driven dislocation.

In her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Potawatomi botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer recounts that:

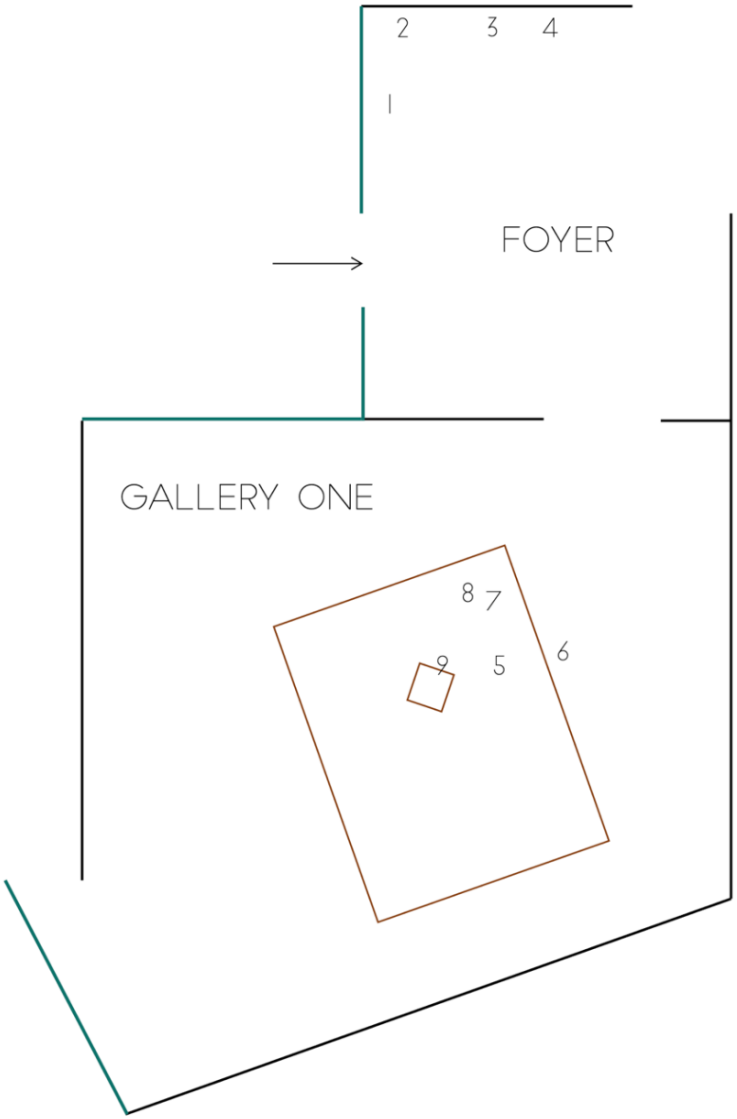
> "Time is not a river running inexorably to the sea, but the sea itself – its tides that appear and disappear, the fog that rises to become rain in a different river. All things that were will come again."

If time is the sea itself, then maybe we already hold all the threads we need to find our way. They're right there with us, beneath the surface. By looking to the past, returning to the waters from which we came, we can untangle those threads; and in the act of re-weaving, find new pathways to reciprocal belonging.

REFERENCES


1. Hinekura Smith, "Whatuora: Theorizing "New" Indigenous Methodology From "Old" Indigenous Weaving Practice", in Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal Volume 4 Issue 1 (2019), 21
2. Excerpt from Arielle Walker, whatu (2019). Poem.
3. Excerpt from Arielle Walker, rongoā (2020). Audio poem. 8 mins 22 seconds
4. Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass (Canada: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 206


IMAGES: *first soft light of the rising sun (2020)* at Tongaporutu, Taranaki (the maunga in the distance obscured by cloud); taken on 35mm film with the assistance of Emily Parr and Makyla Curtis




1. *first soft light of the rising sun* (2020). Foraged plant dyes (angiangi/feusag a gobhair/goats beard lichen, dock/copag, gorse, harakeke, iron sulfate, kānuka, lupin, onion skin, tanekaha) on handed-down silk, cotton muslin, and linen; Grandmama's threads. 1820 x 4700mm.

2. *tūpuna guide us to weave in any way we can* (2019 – ongoing); muka gathered from Taranaki and Tāmaki Makaurau, hand knit into the Shetland lace pattern Print o da Wave. Currently 100 x 290mm.

3. *distance covered, stitch by tiny stitch* (2020 - ongoing). Hīkoi; 35mm film; dye-sublimated print (of Taranaki seen from Ruapehu on a clear day) onto hemp canvas; Taranaki hand-embroidered back into the image (in cotton thread); drawn-thread/cutwork in hemp thread following Nana's patterns; velvet embroidery fabric prepared by Nana. 600 x 1000mm.

4. *distance rewoven from the roots to the stem* (2020 - ongoing). Hīkoi; 35mm film; dye-sublimated print (of Tongaporutu harakeke and gorse) onto hemp fibre unravelled by hand; whatu in plant-dyed (gorse, kānuka, harakeke, lupin, tanekaha) wool yarn. 600 x 1000mm.

5. *embodying my roots, skin, and leaves: a map* (2020 - ongoing); Foraged plant dyes (acorns, angiangi/feusag a gobhair/goats beard lichen, dock/copag root, gorse flowers and spines, harakeke para, kānuka bark, kawakawa, lupin leaves, mānuka leaves, onion skin, pōhutukawa bark, pōhutukawa roots, tanekaha bark, yarrow, woad), aluminium sulfate, ferrous sulfate, sodium carbonate on vintage and handed-down woollen blanket. Currently 2000 x 3720mm.

6. *rongoā* (2020). Audio (spoken poem fragments, the ocean at Tongaporutu, Taranaki springwater, tones from Granddad's tuning fork); headphones. 8 mins 22 seconds (loop)

7. *thirty-one hand-turned wooden lace-bobbins in various hardwoods, gifted to me by Nana and made by my uncle; beads made from river clay, ochre, and black sand, gathered from Tongaporutu, Taranaki; beads made from seaweed and pumice, gathered from Oakura, Taranaki; beads made from river stones, gathered from Tongaporutu Beach and the base of Taranaki maunga; Hawaiian faux-pearl beads from Grandmama's necklaces; quartz, amethyst, malachite, shell, and glass beads gifted to me as a child; muka; fish skin leather* (2004 - ongoing). Hand-made and passed down beads; wooden lace-bobbins; repurposed electrical wire. Dimensions variable. Placed on Nana's embroidery sampler.

8. *gather riverbank clay/to make a bowl, shaped in the palm of your hand, to find again a lost and tender tongue* (2020); river clay, ochre, black sand (gathered from Tongaporutu, Taranaki); various beads for *thirty-one hand-turned wooden lace-bobbins [..].* (Title formed from lines in Qwo-Li Driskill's poem *Tal'-s-go Gal'-quo-gi Di-del'-qua-s-do-di Tsa-la-gi Di-go-whe-li/ Beginning Cherokee*)

9. *if I knit enough lace into blankets we can keep warm for generations to come (*2019-present). Wool hand-spun in conversation between my sibling-out-law Siobhan and myself, knitted into an ongoing blanket in the Shetland lace pattern Print o da Wave.

# GLOSSARY

**Alba** (GÀIDHLIG) Scotland

**akoranga** (TE REO MĀORI) circumstance of learning, time of learning, place of learning

**aho** (TE REO MĀORI) weft, woof - cross-threads of weaving or a mat. Also fishing line, cord, string, line, medium for an *atua* in divination; line of descent, genealogy; radiant light - as opposed to diffused light

**Aotearoa** (TE REO MĀORI) now used as the Māori name for New Zealand.

**ātua** (TE REO MĀORI) ancestor with continuing influence, god, demon, supernatural being, deity, ghost, object of superstitious regard, strange being

**athair thalún -** (GAEILGE) *Achillea millefolium*, yarrow

**aulder** (SCOTS. SHAETLAN) older; also elder, ancestor

**awa** (TE REO MĀORI) river, stream, creek, canal, gully, gorge, groove, furrow.

**braes** (SCOTS) hills or hillsides; the high ground adjoining a river bank; upland, mountainous district

**cànan** (GÀIDHLIG) (noun, masc) language

**coileach an t-srutha** (GAEILGE) strong tide currents; tide rapids

**daoine sídhe/ daoine sith** (GAEILGE/GÀIDHLIG) Fair Folk, faery people

**draa** (SHAETLAN) the place where a boat is drawn up on shore

**e hoa mā** (TE REO MĀORI) friends

**Éire** (GAEILGE) Ireland (gen. Éireann)

**fearnóg** (GAEILGE) *Alnus glutinosa*, native Irish alder (tree)

**feusag a' ghobhair** (GÀIDHLIG) 'the goat's beard' (*Usnea* species of lichen)

**haaf** (SHAETLAN) the deep sea beyond coastal waters; the deep-sea fishing carried out 30-40 miles offshore in open boats

**haerenga** TE REO MĀORI) journey, trip, parting

**hapū** (TE REO MĀORI) kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe - section of a large kinship group and the primary political unit in traditional Māori society. Also pregnant, expectant, with child.

**harakeke** TE REO MĀORI) *Phormium tenax,* New Zealand flax

**he taonga tuku iho** (TE REO MĀORI) treasure passed down

**hīkoi** (TE REO MĀORI) step, march, hike, trek, tramp, trip, journey; to step, march, stride, walk

**kaiako** (TE REO MĀORI) teacher

**ika** (TE REO MĀORI) fish, marine animal, aquatic animal - any creature that swims in fresh or salt water including marine mammals such as whales. Also slain warrior, victim; prized possession - a figurative use; cluster, band, troop, group, company, heap

**iwi** (TE REO MĀORI) extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, nationality, race - often refers to a large group of people

descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory. Also strength, bone

**kanohī ki te kanohī** (TE REO MĀORI) face to face, in person, in the flesh

**kānuka** (TE REO MĀORI) *Kunzea ericoides,* white tea-tree

**kaupapa:** (TE REO MĀORI) topic, policy, matter for discussion, plan, purpose, scheme, proposal, agenda, subject, programme, theme, issue, initiative.

**kaupapa Māori:** (TE REO MĀORI) Māori approach, Māori topic, Māori customary practice, Māori institution, Māori agenda, Māori principles, Māori ideology - a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society.

**kaitiakitanga:** (TE REO MĀORI) guardianship, stewardship, trusteeship, trustee.

**kist** (SHAETLAN) a chest, a trunk; a coffin; to lay corpse in its coffin

**kiver'd** (SCOTS) covered

**kōrerorero** (TE REO MĀORI) to talk, discuss, converse, chat; dialogue, conversation, discussion, chat.

**kōtuitui** (TE REO MĀORI) to lace, fasten by lacing, interlace, interlink, connect

**lönabrak:** (SHAETLAN) the swell and surge of sea breaking on the shore

**mahi** (TE REO MĀORI) work, job, employment, trade (work), practice, occupation, activity, exercise, operation, function. Also abundance, lots of, many, heaps of

**mamae** (TE REO MĀORI) be painful, sore, hurt; ache, pain, injury, wound

**mana:** (TE REO MĀORI) prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma - *mana* is a supernatural force in a person, place or object. *Mana* goes hand in hand with *tapu*, one affecting the other. The more prestigious the event, person or object, the more it is surrounded by *tapu* and *mana*. *Mana* is the enduring, indestructible power of the *atua* and is inherited at birth […] There is also an element of stewardship, or *kaitiakitanga*, associated with the term when it is used in relation to resources, including land and water.

**mānuka** (TE REO MĀORI) *Leptospermum scoparium,* tea tree

**mātauranga** (TE REO MĀORI) knowledge, wisdom, understanding, skill - sometimes used in the plural;

**mātauranga Māori** (TE REO MĀORI) Māori knowledge - the body of knowledge originating from Māori ancestors, including the Māori world view and perspectives, Māori creativity and cultural practices.

**maunga** (TE REO MĀORI) mountain

**mauri** (TE REO MĀORI) life principle, life force, vital essence, special nature, a material symbol of a life principle, source of emotions - the essential quality and vitality of a being or entity. Also used for a physical object, individual, ecosystem or social group in which this essence is located

**mindin** (SHAETLAN) memory, remembering

**mita** (TE REO MĀORI) rhythm, intonation, pronunciation and sound of a language, accent, diction, elocution, dialect, register

**moana** (TE REO MĀORI) sea, ocean, large lake

**mōhiotanga** (TE REO MĀORI) knowledge, knowing, understanding, comprehension, intelligence, awareness, insight, perception.

**motu** (TE REO MĀORI) island, country, land, nation, clump of trees, ship - anything separated or isolated. Also to sever, cut, cut off, set free, separate

**ora** (TE REO MĀORI) life, health, vitality. Also alive, well, safe, cured, recovered, healthy, fit, healed; satiated, replete; to recover, revive; to survive, escape

**Pākehā** (TE REO MĀORI) New Zealander of European descent; English, foreign, European, exotic - introduced from or originating in a foreign country; foreigner, alien

**paringa** (TE REO MĀORI) flowing (of the tide), incoming (tide)

**patupaiarehe** (TE REO MĀORI) fairy folk - fair-skinned mythical people who live in the bush on mountains. Although like humans in appearance, the belief is that they do not eat cooked food and are afraid of fires.

**pepeha** (TE REO MĀORI) tribal saying, tribal motto, proverb (especially about a tribe), set form of words, formulaic expression, saying of the ancestors, figure of speech, motto, slogan - set sayings known for their economy of words and metaphor and encapsulating many Māori values and human characteristics; now commonly refers to a set structural way of introducing yourself and how you are connected

**poi** (TE REO MĀORI) poi - a light ball on a string of varying length which is swung or twirled rhythmically to sung accompaniment. Traditionally the ball was made of raupō leaves; poi dance - songs performed in which the poi is swung in various movements to accompany the singing. Also to knead, make into balls; sphere

**pūrākau** (TE REO MĀORI) myth, ancient legend, story

**raupatu** (TE REO MĀORI) to conquer, overcome, take without any right; conquest, confiscation

**reo** (TE REO MĀORI) language, dialect, tongue, speech

**rongoā** (TE REO MĀORI) remedy, medicine, drug, cure, medication, treatment, solution (to a problem), tonic; also to treat, to apply medicine

**ruam** (GAEILGE) red tannin-dye obtained from alder wood

**Samhain** (GAEILGE/GÀIDHLIG) festival marking the end of harvest season/beginning of winter

**seamróg –** (GAEILGE) shamrock, clover *Trifolium dubium* (lesser clover, Irish: *seamair bhuí*) or *Trifolium repens* (white clover, Irish: *seamair bhán*

**selkie –** (SCOTS/SHAETLAN) a seal; also a mythical seal-being, able to shed its skin and take human form on land. Variations on the name include silkie, sylkie, selchie

**shoormal –** (SHAETLAN) where the shore meets the sea

**sionainn** (GAEILGE) old river; from the river Shannon

**sruthán** (GAEILGE) small stream; rivulet, brook. Also gush, flow

**tai:** (TE REO MĀORI) sea, coast (as opposed to *uta* when referring to the hinterland), tide; also a term for friend.

**takutai moana:** (TE REO MĀORI) shore

**tang** (SHAETLAN) seaweed

**tangata** (TE REO MĀORI) person, human being, individual.

**tangata whenua** (TE REO MĀORI) local people, hosts, indigenous people - people born of the whenua, i.e. of the placenta and of the land where the people's ancestors have lived and where their

placenta are buried. Also to be natural, at home, comfortable, naturalised, acclimatised, established, adapted

**taniwha** (TE REO MĀORI) water spirit, monster, dangerous water creature, powerful creature, chief, powerful leader, something or someone awesome - **taniwha** take many forms from logs to reptiles and whales and often live in lakes, rivers or the sea. They are often regarded as guardians by the people who live in their territory, but may also have a malign influence on human beings

**taonga** (TE REO MĀORI) treasure, anything prized

**tapu** (TE REO MĀORI) sacred, prohibited, restricted, set apart, forbidden, under *atua* protection, "holy"

**tautoko** (TE REO MĀORI) to support, prop up, verify, advocate, accept (an invitation), agree.

**teanga** (GAEILGE) tongue, language

**teanga** (GÀIDHLIG) tongue, speech, spit (of land)

**tīhore** (TE REO MĀORI) to skin, tear the skin off, tear back, peel, pare; to strip. Also to clear up (of rain); to be cloudless (of the sky); bare, clear; the name for a flax variety, one of the best varieties of *harakeke*

**tikanga** (TE REO MĀORI) correct procedure, custom, habit, lore, method, manner, rule, way, code, meaning, plan, practice, convention, protocol - the customary system of values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context

**tír** (GAEILGE) land, country, territory; rural district; land (as opposed to sea); native, ordinary

**tìr** (GÀIDHLIG) land, country, territory; land (as opposed to sea), shore, beach, coast

**Tír-Dhá-Ghlas** (GAEILGE) the original name for Terryglass, Tipperary, Ireland (where most of my grandmama Faith's Irish ancestors are from), meaning land of two streams.

**tūpuna** (TE REO MĀORI) ancestors - plural of **tupuna** and the western dialect form of **tīpuna**

**tūpuna wāhine** (TE REO MĀORI) female ancestors, grandmothers, great grandmothers – the western dialect form of tīpuna wahine and plural form of tupuna wahine

**ūkaipō** (TE REO MĀORI) origin, real home; also mother, source of sustenance

**uta** (TE REO MĀORI) the shore, ashore, land (from a sea or water perspective), inland (from a coastal perspective), interior (of a country or island); also to load on, put on

**wairua** (TE REO MĀORI) spirit, soul. Also attitude, quintessence, feel, mood, feeling, nature, essence, atmosphere.

**wānanga** (TE REO MĀORI) to meet and discuss, deliberate, consider; seminar, conference, forum; tribal knowledge, lore, learning - important traditional cultural, religious, historical, genealogical and philosophical knowledge

**whakapapa** (TE REO MĀORI) to lie flat, lay flat; to place in layers, lay one upon another, stack flat; to recite in proper order (e.g. genealogies, legends, months), recite genealogies; genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent - reciting whakapapa was, and is, an important skill and reflected the importance of genealogies […] It is central to all Māori institutions.

**whanaunga** (TE REO MĀORI) relative, relation, kin, blood relation

**whanaungatanga** (TE REO MĀORI) relationship, kinship, sense of family connection - a relationship through shared experiences and

working together which provides people with a sense of belonging. It develops as a result of kinship rights and obligations, which also serve to strengthen each member of the kin group. It also extends to others to whom one develops a close familial, friendship or reciprocal relationship

**wharepora:** (TE REO MĀORI) space of weaving; from Te Whare Pora

**whenua:** (TE REO MĀORI) land - often used in the plural. Also ground; country; placenta, afterbirth.

This glossary is an attempt to give a somewhat broader, fuller sense of the terms used through this exegesis, though any translation into English necessitates loss of meaning. The sources I have referenced from do, however, give a deeper view of these words and their meanings, and I recommend visiting them directly. All terms referenced from:

Te Aka Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary and Index
https://maoridictionary.co.nz

The Shetland Dictionary (online)
https://www.shetlanddialect.org.uk/dictionaries

Roseanne Watt, *Moder Dy*

Dictionary of the Scots Language/Dictionar o the Scots Leid
https://dsl.ac.uk

Foras na Gaeilg Dictionary and Language Library

https://www.teanglann.ie/en

Am Faclair Bheag
https://www.faclair.com

Learn Gaelic

https://learngaelic.scot/dictionary/

# TEXTILE GLOSSARY

**aho** (TE REO MĀORI) weft, woof - cross-threads of weaving or a mat.

**aute** (TE REO MĀORI) cloth made from bark of the paper mulberry tree

**bobbin lace** lace made by twisting and braiding lengths of thread, wound onto bobbins for management, usually around placed pins

**gauge (knitting)** number of stitches and rows needed per cm on a particular needle size to gain the desired size of finished fabric

**kahu/kākahu** (TE REO MĀORI) garment, cloth, cloak

**kahu huruhuru** (TE REO MĀORI) feather cloak

**kairaranga** (TE REO MĀORI) weaver

**knit a** fabric structured formed by interlocking loops of wool or other yarn with needles; usually using a single continuous thread

**māwhitiwhiti** (TE REO MĀORI) crossover stitch - used in making *kākahu*. Also used as a term for the use of five *whenu* (or multiples of five) to create a hole for the *here* to go through, and as a counting system for the top and the bottom of a *kākahu*

**miro** (TE REO MĀORI) to spin, twirl, twist, twine; thread, strand, twisted cord, fibre

**mordant** a substance, usually a metallic salt, that allows a chemical bond to form between fibre and dye

**muka** (TE REO MĀORI) prepared harakeke ("flax") fibre

**openwork** ornamental textile work, with regular openings or holes in the fabric forming patterns

**ruam –** (GAEILGE) red tannin-dye obtained from alder wood

**tāniko** (TE REO MĀORI) finger-twined patterns in multi-colour threads, often used for the decorative borders of kākahu

**tweed** iconic woven woollen fabric of Scotland and Ireland, closely woven in a soft, flexible texture. The name derives from the Scots *tweel*, the name for baric woven in a twill pattern

**twill** type of textile weave with a pattern of diagonal parallel ribs

**waulk** (SCOTS) the process of fulling, making a woven woollen fabric denser and softer by a process of soaking and beating

**waulking song** rhythmic folk songs sung while waulking cloth, the beat helping keep time in the work.

**weave/weaving/woven** a fabric structure formed by a single weft/woof thread passing over and under successive warp threads row by row, at right angles. Typically made with the aid of a loom

**whatu** (TE REO MĀORI) a fabric structure made by the twisting/twining of a pair (or two pairs) of horizontal aho threads to enclose adjoining vertical whenu threads

**whenu** (TE REO MĀORI) strand (of a cord), warp - lengthwise threads of a woven flax garment. Also to twist, spin

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# APPENDIX 1

## THREAD BOX

Writing commissioned by Objectspace for
The Single Object At Home series, April 2020
http://www.objectspace.org.nz/journal/the-single-object-at-home-edition-thread/

Author
Arielle Walker

Date
20 Apr 2020

Arielle Walker's thread box

All through my childhood, this box of threads sat close at hand. Its designated shelf space was next to the tartan-print biscuit tin filled with buttons, on top of piles of cotton muslin, wool felt, and the rare silvery scrap or two of silk. I don't remember the exact moment the box became "mine" instead of my mother's. I never thought about where it came from because it was always there. As I grew older I dipped into it at will, experimenting with stitches, mending rips and tears, reattaching buttons to old shirts; finally taking the box with me when I moved away from home (where it found it a new place on a new shelf).

I only learned recently that before it belonged to me, or to my mother, it belonged to my grandmama, Faith Walker (née Muldoon: she grew up in the prairie of Saskatchewan, Canada, but was very proud of her Irish roots). The threads were a gift from Grandmama's dressmaker sister Bonnie, via Bonnie's Scottish mother-in-law. It must have been sometime in the 40s or 50s, after Grandmama's ocean-crossing between Canada and the UK – the oldest threads inside still all come from Scotland. The box was filled to the brim when it accompanied her across the ocean yet again in 1964, to Aotearoa. It was constantly in use and always being replenished.

Many of the threads inside still hold vintage brand names on wooden spools – J. Dewhurst & Sons, J & P Coats, Mettler – mixed in with poly-blends and plastics added to the collection later on. I hate to think how many of these older threads I squandered on long-forgotten projects. But then again, were they really squandered? Perhaps not: the threads were

Arielle Walker's
thread box
exterior

with me as I began to learn my craft, drawing from this rich, seemingly endless source for each clumsy new stitch. What were once 'just threads' have grown far more important to me. I've become aware that this is a finite resource; that the original threads inside will, eventually, run out. I'm more careful with my stitches now.

I'm in the final stretch of my MVA thesis, centring on stories, textiles, ancestral narratives and traditions passed down over generations, he taonga tuku iho. It feels odd to be working on a project as tactile as this, a project held together by relationality, during the unsettledness of a global pandemic. I keep returning to objects to ground me. The thread box sits beside me on my desk as I write, or by my sewing machine as I stitch together final thesis works (and draw a few precious threads from the box for each piece). The wooden inlay is beginning to chip away, and the mismatched paper linings are peeling and frayed, but the bones hold strong.

Shall I end on that sentimental-yet-hopeful metaphor for our current isolation (frayed, but still held together)? The beauty of our objects lies in their ability to hold multitudes. They are resolutely themselves, yes: but they can act as metaphor too, as storyholders, memorykeepers. Objects keep us connected to our stories, and our stories keep us connected to one another.

# APPENDIX II

## TE HAERENGA TUATAHI KI A TONGAPORUTU

MVA group exhibition at St Paul Street Gallery Three, June 2019 including my thesis works *Tongaporutu River map* (2019), *Te Pūrākau o Taranaki, a re-remembering* (2019), *Te Pūrākau o Taranaki: a filmpoem* (2019), *ko au te awa ko to awa ko au* (2019), and *Ka haere au ki te tōwenetanga o te rā* (2019)

*NEXT PAGE: Exhibition room sheet. FOLLOWING PAGE: Installation images from* Te Haerenga Tuatahi ki a Tongaporutu, *including works in the background by Luca Nicholas, and Emily Parr*


Te Haerenga Tuatahi ki Tongaporutu

Makyla Curtis | Luca Nicholas | Emily Parr | Arielle Walker

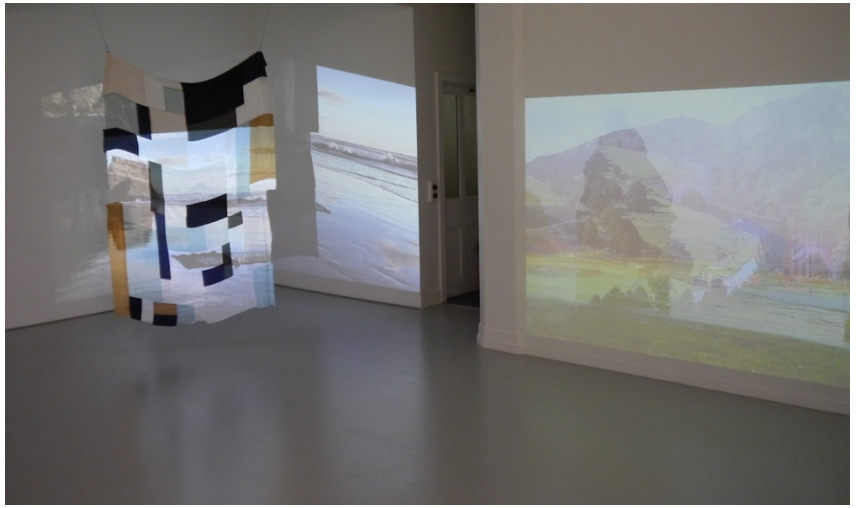
ST PAUL St Gallery Three | 63 Wellesley St E

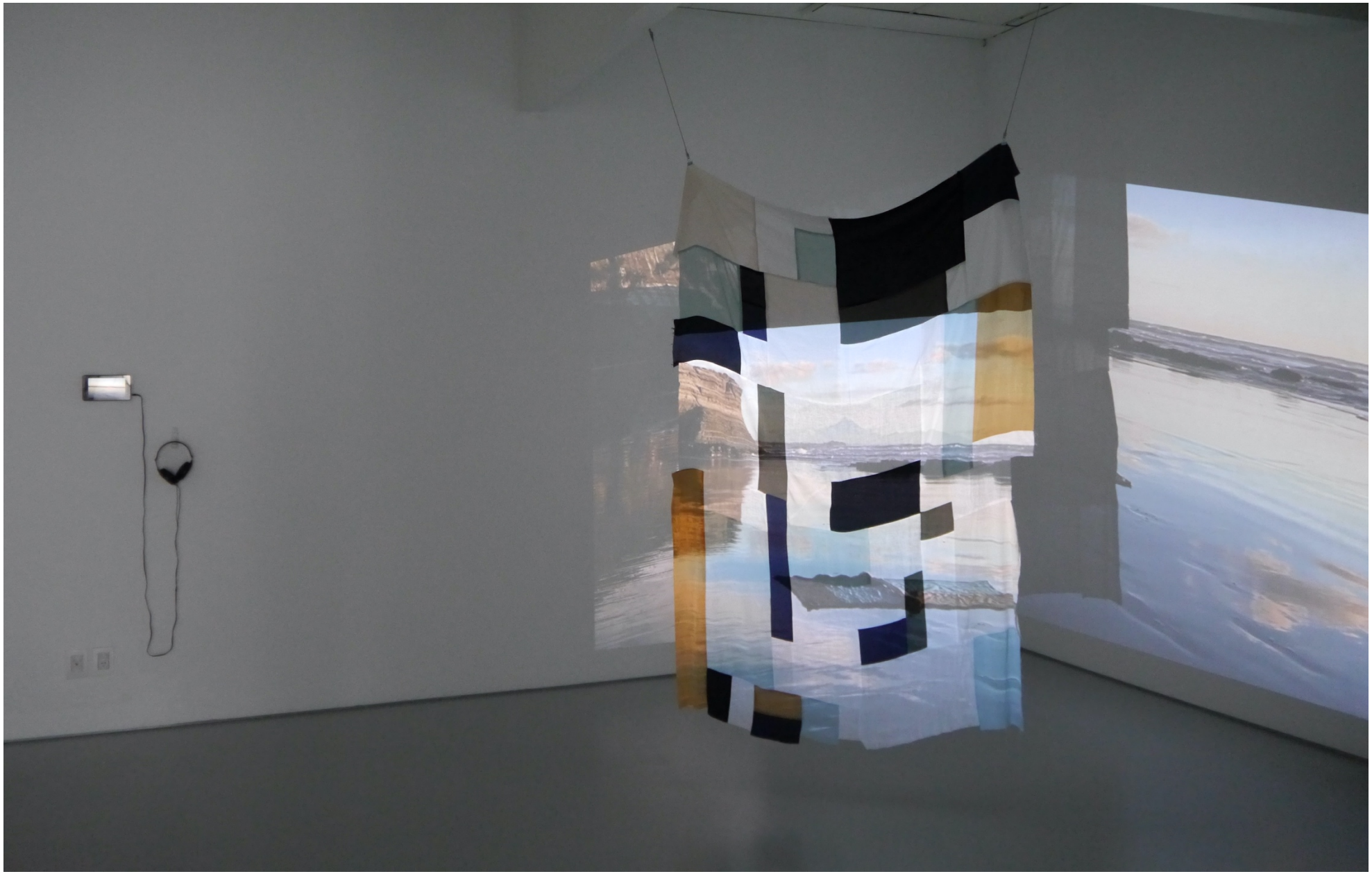
Opening 5-7pm | Wednesday 17th July

11-5pm | Thursday, Friday, Saturday

ST PAUL ST

AUT
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

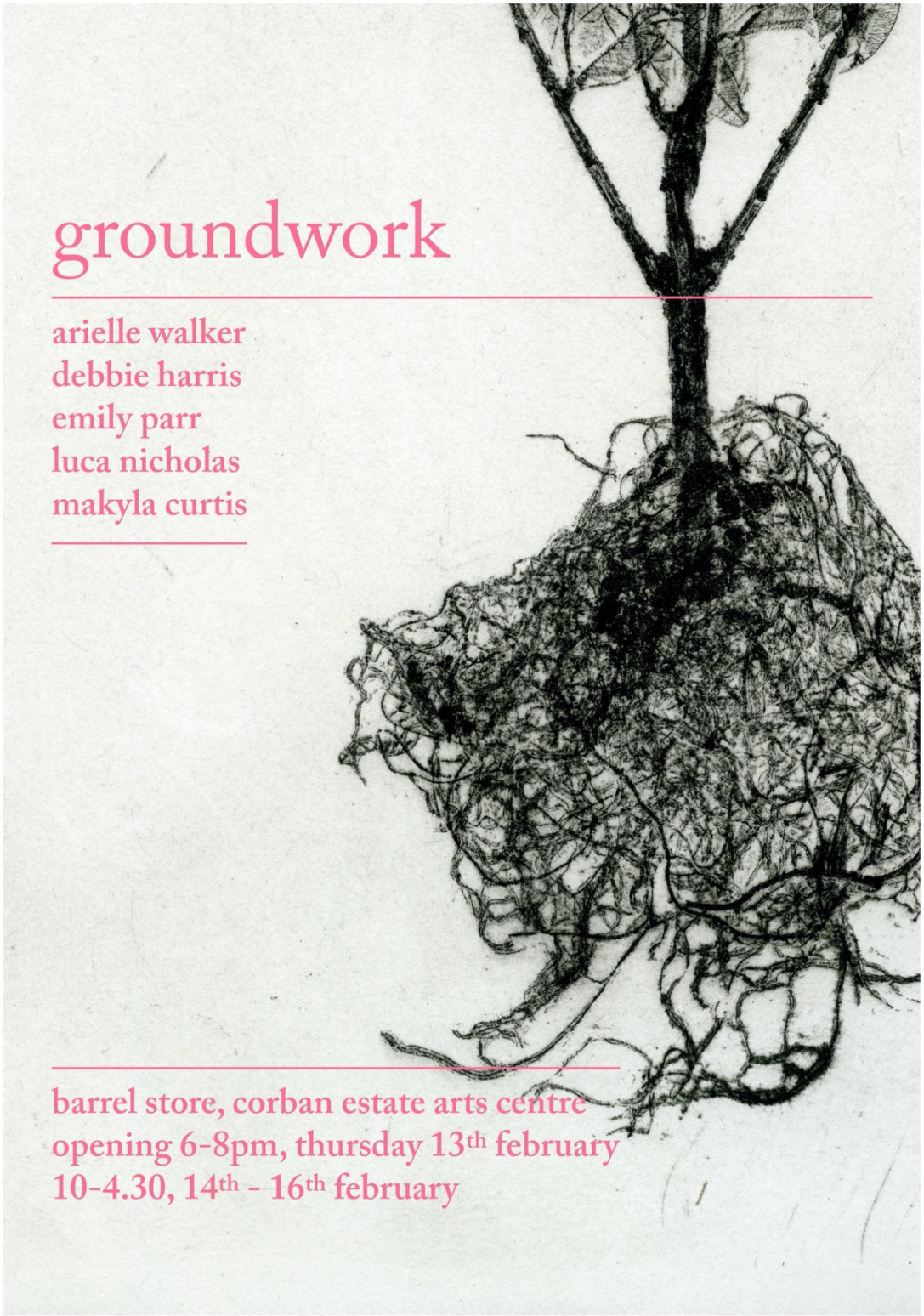




# APPENDIX III

## GROUNDWORK

MVA group exhibition at Corban Estate Art Centre Barrel Store, February 2020, including my thesis works *first soft light of the rising sun* (2020), and *rongoā (draft)* (2020)




*NEXT PAGE: Exhibition room sheet. FOLLOWING PAGE: Installation images from* groundwork, *including works in the background by Debbie Harris, Luca Nicholas, and Emily Parr. Images courtesy of Emily Parr*

# groundwork

arielle walker
debbie harris
emily parr
luca nicholas
makyla curtis

1 Makyla Curtis, *Ink Herbarium* (2020). 1500 x 3200 mm Nature print on cotton. Ferns collected in Taranaki 2019.

2 Makyla Curtis, *Do you have fern fever yet?* (live printing opening only). Print collectors card: bracken, rauaruhe. Ferns collected at Corban Estate Arts Centre, January 2020.

3 Luca Nicholas, *last summer* (2020). 280 x 250 mm, ongoing series of intaglio prints on Fabriano Rosapina paper.

4 Debbie Harris, *I watched as mum planted the roots first* (2020). Dimensions variable, ceramic, plaster, acrylic, paper, textile.

5 Arielle Walker, *first soft light of the rising sun* (2020). 3.8 x 1.79m. Foraged and found plant dyes (harakeke, dock root, lupin, feusag a gobhair goats beard lichen, kānuka, iron, pomegranate skin, onion skin) on vintage and passed-down silk, cotton, and linen.

6 Arielle Walker, *rongoā* (2020). 5m 35s. Spoken plant poetics.

7 Emily Parr, *tending to the roots* (2020). 8m 31s. HD video, copper tub from the laundry of my mother's childhood home, ferns that grow in the lands I descend from.

**Thursday 12 – Sunday 16 February**
**The Barrel Store, Corban Estate Arts Centre**

*Groundwork* is a collaborative show on botanical communication, undergrowth, and rootedness. Through print, poetics, textiles, ceramics and film we explore beneath and above ground for a sense of belonging through botany, in our past and our future. Roots link us through our interlaced and reciprocal practices.