

Material considerations in a painting practice: Reciprocal creation with Papatūānuku through embodied fieldwork

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Abstract

This practice-led research explores materiality across space and time in relation to the environment from a te ao Māori perspective by means of painting, fieldwork, and installation. Through making paint from gathered materials and non-plastic binders, I explore my relationship to Papatūānuku, an atua wahine, an ancestor, embodied as the Earth. By painting outdoors in the local area (rohe) where I stay (kāinga noho) and in places I visit, I seek to ground and connect viscerally to place. Tending, as an action of care, is a means to practise relating well (whakawhanaungatanga) that references stewardship (kaitiakitanga) and reciprocity (utu), which can deepen my connection to place and mana whenua. The installation of paintings as objects opens up the concept of material connection and reciprocity.

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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 defined in the Acknowledgements), 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.

Signed

May 5, 2026

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Introduction

Pepeha

Ko Pukekawa tōku maunga

Ko Waipapa tōku awa

Ko Tāmaki Makaurau tōku kāinga noho

Ko Helen tōku ingoa

For most of my life, I have lived near Pukekawa (Auckland Domain). Pukekawa Hill and the nearby Waipapa Stream are the mountain and river I feel connected to.



Figure 1. Red whenua and tree roots, Pukekawa Hill, Parnell, Tāmaki Makaurau. Lava from the crater, which is now the sports field, is the parent rock of this iron-rich soil. April 2025.



Figure 2. Waipapa Stream, Parnell, Tāmaki Makaurau. November 2025.

From my mother's side, I am Samoan/Pākehā. I grew up with the oral history of being Māori/Pākehā on my father's side, without knowing my iwi (tribal group). From this foundation of disconnected whakapapa and hybrid identity, I relate to Papatūānuku (the Earth) as manuhiri (a visitor) wherever I go. My research focuses on material and sensorial connections to Papatūānuku at my kāinga noho, where I stay and work, and in places I visit.

After growing up disconnected from te ao Māori, learning raranga (weaving) gave me a feeling of whakawhanaungatanga (connection) to other weavers, to toi (art), and to te reo Māori (Māori language) through a lexicon of kupu (words). This research has helped me understand my own identity and build whakawhanaungatanga.

A brief history of materiality in my making

Materials are of the earth and return to the earth.

Raranga uses a circular methodology: materials come from harakeke (flax) plants grown on the earth, and offcuts are returned to the earth, nurturing plants in the pā harakeke (flax garden).¹ Weaving involves planning and setting up the whakapapa of whenu (flax strips) from the outset. Although I enjoyed weaving, my wairua (spirit) longed for the flexible layered approach of painting.



Figure 3. Helen Harvey, *Foraging Vessels*, late 1990s, harakeke kono (four-cornered baskets) with double whiri, Tāwhanga Noho Sitting Room Gallery, Nathan Homestead Pukepuke, installation view, 2026.

When painting with acrylics, their quick drying time allowed me to build layers or whakapapa of paint quickly, to work without a preconceived plan and to remove paint, revealing glimpses of previous whakapapa. But I was concerned that painting with acrylics could pollute waterways with microplastics. Concern for the well-being of Papatūānuku and future generations drove my research into water-based paint that could return to the earth safely.

I was curious about the material makeup of paint and how paint was made in Aotearoa and overseas prior to industrialisation. As manuhiri, I wanted to source ingredients from the land with respect for mana whenua, and to connect with people and place. I wondered how I could depict my sense of

¹ Don Solomon, Personal communication, 1995.

awe for Papatūānuku in my paintings, and how my practice could reciprocate for the materials Papatūānuku provides. These curiosities led to the following research questions:

How do materials in my painting practice mediate my ongoing relationship with Papatūānuku, and what is their whakapapa across space and time?

How can the practice of painting facilitate whakawhanaungatanga and harmony with the whenua?

Research underpinnings and exegesis overview

A whakapapa worldview, in which all things are connected in wā (the time and space continuum), is central to te ao Māori.² It informs and inspires my actions in life and in my art practice, where I work toward relationality, rather than extraction and pollution. Biologist and researcher Mere Roberts (Ngāti Apakura, Ngāti Hikairo) sees whakapapa as a way of looking at the world, that is flexible and adaptive to people and place.³ Knowledge, including cultural beliefs and observations, can flow in and out. Whakapapa is circular and iterative. A research methodology based on whakapapa provides a relational framework for situating celestial and earthly knowledge. Applying a whakapapa methodological approach to my painting practice allows me to consider relationships between people, more-than-humans, materials, and land: acknowledging connections in the present, while also looking backward and forward.

Through a whakapapa lens, I explore my relationship with Papatūānuku. Making paint with whenua pigments viscerally connects me to soil, a material which is part of Papatūānuku. Gathering guidelines shared by Kauae Raro Research Collective inform this research. Paintings by Raukura Turei (Ngā Rauru Kītahī, Taranaki, Ngāti Pāoa, Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki) and Kura Te Waru Rewiri (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Raukawa) speak of whakapapa connections and materiality. Broadening my painting practice in three dimensions into installation allows me to depict material relationships as a web of connections. Circularity is introduced through the reuse of elements in further iterations. The circularity and low environmental impact of Pauline Rhodes' outdoor installations inspire this expansion of my painting practice. These concepts and processes are explored in Chapter 1, *Papa: Material foundations*. Stanton, P. *Indefinite Terrains: Fieldworking as Making With*

In Chapter 2, *Oneone: Reciprocal creation with Papatūānuku as fieldwork*, I experience painting-as-fieldwork, where my body is immersed in place and engaged in making. Fieldwork fosters "being-with."⁴ Being-with place and its layers of history, being-with atua and wairua, being-with more-than-humans. The topography of the place, as well as the elements, contribute to the reciprocal creation of paintings. Painting on the ground expands my awareness through activating touch, smell, hearing and taste, as well as the more commonly used sense of sight. The relationship between exhibiting

² Hirini Moko Mead, *Mātauranga Māori* (Huia and Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi, 2025), 122.

³ Mere Roberts, "Ways of Seeing: Whakapapa," *Sites: A Journal of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies* 10, no. 1 (2013): 1, <https://doi.org/10.11157/sites-vol10iss1id236>.

⁴ Bridget Crone et al., eds., *Fieldwork for Future Ecologies: Radical Practice for Art and Art-Based Research*, Second edition, Onomatopée (Onomatopée Projects, 2024), 8.

works indoors and outdoors is explored through video footage of a work returned to the beach where it was painted, animated by the wind and tide.

Chapter 3, *Wairākau*, looks at compost as a metaphor for reciprocity. “Tending” practices, including weeding and picking up rubbish, inform installations. The complexities of weed control are explored through processes and artworks. Tending activities nurture connections beyond whenua and the more-than-human inhabitants, fostering connection with the wider community and further building whakawhanaungatanga. Following circular cycles of the natural world and the inclusion of humour are decolonising practices which bring balance.

Material covered in Chapters 1 to 3 is supplemented by studio and field notes in Appendix I.

Chapter 1. Papa: Material foundations

“Papa”, the first part of the kupu Papatūānuku, means rock foundation.⁵

My relationship with Papatūānuku, a tūpuna (ancestor), an atua (goddess), and embodied as the Earth, is the foundation on which this research is built. Tohunga Reverend Māori Marsden (Ngāi Takoto) sees Papatūānuku as a living organism, whose human and more-than-human children are connected through a web of symbiotic relationships.⁶ In this chapter, I consider the interrelationship between the paint which I use in my practice and Papatūānuku, and her human children and her more-than-human children. I research paint ingredients that maintain the well-being of Papatūānuku and her children. Material research is a critical foundation for later paintings.

A whakapapa perspective

In te ao Māori, the connection of all things through lineage (whakapapa) is referenced in the creation story.⁷ The Earth as we know it resulted from the separation of the tūpuna Ranginui, the Sky Father, and Papatūānuku, the Earth Mother, and from the cloaking of the Earth with vegetation by their son, Tāne. All animals, plants, and minerals whakapapa to Ranginui and Papatūānuku; everything is connected. Historian and Māori leader Professor Hirini Moko Mead (Ngāti Awa, Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Manawa, Tūhourangi) emphasises people's responsibility to maintain harmony in this connected universe.⁸ But since industrialisation and colonisation, we live out of balance with our more-than-human beings. As Māori Marsden says:

We are, however, rapists, despoilers, pillagers of Mother Earth.⁹

Kaupapa Māori researcher Hana Burgess (Ngāpuhi, Te Roroa, Te Ātihaunui a Pāpārangi, Ngāti Tūwharetoa) and science educator and researcher Te Kahuratai Moko-Painting (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Rongo, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Tūwharetoa) point out that the future effects of living out of balance can be seen through the eyes of mokopuna (grandchildren or anamata).¹⁰ In my research, I look to the wisdom of tūpuna, who lived in balance through circular practices. When looking through the eyes of tūpuna and mokopuna (onamata and anamata), past, present and future are intertwined in wā.

⁵ Māori Marsden, *The Woven Universe: Selected Writings of Rev. Māori Marsden* (Estate of Rev. Māori Marsden, 2003), 178.

⁶ Marsden, *The Woven Universe*, 45.

⁷ Mead, *Mātauranga Māori*, 122.

⁸ Mead, *Mātauranga Māori*, 122.

⁹ Marsden, *The Woven Universe*, 46.

¹⁰ Hana Burgess and Te Kahuratai Moko-Painting, “Onamata, Anamata: A Whakapapa Perspective of Māori Futurisms,” in *Whose Futures?* (Economic and Social Research Aotearoa, 2020), <https://hdl.handle.net/2292/63910>, 208.

Burgess and Moko-Painting define “papa” in whakapapa as a foundation onto which layers are added. The prefix “whaka” means to cause.¹¹ “Rooted in creation, generations layer upon each other”¹² Whakapapa is not linear, but expands outwards in all directions.¹³ This concept is represented in customary carving (rākau whakairo) as a double spiral (takarangi), which depicts whakapapa and wā.



Figure 4. Takarangi detail, *Taheretikitiki, Tauihu*, Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland Museum Collection: AM167, 167.

A whakapapa of materials

I propose a whakapapa research methodology that considers the interconnections between materiality in my painting practice and humans, and more-than-humans, in the past, present, and future. By learning more about paint ingredients and their provenance, I can better understand the social and environmental effects of their extraction and their future effects on mokopuna. By looking to the wisdom of tūpuna, I can find alternative materials that will not harm humans and more-than-humans in the present or future.

¹¹ “Te Aka Māori Dictionary,” *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, accessed April 21, 2026, <https://www.maoridictionary.co.nz/word/9340>.

¹² Burgess and Moko-Painting, “Onamata, Anamata: A Whakapapa Perspective of Māori Futurisms,” 209.

¹³ Georgina Stewart, *Māori Philosophy: Indigenous Thinking from Aotearoa* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 86.

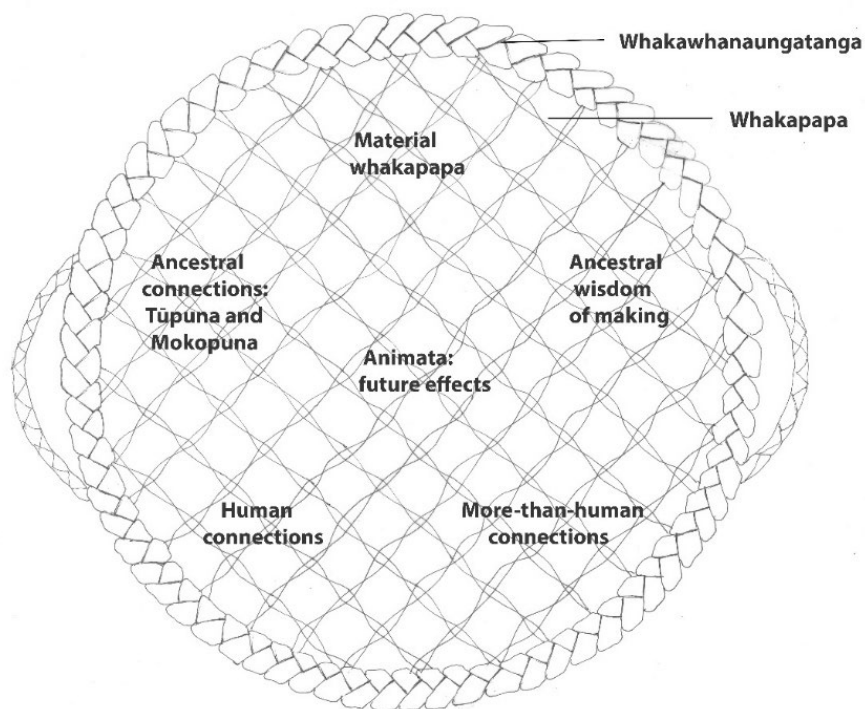


Figure 5. Helen Harvey, Kono Kupenga (foraging basket) model of making, 2025.

I have visually represented this methodology in Figure 5 with a kono kupenga (foraging basket), with elements connected by interwoven harakeke whenu.¹⁴ An outer ring of whiri (braiding) symbolises whakawhanaungatanga: actions of being in right relations with all things.¹⁵ The round shape of the kono represents circular processes; the life cycle of materials that eventually return to the earth, and the circular processes found in customary toi. In my practice, circularity also includes the reuse of artworks to create other iterations or installations.

Paint - onamata and anamata

In customary Māori kōwhaiwhai painting, paint was made from materials that could return to the earth without causing harm. But I question what comprises modern paint. I question how my painting practice disturbs harmony in the present and future, and what the effects of paint materials will be on Papatūānuku and future generations. Drawing on the wisdom of Māori and Pākehā ancestors to make paint is foundational to the research.

In the past, I have used acrylic paints to build layers. Opaque and translucent layers could be added without reactivating previous layers. But I was concerned about its future effects, that waste from sanding and brush washing was polluting waterways and soil (the skin of Papatūānuku) with microplastics. Researchers Matt Peryman et al. use the kupu kirihou to describe plastics, “kiri”

¹⁴ The Kono Kupenga Model of Making acknowledges but does not specifically reference the three kete of knowledge described by Marsden as three worlds in *The Woven Universe*, 60–62.

¹⁵ Drawn from Kim TallBear (2019) in Burgess and Moko-Painting, “Onamata, Anamata: A Whakapapa Perspective of Māori Futurisms,” 210.

meaning skin and “hou” meaning new, and refer to it as the “new skin of the world,” because it extensively colonises te taiao (the natural world).¹⁶ Looking at the material makeup of paint was the first step to find replacements for acrylic paint. Early in the research, I explored the plastic nature of the acrylic binder by painting acrylic skins with minimal pigment (see Figure 6, *Kirihou*).



Figure 6. Helen Harvey, *Kirihou* (detail), 2025, translucent acrylic skin - made from Indian ink and acrylic medium, on board, painted with whenua pigments in cellulose medium. The contrast of acrylic and plant-based paint materials represents plastics polluting te taiao.

Paint consists of ground pigments in a binder medium. Through making paint myself, I would look closely at its ingredients. I researched water-based alternatives to acrylic medium by looking back to Māori and Pākehā paint-making techniques that predate plastics. Binders traditionally used in rock art in Aotearoa included shark oil and tree gum.^{17 18}

¹⁶ Matt Peryman et al., “Plastic Pollution as Waste Colonialism in Aotearoa (New Zealand),” *Marine Policy* 163 (May 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2024.106078>.

¹⁷ Louise Furey, “Use of Kōkōwai in Traditional Māori Society,” in *Five Māori Painters*, ed. Clare McIntosh (Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2014).

¹⁸ “The Story of Rock Art,” Te Ana Māori Rock Art, accessed January 26, 2026, <https://www.teana.co.nz/about-us/>, 75.

Kauae Raro - earthly wisdom



It was an interest in rock art that inspired Sarah Hudson (Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Pūkeko) and Lanae Cable (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Pūkeko, Ngāti Maru ki Hauraki, Ngāi Tūhoe) to further research customary pigment use, which led to the formation of Kauae Raro Research Collective. In conversation with multidisciplinary artist, curator and educator Israel Randell (Tainui, Ngāti Kahungunu, Mangaia), Hudson said that their research “builds a relationship with the land through embodying the sustainable art practices of our ancestors.”¹⁹

On their website,²⁰ Kauae Raro share traditional processes, including the use of tarata gum (*Pittosporum eugenioides*) to make watercolour paint. In my own search, I did not find any gum on local tarata trees, so I looked at binders historically used in European and Japanese painting. Plant and animal-based binders derived from cellulose, soy, and animal skin were tested as substitutes. See Appendix Ib for a description of these binders.

Figure 7. Helen Harvey, *Turning Tides*, 2025. handwoven cotton and wool pigmented with earth, overpainted with whenua and mineral pigments in soy medium. 2740 x 950 mm excluding fringe, Taranaki National Art Awards.

¹⁹ Israel Randall, “A Conversation with Kauae Raro,” *ATE Journal of Māori Art* 3 (2022): 67-75.

²⁰ “He Kapunga Oneone,” He Kapunga Oneone, n.d., <https://www.kauaeraro.com>.

Making paint

Kauae Raro's research on pigment use and its associated tikanga (correct procedure, practice, manner)²¹ have hugely influenced my methods. Making paint from whenua was a way to directly connect with the skin of Papatūānuku, but as manuhiri, I wanted to approach it in the tika (correct) way. Collective member Sian Montgomery Neutze (Muaūpoko, Ngāi Tara) has written introductory guidelines for pigment gathering.²² Guidance and permission from mana whenua is needed for Māori gathering pigments outside of their rohe (ancestral land), and care is needed to avoid damaging plants and to only harvest what is needed. As manuhiri, it means taking time to build relationships with mana whenua. Consequently, I have made paint with gifted whenua that was destined for landfill, and I have not gathered material without permission from iwi. Disturbing layers of oneone (soil) to reach ochre-rich material feels disruptive to the skin of Papatūānuku, and I am more at peace working with oneone that has already been disturbed.



Figure 8. Pigmented whenua exposed in construction site excavation, Kerikeri, 2024. Spoil was used to create paint.



Figure 9. Kōkōwai seeping from the cliff at Ōpunake was not used to make paint without iwi permission.

²¹ "Te Aka Māori Dictionary," *Tikanga - Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, accessed April 30, 2026, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/8043>.

²² "Gathering Guidelines by Sian Montgomery Neutze," He Kapunga Oneone, n.d., <https://www.kauaeraro.com/tikanga/sian-montgomerynutze-shares-some-gathering-guidelines>.



Figure 10. Scan to hear sounds of crushing, grinding and sifting whenua, Ōpunake, 2025.

Grinding whenua to make paint is physical, sensory, and repetitive. Alongside the action of smashing chunks, grinding, sieving, and finer grinding, the sounds change. Through this work, I feel connected to the customary practice of grinding of whenua on rocks. Hirini Moko Mead discusses engagement with te ao Māori through lived experience and the senses.²³ Hearing the sounds, feeling the grittiness between my fingers and thumb, gives me sensory engagement that I had previously enjoyed while weaving harakeke.²⁴

After adding medium, the pigment is refined with a glass muller. At first, it feels coarse and scratchy, but there is a point where the sound shifts from gritty to smooth. The creation of paint is a welcome reward. Paint made by hand will never have the smoothness of manufactured paint, but for me it retains a sense of materiality connected to whenua and place.

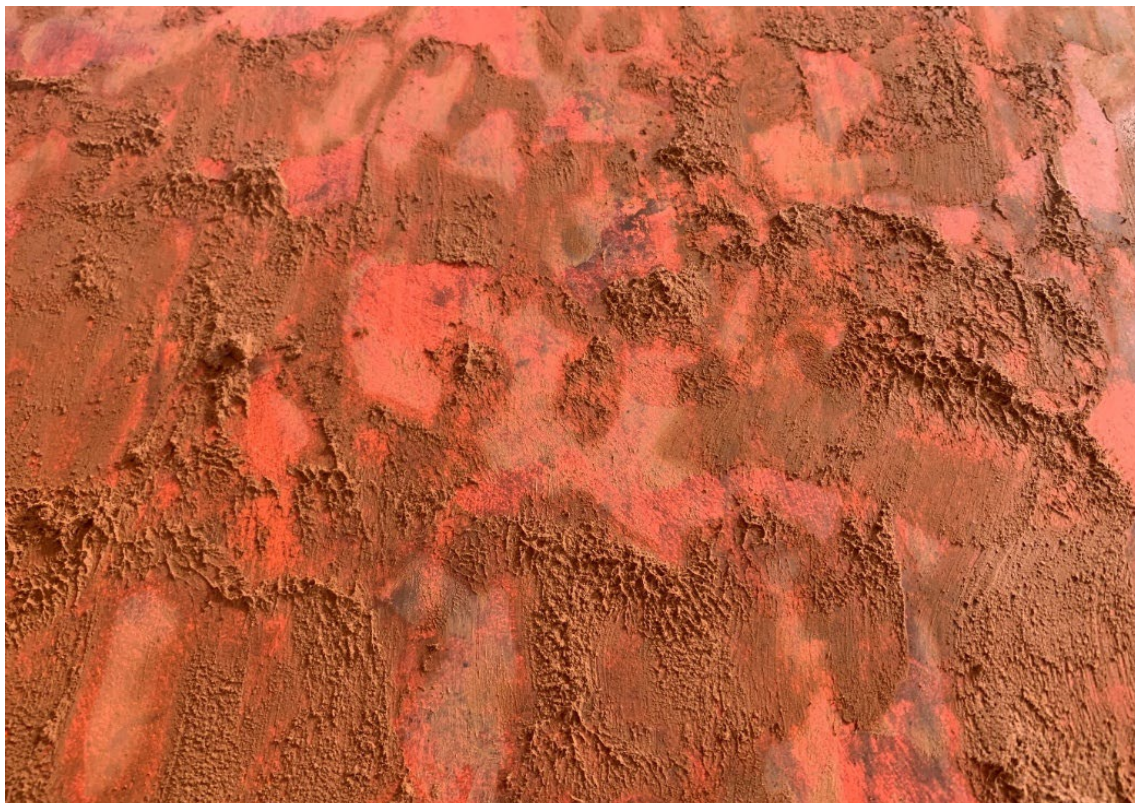


Figure 11. Helen Harvey, Applying waste-stream whenua in cellulose medium with bare hands to a painted board in the making of *Crusty Paint 2* (detail), March 2025.

²³ Mead, *Mātauranga Māori*, 114.

²⁴ Such as the whooshing sound and air movement felt when softening whenu.

Materiality and connection are evident in the work of artists Raukura Turei, Kura Te Waru Rewiri, and Pauline Rhodes. Turei's painting *Te Poho o Hine-Moana* and Te Waru Rewiri's painting *The Elements* reference tūpuna and atua. A depth of earthy presence is built up through layering paint in these works. Being in right relations while connecting with place underpins Rhodes' process of indoor and outdoor installations, where painted components are reused in later works. Aspects of these artists' practices relate to my own research.

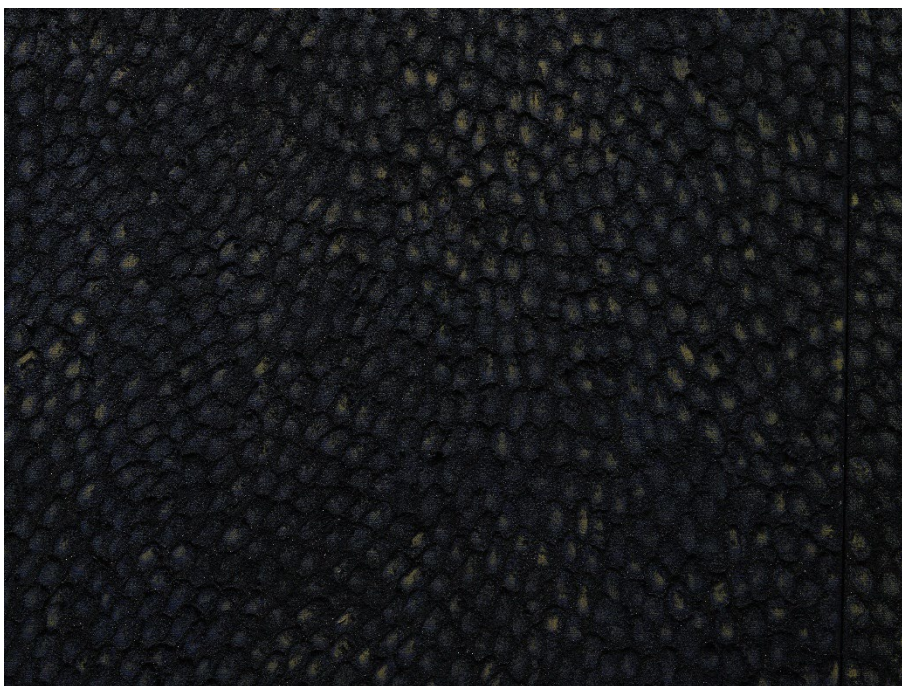


Figure 12. Raukura Turei, *Te Poho o Hine-Moana* (detail), 2020-21, Oil and Whatipū onepū (black manganite sand) on linen, 2400mmx6000mm/6 Panels. Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. Photograph: Sam Hartnett.

It was the strength of materiality that first drew me to the artwork *Te Poho o Hine-Moana*. Turei is a member of Kauae Raro who has been working with whenua in her art practice. Her paintings pulsate with sensorial materiality. Sand and clay used in *Te Poho o Hine-Moana* are from the rohe to which Turei has whakapapa connections. Viewed obliquely, the thickness of black sand and pigment on the linen is striking. The indentations look like thumbprints, and I feel immersed in the marks made by hand on this large-scale work of six stretched linen panels. In fact, the indentations are formed by pushing an oil stick into the uppermost sand layer, both staining and revealing the clay beneath.²⁵

There is both strength and vulnerability in the artwork's material makeup and the personal narrative on which it is based. This work expresses the grief that Turei feels at the loss of her grandmother, whom she never met in person. The title honours her grandmother and the generational pain her family has endured, referencing the atua Hine-Moana (goddess of the ocean).²⁶

²⁵ MĀORI+ | *The Drawing Board*, n.d., accessed March 29, 2025, <https://www.maoriplus.co.nz/show/the-drawing-board/play/6324183489112>.

²⁶ Erena Shingade, "I Will Live and Die a Thousand Times and Still Be of This Land," in *Raukura Turei – Takoto Ai Te Marino: Selected Works 2018–2025*, ed. Zoe Black (Raukura Turei, 2025), 4.

Painting Papatūānuku

The tangible quality of earth, and the intangible presence of atua and tūpuna who have passed, can be seen in the painting *The Elements* by Te Waru Rewiri. *The Elements* references the separation of Ranginui and Papatūānuku in the creation of the universe. Light vertical areas show the force with which they were separated. In the lower portion of the painting, the deep red resembles the red ochre of the earth. Papatūānuku is cloaked by green forest. In conversation with art historian and curator Kirsty Baker, Te Waru Rewiri describes how dark and light circles are like windows into other worlds, including the realm of tūpuna who have passed.²⁷

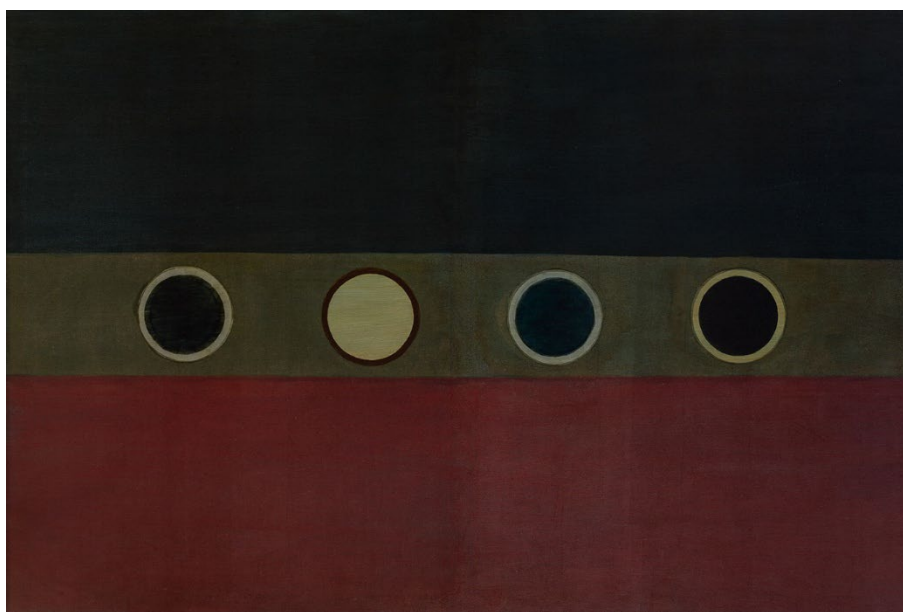


Figure 13. Kura Te Waru Rewiri, *The Elements*, 1998, acrylic on canvas, 1000 x 1500, Fletcher Trust Collection, Tāmaki Makaurau. Image source Kura Te Waru Rewiri.

Many paintings by Te Waru Rewiri evoke traditional Māori art (toi) in a non-customary way.²⁸ A visual language of colour and form is grounded in mātauranga²⁹ (the complex system of knowledge found in all aspects of Māori culture).³⁰ In layering paint (whakapapa), history is built up, with aspects coming forward or receding into the picture plane. The partial removal of paint allows glimpses of the past and her use of transparency symbolises the intertwining of past, present, and future in wā.

²⁷ Kirsty Baker, *Sight Lines: Women and Art in Aotearoa* (Auckland University Press, 2024). Protest, 243.

²⁸ Camilla Highfield, *Kura Te Waru Rewiri: A Māori Woman Artist* / (Gilt Edge Publishing, 2000), 4. The Cloak, 17.

²⁹ Kura Te Waru Rewiri and Nigel Borell, *Kura: Story of a Māori Woman Artist*, with Māngere Arts Centre Ngā Tohu o Uenuku (Māngere Arts Centre, 2011), sec. Borell, N., Ata Haere; Go slowly into the world.

³⁰ Mead, *Mātauranga Māori*, 1.

A circular connection to place

For decades, Pauline Rhodes has been physically immersed in the Canterbury coastline, creating temporary installations which she calls “*extensums*”. In the 1982 indoor installation *Extensums: Ground Runs - Stained Ground*, rust-marked paper and other components were situated on the ground, in conversation with one another and with the industrial building’s infrastructure, such as oil stains and channels in the floor.³¹ The rods, painted a distinctive lime green, have been reused in later sculptural installations in galleries and other site interventions. The reuse of components has been an enduring circular approach in Pauline Rhodes' artwork. In the exhibition *Blue Mind* at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, painted boards were propped up against the walls, while driftwood and seaweed were entwined with a canoe frame. Natural materials relating to place interacted with hand-made objects. The tripods had been used previously in an outdoor artwork. When Rhodes removed the outdoor installation, nothing was left behind. This “open-ended process”³² speaks to me of light, thoughtful walking on the Earth; of being a good visitor.

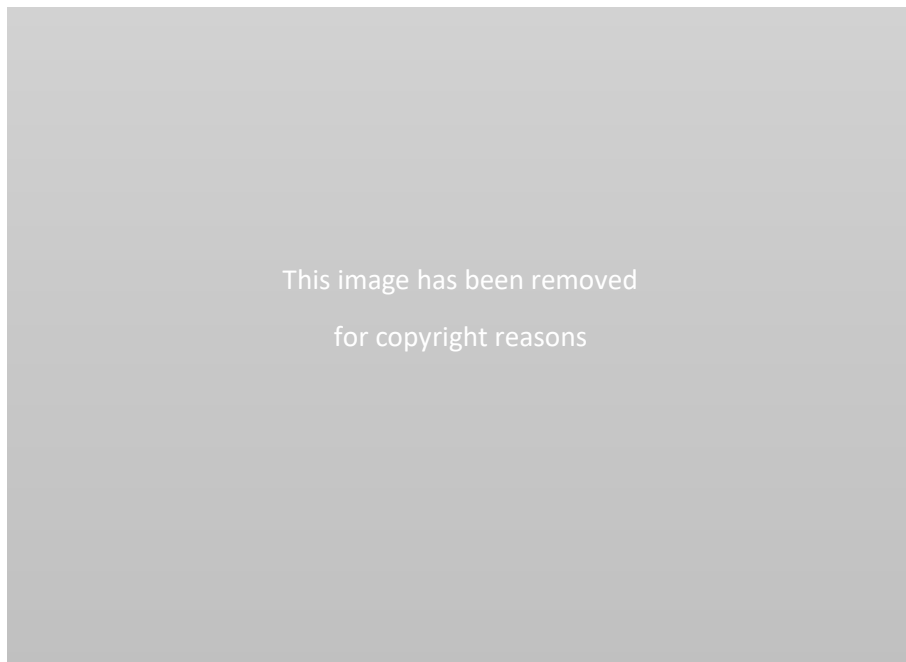


Figure 14. Pauline Rhodes, *Blue Mind* (detail) 2020. Installation at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū. Photograph: John Collie.

³¹ Baker, *Sight Lines*, Pauline Rhodes, 155.

³² Tony Green, “Placing the Art of Pauline Rhodes,” *Art New Zealand* 107, 2003, <https://art-newzealand.com/107-rhodes/>.

Painting with crusty paint

Inspired by the materiality and texture of Raukura Turei's immersive artwork, I started making small marquettes that spotlighted the materiality of whenua-based paint (see Figure 11). In my own painting with whenua, I wanted the security of a stable foundation (papa), so I began painting the thickly textured samples on board. When painting without microplastics, the foundation layer of gesso must be addressed as well. Modern gesso consists of calcium carbonate or other grounds in acrylic medium, which I wanted to avoid. An experiment mixing grounds with methyl cellulose produced gesso that was brittle and prone to chipping. It was easy to make, but not a strong foundation. Rabbit-skin glue was then trialled as an alternative to make clay paint, to size canvas, and, later, to make gesso. For the gesso recipe, see Appendix Ia.

Rubbing the paint made from clay, graphite pigment, and rabbit-skin glue onto raw canvas over rocks and grape prunings created texture, an imprint of material interaction (see Figure 15). Using a thin scourer to apply paint was more immediate than using a brush. I could feel the texture of grape prunings and rocks beneath the canvas; the experience of touch was more visceral than that of sight.



Figure 15. Paint, made with rabbit-skin glue, clay and graphite, was worked into raw canvas over rocks and vegetation, embossing the canvas. This textural memory was retained when the paint dried, April 2025

Moving from the left-hand to the centre boards (see Figure 16), I put down the palette knife and used my hands to create texture. Touching whenua reminded me of the mineral iron oxide, which rocks and bodies share. Touch invokes not just concepts of materiality but also the senses and a feeling of connection through physical contact. Constructed boundaries between myself and Papatūānuku became blurred.



Figure 16. Helen Harvey, *Groundworks*, April 2025, 600 x 600 mm boards, canvas, grape prunings from 2024, clay. Installation at Auckland University of Technology Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau, WM Building, Level 3 foyer.

The making of artworks was informed by the experience of making, not by a preconceived idea.³³ By discarding the palette knife or brush and using my hand as a gestural tool, I received immediate feedback from the paint and its substrate through touch. My fingers were sensitive to the grittiness of the whenua pigments I had ground and to the viscosity of the mixed paint. Through touch and gesture, I gained tacit, or embodied, knowledge³⁴ of the materiality of the paint I had made.

³³ Paul March and Lambros Malafouris call making with and through material “creative thinging.” In the writing “Art Through Material Engagement,” they discuss how “sensory experiences, through the sculptor’s interaction with materials, shape cognition.” Paul Louis March and Lambros Malafouris, “Art Through Material Engagement... and Vice Versa.” in *The Routledge International Handbook of Creative Cognition* (Routledge, 2023), 921. Boundaries are blurred between the hand, the tool, and the material.

³⁴ Branka Marinkovic, “Tacit Knowledge in Painting: From Studio to Classroom.” *International Journal of Art & Design Education* 40, no. 2 (2021): 389–403, 150679313, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jade.12354>.

Instead of exhibiting my paintings as a series on a wall, they were shown as part of an installation that highlighted not only their materiality but also whanaungatanga (connections). In the installation *Groundworks* (see Figure 16), grape prunings, clay, and paintings are connected through material relationships. Charcoal was used on the left-hand and middle boards. The grape prunings were destined to become more charcoal. The clay was used to make the right-hand clayboard.³⁵ After buffing by hand, graphite was rubbed into the surface. Graphite, rabbit-skin glue, and clay were used to make paint, which was rubbed on the canvas.

Displaying the work on the floor invoked the grounding connection with Papatūānuku that I experienced while painting. Similarly, many of Pauline Rhodes' indoor installations have a strong relationship with the floor. Art historian and curator Christina Barton describes Rhodes' installations as "an array of materials that variously lie, lean or drape in ways that posit the gravitational pull of their physical confines."³⁶

Akin to Rhodes' circular approach to exhibition-making, installation components would be reused in the future or be transformed into new works or materials. The grape prunings were later transformed into charcoal (see Figure 17, left). The past, present, and future are evident in the connection between charcoal-making and seasonal cycles. Buying materials from an art store removes this opportunity for connection with the rhythms of te taiao that working with raw materials allows.



Figure 17. Charcoal made from 2024 grape prunings (left), 2025 grape prunings, dried (middle), 2026 growth (right)

³⁵ A description of clayboard can be found in Appendix 1a.

³⁶ Christina Barton, *Ground/Work: The Art of Pauline Rhodes* (Te Herenga Waka University Press, 2002), 22.

The canvas and lumps of clay were further developed to form the painting *The Dithering Folds*, a finalist in the 2025 Estuary Art and Ecology Awards. Layering glazes made with watercolour paint and rabbit-skin glue with paint made from sandy clay gave the surface a gritty, muddy appearance. Materials danced, like the estuarine interplay of sand and mud. Texture on the surface of the canvas, which represented sediment slugs, was retained by gluing the canvas to a cradled board with rabbit-skin glue. My artist statement about the importance of maintaining the balance of sand and mud in the Tāmaki Estuary was presented as a poem in which words also formed an image, with the two columns showing divergent pathways for our relationship with te taiao through land care.

Sand and mud a delicate balance.	
Waves carry sand from the Waitematā.	Kia tau! Slow down!
Rain quickens over concrete carrying soil from development sites.	Rain slows meanders through hay bales sediment fences on development sites.
Coursing downhill sediment slugs slide into intertidal estuarine zones blanketing sand in folds.	Through catchment plantings whau nikau harakeke fringes; pauses in wetlands trickles unclouded converging with water from the Waitematā in the estuary.
Mud crabs proliferate cockles fail to thrive.	
What happens on land disrupts the balance when it rains.	
The Dithering is time to reset the balance.	Diverse kai moana communities flourish.
	Sand and mud a delicate balance.

Helen Harvey 2025

Figure 18. Helen Harvey, Artist statement for *The Dithering Folds*, Estuary Art and Ecology Awards, 2025



Figure 19. Surface texture on *The Dithering Folds* (detail), 2025. Photograph: Sait Akirrmann.



Figure 20. Helen Harvey, *The Dithering Folds*, 2025, 1500 x 800 mm, clay paint, pigments, graphite, and rabbit-skin glue on canvas, hand-manipulated and mounted on a cradled board. Photograph: Sait Akirman.

My early works tested pre-industrial paint recipes. They also attempted to highlight the beingness of paint ingredients. Using my hand instead of a palette knife or brush gave surfaces a livelier, less machined look. There was an early shift beyond painting flat canvases to hang on the wall to expanded painting and installation. In the installation *Groundworks*, painted works were displayed on the floor, in relation to the materials used to make them, spotlighting the whakapapa of those materials to Papatūānuku. Unconstrained by stretcher bars, the canvas retained a textural memory of material encounters integral to the making. Circularity was introduced through the reuse of canvas and clay in the work *The Dithering Folds*. But I wanted to scale up the work to magnify the experience of making and viewing. I also wanted to continue the experience of sensorial painting and painting-as-fieldwork to be in close contact with Papatūānuku.

Chapter 2. Oneone: Reciprocal creation with Papatūānuku as fieldwork

Oneone, or soil, sustains us. It represents the skin of Papatūānuku, the outermost layer of the Earth,³⁷ a place of encounter with Papatūānuku.

In this chapter, I reflect on the physicality and sensory experience of painting, particularly outdoors. Components of the artwork referred to earlier, *Groundworks*, 2025, attempted to highlight the materiality of whenua in paint, where marks made with my bare hands were records of sensorial interaction with the paint. There was an early shift from painting flat canvases to be hung on the wall to expanded painting;³⁸ expanding into the third dimension and sitting on the fringe of installation. The paintings were created and displayed on the floor with whenua and grape stems, the precursor of charcoal—the very materials which were used to make paint in the artworks, spotlighting the whakapapa of those materials to Papatūānuku.

Unstretched canvas retained a textural memory of sensorial and material encounters integral to the making. After the introductory experience of painting the canvas outside, I wanted to scale up the work to magnify the grounding experience of painting-as-fieldwork. In particular, I wanted to take longer lengths of canvas outside to paint in direct contact with Papatūānuku's skin. I wondered whether larger-scale artworks would create a more immersive experience of the paintings' materiality for viewers, like I had experienced viewing Raukura Turei's large work *Te Poho o Hine-Moana*.

Expanding my painting out into the field, I draw on the vast experience of artist Ulrike Arnold, painting with soil outside and the physicality of this work in the elements.³⁹ Kura Te Waru Rewiri's method of painting without a brush is tactile and meditative.⁴⁰ For Te Waru Rewiri, the senses are a way to connect with the wairua of te taiao.⁴¹ Components of Pauline Rhodes' outdoor installations act as messengers of communication with the earth.

³⁷ Jessica Hutchings and Jo Smith, eds., *Te Mahi Oneone Hua Parakore: A Maori Soil Sovereignty and Wellbeing Handbook* (Harvest, 2020), Harmsworth, G., Oneone Ora, Tangata Ora: Soils and Māori Health and Wellbeing, 30.

³⁸ Visual artist and lecturer Mark Titmarsh defines expanded painting as 'more-than-painting', non-traditional painting where paint is not the only medium to carry colour. Mark Titmarsh, *Expanded Painting: Ontological Aesthetics and the Essence of Colour* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 10-12.

³⁹ Ulrike Arnold, "World Painting," personal communication, April 1, 2026.

⁴⁰ Highfield, *Kura Te Waru Rewiri*, 28.

⁴¹ Mark Stocker, ed., *New Zealand Art at Te Papa* (Te Papa Press, 2018), 239.

Painting as nomadic fieldwork: Ulrike Arnold



Figure 21. Ulrike Arnold holding her canvas painted with earth in Broken Arrow, Utah, 2013. Image source Ulrike Arnold, www.ulrikearnold.com.

In the documentary *Dialogue Earth*,⁴² Ulrike Arnold is immersed in silent communion with the materials of place. Her semi-nomadic, outdoor painting practice began in 1971 when she saw ancient cave paintings in Lascaux, France, and something deep inside of her stirred. Arnold then started painting with earth on canvas in her studio, but longed to be outdoors. For decades, she has carried canvases to remote locations in the world, bringing glue, water, and brushes. Pigmented earth is crushed, sometimes on rocks or with a mortar and pestle. There is a sense of physicality; the sound of rocks clinking, the clockwise motion of mixing paint, whole body movements applying paint to canvas in bold gestures with brushes and fingers, or strewing pigmented earth on the surface. Watery paint soaks in or runs, following the contours of the Earth below the canvas. Crusty lumps, which sit on the surface, are later touched by curious fingers. There is an element of performativity to her method.

As the camera zooms out to an aerial view, I am not sure whether I am still looking at a painting on the Earth or the Earth's skin itself. Arnold is interested in the big picture. She wants to share the beauty of the Earth to inspire others to care for it. In a dialogue with soil scientist Thomas Scholten, Arnold explains how ceremony and asking permission from First Nations people are integral to her practice.⁴³ Scholten demonstrates how touch and listening are important in fieldwork. Rubbing soil between the fingers close to the ears tells him about its materiality. Arnold replies that she also tests soil with her fingers, but intuitively, learning through touch.

⁴² *Dialogue Earth - Ulrike Arnold*, directed by Hank Levine, 2020, <https://vimeo.com/390784539>.

⁴³ Alexandra Toland et al., eds., *Field to Palette: Dialogues on Soil and Art in the Anthropocene* (CRC Press, 2018), sec. Dornberg, B., A Kind of Soil Genesis on Canvas, <https://doi.org/10.1201/b22355>, 137.

Layers of sensory encounter

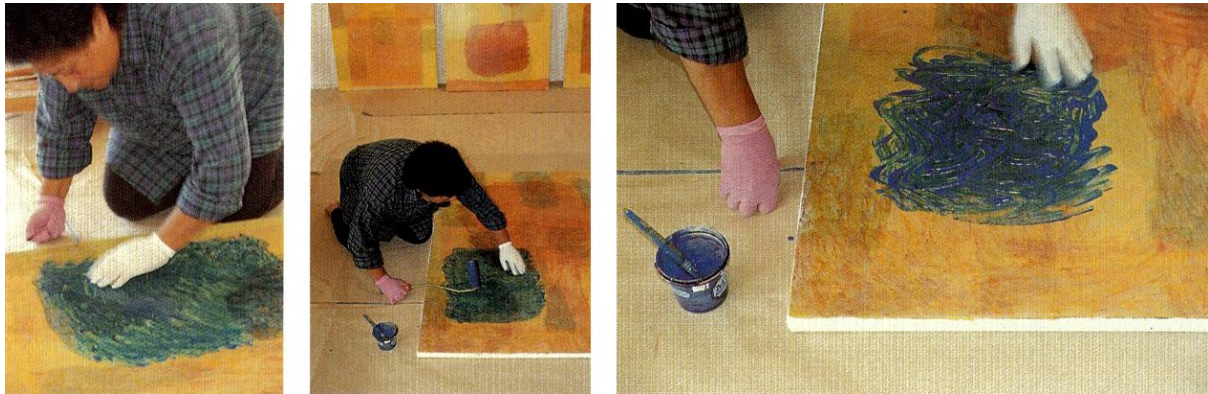


Figure 22. Kura Te Waru Rewiri painting in her studio. Image source Kerry-Ann Boyle in Camilla Highfield, *Kura Te Waru Rewiri: A Māori Woman Artist*.

For Kura Te Waru Rewiri, painting begins with *karakia*.⁴⁴ Her process has incorporated painting on the floor, allowing her to move around the canvas while manipulating paint with her gloved hand. The glove was a thin membrane between her body and the materials and canvas, facilitating a different painting experience than using a brush.⁴⁵ Since 1985, abstraction has been an important approach for her to express the “intangible and a tangible presence of *wairua*.”⁴⁶ In correspondence with artist and academic Huhana Smith (Ngāti Tukorehe, Te Mateawa, Ngāti Te Rangitāwhia, Ngāti Kapumanawawhiti ki Kuku), Te Waru Rewiri said of the revival of Māori *toi* and *reo* in the 1980s:

We were not acknowledging the importance of *wairua* in our whole-being, our existence... I began to focus on Te Kore, Te Po, Waahi Nga ro, Matakite. I used to feel the earth, the mud, the sand, the stones, the water, the sea, the sun, those sorts of things and get lost in the silence of the tactile being of those elements.⁴⁷

The confluence of physicality and meditation is something that I also experience when painting. *Wairua* is easier to sense when my mind is quiet.

⁴⁴ Highfield, *Kura Te Waru Rewiri*, 18.

⁴⁵ Highfield, *Kura Te Waru Rewiri*, 28.

⁴⁶ Baker, *Sight Lines*, Protest, 239.

⁴⁷ Stocker, *New Zealand Art at Te Papa*, 239.

The intermingling of bodies and place

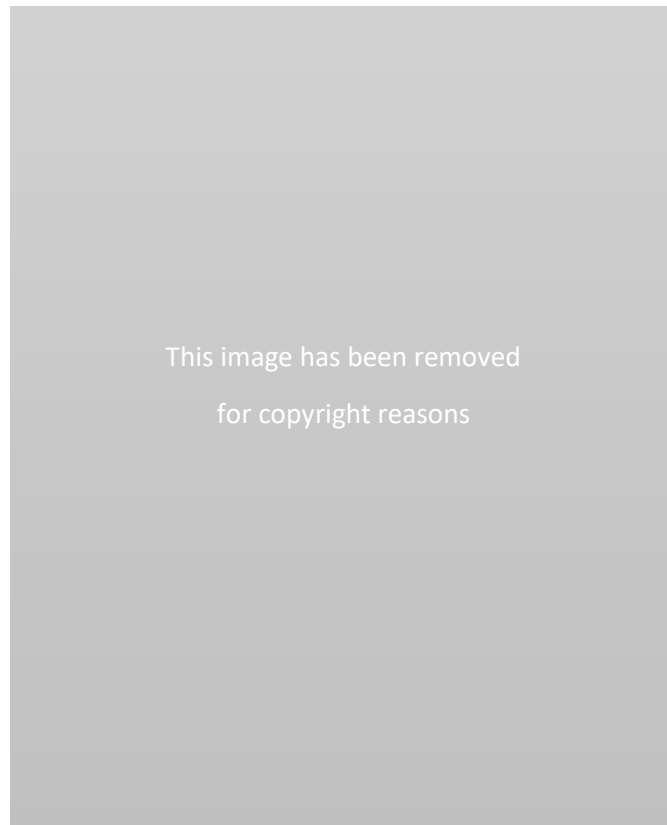


Figure 23. Pauline Rhodes, *Harbour Tripods*, 2019, painted plywood. Temporary installation in the intertidal zone, Canterbury.

Many of Pauline Rhodes' outdoor installations have been sited in places in Canterbury that are familiar to her body. Rhodes' thinking around the bodily experience of place was influenced by philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who saw bodies and place as intermingling.⁴⁸ She saw outdoor installations, her *Extensums*, as "gaining knowledge through touching the ground, becoming part of the earth."⁴⁹ *Extensums* are transitory, leaving no trace when they are removed. Consequently, these works have been critiqued through post-colonial, feminist and ecological lenses.

⁴⁸ Barton, *Ground/Work*, 21.

⁴⁹ Barton, *Ground/Work*, 21.

Expanding my sensory experience of painting

Returning to my desire to extrapolate the experience of painting-as-fieldwork, I scaled up artworks to become immersed in materiality and process. Painting large-scale artworks with paint made from whenua was physically engrossing over a long period; it felt as though the artworks were residencies that I inhabited.



Figure 24. Painting the first layers of *Sensing With Place* with whenua-based paint on 5 m x 1.6 m unprimed canvas, 2025. Photograph: Josef Harvey.

Scaling up to five-metre-plus lengths of unprimed canvas altered the tools and the physical process of painting. Paint, which was previously made with rabbit-skin glue and earth pigments warmed in a one-litre bain marie required a large crock-pot. My whole body was engaged in applying initial layers with a broom.



Figure 25. *Sensing With Place*, building layers through painting-as-fieldwork in my garden, 2025.

When the canvas was moved outdoors to my garden, painting became a more grounded experience, connected to place. Layers of paint were applied with a thin scourer. Like Te Waru Rewiri's gloves, it acted as a membrane through which I could feel the canvas' surface, as well as the rocks and vegetation beneath. It felt like I was touching the Earth, and the Earth was touching me.⁵⁰ This sensorial approach to painting opened up a new way of being with Papatūānuku in my practice. Layers of paint were records of encounter.

In my pepeha, I refer to Pukekawa as the maunga connected to my kāinga noho. Not knowing my iwi or rohe, I connect to this place as manuhiri. Similarly, the paint made from displaced whenua was also a visitor to the site. I took the canvas from my garden to encounter the hillside at Pukekawa. But as the canvas was like a sail on the windy hill, it was hard to keep it from blowing away. Despite the wind and rain, I would rather be outside where I feel closer to the skin of the Earth.

⁵⁰ David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (Vintage, 1996), 268.

Sensory engagement with Papatūānuku

Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote “Every perception is a communication or communion... as a coupling of our body with the things.”⁵¹ Drawing on the writings of Merleau-Ponty, philosopher and ecologist David Abram discusses the reciprocal nature of sensing in his book, *The Spell of the Sensuous*. Abram posits that, through sensory engagement with the earth, we enter into conversation and to know its wisdom.⁵² It is only through this awareness that we can live in greater harmony with our surroundings. In the context of phenomenology, touch can be described as reciprocal, but, to me, reciprocity also involves acts of giving back—a gifting and receiving.

By painting outdoors, the sounds of wind and rain, birds, the fresh smell of humus, the animal smell of rabbit-skin glue, the slight saltiness of paint accidentally tasted, and the texture of holes in scoria rocks were all within my aroaro (zone of awareness). To me, this expanded experience of place became part of the painting. The appearance of marks made on the canvas became less important than the experience of making them.

The aroaro

In his paper titled *Exploring Indigenous Knowledge*, Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal (Ngāti Whanaunga, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Tamaterā, Ngāpuhi) discusses sensory experience as a precursor to matauranga.⁵³ The aroaro is in front of the body when the world is experienced through sight. By engaging with other senses, including hearing, touch and smell, the aroaro expands. Awareness of surroundings is therefore experienced through the whole body. The ngahere (forest) imparts wisdom to those who listen.



Figure 26. *Sensing With Place*, details showing marks made as a record of bodily contact with iron-rich paint (deep red) on scrunched-up canvas, 2025.

⁵¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald Landes (Routledge, 2012), 377.

⁵² Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 268, 278.

⁵³ Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, “Exploring Indigenous Knowledge,” paper presented at The Indigenous Knowledges Conference - Reconciling Academic Priorities with Indigenous Realities, Wellington, June 25, 2005.

I wondered what the canvas could tell me if I stopped and listened deeply. By scrunching the five-metre length of unprimed canvas, I created a comfortable mat for my body to sink into, to rest and contemplate. I imagined the area where I live as it was prior to colonisation, when it was cloaked in vegetation, contiguous with Pukekawa, before Waipapa Stream was rerouted to accommodate train tracks. Following this meditation, while the canvas was still scrunched, surfaces which touched my body were painted with iron-rich paint. When the canvas was stretched out, the abstract marks were a record of physical contact (see Figure 27).



Figure 27. Helen Harvey, *Sensing With Place*, 2025, whenua and mineral pigments in rabbit-skin glue on canvas, 5 m x 1.6 m. Installation at Auckland University of Technology Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau, MW Building, Level 3 foyer

Back in the studio, this work was hung vertically and grounded by its contact with the floor and the whenua-painted boards. For me, the vertical scale of the hanging format was a gesture of reverence for Papatūānuku as an atua and of gratitude for all that she provides. By presenting the boards from the artwork *Groundworks* in a different way, they became part of a circular process that reduced material use and extraction.

Symbiosis



Figure 28. *Symbiosis*, 2025, painting on crunched-up canvas with clay paint.

Painting the artwork *Sensing With Place* with rabbit-skin glue and shellac gave the canvas rigidity, which I wanted to utilise to present it in a new form in relationship with the floor; as artist Mark Titmarsh says, “Floors are the cultural, architectural extension of the surface of the earth.”⁵⁴ By manipulating the canvas, glimpses of the underside could be seen. This iteration led to the development of another work titled *Symbiosis*, painted on both sides with marks highlighting where it contacted my body and the Earth.

⁵⁴ Titmarsh, *Expanded Painting*, 124.

Dye, which I had made from local windblown lichen (angiangi), was smeared onto one side (see Appendix Ic: Dyes, ink, and shellac). Lichen is not a single species, but a symbiotic multispecies relationship.⁵⁵ For me, the dye symbolised my reciprocal encounters with Papatūānuku. In my practice, I consider reciprocity as a two-way exchange of touch, both nurturing and being nurtured. In the installation, both faces of the artwork were visible. Soil, like that I used to create paint, was scattered and allowed to land close to the painting. Its presence was unconstrained by the canvas.



Figure 29. Helen Harvey, *Symbiosis*, 2025, pigments in rabbit-skin glue, lichen dye on unprimed canvas, 10 m x 1.8 m. Installation at Auckland University of Technology Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau, MW Building, Level 3 foyer. Marks on the underside were made on the points of contact of the canvas with the earth.

⁵⁵ Lourdes Morillas et al., "Lichen as Multipartner Symbiotic Relationships," *Encyclopedia* 2 (August 2022): 1421–31, <https://doi.org/10.3390/encyclopedia2030096>.



Figure 30. Helen Harvey, *Symbiosis*, 2025. Scattered soil appears to emanate from beneath the painted canvas.

In painting these works, I was conscious that the colour palette reflected the materiality of my surroundings: the red earth, mud, and ash of Pukekawa’s volcanic cone. This is despite the fact that none of the whenua pigments were collected locally from Pukekawa as I didn’t have permission from mana whenua Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei, and I did not want to disturb the natural layers of oneone. Instead, I continued making paint with previously collected discarded soil sourced from Kerikeri and manufactured iron oxides.⁵⁶ This approach of using materials sourced from places other than the fieldwork site paralleled my own displaced cultural identity of not knowing my iwi and rohe.

⁵⁶ To discover more about the provenance of their pigments, I contacted Cretacolor. Cretacolor, “Sanguine,” personal communication, May 9, 2025.

Taranaki fieldwork

In the book *Fieldwork for Future Ecologies*, editors Bridget Crone, Sam Nightingale and Polly Santon define fieldwork as “a process grounded in and shaped by the site or situation that the artist or researcher works.” They see fieldwork as open, yet grounded, allowing for “co-production” with place.⁵⁷ In my practice, fieldwork is flexible and responsive to place.

During my residency in Ōpunake, Taranaki in August 2025, the colours in my work shifted from warm ochres to warm greys and blacks. These colours were similar to beach stones and black sand. In Ōpunake, there were fewer urban distractions. The moon was brighter, the sky was darker, and birdsong announced dawn and dusk. I felt more in touch with the lunar phases and their effect on the tide. It was easy to notice my sensory engagement with place. I started following the maramataka Māori lunar calendar published by Heeni Hoterene (Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, Ngāi Tahu).⁵⁸

Karakia by Mero Irihapeti Rokx - used to relax and to settle.

Appropriate for opening or closing.⁵⁹

Hā ki roto	Breathe in
Hā ki waho	Breathe out
Kia tau te mauri	Settle the mauri
te kōkiri nei	that stirs inside of me
I ngā piki me ngā heke	Through the ups and downs
Ko te rangimārie	It's peace that I seek
Tāku e rapu nei	Let me be at one with
tīhei mauri ora!	the breath of life

A large linen canvas was painted in the garden outside my cabin and on the beach. After the feverish activity of preparing for and installing an exhibition,⁶⁰ my wairua settled in contact with the ground. The karakia *Hā Ki Roto* by Mero Irihapeti Rokx (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Awa) invokes a similar feeling for me of being mindfully present.

⁵⁷ Bridget Crone et al., *Fieldwork for Future Ecologies: Radical Practice for Art and Art-based Research* (Antenne Books Limited, 2023), sec. Introduction.

⁵⁸ “Maramataka Māori Lunar Calendar,” Maramataka, accessed March 14, 2026, <https://www.maramataka.co.nz/>.

⁵⁹ “Karakia | Hā Ki Roto,” Te Hou Ora Whānau Services, accessed April 1, 2026, <https://www.thows.org.nz/karakia-self-regulation>.

⁶⁰ *Whakakotahi / Coalescence*, From Out of the Blue Studio Gallery, Ōpunake, 2025.

I made paint with a soy binder (made from soybeans), earth pigments, metal oxides, and beach charcoal. Ulrike Arnold's use of PVA as a binder allows her to apply more pigment in a single layer, but I knew from previous experience that crusty paint made with my soy binder cracks and flakes. The canvas was taken outside each day after the dew on the grass had evaporated, earlier on windy days. By painting in thin layers, the paint remained stable on the canvas. White paint made with kaolin seemed to dominate the canvas and was highly resistant to scrubbing back, a process that I use to reveal glimpses of previous layers. It was important for me to still see the displaced pink whenua (see Figure 32), which I treasured. An advantage of using soy-based paint in fieldwork is that it does not need to be kept warm.



Figure 31. Day two of painting the artwork *The Painting on the Beach* outside in the permaculture garden at From Out of the Blue Studio Gallery, Ōpunake, 2025. Photograph: Viv Davy.

Soot from the studio dye pot, a large, gas-fired copper, was incorporated into shellac-based Indian ink that I made to use as a transparent glaze.⁶¹ The canvas was also carried to the beach to be painted. Charred branches found on the beach, with the residue of burnt rubbish, were used to make paint on site. Soaked with paint and rain, the canvas was heavy to carry back to the studio.



Figure 32. Layering soy-based paint on linen (detail).

⁶¹ Notes on preparing soy and Indian ink are in Appendix Ib and Ic.



Figure 33. Further making of the artwork *The Painting on the Beach*, 2025, pigments in soy on 12 m long linen, Middleton Bay, Taranaki. The canvas appears attuned to the rhythm of tides and shifting sand.



Figure 34. Helen Harvey, *The Painting on the Beach*, 2025. Installation at AUT studio. Hanging depicts the rushing and settling of wairua

The finished painting flew with me to Tāmaki Makaurau to be shown indoors in my AUT studio space for Talk Week, 2025. After returning to Taranaki, I took it back to the beach on the full moon (Ōturu).⁶² Animated by the wind and incoming tide, it mingled with seaweed and foam. Rewetted, the colours looked more vibrant. As the sole observer of this interaction between the painting and its surroundings, the event can now be seen only through photographs and videos that I took on my phone. As artist Emily Parr (Ngāi Te Rangi, Moana, Pākehā) says of film photography: “an image can give form to the intangible: light travels to physically alter the negative, which becomes a trace of a person, place or other entity, all of which have mauri.”⁶³ Although my photos and videos were not recorded on film, I feel they have the mauri of the interaction between the painting and place.

⁶² Confused about regional differences, I based the lunar phase on personal observation of the moon. This correlated with the maramakaka for Te Ātiawa.

⁶³ Emily Parr interview, *ATE: Journal of Māori Art*, 2024.

With the phone duct-taped to my body and on a tripod that was blown by strong wind, even when weighted, the video footage has the unpolished yet immediate feeling of fieldwork. The wonky horizon disrupts the level horizontality of European landscape painting tradition. Contrast and colour saturation shift as the weather changes. Later, when editing the footage, I arranged it in nonlinear time, where relationality and circularity took precedence. Writing about moving image “looping back and forward” in time and space, art historian and curator Nina Tonga (Tonga) proposes that looping is not just circular, but “a continuum with no distinct beginning or end, where the past, present, and future have no boundaries,” and that this repetitive looping allows space for decolonisation.⁶⁴



Figure 35. Helen Harvey, Return of *The Painting on the Beach* to Middleton Bay, interaction with the incoming tide, 2025.

Nina Tonga, “Looping Through Time and Space: Observations of Māori Moving Image Out in the World.,” in *Māori Moving Image* (Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, 2022).

Fieldwork has become integral to my practice through gathering materials and carrying rolls of canvas to paint at outdoor sites. Fieldwork away from home felt more nomadic, allowing me to experience the differences in place. Topography, vegetation, and sometimes the wind and rain contributed to the reciprocal creation of paintings, a symbiotic process. Being outside has given me a greater experience of Papatūānuku through sensorial and affective engagement, feeling the whenua beneath the canvas as I worked. As my aroaro expanded, all of my senses were involved in the encounter. The importance of whakawhanaungatanga with soil is summarised by academics and soil health and security advocates Jo Smith and Jessica Hutchings (Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Huirapa, Gujarat):

We are soil, we come from soil, we live on soil, we will return to the soil; this signifies its central importance to us and demonstrates our deep relationship with and belonging to Papatūānuku.⁶⁵

Making my own paint has enabled me to scale up my work, deepening my immersion in the painting-as-fieldwork process. Paint made without microplastic binders has been applied in layers, even in the rain, and was not removed by dousings in the tide once cured. Plastic avoidance addresses one aspect of my expanded painting practice; others, such as the environmental impact of canvas, have yet to be investigated. Practising reciprocity through giving back to Papatūānuku is an ongoing part of my research.

⁶⁵ Hutchings and Smith, *Te Mahi Oneone Hua Parakore: A Maori Soil Sovereignty and Wellbeing Handbook*, 16.

Chapter 3: Wairākau

Wairākau: 1. (noun) Compost, fertiliser, manure.⁶⁶

In my practice, the kupu wairākau symbolises “tending” and gifting back to Papatūānuku through cloaking her skin. It necessitates being in right relations—practising reciprocity, rather than the unilateral extraction of materials. It looks through the eyes of mokopuna, upholding their wellbeing and the wellbeing of whenua in the future. Wairākau is a circular decolonial tending practice.

Tending soil is described by Jessica Hutchings:

Soil joins people to land, to ancestors and to divine spirit – she is in essence a sacred being to be revered, to be cared for and honoured.⁶⁷

Tending the Earth is a ground up process, according to David Abram: “For it is only at the scale of our direct, sensory interactions with the land around us that we can appropriately notice and respond to the immediate needs of the living world.”⁶⁸ In my painting-as-fieldwork practice, where I connect with and experience Papatūānuku sensorially, daily tending actions also help me connect with place and know its rhythms and cycles.

For Kauae Raro founders Sarah Hudson and Lanae Cable, tending land is integral to gathering clay to make pigments. This act of tending transforms gathering from extraction to a reciprocal process.⁶⁹ I am grateful for the materials that I have gathered, even if they are weeds or waste-stream clay.⁷⁰



Figure 36. Wind-blown plastic cleared while painting-as-fieldwork, May 2025.

⁶⁶ “Te Aka Māori Dictionary,” *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, under “wairākau,” accessed March 15, 2026, <https://www.maoridictionary.co.nz/word/9070>.

⁶⁷ Hutchings and Smith, *Te Mahi Oneone Hua Parakore: A Maori Soil Sovereignty and Wellbeing Handbook*, Hutchings, J. Māori Soil Sovereignty: Advocating for the rights of our ancestral soils, 47.

⁶⁸ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 268.

⁶⁹ Randall, “A Conversation with Kauae Raro.”

⁷⁰ On daily walks on the beach in Ōpunake, I noticed lumps of whenua fallen from cliffs, and eroded pigment carried by streamlets. I didn’t make paint from this material without mana whenua’s permission. Although I consulted Taranaki Iwi about gathering ephemeral whenua, I didn’t hear back from the te taiao team.

Not all of the pigments that I use in my painting-as-fieldwork practice are gathered; some are bought. In addition to pigments, I use ground chalk, binders such as rabbit-skin glue, substrates such as canvas, varnishes, and hanging devices, all sourced from somewhere on Earth. Although some of the materials used in my practice are bought and have been commercially mined or manufactured, a tending practice allows me to give back to Papatūānuku for the materials that I use, wherever they come from.

Tending activities connected to my painting-as-fieldwork practice include clearing rubbish and weeding before painting-as-fieldwork (as discussed in Chapter 2), and enriching the soil with compost. Through these reciprocal actions, my practice moves toward right relations and harmony with Papatūānuku.

Balance in a web of whakapapa

Remembering that we are connected to Papatūānuku's other human and more-than-human children⁷¹ can help us work to maintain harmony and restore the balance of whenua disturbed by human actions.⁷² Hana Burgess and Te Kahuratai Moko-Painting see whanaungatanga as fluid, actively negotiating the space between balance and imbalance.⁷³ In my practice of wairākau, my actions are revisited and adjusted. For example, areas cleared of bindweed are monitored for missed plants, so weeds do not grow back with greater vigour.

Maintaining balance through weed management is discussed by rongoā practitioner and government adviser Rob McGowan (known as Pā Ropata to many) in a report on exotic plants:

From a Māori perspective, it could be said that a weed is a plant that upsets the balance that Papatūānuku needs to be well. That suggests that a weed is a plant that dominates an ecosystem to the extent that it is no longer able to function in a way that enables it to sustain the life that belongs there.⁷⁴



Figure 37. Gorse growing near Otahi Stream, Ōpunake, August 2025.

⁷¹ Marsden, *The Woven Universe*, 45.

⁷² Marsden, *The Woven Universe*, 69.

⁷³ Burgess and Moko-Painting, "Onamata, Anamata: A Whakapapa Perspective of Māori Futurisms," 215.

⁷⁴ Robert McGowan, *Mauri Tū! Mauri Ora! Māori Perspectives of Invasive Plants in Aotearoa*, Report prepared for the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (2021), 9.

Before controlling weeds, aspects of balance must be considered. McGowan asks whether weeds are helping to cloak bare soil and whether weed control methods, such as herbicides, will deplete the mauri of whenua.⁷⁵

Observing the maramataka is a way to embody balance through circular time, rather than the linear time of the Western calendar. David Abram sees a connection between circular time, based on cycles of the sun and moon and living with sensorial experience of the natural world.⁷⁶ By stepping outside at night to observe the moon, my awareness expands beyond electronic devices.

Following the rhythms of the marama cycle can optimise tending activities, such as weeding and planting, as well as activity, caution, and rest. I have sown soybeans on days for optimal growth following Whiro (the new moon), and I have taken greater care in the workshop during the no-moon phase before Whiro. Rest is also important for upholding mauri, and I am aware of when I push myself on days best suited to rejuvenation. Textile artist Maungarongo Te Kawa (Ngāti Poro) describes the full moon (Ōturu) as ripe and juicy.⁷⁷ His work *Hineteiwaiwa: The Whakapapa of Moonlight* expresses the moon's healing power. The moon is a companion for Te Kawa, bringing comfort.⁷⁸

The art practices of Java Bentley (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Kahu, Samoa, Pākehā), Kura Te Waru Rewiri and Mark Harvey (Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Raukawa, Mātāwaka, Pākehā) speak to aspects of tending and reciprocity. Through their research, the complexities of maintaining harmony since colonisation are apparent.

⁷⁵ McGowan, *Mauri Tū! Mauri Ora! Māori Perspectives of Invasive Plants in Aotearoa*, 12.

⁷⁶ Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 185.

⁷⁷ As communicated by Zoe Black, Te Ao Mahora Wānanga: a symposium for postgraduate researchers in Art & Design, Ngā Wai of Horotiu Marae, March 19, 2026.

⁷⁸ Objectspace, *Love, Colour, Joy, Safety and Norway: Maungarongo Te Kawa Kōrero*, 2023, <https://vimeo.com/862973980>.

Java Bentley Gifting Back to Papatūānuku

Making compost has been a way for Java Bentley to explore reciprocity with Papatūānuku. In her exhibition *Mata-onerua* at Viewfinder in Whakatū in 2024, unripe compost from her garden in Tāmaki Makaurau was displayed in the gallery’s front windows. The exhibition name references “eyes or windows into compost.”⁷⁹ Gifting compost was an expression of whakawhetai (gratitude) and whakawhanaungatanga. She saw the installation as presenting “the cyclic transformations of life and foundations of whakapapa.”⁸⁰



Figure 38. Java Bentley, *Mata-onerua*, 2024, compost collected from home in Tāmaki Makaurau, plywood, tanalised glass. Installation view, Viewfinder Window, Whakatū, Nelson. Photograph: Melissa Banks.

Mata-onerua was an iteration of the work *Hei whare onerua*, created in Bentley’s Masters of Māori Visual Arts research at Massey University.⁸¹ Compost she made and compost gifted by her mentor in the programme, Kura Te Waru Rewiri, was placed in glass-faced containers, like internal windows, to explore the relationship between compost and the potential of Te Pō, or darkness. Bentley likened these works to paintings about whakapapa, in which compost serves as paint.⁸² Considered in tandem, *Mata-onerua* and *Hei whare onerua* show giving back and circularity.

⁷⁹ Java Bentley, “Gifting Back to Papatūānuku,” *Correspondence*, July 2024.

⁸⁰ *Mata-onerua* exhibition text, Viewfinder, November 14, 2025, <https://www.viewfinderwindow.com>.

⁸¹ Bentley, “Gifting Back to Papatūānuku.”

⁸² Java Bentley, “Hei Whare Onerua. Master of Māori Visual Arts” (Massey University Te Kunenga Ki Pūrehuroa, 2024), <https://mro.massey.ac.nz/handle/10179/72588>.

Weed complexities

Te Waru Rewiri graduated from the Master of Māori Visual Arts programme in 2001. The colonial legacy of ivy was prominent in her research.⁸³ Ivy, brought by British settlers, grows vigorously over other plants and is hard to eradicate once established. For Te Waru Rewiri, it initially symbolised the ongoing struggle for Māori in postcolonial Aotearoa. She came to see the ivy growing rampantly in her garden, not just as a weed, but as rongoā, with benefits similar to those of kawakawa.



Figure 39. Mark Harvey, *Weed Wrestle* (still), 2016.

Weeds as colonial legacies also feature in the work of performance artist Mark Harvey. In the 2016 video work *Weed Wrestle*,⁸⁴ he physically engages with a young Australian wattle tree in Tāmaki Makaurau without using tools. After more than six minutes of struggle, the weed is uprooted. Harvey's farcical approach to protest is easy to connect with. But beneath levity lies deep concern about the destructive effect of colonisation on land and people.⁸⁵ Clearing weeds reflects an indigenous perspective of "serving the land rather than owning it."⁸⁶ Mark questions whether his action made a difference to the weed population or whether the wattle he removed had helped mitigate climate change. *Weed Wrestle* was commissioned for the exhibition *Heat: Solar Revolutions*, which explored climate change, and was held at Te Uru Waitakere Gallery in 2017. Some weed species from hotter climates grow more prolifically as temperatures rise.⁸⁷ Pulling out the wattle was not a one-off action. Harvey regularly pulls out weeds in the area where he lives and replaces them with native species.⁸⁸

⁸³ Cassandra Barnett and Kura Te Waru Rewiri, eds., *Ki Mua, Ki Muri: 25 Years of Toiohi Ki Āpiti* (Massey University Press, 2023), 85.

⁸⁴ Mark Harvey, *Weed Wrestle*, 2016, accessed March 22, 2026, <https://www.circuit.org.nz/work/weed-wrestle>.

⁸⁵ Mark Harvey, "Te Heahea Me Ngā Toi, Te Hikohiko: Productive Idiocy, Mātauranga Māori and Art-Activism Strategies in Aotearoa/New Zealand," *Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism* 81, no. 2 (2023): 228–38, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaac/kpad013>.

⁸⁶ Harvey, "Te Heahea Me Ngā Toi, Te Hikohiko."

⁸⁷ Mark Harvey *Weed Wrestle*, 2016.

⁸⁸ Daniel Higham, "Don't Listen to Me: Mark Harvey," *Visual Arts News*, October 18, 2018, <https://visualartsnews.ca/2018/10/dont-listen-to-me-mark-harvey/>.

Aspects of Bentley, Te Waru Rewiri and Harvey's practices relate to my own tending interventions and the interconnected artworks which inform and are informed by tending. I made compost to feed the oneone, controlled weeds, and cleared rubbish to counter colonial extractive practices. But the inherent complexities of these actions were apparent. Rubbish was inadvertently entangled with homemade compost. I found that there was no ideal way to dispose of rubbish or to control weeds. In fact, like the ivy which Te Waru Rewiri painted, some weeds also have benefits. Inspired by Harvey's approach, humour helped me to negotiate the frustration and overwhelming feelings associated with reciprocal practices of care.

Growing soybeans, ngā ipu wairākau and rubbish

At Talk Week, 2025, I presented *Painting on the Beach*, which I brought up from Taranaki. Manuhiri guest critic Wendelien Bakker asked if I had grown the soybeans used as a binder in the paint. Although it would not have been possible for me to have grown the soybeans I used within the timeframe of the MVA programme, I was spurred to grow soybeans for future use. I constructed a makeshift garden with banana trunk edges, and layers of cardboard, oneone, woollen fleece, coffee grounds from a local cafe and homemade compost. Compost fed the oneone, which was low in organic matter. Seeds of an heirloom variety of soy named “Sonya” were sown on September 30 and October 29 2025, under the lunar phase Tamatea ā āio – a good day for planting. Seedlings started to emerge six days later. After a summer of watering and weeding, they were harvested on January 30 and dried on racks in a shed. For more information on growing soybeans see Appendix Id.



Figure 40. Young soybean plants in the banana-trunk-edged garden I created to trial growing soybeans for paint binder, November 2025.

Once dry, I installed the soybeans in my studio suspended in a web of connections, an installation choice referencing the interconnection of all things, as described by Māori Marsden.⁸⁹ Hanging plants upside down for drying also draws attention to the roots, which are normally hidden underground. Soybeans are legumes which enrich oneone via a symbiotic relationship with nitrogen-fixing bacteria in their roots.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Marsden, *The Woven Universe*, 45.

⁹⁰ *Soil Health: Soy's Role in Nitrogen Fixation*, n.d., accessed April 8, 2026, <https://soyonlineservice.co.nz/soil-health-soys-role-in-nitrogen-fixation/>.



Figure 41. Helen Harvey, *Soybean Constellation*, 2026. Installation at AUT studio. Dried plants suspended in a web of connections. The string which connects the plants is circular and continuous, starting and ending at the same point. Slip-knots loop around the plant stems.

A future iteration of this work using biochar was tested by painting a sample (see Figure 42). I would like to acknowledge the collaborative fieldwork of researcher and artist Huhana Smith, restoring the well-being of wetlands⁹¹ including the work of artist Monique Jansen from the Te Waituhi ā Nuku - Drawing Ecologies collective in creating the biochar art installation alongside Waikōkopu Stream.⁹²

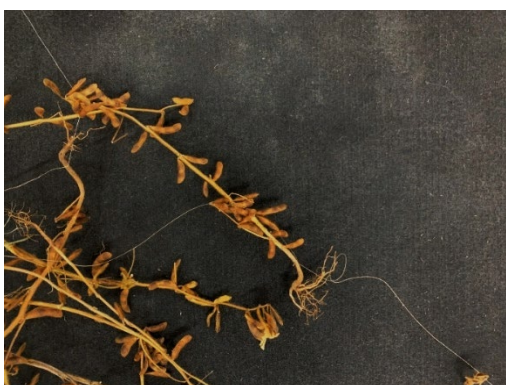


Figure 42. Testing wool and hemp mulch mat, painted with charcoal in soy binder, on the studio floor for future work. I imagine the mat as a fertile ground for future planting.

⁹¹ "Weaving a Collective Ecological Tapestry," Massey University Te Kunenga Ki Pūrehuroa, n.d., <https://www.massey.ac.nz/research/research-impact-stories/weaving-a-collective-ecological-tapestry/>.

⁹² "KUKU BIOCHAR PROJECT 2021-2024," Drawing Open, April 6, 2024, <https://www.drawingopen.com/blog/2024/3/3/the-kuku-biochar-project-2021-2024>.

Plastic everywhere

Emptying the compost bins (ngā ipu wairākau) to prepare garden beds for soybean sowing, I was amazed at how much rubbish they contained, particularly plastic.



Figure 43. Rubbish found in my compost bins, including fruit stickers, sushi fish, and teabags

Picking up rubbish is something I also do at work as a gardener and when I am out walking. Picking up rubbish has been an ongoing practice in my life. Interested in the materiality of rubbish in relation to place, and during my residency in Ōpunake, I started recording the quantity and materiality of rubbish that I gathered. For notes on the materiality of rubbish, see Appendix 1e. The absurdity of counting and recording this rubbish allayed my feelings of anger and despair. On the beach, rubbish above the tideline was from beach users, whilst other rubbish was abraded, washed up by the tide. Some rubbish was fishing waste, like fishing line tangled with kelp. Down the coast, the cliff was eroding, exposing an old landfill, spilling once-buried rubbish onto the beach. By picking up this plastic, I prevented it from breaking down into microplastics, which insidiously colonise the Earth.⁹³

Each item picked up with my fingers was counted. Recyclable materials were washed and recycled. Others were put into waste bins for landfill. Materiality was sensed through how items felt in my hands, and for composite-material items through the dominant material. My emotional and bodily reactions affected what I picked up. Certain colours, like magenta, were more salient. Some rubbish evoked repulsion. Perhaps I resisted intermingling with rubbish through my senses. In philosopher and historian Michel Serres' book *The Five Senses*, he writes, "I mix with the world which mixes with me. Skin intervenes between several things in the world and makes them mingle."⁹⁴

⁹³ Microplastics are widely distributed in ecosystems in the air, soil, freshwater, and marine environments, and are present in the tissues of plants, animals and humans. Jacqueline McGlade et al., *From Pollution To Solution: A Global Assessment of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution* (2026), <https://nottingham-repository.worktribe.com/output/8047115>.

⁹⁴ Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies* (Continuum, 2008), 80.

I tried to pick up what could harm human and more-than-human beings. This practice became a daily ritual which connected me to place. I noticed where I could walk when the tide was high or low, as affected by the lunar cycle.



Figure 44. Seaweed entangled with fishing line and synthetic rope, Middleton Bay, Ōpunake, 2024.

On returning to Tāmaki Makaurau, I continued recording the rubbish that I picked up. In both places, the predominant material was plastic. It felt like there was a relationship between painting with non-plastic paint and picking up plastic rubbish. My non-customary painting-as-fieldwork practice had circularity through other parts of my life. By making non-polluting paint and expanding tending practices, my relationship with Papatūānuku became less extractive and polluting, and more reciprocal.

The Material Nature of Rubbish

In my work titled *The Material Nature of Rubbish* (2026), canvas was sized with rabbit-skin glue and laser-cut into circles. To give the circles rigidity, they were painted on both sides with traditional, handmade gesso.⁹⁵ This gesso, made from hide glue and ground chalk, had an animalistic nature, requiring slowness and care to avoid overheating, bubbles, cracking and delamination. Balance was needed in painting both sides of the canvas to minimise cupping.

After being painted with layers of gesso, the canvas circles developed quirks and became individuals. When sanding the circles, my fingers were sensitive to irregularity, but I wanted to retain some of these details. A commercial plant-based paint was chosen for most of the painting to maintain colour consistency, reflecting the materiality of the rubbish picked up.⁹⁶ The smell of mānuka oil in

⁹⁵ See Appendix 1a for the handmade gesso recipe

⁹⁶ Wall and ceiling paint produced by the Natural Paint Company is low VOC and made with plant oils, chalk, cellulose, water, titanium dioxide, china clay, lecithin, iron oxides, and earth pigments. "Product and Application Information," Natural Paint Co., accessed April 8, 2026, <https://www.naturalpaint.co.nz/pages/information-sheets>.

the paint infused my body, eliciting a feeling of calmness. The plant-based aroma lingered on the painted circles for months.

Information from three months of tending was represented in the work, *The Material Nature of Rubbish*, in my solo exhibition, *Small Acts of Tending*, at Tāwhanga Noho Sitting Room Gallery, Nathan Homestead Pukepuke, in January 2026. This diaristic work was assembled in the gallery during the first week of the exhibition. Painted canvas circles representing individual pieces of rubbish picked up were threaded onto strings with spacers lasercut from wool and hemp mulch mat. Slowly threading each circle felt like a devotional act. Clusters of circles represented rubbish picked up on different days. On most days, I had not picked up many items, sometimes none, but the work illustrated the additive nature of a regular tending practice.

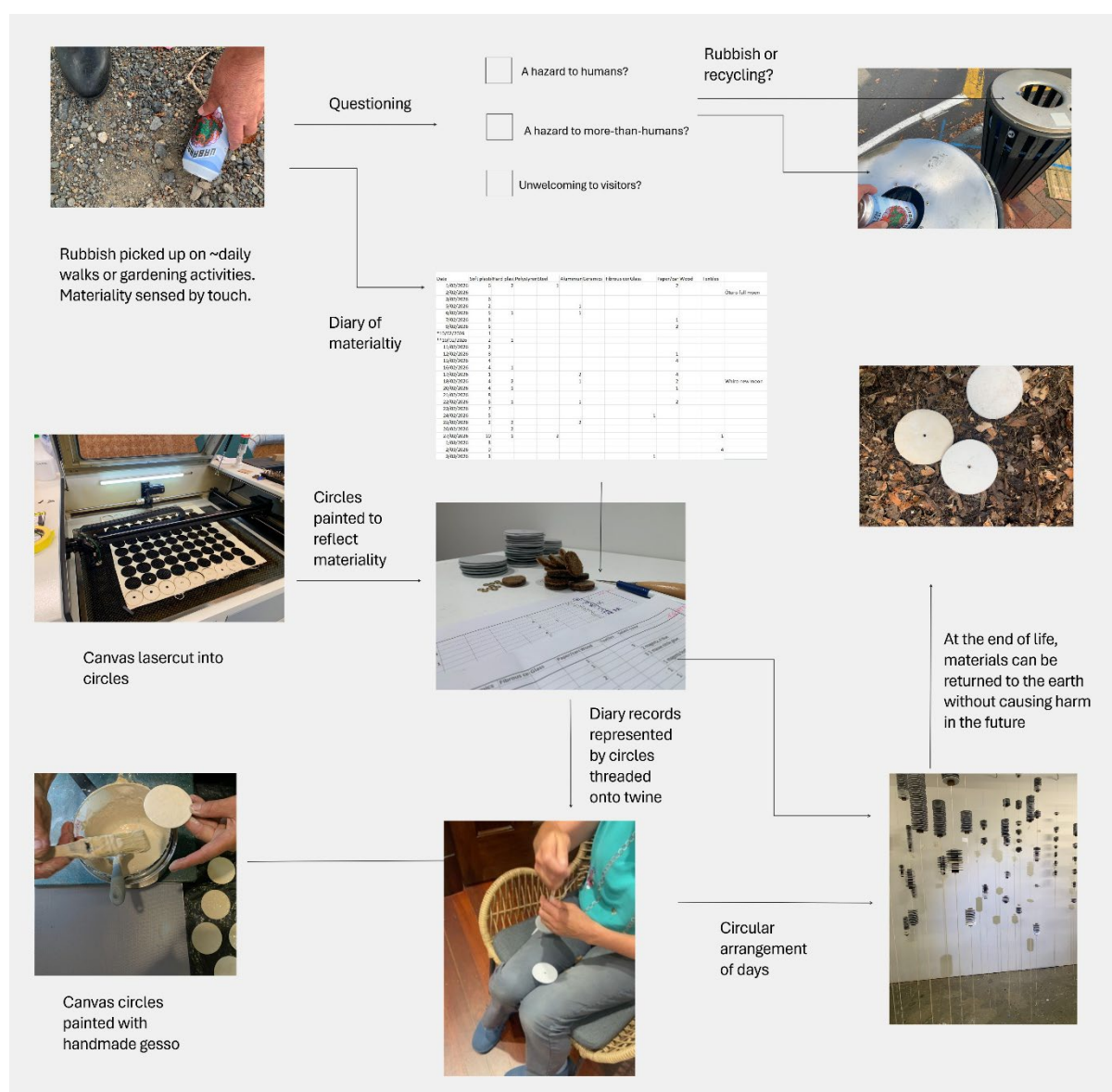


Figure 45. Helen Harvey, *The Material Nature of Rubbish*, 2025-26, tending and making process.



Figure 46. Helen Harvey, installing diaristic elements of the artwork *The Material Nature of Rubbish*, 2026, Tāwhanga Noho Sitting Room Gallery, Nathan Homestead Pukepuke

Installation was slow, but spending time in the gallery allowed me to make observations about the artwork. Strings on which the circles were threaded were paired, working in concert to keep the circles elevated. This relational motif was repeated in other artworks in the exhibition. The ends were left loose, without conclusion, suggesting that the work was not finished. Strings left trailing on the ground would move with air movement, as though painting lines. Some twisted around each other, some were loose. Threading was from top to bottom. As spotlights shone down, days of tending (clusters of circles) projected long shadows into the future. Some people could not resist running their fingers down the edge of painted circles, like running their fingers along piano keys.

In mass, my visual representation of the diary felt linear because it wasn't permitted to hang artworks from the ceiling. After the exhibition, I installed the artwork in my AUT studio space in groups, emulating the circularity of the maramataka.



Figure 47. Testing an alternative lunar rearrangement in AUT studio, 2026.

Offerings to Papatūānuku

Another threaded artwork in *Small Acts of Tending* was made from weeds. Handmade paper utilised agapanthus leaves from my neighbours and crocosmia leaves gathered at a Kaipātiki Project⁹⁷ working bee at nearby Waipapa Stream (the awa in my pepeha). Incorporating studio waste paper from notes and packaging into the pulp allowed me to process the plant fibres with less caustic materials.



Figure 48. Helen Harvey, *Offerings to Papatūānuku*, 2026, laser-cut handmade paper and wool mulch mat on linen thread. Installation at Noho Sitting Room Gallery, Nathan Homestead Pukepuke.

⁹⁷ Kaipātiki Project is run in partnership with mana whenua Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei



Figure 49. Close-up of threaded paper circles and wool mulch mat (left). Threading paper made from agapanthus weeds during the exhibition at Tāwhanga Noho Sitting Room Gallery (right). Photograph: Suzie Kim (right).

Threading the paper circles in the gallery was meditative and restful after frenetic preparation for the exhibition. I lost sense of time, stopping when I was hungry. The paper felt crunchy and smelled like leaf litter. My fingers were marked by the soot from laser-cut edges. It also allowed me to talk with visitors about the artworks. “You must be very patient,” said a viewer. Some people spent time with the artworks, engaged with them, and others skimmed the surface. To give back to the community that hosted the exhibition, I ran a free workshop on making paper from weeds. Connecting with people also interested in reciprocity was heartwarming.



Figure 50. Papermaking workshop, pottery studio, 2026, Nathan Homestead Pukepuke. Photograph: Toni Mosley

Gorse staining and ghost seeds

At times, it feels like humans have caused so much destruction since colonisation that tending is tokenistic. To lighten my ngākau kōhuki (emotional stress)⁹⁸ I undertook a slightly farcical action of picking gorse flowers. Mark Harvey was my inspiration for this approach. Over five days, wearing thick gloves, I harvested the sweetly scented yellow flowers individually. Each day, the gathered flowers were spread over a section of cotton cloth pre-treated with a plant-based mordant and locally sourced cow dung, then steamed. Bundling and steaming confined and sterilised the flowers, preventing them from forming seeds. For more information on gorse staining, including dunging, see Appendix Ic.



Figure 51. Helen Harvey, video stills (clockwise): liquid feeding, picking gorse flowers, and dunging cloth, 2025. Montage of video still screenshots from Layne Waerea.

Gorse was brought to Aotearoa by British settlers as living fences to contain livestock. Spreading quickly, it was declared naturalised in 1867.⁹⁹ Gorse seeds are spread by the ballistic action of exploding seed pods.¹⁰⁰ As water is also a vector, the proximity of the plants to Otahi Stream in Ōpunake felt ominous. Paint made from beach charcoal and cellulose medium was used to mark the cloth and a wooden rat trap.

⁹⁸ “Te Aka Māori Dictionary,” *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, under “ngākau kōhuki,” accessed March 15, 2026, <https://www.maoridictionary.co.nz/word/50636>.

⁹⁹ Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, *Space Invaders: A Review of How New Zealand Manages Weeds That Threaten Native Ecosystems*. (Wellington, New Zealand, 2021), 5.

¹⁰⁰ “*Ulex Europaeus*,” New Zealand Plant Conservation Network, accessed March 24, 2026, <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/ulex-europaeus/>.



Figure 52. Scan to hear sounds recorded at Otahi Stream, overlaid with the crushing of ghost seeds, 2025.

During the installation, *Rima*, in the AUT WM Building, Level 3 foyer, the rat trap contained a portable speaker that played a recording of the stream overlaid with the sound of clay gorse seeds being crushed.¹⁰¹ Seeds I carved were replicated by slip casting. I saw these hollow, chlorotic forms as ghost seeds—seeds that were prevented from forming because the flowers were picked.

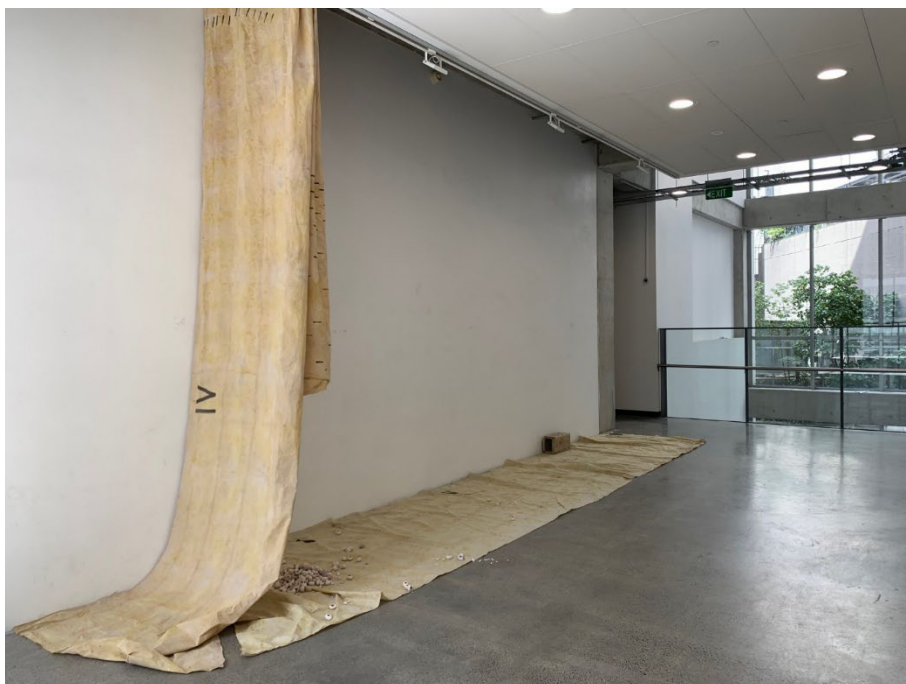


Figure 53. Helen Harvey, *Rima*, 2025, gorse-stained cotton painted with beach charcoal in cellulose medium, with unfired slip-cast ghost seeds and rat trap speaker housing. Installation at Auckland University of Technology Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau, WM Building, Level 3 foyer.

Despite slip-casting many seeds, they were dwarfed by the scale of the cloth. I had underplayed the physicality of picking flowers from prickly plants. For the next iteration, in Test Space, for Exhibition Practice critiques, I cast vast quantities of seeds. Hanging the cloths and painted muslin in a larger space created a different experience from when they were against a wall. Variation in hanging heights reflected changing water levels in the nearby stream. A stark photo of spiky, dead gorse washed up on the beach was projected in the space. A floor fan, which created movement in the cloth, was a noisy interloper. Viewers were invited to move around the space and tread on the fragile, unfired ghost seeds.¹⁰² Hearing the crunchy sounds was satisfying. Destroying the seeds that I had made did not bother me. I intended to use the crushed unfired slip to make paint in the future.

¹⁰¹ With sound mixing assistance from Dylan Brown.

¹⁰² I intended to use the crushed unfired slip to make paint in the future.



Figure 55. *Rima* (version two) Exhibition Practice in Test Space, 2025. Photograph: Ziggy Lever.



Figure 54. *Rima* (version two), 2025. Photo of dead gorse projected onto gorse-stained cloth and painted muslin (left). Whole and crushed ghost seeds on the ground (right).

At the Waipapa Stream working bee, I learned about the Mahoenui giant wētā that shelters from predation in gorse in the King Country.¹⁰³ After the Exhibition Practice critique, I remembered the giant wētā and lay under the cloth's tent-like folds to rest. I felt nurtured and held.

The Bach gorse flower remedy is one of 38 flower remedies representing different emotions developed by the medical doctor and homeopath Edward Bach.¹⁰⁴ Bach used the gorse remedy to treat a state of hopelessness in his patients.¹⁰⁵ I wonder if the cloth was imbued with gorse's therapeutic qualities.



Figure 56. *Rima* (version two), 2025. Shelter synonymous with a giant wētā shelter.

Relational entanglements raised by the *Rima* installations are indicative of the complexities of tending, like those found by Kura Te Waru Rewiri in her ivy research. As manuhiri in Taranaki during my residency in 2025, painting with plant-based pigments from that place was a viable alternative to using whenua pigments which respected mana whenua and the whenua of their rohe. There was also circularity in creating art materials from tending and making use of weeds as a means of management. Tending was an opportunity to build whanaungatanga through connecting with people and place.

¹⁰³ Department of Conservation, "Mahoenui Giant Wētā," accessed March 24, 2026, <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/native-animals/invertebrates/weta/mahoenui-giant-weta/>.

¹⁰⁴ "History of the Bach Flower Remedies," *The Bach Centre*, n.d., accessed April 12, 2026, <https://bachcentre.com/en/remedies/>.

¹⁰⁵ "Gorse - The Bach Centre's Guide to the Bach Flower Remedies," *The Bach Centre*, n.d., <https://bachcentre.com/en/remedies/the-38-remedies/gorse/>.

Conclusion

At the beginning of my research journey into my connection with Papatūānuku, I hoped to learn more about my whakapapa and experience an ancestral connection to place, to make paint from oneone, from the skin of Papatūānuku in that place. Having, as yet, discovered more, I approached this research as manuhiri. Alternatively, I wanted to paint with whenua pigments related to places where I live, my kāinga noho, and where I visit, but that involves consultation with mana whenua, and building whanaungatanga takes time. Instead, I made paint from displaced oneone, plant materials, and bought pigments. In my body, it did not feel comfortable to disturb soil strata to reach the richly pigmented subsoil.

Making water-based paint without plastic binders felt like a triumph. It is easy to make watercolour paint, but I wanted the paint to have a greater density of materiality, to richly layer history. In working with earth, Raukura Turei and Ulrike Arnold usually achieve that density with acrylic and PVA paint binders. Cellulose medium, rabbit-skin glue and soy were viable alternatives to plastic-based binders, and my soy-based paint remained stable even after interaction with rain and dousings in the wild Taranaki tide.

Installing my paintings in unconventional ways has highlighted certain material relationships and agency. Some of the artworks were displayed on the floor, in repose, communing with allied materials. This “flooriness” grounded the works, implying a connection to the Earth. Cutting canvas and threading it onto strings moved it more into the third dimension. Installations were formed from the alliances that paintings made with materials. In the manner of Pauline Rhodes’ installations, there was circularity and temporality; where elements might return to the tide, be crushed underfoot, or become part of later iterations.

My methodological approach to painting-as-fieldwork became an important means of connection to Papatūānuku. Through sensory experience and listening deeply to the canvas, there was a softening of constructed barriers around my body and wairua, and a sense of intermingling with materiality, the more-than-human world, and place. When *The Painting on the Beach* returned to the outdoors, it was animated by the wind and high tide of the full moon. Video of this event shifted the indoor/outdoor relationship again by bringing the outdoors inside as documentation within the installation. Observing the maramataka was not just a tool for gardening, but a way to think about balance in all aspects of my life. Tūpuna closely observed the seasons and lunar cycles to optimise timing.¹⁰⁶

Throughout this project, the concept and practice of tending allowed me to give back to Papatūānuku, deepening whanaungatanga through giving thanks. Through tending, I also formed alliances with others. I realised that even though my painting-as-fieldwork practice didn’t have the obvious circularity and in-built processes of care that my customary raranga practice had, it was nonetheless present. There was an obverse relationship between the materiality of rubbish picked up (mainly plastic) and the production of paint without microplastic binders. Weeds provided raw materials for papermaking. Small actions of levity, such as counting rubbish and picking gorse

¹⁰⁶ Mead, *Mātauranga Māori*, 269.

flowers, brought lightness to an otherwise overwhelming area of engagement. I am grateful to artists like Mark Harvey, who are vanguards in using humour as a decolonising practice.

Painting without plastic, expanding painting into the field, observing the lunar cycle, and practising reciprocity through tending all felt like ways to subvert the legacy of colonisation in Aotearoa. These experiences have deeply enriched my sense of connection to Papatūānuku. Operating from a liminal space of displaced identity has been uncomfortable and, at times, painful. Discomfort, however, can cultivate creativity. Adapting to different ways of making, as a means to connect to place, has expanded my practice in unexpected and delightful ways. Working in this liminal space with displaced materials is an area that invites me to research in greater depth in the future. Making paper from weeds created an alternative substrate to cotton duck canvas. Researching other alternatives is an exciting space for enquiry that will feed my practice for years to come. I am aware that I have not acknowledged my Samoan whakapapa in this project, and future explorations will expand my focus across Te Moana-nui-a-kiwa, The Great Connector,¹⁰⁷ to further enrich my understanding of whakapapa.

¹⁰⁷ "Te Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa: The Great Connector," Pacific Cooperation Foundation, accessed March 25, 2026, <https://www.pcf.org.nz/news/te-moana-nui-a-kiwa-the-great-connector>.

Appendix I. Studio and Field Notes

a. Gesso and clayboard

Gesso and clayboard are foundations on which to layer paint. Acrylic gesso consists of grounds, such as chalk, marble dust and zinc oxide, in an acrylic binder, which gives it flexibility. Painting with alternatives to acrylic gesso was more complex. In *The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques*, Frank Meyer and Steven Sheehan recommend that gesso made with a non-acrylic binder be applied to a rigid support to avoid cracking.¹⁰⁸

Methyl cellulose gesso

Methyl cellulose, a plant-based dry powder, needs to be hydrated to the consistency of wallpaper paste before it can be painted on board as a size and mixed with grounds to make gesso. I found methyl cellulose gesso to be an unstable foundation for painting, brittle and prone to chipping as layers of paint were added, or cracking due to shrinkage.



Figure 57. Methyl cellulose gesso ingredients and gesso on gesso-painted board (left). Animal glue gesso ingredients (right), 2025.

Animal glue gesso

Rabbit-skin glue and hide glue are like gelatin but stronger than edible gelatin. I found hide glue (sold as pearl glue) to be a stronger binder than rabbit-skin glue. Like methyl cellulose, the glues came as dry granules that needed soaking to rehydrate (1 part hide glue to 5 parts water). To be usable, they also needed to be warmed in a double boiler. Overheating is said to darken and weaken the glue.¹⁰⁹ Chalk grounds were stirred in until the gesso had the consistency of pouring cream. Vigorous mixing

¹⁰⁸ Ralph Mayer and Steven Sheehan, *The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques* (Faber & Faber, 1991), 306.

¹⁰⁹ Mayer and Sheehan, *The Artist's Handbook of Materials and Techniques*, 310.

incorporated bubbles, which set in the gesso and sometimes led to cracking. Due to the strong smell of hydrated animal glue and gesso, they were best stored in a studio fridge not used for food.

The canvas circles

I flaunted the recommendation for a rigid support by painting the gesso onto 70mm-diameter canvas circles. Although canvas is not recommended as a substrate due to its flexibility, reducing the size decreased the risk of cracking. Pieces of canvas were first sized with rabbit-skin glue to penetrate the fibres. A strong smell was released when the canvas was laser cut into circles. Gesso made with hide glue was painted onto the individual circles. Gesso shrank as it dried, making the canvas curl. Painting the other side helped to reduce curling. I found that the primed canvas could also be weighted while the gesso was still plastic. This process could not be rushed. Layers and layers of thin gesso, slow drying and sanding produced a smooth surface without cracking or delamination.

Layers of gesso added weight, and when many circles were threaded on a string during installation, they started to feel heavy. To overcome this problem, I introduced plaster bandage. Circles of plaster bandage were cut, dipped in water, and placed on sized canvas circles. Rubbing the surface evened out bumps and helped adhesion. When dry, plaster bandage was applied to the other side. Plaster bandage reduced cupping when the gesso dried, and reduced the overall weight.

Clayboard

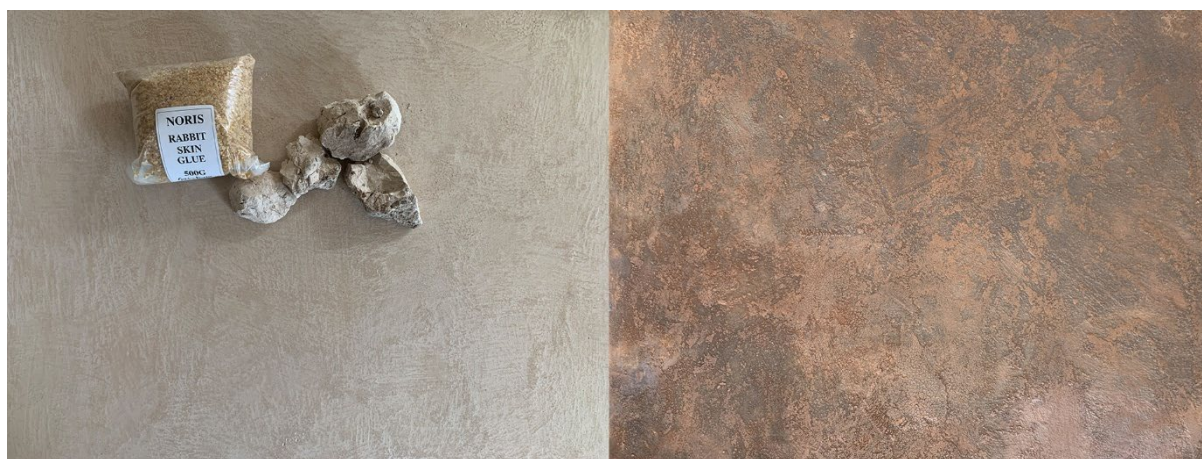


Figure 58. Clayboard made from sandy clay and rabbit-skin glue (left). Clayboard made from volcanic whenua and rabbit-skin glue (right), 2025.

Clayboard paint is similar to gesso, but the chalk grounds were replaced with soil.¹¹⁰ Using soil with a high clay content created a silky paint, which, when layered on board, produced clayboard, a substrate for graffito (scratching). I liked the materiality of the clayboard in itself, and just buffed the surface and rubbed pigment into the recesses.

¹¹⁰ Jim Yarbrough, "How to Make Your Own Clayboard," *Jim Yarbrough's Artblog: A 17th Century Artist Stuck in the 21st Century*, 2010, <https://jimyarbrough.wordpress.com/2010/08/23/how-to-make-your-own-clayboard/>.

b. Pigments and binders for paint-making

Pigments

Pigments used to make paint were purchased earth pigments, metal oxides, charcoal, graphite, and building site spoil. Watercolour paint was useful for making glazes. By using pigments from different sources, I was unable to make site-specific material connections except when making dyes or charcoal.

Acrylik medium¹¹¹

Natural Earth Paints manufactures a flexible, cellulose-based binder that is more affordable for smaller paintings. I used it to make thick paint and thin glazes. To paint the wooden rat trap, I had mixed the medium with ground charcoal. At the time of writing, the trap had been left outside to weather for 4 months, and the paint was nearly as vibrant as when it was applied.

Rabbit-skin glue

For the large canvases, rabbit-skin glue was used to make paint (1Tbsp per cup of water). Painting in the garden outside my studio, I took it outside in a double boiler. I have yet to test a wide-mouthed thermos flask for fieldwork farther from the studio.

Soymilk



Figure 59. Painting soy milk over layers of soy-based paint to stabilise the layers, 2025.

¹¹¹ Acrylik medium is the name of a cellulose-based medium produced by Natural Earth Paints

To make soymilk, dry soybeans are soaked overnight in water. The water was drained, then the soybeans were blended with fresh water. The liquid was strained through muslin, which was then squeezed to extract more milk. The dregs were composted. Soymilk needed to be stored in the fridge and had a limited shelf life. Pigments were mixed into soymilk to produce a thin paint, suitable for absorbent substrates such as cloth. A basic recipe can be found on the Natural Earth Paint blog.¹¹² Through prior experience, I knew that thick soy-based paint cracked and flaked. Instead, depth of pigment was built up through painting thin layers. Paint was also thickened by adding xanthan gum.

c. Dyes, ink, and shellac

Lichen dye

Windfall old man's beard lichen was previously soaked in ammonia and water to see how the colour changed. Left in a jar for seven years, the resultant brown sludge was paint-like, ideal for smearing on canvas.

Gorse staining

Pre-treating cotton cloth with mordants¹¹³ assists in dyeing with plant materials. The recipe I followed used Symplocos Plant Mordant, from the leaves of *Symplocos cochinchinensis*¹¹⁴, a tree that naturally accumulates aluminium after dyeing with tannin-rich plants.¹¹⁵ Cotton lawn cloth was simmered with symplocos powder and water in a copper. Testing the cloth with an iron sulphate solution¹¹⁶ I realised that my kanuka leaf dyebath had failed to impart tannins to the cloth. As a fix, I attempted another old process called dunging. According to Joy Boutrup and Catharine Ellis,

"Traditionally, cow dung was used to neutralize and fix mordants on cellulose fibers when tannins were not applied prior to the mordant. The phosphates and enzymes in the dried dung are active ingredients."¹¹⁷

¹¹² "DIY Natural Fabric Paint with Earth Pigments," *Natural Earth Paint*, June 22, 2024,

<https://natureearthpaint.com/blogs/blog/diy-natural-fabric-paint-with-earth-pigments>.

¹¹³ Substances which bind to fibres to be dyed and the dye pigments, acting as a connector.

¹¹⁴ *History of Symplocos Use – Plant Mordant Project*, n.d., accessed April 2, 2026, <https://www.plantmordant.org/history-of-symplocos-use/>.

¹¹⁵ Jenny Dean, "More about Symplocos Leaves as a Mordant," *Jenny Dean's Wild Colour*, September 4, 2017, <https://www.jennydean.co.uk/symplocos-leaves-mordant/>.

¹¹⁶ Iron sulphate solution modifies the colour of tannins to dark grey.

¹¹⁷ Joy Boutrup and Catharine Ellis, *The Art and Science of Natural Dyes: Principles, Experiments, and Results* (Schiffer Craft, 2018), 56.



Figure 60. Site of cowpat collection by the cliff top lookout, 2025, Ōpunake (left). Spreading out dunged cloth on the grass to dry (right).

To dung the cloth, cow pats were collected and stirred into a tub of water. I perceived the act of collecting dung from a cliff-top paddock as preventing a negligible amount of nitrates from fouling the nearby sea. Dunged cloth was spread on the grass to dry. Fibrous matter was swept from the cloth before dyeing.

Gorse flowers, picked by hand, were sprinkled onto sections of cloth, which were rolled, tied with string, and steamed for 90 minutes. The yellow-stained cloth was line-dried, rinsed, and dried again.



Figure 61. Bundle of gorse-stained cloth post-steaming (left), 2025. Unbundled cloth and steamed gorse flowers (right).

Indian ink

Indian ink is sold in small bottles. Making Indian ink from shellac and borax is useful when larger volumes are required. I adapted a recipe found in *Make Ink* by Justin Logan.¹¹⁸ 2 Tbsp of borax was dissolved in $\frac{3}{4}$ c of very hot water. $\frac{1}{4}$ c shellac flakes were slowly added, forming a syrupy liquid. The base has a pinkish-brown colour, altered by the addition of soot from the dye copper and other pigments.



Figure 62. Soot collected from the dye copper to use as pigment (left), 2025. Close-up of making Indian ink, shellac on the surface dissolves as it settles (right).

Shellac

Shellac varnish, made by dissolving shellac flakes in ethanol, gave rigidity to canvases and handmade paper. This enabled the canvas to hold a 3D form in the work *Symbiosis*, and for the paper to be threaded onto string in *Offerings to Papatūānuku*.

¹¹⁸ Jason Logan, *Make Ink: A Forager's Guide to Natural Inkmaking* (Open Road Integrated Media, Inc., 2018), 39, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=5495574>.

d. Growing soybeans



Figure 63. Young soybean plants (left), November 2025. Soybean pods on mature plants (right), January 2026.

A pop-up garden bed was made by layering cardboard, soil, fleece, coffee grounds and compost. The heirloom variety *Sonya* was sown every 15 cm in rows 45 cm apart. As soybeans fix nitrogen through a symbiotic relationship with bacteria in their roots, no further nitrogen was added as fertiliser. Plants were watered over the summer and harvested as they started to yellow, but before the seed pods burst open. They were dried upside-down in a shed. Once shelled, they can be stored in a cool, dry place for future use as paint.

e. Field guide to tending

The materiality of rubbish picked up in Ōpunake on walks from August 9 to September 8, 2025, and in Tāmaki Makaurau at home, on walks, and at work - gardening from September 10, 2025 to May 2, 2026.

	Ōpunake	Tāmaki Makaurau
Soft plastic	Fishing line tangled in kelp, rope Nitrile glove, face mask, earplugs Fake leaves and flowers, oasis (near the cemetery) Streamer fragments Wet wipes Vinyl handbag Fishing hand net Rice sack Cigarette butts Foam rubber Dacron	Mentos wrappers—mint and tropical Chewing gum Wet wipes Cigarette butts Paint flakes Weed mat fragments Rubbish bag ties Balloons—shrunk, Happy Birthday, Happy Valentine's Day Duct tape Shrink-wrap from scaffold removal Nerf bullet, small pink unicorn/rainbow facemask Dog poop bags (used) Teabags, sushi grass and fruit stickers (from compost bin)
Hard plastic	Lids and non-tamper rings, pieces Fishing lures Toy crinkle-cut chip Sunglasses Mesh encrusted with oyster shells Vape (could have been categorised as e-waste) Formica Syringe Pegs	Twinwall sheets, broken down into slivers Water bottle caps Takeaway coffee cup lids Disposable hot pink and white razor Christmas tree balls, confetti Electrical conduit Tetrapak – a confusing compound material Interdentals Sushi soya sauce fish container (from compost bin) Outdoor furniture plastic cane fragments
Polystyrene	Chunks and beads (macro and micro)	Chunks and beads (macro and micro)

Aluminium	Foil confectionery wrappers Drink cans, deodorant can	Wine bottle lids Fortune chocolate wrappers Drink cans and pull tabs Foil-wrapped kebabs Fortune chocolate wrappers Tea light
Steel	Beer bottle lids Rusty steel	Beer bottle caps Bent nail scissors Shelf brackets Nails and screws Wire
Ceramics	Worn by the tide Tiles	Broken miso bowls
Glass	Bottles Broken glass	Beer bottles Broken glass Tumbler
Paper	Tissues Receipt	Chopstick sleeves, serviettes Takeaway bags Cardboard box fragments <i>The Feminist Killjoy Handbook</i> Lists, colouring in
Wood	Iceblock stick 100 x 50 mm timber on wheels (burnt) Particle board (burnt)	Satay stick Plywood Takeaway teaspoon
Textiles	Rags and clothing, partly burnt	Christmas ribbon Witchy Halloween glove Hair tie Mop strings Sock



Figure 64. Rubbish collected at Middleton Bay on August 14, 2025.

Appendix II. Exhibition Documentation

Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery 3

June 11 to 15, 2026

Planning for the MVA graduate exhibition

Kōrero about choosing gallery spaces took place in my AUT studio, where I was testing a lunar arrangement of suspended artworks (see Figure 47). Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery technician, Eddie Clemens, suggested that Gallery 3 would be the easiest place to exhibit the artworks due to the lower ceiling height and existing lighting track. Although I was uninspired by the strip lighting in Gallery 3, I could see that installation would be easier in this space, and I was reassured that the lighting could be dimmed.

Artwork in the studio represented approximately four lunations, or lunar months, of picking up rubbish. I intended to increase the scale of this diaristic work to represent nine lunar months. Clusters of suspended strings depicting circularity would be arranged to take viewers on a circuitous journey through Gallery 3, immersing them in materiality and opening out into spaces for pausing and contemplation.

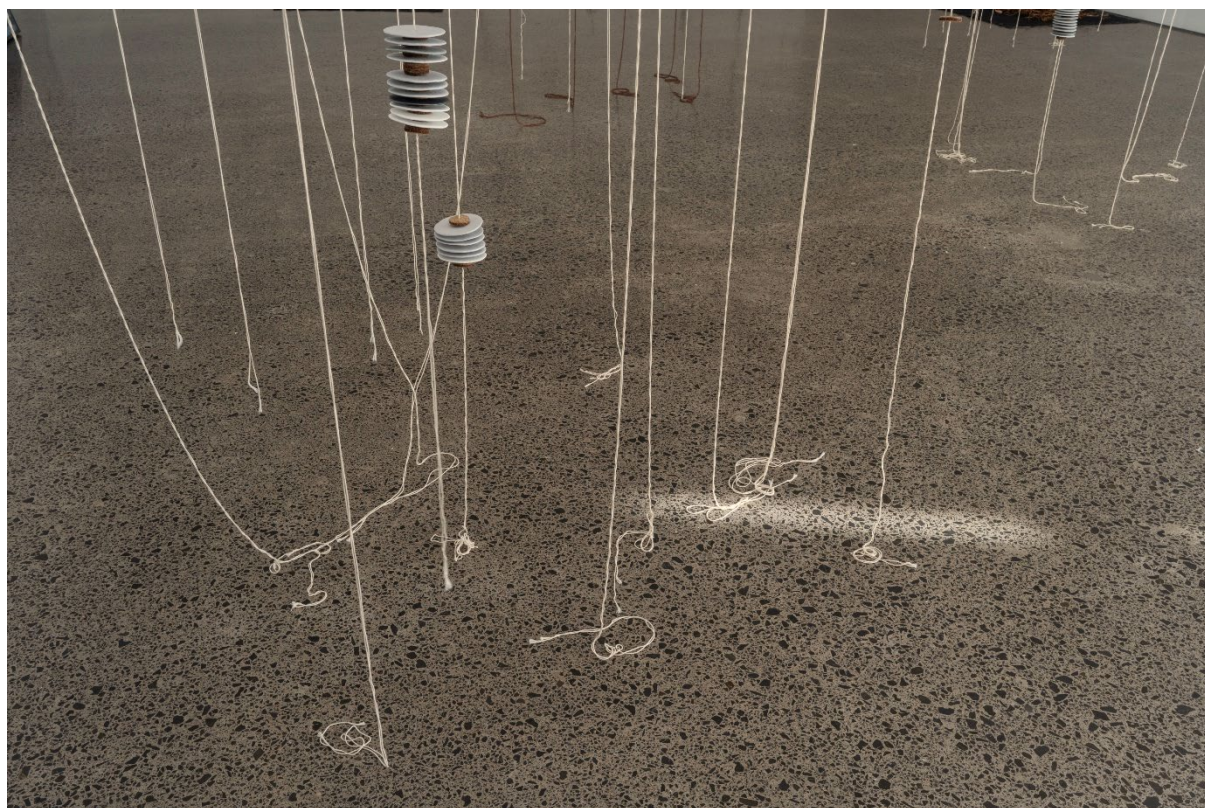


Figure 65. Clusters of suspended strings at the start of the journey through Gallery 3. Photograph Paul Chapman.

Room Sheet

Material considerations in a painting practice: Reciprocal creation with Papatūānuku through embodied fieldwork

Lunations of Tending, 2025-26

Cotton duck canvas circles sized with animal glue, +/- plaster bandage, gesso made with calcium carbonate and animal glue, limestone and cellulose-based paints, wool and hemp mulch mat spacers, shellac, 12/12 cotton tapestry warp, vintage seaming twine, brass washers.

The Material Nature of Rubbish, 2026

Laser-printed data sheet, clipboard, hand-made Indian ink, shellac.

Painting on the Beach, 2026

Single-channel video, stereo sound, 3.25 minutes, Middleton Bay, Ōpunake. Painting materials: earth and mineral pigments, and beach charcoal in soy binder, hand-made Indian ink on linen.

Fertile Ground for Soy, 2025-26

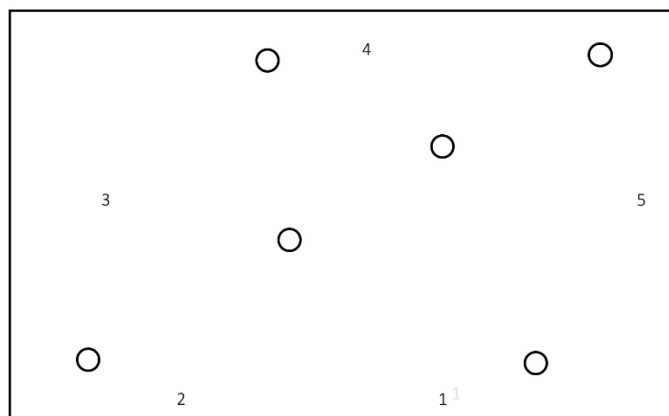
Harvested soybean plants, linen thread, wool mulch mat, painted with made and bought charcoal in soy binder. Charcoal made from home-grown grapes, grapes and basket willow grown at From Out of the Blue Studio Gallery, beach charcoal.

Gorse Management, 2026

Single-channel video, stereo sound, 4.27 minutes, Otahi stream, the lookout, From Out of the Blue Studio Gallery, Ōpunake.

Travelling with Tūpuna, 2025-26

Earth and mineral pigments in rabbit skin glue on canvas, lichen dye, shellac, gabion panel, banana pseudostem.



- Lunations of Tending
- 1 The Material Nature of Rubbish
- 2 Painting on the Beach
- 3 Fertile Ground for Soy
- 4 Gorse Management
- 5 Travelling with Tūpuna

Entry

Installation as collaboration

On the first day of installation, I arranged gabion panels on the gallery floor to test the journey. These wire mesh panels would be attached to the lighting track and used to suspend artworks. Having minimal fixings to the walls and ceiling sat comfortably with my kaupapa of leaving a minimal trace. The panels, borrowed from my garden, would return there after the exhibition.

Preparing the lighting track was the most time-consuming part of the installation. Bolting on additional lengths of steel Unistrut beam sounded straightforward, but it was fiddly. Eddie and I worked in tandem, each on a mobile platform at either end of the beams that would serve as fixing points for the gabion panels. The installed panels looked like part of the existing infrastructure, 'working with'.



Figure 66. Planning the journey—setting out gabion panels to hang *Lunations of Tending* before bolting them to the lighting track.



Figure 68. A space to pause. Photograph: Paul Chapman



Figure 67. Glimpses of *The Material Nature of Rubbish* on the wall and the video *Painting on the Beach*.

Fellow student Jo Bradbeer carefully passed me the strings of painted circles, following the order of the maramataka. Six clusters were arranged in an irregular circle, starting and ending with Ōturu, the full moon. Brown strings signalled the Ōpunake and compost bin tending days. The completed artwork was renamed *Lunations of Tending. The Material Nature of Rubbish*, a spreadsheet hanging on a clipboard on the wall, showed the materiality of rubbish picked up. This name was borrowed from the *Small Acts of Tending* exhibition at Nathan Homestead.

	Soft plastic	Hard plastic	Polystyrene	Steel	Aluminium	Ceramics	Fibrous cement	Glass	Paper/cardboard	Wood	Textiles	Maramataka and place
Opunake												
8/08/2025												o Ōturo
9/08/2025	10	3	2									
10/08/2025	3		270							2		waterfall
11/08/2025	22	12	1	1			1		1		9	
14/08/2025	1	34	2								2	
17/08/2025	25	7	2	2	8	6		4	2		3	
19/08/2025	16			2	3			1				
20/08/2025		4							1			
21/08/2025	2	4		2								1
23/08/2025												• Whiro
24/08/2025	8	3		1	6						1	
25/08/2025	2	4	4									
28/08/2025	2	5		1						1		
29/08/2025	16	2			2			1				
30/08/2025	2	11	4	1	1	7				2	2	
1/09/2025	16		7	1								
2/09/2025	2	4		2	1		2					
3/09/2025	4	15	1						1	1	2	

Figure 70. *The Material Nature of Rubbish* video still.

	Soft plastic	Hard plastic	Polystyrene	Steel	Aluminium	Ceramics	Fibrous cement	Glass	Paper/cardboard	Wood	Textiles	Maramataka and place
25/03/2026												
27/03/2026	1	1		1	2	1		20				
29/03/2026	18	2			1							
31/03/2026*	11				1							
31/3/2026**	4	2										
1/04/2026	7				11					2		AUT quad
2/04/2026	2									1		o Ōturu
3/04/2026	4	2		3								home
4/04/2026	117	10										
5/04/2026	28	10			1		1					
6/04/2026	8											
9/04/2026	5									1		
10/04/2026	3	1										
11/04/2026					1							
13/04/2026	8				1					4		
16/04/2026	9				1							• Whiro
17/04/2026	2								3			
18/04/2026	5	1								1	1	
20/04/2026	4	3			1		1		1			
22/04/2026	13	1										
25/04/2026	3	1										
27/04/2026	12				1	2				3		
28/04/2026	8	1										
30/04/2026	7	1								2		o Ōturu
1/05/2026	1								1			
2/05/2026	3											
	1864	444	381	135	116	16	3	50	259	15	37	3320

Figure 69. *The Material Nature of Rubbish* video still.

I had hoped to rehang *Soybean Constellation* as it was in the studio, but it was impossibly tangled. Jo carefully cut off the linen strings and passed them to me as I restrung the plants. Having Jo's assistance was invaluable, and I later enjoyed reciprocating by helping hang Jo's *Daily Decompositions* in her exhibition. Wool and hemp mulch mats painted with charcoal in a soy binder were among the last things installed, so they wouldn't be marked by footprints or dust. The partnership between the mats and soybeans was renamed *Fertile Ground for Soy*.



Figure 71. *Fertile Ground for Soy*—soybean plants suspended on linen thread over wool and hemp mulch mats painted with charcoal. Photograph: Paul Chaman.



Figure 72. Soybean pods—the next generation. Photograph: Kathryn George.



Figure 73. *Fertile Ground for Soy*

Connections

In Chapters 1 to 3 of this exegesis, I wrote about the artworks separately, but the exhibition brought them into relationship. The artworks were all connected through materiality, process and place.

Fertile Ground for Soy recreated the garden where the soybeans were grown, in past, present and future time. The charcoal primarily came from grape stems grown in the same garden, grape stems and willow grown at From Out of the Blue Studio Gallery, and burnt branches on an Ōpunake beach. The same beach charcoal was also used in *Painting on the Beach*, shown in the similarly named video. In the video *Gorse Management*, the willow is visible in the sequence where I stirred cow manure.



Figure 75. *Painting on the Beach*



Figure 74. *Gorse Management* video still

Trunk-like banana pseudostems edged the garden where I grew the soybeans (see Figure 40). They were also used as rollers in *Travelling with Tūpuna*. The way the leaf bases spiral in the pseudostems reminded me of the takarangi spiral, which connects maternal and paternal whakapapa. While emptying compost bins to prepare the soybean garden, I found a large quantity of rubbish, mainly fruit stickers and tea bags. This data, recorded on the spreadsheet in *The Material Nature of Rubbish*, informed *Lunations of Tending*.



Figure 76. *Travelling with Tūpuna*. Photograph: Paul Chapman.

Alternatives to acrylic paint binder are a common element in the artworks. Animal glue was used in the paint of *Travelling with Tūpuna* and in the gesso of *Lunations of Tending*. Soymilk was used in the paint in *The Painting on the Beach* and *Fertile Ground for Future Soy*. Harvested soybeans could be used to make paint in the future. Cloth stained in *Gorse Management* utilises cow dung to help bind the yellow of gorse flowers.



Figure 77. *Gorse Management* video. Photograph: Monique Redmond.

The maramataka is another connection. *Lunations of Tending* was re-strung to include markers of the Maramataka, as shown in the spreadsheet, *The Material Nature of Rubbish*. In the video *Painting on the Beach*, the painting was returned to Middleton Bay during a full-moon storm. When growing the soybeans, I followed the maramataka, planting seeds on optimal days for growth.

Giving back to Papatūānuku through reciprocity underpinned *Lunations of Tending*, the associated artwork, *The Material Nature of Rubbish*, and *Gorse Management*.



Figure 78. *Lunations of Tending*—circles representing polystyrene beads collected at the Middleton Bay waterfall (front) and steel bottlecaps collected at The Lookout, Ōpunake.

The viewing experience

The resulting installation was contemplative and multi-sensory. I noticed that viewers spent time experiencing the journey. Ethereal suspended artworks were offset by floor-based paintings and televisions, a reminder of our grounded connection to the earth.



Figure 79. Opening night. Photograph: Monique Redmond.



Figure 80. Shadows cast by spotlights visually expanded the space, as though pushing out the gallery walls. Photograph: Kathryn George.



Figure 81. Shadows from the window were a reminder of the outside world, to which the artworks were strongly connected.



Figure 82. Strings of painted circles—more silhouette-like in the distance.

Painted circles were like paintings presented on their sides. Their colour and form were visible up close, but at a distance, the strings of circles became silhouettes, indicating the scale of the installation. As the circles were tempting to touch, I would like to invite people to touch them in a future iteration. Another student suggested that I could give people a circle to carry as they move throughout the room. Plant-based paints gave off subtle aromas of soymilk and manuka oil. Sounds in the videos were specific to place and process—wind and waves on the beach, the plop of cow manure in a bucket, birdsong at dusk, and the sound of water dripping from wrung cloth.



Figure 83. The sound of water dripping in the bath could be heard on the video soundtrack. Photograph: Monique Redmond.

Deinstallation

The exhibition closed with a karakia. Unistrut beams were unbolted in tandem and stacked for future use. Two tack holes marked the gallery walls. The artworks were packed and stored for future iterations, indoors or outdoors. After soybean pods were saved, the plants were returned to the garden with gabion panels and lengths of banana pseudostem. Banana fibre would break down into mulch over time or could be used to make paper.

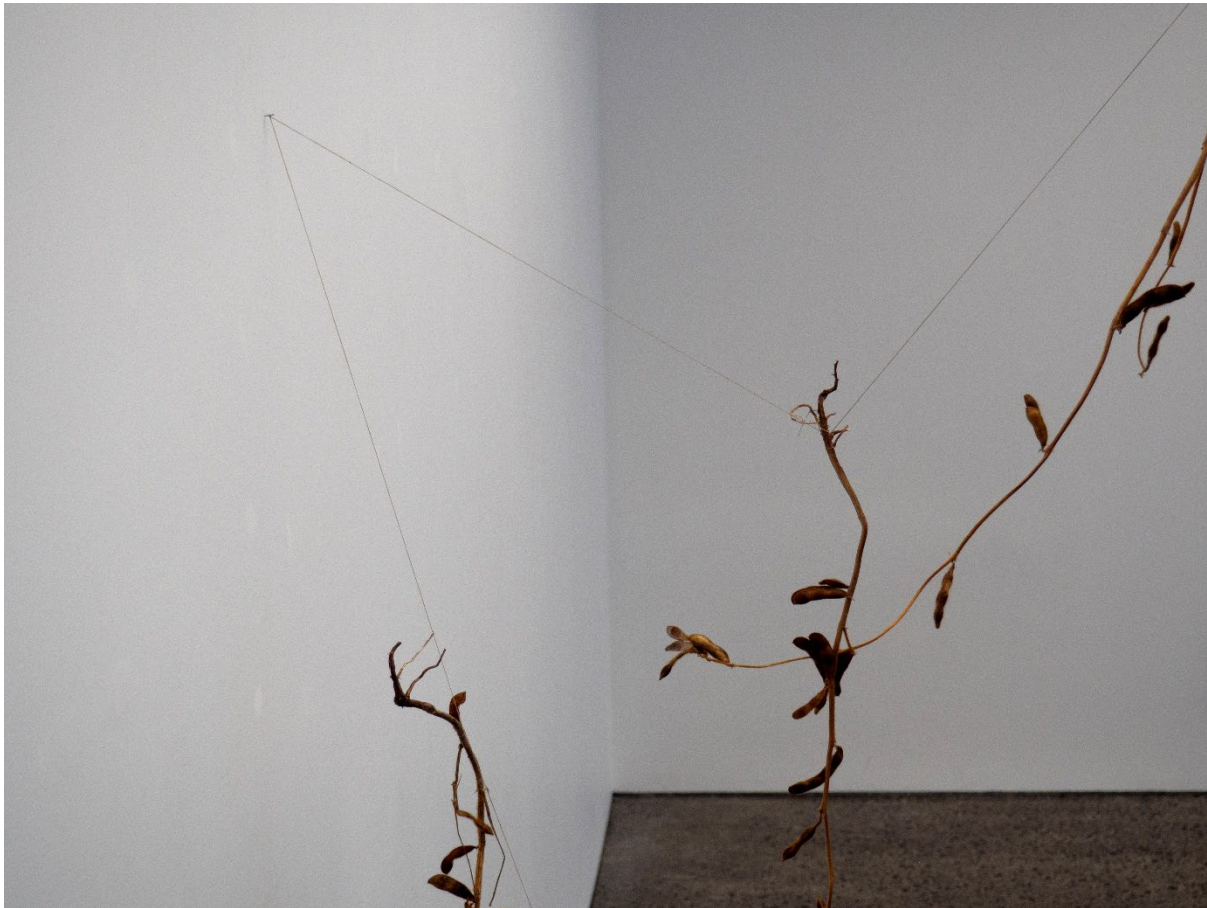


Figure 84. Wall tack.



Figure 85. Components en route to the garden.

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