

Walls That Speak
Creative Multivocality Within Tangatarua

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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.”

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Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi; engari he toa takitini
Collective effort is more significant than individual effort

This study is dedicated to those unnamed art students whose collective effort and unity of purpose contributed in small but significant ways to the sumptuous walls of Tangatarua Marae. The privilege of contributing would not have been possible without the foresight and mantle of guidance extended by Hiko o te Rangi Hohepa.

I thank those who love me for their forbearance on this project.

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Abstract

E raka te maui, e raka te katau

Each respective skill is valued

This research posits art as an *encounter*, an encounter between the conceptual worlds of artists and of viewers. It acclaims the respective art skills within the marae (communal meeting place) named Tangatarua at Waiariki Institute of Technology, Rotorua. Tangatarua Marae is a place of bicultural encounter. This writing includes readers in the social relations of this encounter.

This is a qualitative study that uses an interpretive epistemology to examine some of the art forms of Tangatarua. My focus is on micronarratives - that is, on intimate, improvised meanings generated by some of the small artworks. These reference and affirm the symbolism of the carvings but are less visible due to their lesser scale and interstitial placement within the interior architecture. They are rendered more visible through the phenomenological detail of participant accounts as well as the positivism of a formalist critique.

I posit art as a dialogical activity, inseparable from the phenomenological conditions that precede and inform it, and inseparable from the emergent meaning that is forged at its encounter. I contend that the collaborative mode of art production within Tangatarua embodies this dialogical model.

I amplify some of the tangible art forms of Tangatarua by dismantling the *intangible* discursive forms that have impinged on them. These include aspects of the political context of the establishment of the marae, Waiariki Institute of Technology's bicultural framework, and the pedagogy of its Art School.

My writing is underpinned by a participatory paradigm acknowledging my situatedness as an artist participant within Tangatarua, a woman of Ngai Tahu descent, and art tutor at Waiariki Institute of Technology. This study similarly acknowledges the multifaceted, experiential transactions between those artists whose small collective gestures have informed and transformed the interior of Tangatarua.

Walls That Speak – Creative Multivocality Within Tangatarua

Aho (threads)

Walls that Speak refers to the mythological talking poupou (wall-posts) of Tangaroa's underwater whareniui (communal house). As the powerful god of the ocean surrounding Aotearoa (New Zealand), Tangaroa commanded due respect in all fishing protocols. His whanaunga (relative) named Manuruhi had failed to observe these protocols on a fishing expedition, incurring Tangaroa's wrath. He was transformed into a bird and affixed to the apex of the roof gable of Tangaroa's whareniui. Desperate to retrieve Manuruhi from underwater captivity, his father Ruatepupuke set fire to Tangaroa's house, salvaging the carved poupou of the porch, which later became the blueprint for carving (Mead, 1986, p.10).

Ironically, while Ruatepupuke is credited with discovering the origins of carving in Aotearoa, his eponymous whareniui¹ now resides in the Field Museum in Chicago, a casualty of the commodification of culture. Since the salvaged poupou no longer spoke when Ruatepupuke transported them to the mortal realm, it is now up to carvers to activate their voices by embellishing them.

The walls of Waiariki Institute of Technology's marae, Tangatarua, are richly embellished with innovative design and diverse materials generated by multiple creative voices. This study critiques the conception, generation, and reception of some of the smaller creative voices within Tangatarua. It hopes to make these voices more intelligible, not through their volume, but by encouraging a more careful listening, which in turn might engender reciprocal voices.

¹ In 1992 a former art graduate of Waiariki, Hone te Ihi o te Rangi Ngata, worked in Chicago on a restoration project for Ruatepupuke initiated by Te Waka Toi, NZ Art Council. The whareniui used to stand at Te Ariuru, Tokomaru Bay, in 1890 and had been in the Field Museum since 1905 on intermittent display. It was 'rediscovered' during the 1984-86 *Te Maori* tour of the USA.

Tangatarua Marae is sited on a volcanic plateau in the centre of Te Ika a Maui, the North Island of Aotearoa. It is in the city of Rotorua, the tribal region of Te Arawa whose lands house the tertiary campus of Waiariki Institute of Technology. The wharenuī (communal house) of Tangatarua is named Ihenga, after a celebrated Te Arawa ancestor, while its adjacent wharekai (dining hall) is named Hinetekakara after Ihenga's wife. Tangatarua Marae was officially opened on the 5th of October 1996, five years after the first plans were drafted, and four years after a carved manuka stake was buried under its initial foundations to bless the project. Its lavish walls exhibit a creative convergence of traditional and contemporary designs, specialised processes, and innovative materials.

This creativity was the culmination of four years of commissioned carving and weaving expertise, overseen respectively by foremost Te Arawa exponents Lyonel Grant and Tina Wirihana. Their expertise was complemented by the voluntary skills of art students and tutors of the Waiariki Design School. As an art tutor during this time I was witness to, and participant in, this creative teamwork. Hence my writing is cognisant of my multiple positions as researcher, artist-participant, woman of Ngai Tahu descent, and art tutor.

My study affirms the creative teamwork of Tangatarua. My focus is on artworks which are visually inconspicuous in relation to the large carved poupou (wall posts) and the expansive turapa (woven panels) of the wharenuī, occurring mainly in the interstitial wall places between them. My focus also includes a complementary wall installation in Hinetekakara, the adjoining wharekai (dining hall). These artworks are comparatively small and subtle, their messages less predetermined by a holistic kaupapa (scheme) than those of the poupou and turapa. I want to draw attention to their inextricable but often divergent relationship to the larger forms. I also want to draw attention to their ad hoc, dialogical mode of production that prioritised shared creative skills.



Figure 1 Tangatarua Marae, Rotorua. On the right is the whareniui (communal house) named Ihenga and on the left is the wharekai (dining hall) named Hinetekakara, after Ihenga's wife.



Figure 2 Small artworks inside Tangatarua.

These artworks all comprise small, multivocal acts of creativity that embroider, cross-reference, interpret and affirm in their detail the strong three-dimensional symbolism conveyed in the adjacent carvings. They are concerned more with paying cultural homage than with individual authorship or originality. Their imagery has been bricolaged² from literary, archival, and personal sources, and collaboratively processed.

This study reinstates an emphasis on collaborative artistic production by focusing on works in Tangatarua that were collectively, rather than individually generated. As overall designer, co-ordinator, and Master Carver, Lyonel Grant encouraged the creative team to adopt a dialogical approach to artistic problems. While his own role was culturally prescribed and mediated by the sage counsel and expectations of Waiariki's Kaumatua³ (spiritual advisor), there

² Bricolaged here means improvised, and derives from the French term for doing odd jobs.

³ Hiko o te Rangi Hohepa was appointed Kaumatua in 1991 by the CEO, Arapeta Tahana, who described this role as "literally the servant of the people." Hiko had been destined to play this diplomatic and spiritual role, explaining; "I come from the Tohunga line. I was groomed for that from birth. The whole tribe has a hand in it."

was considerable latitude for innovation and ad hoc processes in the expression of prescribed concepts. Such latitude validated and empowered the smaller creative voices.

I reveal some of those voices through the phenomenology of first-hand participant accounts to illuminate aspects of the collaborative mode undertaken. Production in media specific workshops meant that this mode was often more akin to a Mediaeval division of labour than to contemporary art practice.

Whitney Chadwick notes; “Art history’s emphasis on individual genius has distorted our understanding of workshop procedures and the nature of collaborative artistic production” (1990, p.15).

Student participants numbered about 40, some involved for sustained periods and some for short periods. In some instances tasks were undertaken in scheduled classes and completed after hours or at weekends. Media teams were not fixed, comprising those students who were available at the time with the requisite skills. More than half the student participants identified as Maori, with an even gender mix.

First-hand, experiential accounts have been distilled from questionnaires⁴ where it was agreed that participants would not be named. It was initially envisaged that these questionnaires would yield a more cohesive overview of collaboration, but responses were fewer and less elaborate than expected. Both verbatim and paraphrased responses are interspersed throughout Chapter 6 *Artworks of Tangatarua*, reflecting the extemporised, fragmented nature of production that they give insight to.

Collaborative production in Tangatarua resulted in a rich tapestry of diverse media and imagery, generated by diverse voices - Maori and non-Maori, abstract and figurative, universal and localised. Lyonel Grant himself considered this diversity a prerequisite for engagement with diverse audiences;

⁴ Ethics Approval for Application Number 07/103 was granted on 7 February 2008. My questionnaire is included in this study as an appendix.

“I wanted there to be something for everybody, really. While the whole idea of Ihenga was to try and reach and touch as many people as you could in the one package, perhaps even more important are those who are unfamiliar with the culture. Ihenga needed to reach out to them also” (2007, p.31).

This study is intended to enhance this ‘reaching out’. While the physical artworks are its focus, they are not considered autonomous in the Modernist sense, but as ‘one package’, inextricable from the cultural context that gave rise to them. While all of the diverse forms and objects under scrutiny will be referred to as ‘artworks’ for the purpose of this study, this does not imply that they can be reduced to common terms. Neither does it imply a fine art emphasis, or a cultural separation of these objects.

Mason Durie’s notion of “continuum” conveys the plurality of cultural context; “Tradition can denote fixed, restrictive stereotypes but the notion of continuum enables a mutually dependent dynamic to emerge, a developmental journey where there is fusion of media, cultures, times, and memories” (2002, p.22).

Tangatarua’s cultural ‘fusion’ includes local Te Arawa history, the institutional politics of Waiariki Institute of Technology, and the pedagogical influence of Waiariki’s School of Art and Design. These disparate aho (threads) have intertwined with Maori tradition and contemporary invention to produce innovative artworks. It is a vigorous twining, tensioned by diversity yet still connected to Maori tradition. The creative voices within Tangatarua have been cognisant of the rich cultural endowment from Te Arawa and embody the whakatauaki (proverb):

He toi whakairo he mana tangata
Artistic expression enriches cultural life

These words ascribe a communal function to Maori art. They suggest that collective beliefs might be affirmed when artwork is encountered. Nicolas Bourriaud ascribes a communal function to *all* art, deeming it more meaningful in terms of the social relations of its encounter than in terms intrinsic to art itself.

He describes art as “an activity consisting in producing relationships with the world with the help of signs, forms, actions and objects” (1998, p.107).

This study is premised on a whariki (woven mat) of interconnectedness that deems the generating, viewing and apprising of art as communal, reciprocal encounters. My aim is twofold: firstly, to encourage such an inclusive relationship for viewers with some of the diverse ‘signs, forms, actions and objects’ of Tangatarua; and secondly, to suggest that through this relationship, the diverse voices of *viewers* are also activated. My intention is to furnish an account that does not merely describe the art disciplines within, or connote meanings, but also evokes the connective and poetic power of the artworks themselves, conveying “a sense of the contingent interrelation of the acts of making, seeing and saying, of the interchangeability of both subject and object” (Christina Barton, 2000, p.68).

As writer and participant in the artworks I intend to convey a potential interchangeability between artists and readers. I also intend to embrace a sense of the plural and ambiguous facets of my cultural identity and those of the participants through accounts that disperse causal connections and reassuring fixity.

In our post-modern relativistic age we find ourselves adrift in a sea of stories that cannot be fathomed nor anchor found. We find ourselves in a world without certainties; without a fixed framework of belief; without truth; without decidable meaning. We have no unique history, but a multitude of competing histories. We have no right or moral action but a series of explanations for behaviour. We have no body of knowledge, but a range of alternative cultural descriptions (Hilary Lawson, 2001: ix).

To counter finding myself ‘adrift in a sea of stories’ I have adopted hermeneutics as an anchoring framework for this study. Hermeneutics encourages the separate consideration of the physical, formalist context of art and the political context that informs and receives it, giving each due attention whilst still acknowledging their inextricable interrelationship. It furnishes a temporarily

separate lens for the artworks and the conditions of their making. Neither form nor content have priority, avoiding the extremes of what Michael Pickering (2007) calls “under-politicised aesthetic enchantment and the demystificatory position of over-politicised disenchantment.” My writing intends to avoid these extremes by adopting a demystificatory position for *both* the aesthetic *and* the political in regard to Tangatarua.

Hermeneutics is also a useful tool to help dismantle the ambiguity of my roles as art collaborator, writer, and art educator employee of the institution that has sponsored Tangatarua. My writing could be generated from ambiguous or competing interests, or mediated by my unwitting subscription to hidden ideological agendas.

“Art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.7). I need to interrogate my own part in this ‘predisposing’ in order to resist it in my writing. As it is more than ten years since the opening of Tangatarua, I may succumb to the subjective tendency to shape an aspirational, nostalgic account that gives closure to ambivalence and tensions. As Roger Neich warns, albeit in sexist terms; “History cannot be known except through the subjectivity of the historian himself” (1993, p.11). My ‘subjectivity’ as a part-Maori woman may predispose me to try and dismantle phallogocentric and Eurocentric assumptions. Likewise, my subjectivity as an art educator may predispose me to validate and promote the art disciplines that constitute Waiariki’s art programme. As an employee, I may unwittingly commend myself with academic and artistic self-applause, legitimating the social differences admonished by Bourdieu.

Kaore te kumera e korero mo tona reka

The kumera doesn’t commend its own sweetness

Reflexively critiquing my own writing guards against becoming a noisy kumera. However, this reflexive task is often occluded by socially conditioned ways of perceiving the world, resulting in ‘social differences’ being interrogated with the

very epistemological mechanisms that legitimate difference in the first place. To avoid perpetuating habitual ways of perceiving, the mechanisms of perception *themselves* need to be the object of scrutiny. This entails addressing not so much *what* is known, but *how* it is known.

To this end my methodology considers three inextricable contexts; the cultural context of Tangatarua Marae, the formalist context of the artworks, and art discourses. These are not discrete and tend to interweave and recur in all chapters. They are isolated here as separate contexts to clarify my methodology.

Methodology

The first context, *the cultural context of Tangatarua Marae*, aims to reveal some of the enriching tensions of biculturalism by examining the social relations that gave rise to the artworks. The Chapter *Tangatarua*, provides a political and historical account of the establishment of Tangatarua Marae within the educational context of Waiariki Institute of Technology. I discuss the cultural function of artworks within marae to show their local, tribal connectedness, distinct from autonomous artworks. I contrast indigenous and Eurocentric paradigms to account for the tensions between incommensurable views, and to promote a space of enunciation. I reaffirm this promotion in my final chapter, *Inclusive Pedagogy*. I posit the concept of waahi ngaro (invisible dimensions) to convey an indigenous sensibility in Chapter 3 *Art Discourse*, and in Chapter 5 *Art's Reception*. I also convey indigenous erudition with whakatauaki (proverbs) throughout all chapters.

My second context, *the formalist context of the artworks*, examines their aesthetic and dialogical significance. In my chapter entitled *Artworks of Tangatarua*, I apply formalism as a positivist analytical tool to critique an innovative fusion of indigenous art, modernist and post-modernist approaches within Tangatarua. I account for the media technologies employed in this fusion, describing some of the ad hoc, improvised creative processes to reveal the

collaborative mode of production undertaken. I emphasise collaboration as a departure from contemporary art practice that attributes merit to recognised, individual artists. I implicate a legacy of modernism in contemporary art practice, deconstructing some of modernism's canons and hierarchical assumptions. I posit the notion of relational aesthetics in my chapters *Cultural Understandings*, and *Artworks of Tangatarua* to undermine the primacy of formalism, and to privilege the dialogical significance of these artworks. I emphasise the latter by conveying the extemporised nature of production via accounts from participant interviews. My section, *Pedagogy*, links modernism's legacy to tertiary art pedagogy, and considers the Bauhaus influence in the generation and reception of the art of Tangatarua. At the same time, I draw attention to my own ambiguous position of interrogating and colluding with modernism.

The third context of this study, *Art discourses*, addresses aspects of ideology underpinning definitions of art and artists. My chapter on *Cultural Understandings* exposes the exercise of curatorial and pedagogical power in art in Aotearoa. My chapters on *Art Discourse* and *Art's Reception* consider some of the marginalising impacts of this power. My section *A Culturally Constituted Artist*, adopts a post-structuralist view of art and artists as inextricably constituted in culture. I suggest a recursive connectedness between making, viewing and apprising art based on this view. My chapter on *Situated Writing* similarly defines the *writer* as culturally constituted, and interrogates the ambiguity of my own multiple positions as artist-participant, art tutor, and writer. I employ hermeneutics as a tool throughout to dismantle these inextricable subject-positions, and to prevent my study becoming autodidactic. My final chapter *Inclusive Pedagogy* advances a democratic reconceptualising of art in Aotearoa. I cite the views and strategies of various educational theorists to propose ways of transforming institutional practices and negotiating inclusion. I contend that adopting a reflexive approach will encourage discursive awareness and safeguard a space for bicultural negotiation.

Throughout all contexts I adopt a recursive stance, mindful that a researcher is "the object of knowledge and the subject that knows" (Foucault, in Smart, 1985, p.136). Jean-Francois Lyotard also recognised this recursive aspect of

research, describing it as autodidactic, and warning “you cannot scrutinise a subject without being scrutinised by it” (1992, p.116).

Thus a scrutiny of Tangatarua exposes more than the artwork within; it exposes the ideological ground of my looking. I am recursively implicated in my own research as subject and object. As Francis Pound says; “The critical frame... determines the form of the framed: it is inextricably mixed with the work, so that one may not ever determine where one ends and one begins” (1992, p.186).

With this paradox in mind, I begin this study by trying to extricate some of the cultural, political and educational ‘frames’ that have informed the establishment of Tangatarua.

A Bicultural Marae

Tangatarua was conceived as a bicultural marae. Biculturalism implies binationalism and in Aotearoa (New Zealand) refers to a Maori-Pakeha⁵ relationship distinct from a multicultural one, enshrined in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. Tangatarua was established in 1996 so that Waiariki Polytechnic's bicultural policies could be substantively implemented on a site whose name, meaning two people, seems synonymous with bicultural practice.⁶ This tertiary institution derived its own name, Waiariki, from its geological environment of simmering thermal activity, which translates as waters of the gods.



Figure 3 The view over the simmering thermal waters of the Gods, Waiariki, from the office of the CEO of Rotorua's eponymous tertiary institution. The famous geyser, Pohutu, punctuates the sky with steamy plumes.

Figure 4 Further references to the waters of the Gods punctuate the interior of the whareniui (communal house) of Tangatarua Marae. On the right is Ngatoroirangi, a poupou (wall-post) that originated from a whareniui built in 1906, Nuku te Apiapi, once extant close to Pohutu Geyser. Beside Ngatoroirangi is a newer poupou depicting his sisters, Kuiwai and Haungaroa, the gods credited with bringing thermal activity to Aotearoa. The heke (rafter) pattern above them is an abstract depiction of thermal mist and steam.

⁵ Maori means indigenous while Pakeha is a counterpart term for non-indigenous.

⁶ While Tangatarua literally translates as two people, it is the name of a Te Arawa ancestor who lived in the vicinity, as well as the name accorded to the hilltops south-west of the marae.

The Waiariki region is a god-given natural wonder in Romanticism's sublime, monotheist sense, but it is *Maori* gods who are credited as its creators. These were the fire-bearing gods summoned by Te Arawa tohunga, Ngatoroirangi, to deliver him from life-threatening cold on the snowy summit of Ngauruhoe. These gods swam underwater from ancestral Hawaiki, surfacing intermittently and rupturing the surface with a legacy of steaming volcanic fissures that now distinguish the Waiariki region.

Waiariki History

Tangatarua had been envisaged as the embodiment of the spirit of bicultural partnership. For Waiariki's Polytechnic's Kaumatua (spiritual advisor) Hiko o te Rangi Hohepa, Tangatarua would be a site to *practise* rather than merely theorise about this partnership: "Biculturalism means trying to work together in partnership and accepting each other. I think most people just want to talk about it, not to do anything about living up to what it really means" (1995).

A local Tangata Whenua Accord was signed in 1996 to ensure that Waiariki was in fact 'living up to what it really means' to be bicultural. This document formalised a partnership of mutual consultation between Waiariki and its local iwi (tribal) representatives and educational gatekeepers, Te Mana Matauranga. At this time Waiariki Polytechnic also subscribed to the principles of the Ministry of Education's 1989 document, *Learning for Life* which stated that "full participation by Maori in the spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi is an important objective of the post-compulsory education and training system" (2.2.2, p.13).

This principle was endorsed in Waiariki Polytechnic's own Charter Document of 1989 which declared that it "acknowledges the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi with recognition that the achievement of a partnership with the Tangata Whenua in its provision of PSET (post-school education and training) programmes is a matter of priority".

The establishment of Tangatarua would help meet this provision by ensuring the uncompromised delivery on site of Maori programmes which had formerly been accommodated at local marae, often facing postponement when unanticipated local tribal events took precedence. Tangatarua would not only provide much-needed teaching facilities, but would furnish a holistic environment for the transmission and ritual enactment of Maori culture. Its wharenuī, Ihenga, would be a tangible repository of Maori art and symbolism, “a visual anthology”⁷ according to its Master carver, Lyonel Grant (Personal Communication, 1995).

Wharenuī

Wharenuī are sometimes misconceived as traditional, communal sites exhibiting a visual anthology similar to Ihenga’s. Material culture was not formerly contained like this in a single architectural repository, but was manifest in all aspects of social life such as clothing, utensils, implements, weapons, architecture, and waka (boats). Ornamentation and surface decoration were neither gratuitous nor purely aesthetic, but enhanced the efficacy of a specific ritual function. Maori iconography seamlessly combined form and function to meet spiritual and practical needs. This iconography responded to and reflected regional materials and changing political circumstances (Neich, 1993, p.92). Attributing a showcase function to early wharenuī may owe more to the practices of the European museum than to Maori accounts, practices which were inclined to record, represent and classify. “This notion of putting words and things in museums and archives as though they are discrete, unmediated, objective artefacts, is one that continues to be contentious” (Cruikshank, 1992).

Roger Neich (1993, p.92) has surveyed the changing political circumstances of early wharenuī, and has collated varying accounts of their scale, purpose and degree of ornamentation. It seems they were not the focus of communal life and

⁷ I am mindful here of ‘anthology’s’ etymological link to a collection of flowers, which in turn evokes Hirini Mead’s term Te Puwaitanga (flowering) for that period of classical efflorescence within Maori carving between 1500 and 1800.

were generally smaller and minimally decorated in comparison to contemporary models. Ceremonial occasions were often conducted in the open, and visitors slept outdoors or were hosted in the chief's wharepuni (sleeping dwelling), or even slept on the porches of pataka (storehouses).

By the 1840s the dimensions and function of communal houses had expanded. House ownership had transferred from the chief to the hapu (extended family), and became a focus of collective prestige, rather than individual chiefly prestige, expressed by a more denotative style of narrative carving. This style asserted a *collective* identity in the face of European encroachment, as well as a *local* identity for the hosts of large intertribal hui (meetings that were convened, sometimes hurriedly, to address land issues). The chief substituted the now-communal house for his own private dwelling, a move which Neich suggests may have been a strategy to maintain and safeguard his social position. He cites Groube to summarise these changes;

“The fully carved meeting house with its associated patterns of cultural behaviour, evolved in post-European times as a combination of ideas from the chief's dwelling house, large temporary guest-houses, and the churches of the European missionaries” (1993, p.90).

The ‘churches of the European missionaries’ are also confirmed by Hirini Mead as an influence in the evolution of contemporary wharenui. Mead considers that the need to evangelise to large gatherings was one of the main factors in the promotion of larger buildings.

“Its clear identification as a communal meeting-house rather than as a chief's house did not come until some very drastic and revolutionary changes had altered the settlement pattern, the religion, and the technology of the Maori” (in Neich, 1993, p.92).

Waiariki Polytechnic's chief executive officer, Arapeta Tahana, also attributed a religious function to the establishment of Tangatarua. He drew an analogy between the Gothic Cathedral and the contemporary marae;

“The marae is the essence of Maori culture. It is the Maori equivalent of the cathedral, which is the essence of European spirituality. Figuratively speaking, we have to build that European cathedral into Waiariki Polytechnic's marae” (1992).

Hirini Melbourne gives primacy to *Maori* spirituality in contrast to the equivalence that Arapeta perceives between the marae and the cathedral. He contends that the presence of wharenuī (communal houses), or wharewhakairo, (carved houses) empowers Maori to resist, or at least appropriate on their own terms, the moral imperatives of Christianity:

Whatever alien influences have affected Maori people, Maori culture itself is able to assimilate them – Christianity for example – rather than be assimilated by them. So long as the wharewhakairo is there to provide a context linking contemporary Maori people to their ancestors, Maori culture will not be swamped by the dominant culture (1990, p.139).

Jeffrey Sissons believes that wharenuī built in the 1860s were a deliberate statement of resistance to ‘the dominant culture’, especially to Christianity, suggesting; “We might regard meeting houses as potent counter-symbols designed and built to directly contrast with churches and the disempowerment that they stood for” (1998, p.2).

In 2004 an art installation sited beside Christchurch Cathedral also seemed like a ‘potent counter-symbol’ to Christianity. The artwork comprised a large boulder onto which moving images of a dancer were projected. The title, *Ahakoā He Iti*, is a contraction of the whakataurangi (proverb) “ahakoā he iti he pounamu”, meaning that small or seemingly insignificant objects may be immeasurably precious, akin to pounamu (greenstone). While these words contrast the boulder with the comparatively lofty and monumental permanence of the Cathedral, they also aptly ascribe significance to the small artworks of Tangatarua

This audio-visual work by artists Rachel Rakena and Keri Whaitiri, literally illuminated the function of mauri stones, repositories of a spiritual essence. Projected ephemeral images evoked a sense of something intangible and resistant to capture, made more tenuous by the boulder's granular texture and the spasmodic urban glare.



Figure 5 *Ahakoa He Iti* installation Cathedral Square Christchurch 2004 (Lightworx Photography)

At the opening ceremony for this work, Tahu Potiki, CEO of Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, observed; “What is poignant here is the placement of the rock alongside the cathedral, a vessel of settler spirituality. English mauri, steepled, proud and foreign juxtaposed with the toka tu-moana, the long standing sea-rock, ancient, unpretentious, unavoidable” (in Wood, 2004).

Tahu Potiki also compared the rock with te punga i mau ai (the anchor which binds), alluding to the symbolic role of women in ‘anchoring’ the whanau (family) together. “The anchor stone is fixed and stable like Papatuanuku herself, the earth mother” (ibid). Tahu’s grounded female analogy offers further contrast to the phallogentric, celestial soaring of the Christchurch Cathedral, which symbolically once dominated settler horizons.

The ‘cathedral’ of Tangatarua, the communal house named Ihenga, now dominates the most elevated part of the Waiariki Institute of Technology campus. It symbolically links the local Te Arawa tribe to their eponymous ancestor, a renowned explorer who was credited with discovering the major lakes and significant sites of the Waiariki region. As an explorer, Ihenga exemplified the requisite spirit of enquiry and innovation for the pursuit of knowledge.



Figure 6 Waiariki Institute of Technology’s website image (2008) recaptures Ihenga’s enquiring spirit in an allegory of educational achievement.

Having the world at one’s feet is suggested in a geographic likeness of Te Arawa lands which extend from the summit of Tongariro in the west to Maketu on the eastern coast. A whakatauki (proverb) that is often quoted at Waiariki Institute of Technology graduations echoes this achievement:

Te manu e kai i te miro nona te ngahere

Te manu e kai i te matauranga nona te ao.

The bird who consumes the miro berry has the forest as its dominion

The bird who consumes education has the world as its dominion.

Ihenga the Te Arawa explorer also exemplified pacifism and tolerance, atypical qualities in leaders of his era. He was only provoked into taking up arms to avenge the murder of his daughter. Kaumatua (spiritual advisor) Hiko o te Rangi Hohepa explains; “I deliberately chose a man of peace as most appropriate for an educational house, such as Waiariki’s” (1996, p.3).

Pakeha Protest

In spite of this peaceable homage and the unwavering dedication and optimism of the Kaumatua, Waiariki's marae project was assailed by vigorous philosophical opposition, financial constraints, and a pervasive skepticism from the public. Some expressed their concern for what they perceived as disproportionate expenditure of taxpayers' money. Others expressed their opposition to indigenous beliefs. Many thinly disguised the latter sentiments in the more politically correct guise of the former. Chief executive Arapeta Tahana's transparent and culturally inclusive promotion of the marae project was not enough to deflect discomfort about the politics of indigeneity.

The politics of indigeneity does not disregard the rights of others, nor imply political isolation. Rather, it rejects domination and subjugation as the foundation of political order. It rejects one culture positioning itself as the 'normal' basis for the conduct of public affairs (O'Sullivan, 2006, p.1).

An internal Waiariki Polytechnic newsletter was established, partly to offset the negative sentiments expressed, but also to update and celebrate the marae project for internal staff. This newsletter was named *He Whiringa Korero* by the Kaumatua, meaning a supportive gathering of news. A sample of headlines contained in articles between 1992 and 1993 affirm the progress and spiritual context of the project:

Kaumatua Blesses Marae Site
Towards a Bicultural Policy
Ceremony Establishes Spirit of House
Marae to be Artistic Centre

A more confrontational tenor is evident in external local newspaper headlines:

Polytechnic Says Lee Can Test Marae Case in Court
Student Lodges Formal Complaint
Waiariki Debate Continues
Polytechnic Disharmony- System at Fault?
(Daily Post 1993, April 29 ; Ibid; April 28; Ibid)

The latter headlines all focused on objections to the erection of a sign outlining kawa (protocol) pertaining to the building of the wharenui. It prohibited women and children, and the consumption of food from the construction site, a restriction that was enshrined in the principles of tapu and noa (sacred and secular). In 1993 Hiko Hohepa explained the origins of this restriction:

When they built or made things, females were not allowed to help in this work. Right from the beginning, female was regarded as the opposite of the male; they too have a role to play but it is not the same role. During the work of construction and carving, the women do the taurapa (wall panels) and tukutuku, but not on site. While the women are not allowed into buildings or constructions of any sort until they are completed, they play a big part when it comes to lifting the tapu or sacredness. The tapu cannot be lifted without them, because it is women who have the power to make a building noa, or free for use.

Vociferous protest suggested that women were adversely discriminated against, with one protest going as far as the Human Rights Commission, though unsuccessfully. It is ironic that the latter protest was authored by a male on behalf of the silent women he argued were disempowered. Those women engaged on artistic work within Tangatarua were unperturbed by the prohibition, and pursued their respective tasks on other premises that were often better suited than a construction site. These women were committed to a cultural division of labour because it met the artistic demands of their various disciplines, while still honouring the collective effort.

*E hara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa taki tini.
My effort derives not from my individual strength,
but rather from the concerted action of many people.*

Participation in this bicultural project entailed multiple subject positions including those of ethnicity, belief, artistic style, as well as gender, and the competing interests they often implied. The gender-specific restraints of the sign were seen in the context of the complementary and interdependent roles of men and

women, expressed in a tapu/noa relation.

“Giving birth to a work of art of the magnitude of a carved house was as tapu as an act of human birth” (Mead, 1986, p.195).

Head of Humanities at Waiariki in 1993, and tutor in Women's Studies, Jill Chrisp, declared that observance of tapu did not compromise feminist ideals:

The discussion of this subject creates an issue where in fact no issue exists. We are totally supportive of the marae development. In the teaching of Women's Studies we seek to develop within our students a critique of the positions of all women in society. This includes undertaking the dynamics of any "position" (including ethnicity, ability, age, economic status etc.) and its interface with other ideologies that exist (Waiariki Council Correspondence, 1993).

Many of the views expressing opposition to the marae development articulated the primacy of individual rights. Ian Culpitt (1994, p.7) argues that advancing individual rights at the expense of collective rights marginalises a Maori perspective. He feels that resistance to collective rights is based on the perception that Maori empowerment would erode the advantages of monocultural hegemony:

To argue for the sole supremacy of an individual focus is to ignore those whose consciousness and sense of allegiance is more fundamentally based on patterns of group obligation. That this tribalism of purpose arouses such hostile responses is an obvious feature of a political hegemony that fears and resists difference.

Dissolving Boundaries

Arapeta Tahana promoted Tangatarua as an opportunity for bicultural inclusion that could dissolve resistance to difference. His intention was clearly not to endorse a Maori epistemological approach at the expense of a European one, even though he could have argued that the current educational delivery privileged the latter. In 1992 he declared:

We want to build two educational traditions into Waiariki - the European and the Maori. We are talking about the two bodies of knowledge and the two ways of teaching and learning. Immediately we start to focus on the bicultural aspects of education, most people assume that means putting more Maori in; but one of the things I am setting out to do is build more European tradition into it.

Arapeta's Tahana's model proposed to keep aspects of each culture distinct and parallel, privileging neither. Rather than trying to reconcile or reduce these aspects, he preferred to accommodate the intersubjective, contested nature of their difference. Accommodating difference was always a part of Maori cultural heritage, according to Linda Smith: "The idea of contested stories and multiple discourses about the past, by different communities, is closely linked to the politics of everyday contemporary indigenous life" (1999, p.3).

In his opening speech for Tangatarua, Sir Michael Hardie Boys is clearly of the opinion that the best aspects of both cultures are neither incompatible nor mutually exclusive:

In New Zealand, we must continuously acknowledge that we are extraordinarily fortunate, in that we have inherited two great cultures, European and Maori, giving our national life a richness that few other nations possess. We walk and work in forests of redwood and kauri, of radiata and rimu, we take tourists to Whakarewarewa and the Agridome. We know both Handel and haka, the Book of Genesis and whakapapa, Swan Lake and poi songs (1996).

Sir Michael's inclusive term 'we' interpellates his audience as a national family, sharing common values. His pairings dispense with the need to prioritise, and suggest equivalence between them. His cultural ingredients of 'richness' are alluringly wholesome and romantic, and seem to privilege genteel, Enlightenment ideals. Paul Meredith sees the reality of biculturalism as more politically contentious, involving adaptive positions. He advances a reconceptualisation to take account of this;

What is required is a far more critical perspective of bicultural politics in New Zealand that rethinks our assumptions about culture and identity from an 'us-them' dualism to a mutual sense of 'both/and'. This must acknowledge and negotiate not only difference but also affinity (1998, p.1).

The educational vision held by Chief Executive, Arapeta Tahana, acknowledged both difference and affinity between two cultures with neither assuming priority, invoking the notion of Homi Bhabha's 'third space of enunciation'. Bhabha argued that real meaning can only be negotiated between the conceptual boundaries of cultures; "I am conscious of myself and become myself while revealing myself for another... every internal experience ends up on the boundary" (1984, p.287). The 'boundary', or space of enunciation, would dissolve the binary oppositions implicit in fixed cultural categories of Maori and European, and encourage the negotiation, as well as contestation, of new educational paradigms.

Arapeta Tahana's intention to include 'two bodies of knowledge and two ways of teaching and learning' was a refusal to subsume Maori and European content into one another. Instead, he advocated a space for their dialogical co-existence, a notion already implicit in the literal translation of Tangatarua, two people. This name would reflect the diversity of its potential users, people who would be united by educational aims. Arapeta declared; "This marae, Tangatarua is unique because it is the centrepiece for a group tied by educational links. It is a marae for staff and students, most especially for those who are not Maori or not Te Arawa" (1996, p.2).

The views of two young women who were neither Maori nor Te Arawa reflect the sense of belonging Arapeta sought to encourage. They had participated as puhi, ceremonial virgins, in the dawn opening ceremony. Linda Turner recalls;

I feel very, very proud to have been a part of it especially because I'm Pakeha. Tanagatarua means two people and now I identify myself with Ihenga and Tangatarua. I have had arguments with people who have said to me that it's not my marae because you have to have bloodline connections to be a part of it. I just say, no I don't. That's my marae. (in Komene, p.21, 2006).

Jenny Andrews recalls; "Thinking back now it's cool to be able to claim that I did that because not many other people, especially Pakeha, can get involved in that kind of thing. I can't believe I was the first Pakeha woman to cross the threshold" (in Komene, p.21).

Crossing the threshold symbolises the transformation from a spiritually potent state of *tapu* to a more neutral, habitable state of *noa*. Margaret Orbell (1995) refers to the intricate interplay between the states of *tapu* and *noa*, commonly translated into binary oppositions as sacred and secular. Such terms are reductionist in that they fail to account for changeable, complementary contexts, and imply fixed dimensions. "Since nothing in Maori life and experience was secular - beyond the reach of religious thought and practice - *noa* cannot be translated as 'secular'" (p.186).

By including two cultures in the opening ritual of Tangatarua, a *conceptual* threshold, as well as a spiritual one, was crossed. Again this evokes Bhaba's space of enunciation, where cultural boundaries might dissolve and engender a confluence of difference. Atea, the Maori personification of space, also expresses the potential of this confluence. It is embodied in a *literal* space immediately outside the wharenuī, the marae atea. Speakers on the marae atea face west to the wharenuī, Ihenga, occupying that threshold between mortal life symbolised by the wharenuī, and the immortal ancestors symbolised by the sea

to the East, passage to mythical Hawaiikinui⁸. The protocol and content of the speaker's address acknowledges both realities, invoking departed ancestors and addressing current issues/grievances with impunity. The marae atea thus signifies an *intertribal* space of enunciation, an often noisy space that must be negotiated when entering the territory of others.

Typically marae were built on sites that offered the enclosing elements of hills and bush to the rear or west, while the exposing elements of sea or plain lay east beyond the marae atea. This was a strategy of both security and spirituality, giving a vantage point to repel invaders as well as to symbolically connect with Hawaiikinui. Tangatarua nestles into the base of the hill with two peaks whose name it bears, on the south-western perimeter of the Waiariki campus, enclosed by plantings of indigenous trees, and medicinal and weaving plants.

This was the site preferred by Hiko Hohepa, who argued against a more prominent, central positioning: "I like a marae to be more private. I wanted it to be away from everyone, so it would be a special place with an aura. Amongst everyone it would become common" (1992, p.1).

Hiko Hohepa wanted to maintain a separation from the mundane constraints of the Waiariki campus, a separation which would enhance the ritual of traversing a threshold to encounter the marae. Once traversed, Tangatarua could exert its own indigenous ambience, its *waahi ngaro*: "I want to retain a sense of mystery for the students" (1992, p.1).

⁸ Hawaiikinui is the ancestral homeland of the Maori people.

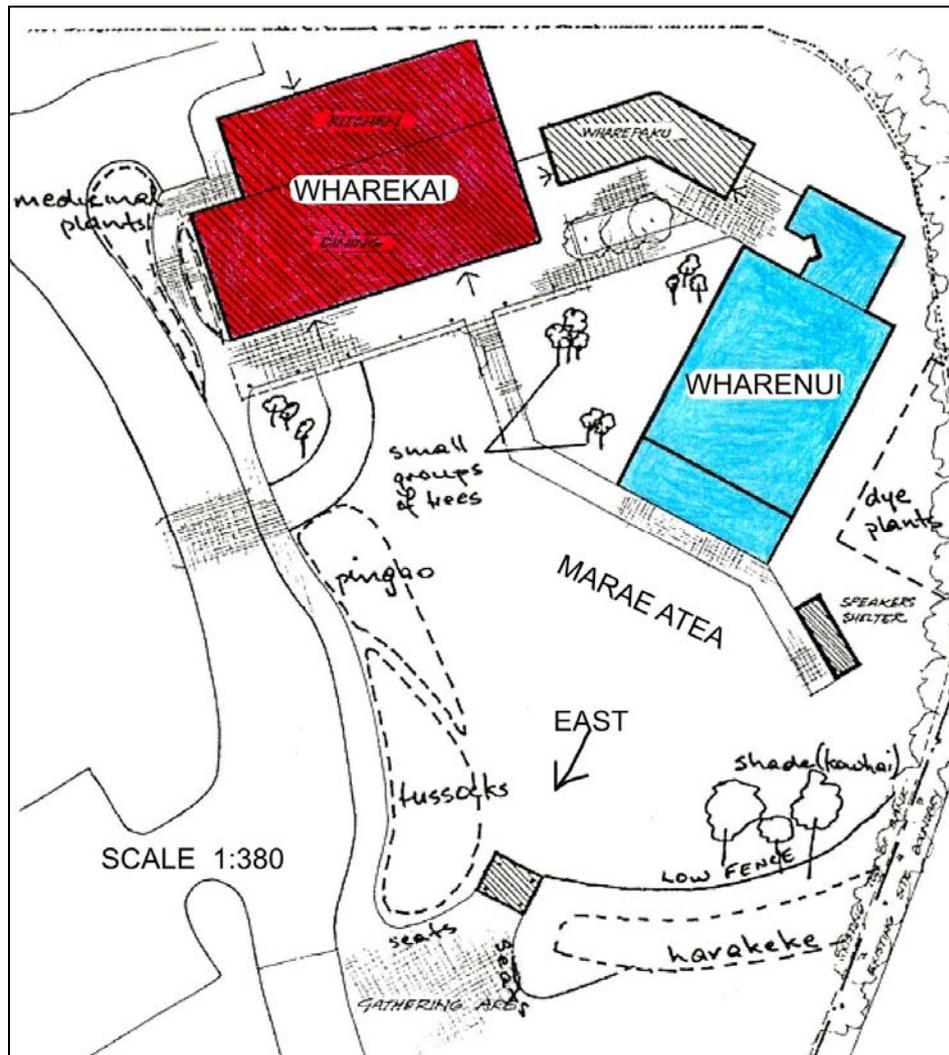


Figure 7 Layout of Tangatarua Marae, Waiariki Institute of Technology, Rotorua. The dining hall, Hinetekakara, is indicated in red, and the communal house, Ihenga (husband of Hinetekakara), is indicated in blue.

Visitors to Tangatarua must negotiate the marae atea before encountering the artworks within the communal house, Ihenga, and the dining hall, Hinetekakara. Once inside, the influence of Rongomatane (guardian of peace) prevails, predisposing harmonious interaction. Here, visitors are no longer considered strangers, and an intimacy is established between their worlds and that of their hosts.

The following chapter considers conceptual differences between worlds, unpacking some of the framing mechanisms, or paradigms, that inform them.

Paradigms

This chapter draws attention to the problems of bicultural translation. While meanings seem open to interpretation and contestable, they are discursively produced within regimes of power, and are seldom mutually understood. This first section examines conceptual mechanisms, or paradigms, that can impede mutual understanding. The second section, Pedagogy, shows a relationship between paradigms and art education.

Tangatarua, the marae of Waiariki Institute of Technology, symbolises the bicultural twining of Maori and European legacies. While Waiariki translates as the waters of the gods, the academic traditions of the tertiary institute bearing this name probably owe more to *European* gods than Maori ones. This institute inherits its pedagogy from a Western world view that formalised power relations through the legacy of Roman law, which became a legitimising tool for the modern rationalism enshrined in Descartes words; “Cogito ergo sum - I think therefore I can validate my existence.” Validating one’s existence differs according to the conceptual framework, or paradigm, that influences one’s thinking, illustrated by Thomas Kuhn’s (1962) observation that when paradigms change, the world changes accordingly.

Kuhn contended that different paradigms were *incommensurable*, that is, one paradigm could not be understood through the conceptual framework and terminology of the other. It is difficult to comprehend another reality when the mechanisms of constructing and translating those realities differ, changing the way the world is seen, and yet this is the difficulty confronted by Biculturalism.

Biculturalism constitutes the political ground that informs the negotiation of partnership between Maori and Pakeha under the Treaty of Waitangi. This requires an interpretation and implementation of the Treaty that is relevant and meaningful for both Maori and Pakeha worlds. It requires cognisance of not only

contemporary worlds but pre-contact worlds, when, for Maori, authority did not need sanctioning through legal documents, but was exercised through mana (communal status).

Ian Culpitt (2002, p.1) asserts that biculturalism must become “an essential aspect of Pakeha political epistemology”, implying that Pakeha need to actively address and incorporate the goals of biculturalism into their own conceptual frameworks. This demands self-scrutiny rather than passively accommodating biculturalism in principle: “Biculturalism has been framed as an essentially Maori question but these social debates have as much significance for the Pakeha” (ibid).

The ‘social debates’ need to recognise the hegemony of Aotearoa’s dominant, monocultural paradigm, if they are to avoid succumbing to Kuhn’s pessimistic incommensurability. Recognition will not ensure compatibility between Maori and Pakeha worlds but will at least ensure participants embark on a journey of negotiation and mutual respect. Homi Bhaba describes negotiation as “the ability to articulate differences in space and time, to link words and images in new symbolic orders, to intervene in the forest of signs and mediate what may seem to be incommensurable values or contradictory realities” (1996, p.8).

Such ‘contradictory realities’ were evident in social policy in the decade preceding the establishment of Tangatarua. A proliferation of corporate and government logos at this time paraded a conspicuous commitment to biculturalism (as well as discernment in a Modernist graphic style that appropriated Maori kowhaiwhai and tukutuku design). There was contradiction, however, between the reality of what was seen, suggested, and practised in “this peculiar New Zealand penchant for constructing new, culturally inclusive corporate identities for government bodies while pursuing policies of social and economic exclusion” (Miles, 1999, p.78).

Maori artist Peter Robinson has undermined the reassuring, graphic slickness of these signs with crudely fashioned parodies of his own, executed from discredited materials such as cardboard, bitumen and oil stick. *In Search of the*

Um World is a makeshift miniature cardboard world filled with signs and slogans. Viewers are invited to don alien masks and peer inside through the strategic viewing points provided.



Figure 8 Peter Robinson 1998 *In Search of the Um World* Mixed media installation

This interactive activity is a parody of Te Papa’s inclusive, populist museum strategies, which ‘frame’ and edit culture for consumption in a similar, but less overt, way. Miles describes Robinson’s work as “a diorama oriented around social alienation rather than cultural identity” (1999, p.81).



Figure 9 Peter Robinson 1998 *Our Place* Mixed media on cardboard

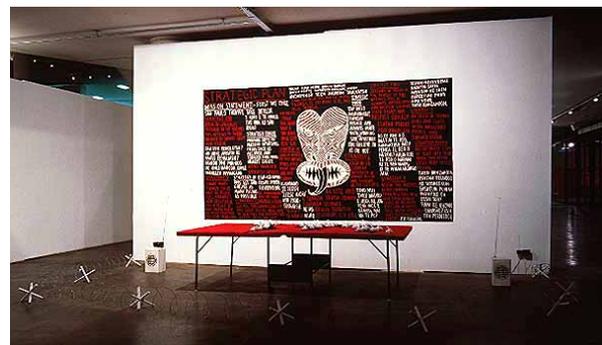


Figure 10 Peter Robinson 1996 *Strategic Plan* Mixed media

Robinson also parodies Te Papa’s appealing emblem of the imagined national family, the thumbprint, by converting it to a swastika, captioned with Te Papa’s inclusive slogan, *Our Place*. The words, accusing and coarsely rendered,

suggest a defiant reclaiming by the excluded. However, Robinson himself is not one of Te Papa's 'excluded', as this institution has directly helped promote and shape his career. In a painting entitled *Strategic Plan*, Robinson also parodies the policies of another institution that has invested in him, the New Zealand Arts Council. Robinson's mockery is a calculated risk in a relationship of mutual reputation fostering, and he fully exploits his ironic privilege to question the terms of this relationship from *within* the citadels of curatorial power.

Curatorial power relies on policies of exclusion as its ideological tools. The Webster Dictionary (2009) offers an ingenuous definition of ideology⁹ as "visionary theorising", and a disingenuous one as "the integrated assertions, theories and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program." Ideology can masquerade as either or both, cloaking its ideals in discourses of rationality and inevitability to secure society's consent. Consent is readily given when ideology appears to represent naturalness, inevitability, and putative morality. Representation thus becomes an instrument of social control, invisibly exercising power over unwitting consenters. Theorist Michel Foucault has illuminated this relationship: "The production of meaning is inseparable from the production of power" (in Chadwick, 1990, p.5).

David Davidson (1973, p.5) illuminates the part that language plays in the production of meaning; "Where conceptual schemes differ, so do languages". This statement suggests that language, as the currency of paradigms, predisposes, constructs, and confirms reality. This reality defines the community and confers a sense of identity within it. This view is echoed by Madan Sarup; "Language is the precondition for becoming aware of oneself as a distinct identity" (1998, p.34).

Richard Bird (1992) links naming and power, and alludes to omnipotence by describing God as the "author of all names". He notes that "to know some-one's name, or something's name, was to have some power over it." He likens the discoverer of the Waiariki region, Ihenga, to an author, who exercised the same

⁹ This definition was retrieved from the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* on April 30, 2009.

empowerment in naming the significant regions of the Waiariki region. Ihenga's naming was not simply labelling, but was a way of ascribing personalised meaning and by implication, identity. For instance, Ihenga named a lakeside stone *Ohinemutu*, meaning the site where a young woman was murdered, to commemorate and avenge the death of his wife, Hinetekakara. For Ihenga's descendents who still live in this area, *Ohinemutu* is not only an evocation of tragedy but also one of connection. This connection is sustained in the *wharekai* (dining hall) of Tangatarua, eponymously named Hinetekakara.

Merata Mita observes that a distinct Maori identity is defined and maintained by the distinct language that constitutes it; "If to choose a language is to choose a world, then being denied a language is being denied a world" (1984, p.4). In a monocultural world, the language of the prevailing paradigm determines and controls meaning, denying the conceptual world of the excluded language.

Maori constitutional lawyer, Moana Jackson, explicitly links power and language; "whoever names something, whoever has the power to define something, controls its meaning. In relation to the Treaty of Waitangi, the controlling of the definition has rested entirely with the Crown" (cited in Young, 1991, p.14). Jackson draws attention to language as a system of representation privileged by the Crown and disadvantageous for Maori.

Pedagogy

My preceding section looked at some of the ways that meaning, and ultimately power, is produced in discourse. This chapter acknowledges that *art* discourses can similarly cement curatorial power in professional art education. In particular, it considers how art discourses of the 1990s might have impacted upon Waiariki Institute of Technology's art courses, or have influenced the way that the artworks of Tangatarua have been generated and received. As an art educator I was implicated in what I perceive was a pedagogical shift from a 1990s Modernist emphasis on exclusive craft design technologies to a current *postmodern* emphasis on interdisciplinary eclecticism.

The pedagogical scaffolding of Waiariki's first art qualifications was underpinned by Modernism¹⁰ which reduced art to positivist, reassuring visual denominators. Such denominators provided a useful certainty to teaching because "the only things in the world which we can talk about are those to which we can point" (Lundquist, 1999). The tenets of Modernism were exemplified by the famous Bauhaus¹¹ School of Art and Design which tried to promote a synthesis of technology, craft and fine art, informed by aesthetic standards.

Theirry De Duve maintains that the Bauhaus ethos offered such a persuasive pedagogy for the tertiary teaching of art and design that it was adopted "often subliminally, almost unconsciously" (2005). In the 1990s the art courses at what was then termed Waiariki Polytechnic were neither 'subliminal' nor 'unconscious' in their promotion of Bauhaus ideals, which were overtly embedded into all media disciplines. These reflected a craft design emphasis through three-dimensional materials of clay, bone, wood, fibre, bronze, an emphasis that was mirrored in other national tertiary craft-design qualifications. The Diploma of Craft Design offered at Waiariki Polytechnic was distinguished by the suffix 'Maori' and its curricula included a Maori Design paper, and fibre and wood courses comprising raranga (flax weaving) and whakairo (surface carving) respectively, in addition to the media mentioned above. Specialised processes exclusive to each media were imparted in separate workshops, akin to a creative quarantining.

This encouraged the "reduction of practice to the fundamental elements of a syntax immanent to the medium" (De Duve in Bailey, 2006/7, p.7). Such self-referencing and media-focused 'syntax' tended to relegate cultural connections by prioritising form over content. Practical workshops focused on the intrinsic world of the media, rather than the external cultural world of origin or reception.

¹⁰ Modernism believes in progress and perfectibility through technology and rationalistic planning. Media specialisation is encouraged to entrench the respective competencies and aesthetic standards of each. It addresses the formal and material problems of art media, hence privileging abstraction.

¹¹ The Bauhaus Movement brought together a number of the most outstanding international architects and artists between 1919 and 1933. It was an innovative design training centre committed to mastering the modernisation process by means of design.

Raranga classes were an exception to this formalist tendency, perhaps because sourcing and processing weaving materials was a more grounded activity, requiring extensive botanical knowledge of ngahere (indigenous flora). It was also because the Raranga tutor, Tina Wirihana, paid homage to indigenous precedent and protocols alongside the design imperatives of modernism.

Modernism's imperatives required educational measures to gauge the efficacy of their application. Hence formalism was applied because it furnished measurable, concrete evidence for assessment. Formalism prioritised the autonomy of the art object and tended to demote mimesis, ornament, and collective art -making. Stylistic consistency and artistic cohesion was promoted and any lapses into ad hoc, hybrid, or dispersed styles were discredited.

I contend that the small artworks of Tangatarua exhibit many of these 'lapses', not in themselves, but as a deviation from cohesive artistic expectation. The palpable bearing and composite narrative authority of the carvings has rendered these small artworks comparatively invisible. At the same time their intimate and improvised messages visually undermine the carvings' unitary narrative, like small fissures in a perception of design harmony.

Design harmony ranked highly in a hierarchy of design values, and was encapsulated in the Bauhaus dictum "form follows function"¹². This demanded a rigorous paring down of form, and the jettisoning of any gratuitous expression or material. The 'form follows function' slogan was echoed and reinforced by Adolf Loos's assertion that "ornament is crime" (1998, p. 175).¹³

¹² The architect of the Chicago steel towers, Louis Sullivan, coined this term to promote design that was defiantly honest and unsentimental.

¹³ Loos' influential views on Modern architecture often betrayed a cultural superiority, evidenced in one of his essays about body ornament; "The modern person who tattoos himself is either a criminal or a degenerate", and, "people with tattoos not in prison are either latent criminals or degenerate aristocrats" (ibid, p.167).

In Tangatarua small tiles and printed paper friezes unrepentantly 'ornament' the kahopaetara (dado moulding) and papaka (skirting board), adding detail to the monumentality of pared down form. In most cases their form is not governed by any predetermined aesthetic function, other than to enhance the cosmology of the carvings. They are the outcome of creative sharing and propitious creative play. Unburdened by sole authorship or narrative responsibility some works simply converse with other works. Some works flaunt the intrinsic properties of weathered or raw surfaces that eclipse their imagery, mindful of architect Frank Lloyd Wright's instruction to "bring out the nature of the materials, let their nature intimately into your scheme... Reveal the nature of the wood, plaster, brick or stone in your designs; they are all by nature friendly and beautiful" (in Pfeiffer and Nordland, p.48).

Often the Bauhaus doctrine had produced designs that were less than 'friendly and beautiful'. Many of these designs were extremely minimal, secular and impersonal, a style described by art critic Tom Wolfe as "repressively clinical". In his 1981 book "From Bauhaus to our House" he caustically compares Bauhaus-style houses in America to "insecticide refineries" lamenting;

I once saw the owners of such a place driven to the edge of sensory deprivation by the whiteness and lightness and leanness and cleanness and bareness and spareness of it all. They became desperate for an antidote, such as cosiness and colour (p.4).

For master carver, Lyonel Grant, Bauhaus minimalism has appeal as a *means* of cultural expression rather than a design *end* in itself. He consciously subscribes to the 'truth to materials' tenet as a means of extending the conventions of traditional carving. To this end he has incorporated bronze, glass, and stone with wood, exploiting the 'cosiness and colour' of natural textures. In doing so, his work becomes less circumscribed by Maori precedent, and becomes more of a formalist exercise, a creative challenge to reconcile form, function, and material.

"The way to do it is to create works in various materials that are non-traditional, that force you into spaces you are uncomfortable with, that require you to be true to that material, that demand different approaches" (in Gifford, 2005). This attitude is reflected in Grant's embrace of the diverse materials and formats enriching the walls of Tangatarua.

A Modernist 'demand for different approaches' also credits singular artists with singular styles and innovations, privileging originality. Thomas Osborne warns that a creative pursuit of newness often entails an unwitting *conformity* to unconformity:

Creativity is a value which, though we may believe we choose it ourselves, may in fact make us complicit with what today might be seen as the most conservative of norms; compulsory individualism, compulsory innovation, compulsory performativity and productiveness, the compulsory validation of the putatively new (in Bill, 2004, p.2).

I believe the artworks of Tangatarua have resisted a 'compulsory' pursuit of newness through their homage and reconfiguring of cultural imagery. They have also resisted 'compulsory individualism' in the collective, collaborative mode of their making. Communal understanding has been prioritised over individual expression. Singular styles and ideas have merged in a creative dialogical sharing.

These artworks concede to Modernist tendencies only in their Formalism; that is, in the way their materials have been manipulated to maximum aesthetic effect. They reference the intrinsic world of their media at the same time they reference the extrinsic world of Tangatarua. There is an enriching tension between their autonomy and their cultural messages, an outcome mediated by a teaching environment that has placed emphasis on media process and its specialised syntax.

Thierry de Duve (1995) claims that syntax-based teaching models are obsolete;

Two models, even though in reality they contaminate each other, divide up the teaching of art. On the one hand, there is the academic model; on the other, there is the Bauhaus model. The former believes in talent, the latter in creativity. The former classifies the arts according to techniques, what I would call *metier*; the latter according to medium. The former fosters imitation; the latter invention. Both models are obsolete (p.19).

Carole Shephard (2001) is also concerned about the obsolescence of teaching models. She appeals for a revision of tertiary teaching approaches in Aotearoa and describes pedagogical power as “a protective shroud”, a term suggesting that it is ready for burial. “Traditional ways of transmitting knowledge about the diverse and ever changing field of art practice remain enveloped in a protective shroud of exclusivity, in-house understandings and approaches that for me reached their 'use by' date sometime in the mid-seventies.”

Shephard believes that critical theory is the key to dismantling outmoded pedagogy, because it exposes the ideological components that maintain those power relations. “It is not safe territory as it contests power, crosses boundaries and gives students the opportunity to experience the studio as a place where students and teachers can examine and question. Decentring the status quo is rarely a comfortable place to reside.”

Decentring pedagogical power would create room for learners to challenge and supplant worn-out teaching models.

Ka pu te ruha, ka hao te rangatahi
When the worn-out nets are discarded
It is time for a new generation to go fishing.

Even when worn-out models are discarded, new democratic models can sometimes be impeded by lingering Modernist definitions. Many art students still subscribe to the fiction of the Modernist artist as social *outsider*, responding to a

subjective inner necessity that is not sullied by external circumstances. This vision is made more seductive by the prospect of short-lived fame;

Constant attempts to reduce the marginality of art education, to make art and design more 'responsive' and 'vocational' by gearing them towards industry and commerce have confronted the ideology of 'being an artist,' the romantic vision which is deeply embedded in the art school experience. Even as pop stars, art students celebrate the critical edge marginality allows, turning it into a sales technique, a source of celebrity (Frith/Horne in Bailey, 2006).

Celebrating marginality is a lingering legacy of the avant-garde¹⁴, which demoted established art practices in the pursuit of novelty. Wylan Curnow claims that it is insufficient for art to confront its viewers with novelty for its own sake - he suggests that novelty should be in the service of challenging and transforming the habitual concepts of those viewers.

"Art is a set of practices which together sustain the capacity of a variety of media to generate new forms of thought and feeling. The measure of their novelty is their potential to displace, replace or misplace dominant and familiar forms of thought and feeling, not of their newness as such" (1998).

Ted Bracey denounces a reliance on 'newness' to disrupt convention, citing Rosenberg's description of the futility of making a convention of eliminating a convention (in Grierson & Mansfield, 2003, p.193). Ted Bracey accuses this approach of being preoccupied with an alternative future rather than the ontology of the present, calling it "the paradox produced by a form of art practice in which the production of art works, the primary purpose of which is to be written into some future account of the past, have no relevance to the present" (ibid).

¹⁴ Avant-garde is defined in the 2006 Collins Dictionary & Thesaurus as "innovative *and* progressive" (my emphasis), conveying its Modernist application.

Bracey feels that the focus of an arts curriculum in Aotearoa should be the social practices of art itself. His view is premised on the belief that, as an inextricable part of social life, art requires the responsibility of ongoing critical review. He warns that if educators adopt an insular and Modernist definition of art as existing *in* artworks, they risk perpetuating “a hierarchy of material visual culture that is consistent with the cultural capital of their own teacher class” (ibid, p.190).

Ted Bracey believes in a democratic goal for art, that is, to empower students to actively improve “the social life of art” (ibid p.195). This entails an awareness of the epistemology of art on the part of educators because “it is surely an important first step in any attempt to change the social life of art for the better, to critically examine how those who have the most responsibility for its conduct, carry out their responsibilities” (ibid,p.192).

Tina Engels-Schwarzpaul also denounces insular references for art, accusing formalism of being “defined by Kantian categories and removed from its social and cultural substrates” (in Grierson & Mansfield, 2003, p.203). A formalist approach neglects social issues in Aotearoa and, more importantly, “relational questions about the position from which such claims are advanced, even as they promote diversity” (ibid, p.204).

While this section has revealed a formalist emphasis in Waiariki’s art courses when the artworks of Tangatarua were made, this emphasis may not have undermined the ‘social and cultural substrates’ of these works. A formalist emphasis may have extended an artistic repertoire of *form* for these artworks, leaving their *content* inextricably connected to ‘cultural substrates’ and a Maori kaupapa (intention).

My following chapter considers an inextricable relation between art and culture. It also considers a factor in this relation - the notion of an intangible Maori aesthetic, waahi ngaro.

Invisible Dimensions

This chapter discusses how different cultural lenses influence the way art is viewed and critiqued. It suggests that art criticism favours formal aesthetic values because they are empirical. Instead I hope to promote an awareness of less empirical ways of ways of knowing and seeing. I believe that such awareness creates space to heed *waahi ngaro* (hidden dimensions), enhancing an encounter with the art of Tangatarua.

Those in positions of curatorial power have often used judgements consistent with the hierarchies of Modernism to demote or promote artistic reputations. This entails an emphasis on originality and internal procedures, meaning that any less tangible aspects cannot be pointed to, and thus, according to Brooke Lundquist, “cannot be talked about” (1999). He observes the paradox of trying to account for and intellectualise aesthetic experience via linguistic concepts, to translate the intranslatable. The intangible nature of a Maori aesthetic, *waahi ngaro*, may elude intellectualisation, or be eclipsed in criticism by more tangible art elements that can be pointed to.

“There is something underlying aesthetics that is undefinable, incomprehensible and impossible to conceptualise through the mind. It must be passed over in silence” (ibid). That which cannot be talked about becomes marginalised and remains unseen beneath the surface of scrutiny, as *waahi ngaro*.

In an attempt to ‘talk about’ Maori aesthetic criteria in carving, ethnologist Roger Neich (1994) analysed original Maori manuscripts seeking terminology that might connote some values of artistic excellence. This exercise was thwarted by the difficulties of translation, compounded by the fact that a lot of this early writing was ‘tailored’ in anticipation of a European readership. In addition, the unconscious, intuitive knowledge of many carvers was not amenable to description.

“Maori people brought up in the old culture had so internalised the conventions of carving that they could not verbalise these to an outsider” (p.140).

Roger Neich suspects that there was a reluctance to divulge even *consciously*-held knowledge due to the fear that it might make Maori art more accessible for unsanctioned use, thus diminishing its sacred power. He believes that only a semiological approach can give insights to aesthetic intention, because it looks at the total cultural and conceptual world of the artist. This approach accounts for the interplay of localised artistic conventions and ideology which mediate the artist’s/carver’s intentions. “Every work of art creates its own universe which is necessarily a whole built upon a time-space network” (ibid, p.135).

This holistic aspect of Maori aesthetic intention contrasted with a European emphasis on the intrinsic physical attributes of artworks, which were evaluated according to abstract Enlightenment ideals of ‘truth’ and ‘beauty’. Philosopher Immanuel Kant (1790) contended that judgments of beauty are sensory, emotional, and intellectual all at once based on unspecified, yet universal criteria. He felt that viewers apprehending beauty in art were affected by a sense of it fulfilling some ultimate aesthetic aim, a sense that is consensual, but cannot be clearly articulated. Kant thus famously claimed that the beautiful has to be understood as purposive, but has no ascertainable purpose (in Pluhar, 1987).

Roger Neich (2001) warns against assumptions that ‘beauty’ was an aesthetic aim for Maori, and even though physical attributes were calculated and exploited, they were more in the service of the artwork’s performative function. In his summary of nineteenth century perceptions of carving, Roger Neich proposes that communication itself was an aesthetic goal: “Colonial Europeans stressed the formal aesthetic side of the art continuum and the conscious will of the artist, while the Maori public emphasised the semantic communicative pole and were less conscious of the aesthetics of form” (p.145).

Rangihiroa Panoho observes that these differences still prevail within contemporary art criticism: “Pakeha artists who assess Maori artists like Karaka

can often miss Maori aspects of their expression, concentrating only on what they can easily understand. Their analysis is then one-sided and emphasises formal aesthetic values to the detriment of the real cultural issues being dealt with - Maori issues” (in Barr, 1992, p.126).

Referring to Emily Karaka’s painting *Race Relations*, Rangihiroa chides Francis Pound for inferring that Karaka’s use of inscribed words exhibits stylistic dependence on Colin McCahon. Rangihiroa argues that kupu (text) often accompanied and empowered expressions of Maori art, citing the nineteenth century innovation of carving the names of eponymous ancestors on the poutokomanawa (central post) of whareniui. This naming was a more denotative and strident way of affirming identity in the face of encroaching colonisation. Rangihiroa validates Emily Karaka’s use of kupu (words) as a direct and dramatic link to forbears or in this case, *Pakeha* (non-Maori) artistic dynasties.

Francis Pound (in Panoho, 1992, p.126) claims “It was McCahon who showed her how this might be done” thus crediting Colin McCahon, not Emily, as the originator of this artistic device. The fact that Francis Pound needs to identify a source reflects his privileging of Modernism’s emphasis on authorship and originality. It also reflects Romanticism’s legacy of the elevated status of artist-as-intellectual-visionary that Colin McCahon has been accorded. Emily Karaka’s inscribing has been reduced by Pound to merely another technique in her formalist repertoire, devoid of the cultural connectedness it signifies.

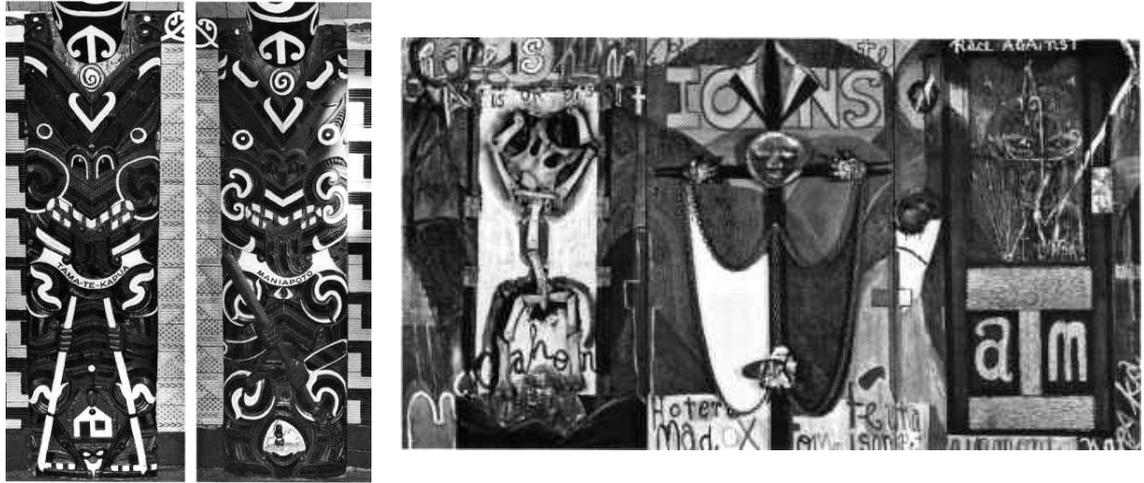


Figure 11 Named poupou depicting Tamatekapua and Maniopoto in the whareni Te Tokonui-a-noho, Te Kuiti.

Figure 12 Emily Karaka's *Race Relations* 1988, with artists' names on the lower edge.

Emily Karaka herself is unconcerned with the immodesty of claiming stylistic uniqueness, inscribing the names of her mentors, such as McCahon, Maddox, and Fomison, into her painting *Race Relations*. This gesture could be categorised as a post-modern homage to artistic precedent and an abandonment of the pursuit of the avant-garde, but I would suggest that it owes more to Karaka's Maori identity than an artistic stance. She extends a *mihī*, or homage, to those who have helped constitute, and whose names are constitutive of, her work. Painted kupu resonate both visually and verbally, invocations to those in front of and those behind her work. Emily Karaka's art practice synchronically embraces past and present.

"Logically, the known world is the past, out of which Maori art emerged. It is the future we cannot see and hence it lies behind us, not in front as the Europeans would have it" (Mead, 1997, p.55). Hirini Mead sees contemporary Maori art as an expression of a cultural continuum, guided by cultural precedent that he places firmly in front. This is a temporal reversal of Western versions of art-historical discourses which privilege the progress of Modernism.

Critic Christina Barton suggests that new theorisations of art within Aotearoa are needed as a consequence of this recognition; "The Maori belief that the past

is living in the present is a profound rebuff to a western conception of linear history and its ideological adjunct: a belief in progress” (1992, p.183).

Claude Paur (2005) defends a conception of linear history, arguing that human consciousness is inescapably inclined to integrate and unify the data of cultural analysis; “We can hardly dispose of our temporal and cognitive constitution, our need for narrative and formal intelligibility, to counter the deficiencies of certain theories. The most we can do is to suppress or to try to alter creatively our symbolisations of these tendencies.”

Claude Paur is advocating a more reflexive, self-critical approach that is informed by the recognition of these tendencies, but one that still utilises, while it consciously mitigates, their shortcomings. It is not productive to throw the epistemological baby out with the bathwater, because they are mutually constitutive. “Discursive has become the general term used to refer to any approach in which meaning, representation and culture are considered to be constitutive” (Hall, 2002, p.6). A discursive approach to art means examining not merely art products or artifacts, but also the relations and conditions of their making.

“It has always seemed ironical, if not plain comical, that art critics, art historians, and anthropologists too, like to begin their analyses of art by examining the finished works of the artists - the paintings, etchings, sculptures, dances, etc.” (Mead, 1983, p.11).

Hirini Mead is disdainful of the Western inclination to consider art more a finished product than a social process. He calls this the “Sherlock Holmes” approach, one that denies the observer the excitement of the work’s social context. In accounting for the art of Tangatarua, this study subscribes to a post-structuralist definition of art, embracing both the finished product *and* the social process.

A Culturally-constituted Artist

Poststructuralism rejects a ‘Sherlock Holmes’ approach, arguing that the artist is inextricably constituted in, and by, culture. Semiotician Roland Barthes articulated this idea by rejecting the *author’s* autonomy, arguing that the author’s language is always anterior, never original, because it derives from the culture in which the notion of an author is constituted (in Hurrell, 1986). Since the *artist* is similarly constituted in culture, artworks cannot be reduced to mechanical formalism or considered independently from what Stuart Hall (2002, p.10) calls the “cultural circuit”.

A poststructuralist artist cannot reflect an unmediated reality, because art itself is a function of discursive formations, that is, it represents the practices of representation. Artists cannot generate fixed, cohesive meanings because their artwork is a function of the many intersections of personal and political positions that constitute the shared understandings of the cultural circuit. It is the overlapping, contradictory and ambiguous nature of such intersections that make up cultural identity; “Identities are constructed as well as inherited, contested yet revered, textual yet contextual, practical yet discursive, lived-in yet ideal, and territorially structured yet de-localised in process” (Maaka & Fleras, 2005, p.94).

Brian Eno (1996) offers a definition of culture that illustrates the plurality of its range: “A culture is the sum of all things about which humanity can choose to differ - all the things by which people can recognise each other as being voluntarily distinguished from each other”. He adds the rider that these ‘things’ range on a continuum between survival and style, implying their varying usefulness by terming the former axis “imperative”, and the latter “gratuitous”.¹⁵

¹⁵ Culture’s gratuitous axis is conveyed on a giant billboard by graphic artist, Barbara Kruger, featuring a beautiful woman accusing male consumers; “*Your gaze hits the side of my face.*” Kruger cynically links culture and commercial commodification in another billboard image of a Howdy-Doody puppet declaring “*Whenever I hear the word culture I reach for my checkbook*” (De la Croix et al., 1996, p.1087).

Stuart Hall suggests that defining these 'things' as meaningful from the situatedness of the cultural circuit is somewhat blinkered: "The concept of discourse is not about whether things exist but about where meaning comes from" (2002, p.10).

Attempting to write about 'where meaning comes from' in regard to the art of Tangatarua requires a reflexive awareness of how my own discursive positions within the cultural circuit influence and frame the way I write. These implications are addressed in the following chapter entitled *Situated Writing*.

Digestible Words

Furnishing an objective and neutral account of the small artworks of Tangatarua is problematic when I am doubly implicated as an art collaborator and art educator employee of the institution that has sponsored Tangatarua. My writing may be generated from ambiguous or competing interests, which can be further mediated by my unwitting subscription to hidden ideological agendas. “Art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.7).

Resisting this predisposition requires an awareness of the ground that generates writing as well as art. Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury propose a participatory paradigm model that would meet this requirement: “A participatory perspective asks us to be both situated and reflexive, to be explicit about the perspective from which knowledge is created, to see inquiry as a process of coming to know, serving the democratic, practical ethos of action research” (2006, p.7). This model is useful because it affirms the partiality of subjective-objective positions, and regards research as a *process* rather than a *product*.

Being situated admits multiple voices, which can be problematic for writing within an academic tradition that privileges logocentrism and empiricism. Laura Brearley (2001, p.2) rejects this privileging by proposing an alternative form of academic discourse that “challenges the traditional paradigm of densely referenced text and the use of a passive, ‘neutral’ researcher’s voice.”

Her research has employed creative forms of representation such as poems, songs, mandalas, and multi-media tracks, to arouse and engage cognitive, emotional and kinaesthetic responses. She contends that these multi-layered forms more adequately evoke the emotional complexity of reconciling personal and professional experience. At the same time Brearley laments that it is still difficult to find workable boundaries for this sort of format because of “a lack of

definitive rules to differentiate between narcissism and authentic self-expression” (ibid).

My writing must also guard against descending into the narcissism of ekphrasis, that is, into inflated rhetoric whose vitality surpasses the artwork being described. For Plato, writing lacked vitality, and he drew attention to its limitations by comparing it with painting:

The painter's products stand before us as though they were alive, but if you question them, they maintain a most majestic silence. It is the same with written words; they seem to talk to you as if they were intelligent, but if you ask them anything about what they say, from a desire to be instructed, they go on telling you just the same thing forever (Plato, in Phaedrus, 275d-e).

Plato implied that writing is not dialogical, and because it is inert, its ideas cannot be interrogated: “Furthermore, writings are silent; they cannot speak, answer questions, or come to their own defense” (ibid).

Plato clearly privileged oratory over writing, suggesting that it was dialectical, and thus potentially transformative in nature.

The dialectician chooses a proper soul and plants and sows within it discourse accompanied by knowledge - discourse capable of helping itself as well as the man who planted it, which is not barren but produces a seed from which more discourse grows in the character of others (in Phaedrus 277a).

‘Choosing a proper soul’ implies that the orator is conscious of the audience and tailors delivery for maximum engagement. It suggests an empowering and embodied relationship between orator and listener. Plato considers writing less engaging than oratory because it cannot target or counter-respond to its audience. His notion of ‘seeding’ discourse connotes an on-going, dialogical interchange of ideas, generated and nourished through oral transmission. This

has parallels with the oral transmission of Maori culture prior to the penetration of literacy. Knowledge was embodied and released within community contexts that sanctioned and safeguarded givers and receivers.

Te Ahukaramu Royal (2007, p.27) offers a term that conveys the intimacy and embodied aspect of orally transmitted knowledge:

Te kaimanga a nga tupuna

The masticated food of the ancestors.

Royal's metaphor conveys both the timeliness and kinship bond involved. Translating knowledge into writing had the effect of rupturing this bond, temporally "freezing" the past. According to Michael Jackson "Literacy introduced new ideas to the Maori and produced an hiatus in the continuity of traditional time. The present and the future no longer recreated or recapitulated the past" (in Neich, 1993, p. 156).

This effect was exacerbated between 1865 and the close of the 19th century by the machinations of the Maori Land Court, which required a formal, diachronic record of the oral recitals of history delivered by elders. In many instances these recitals were tailored to establish linear, and ultimately, legal identities, and converted into manuscripts that absolved families from the duty to memorise their whakapapa (genealogy). These new written records then gave an unassailable authority to words that Plato had deprecated because "they cannot speak, answer questions, or come to their own defense".

Plato also records the dismayed response to the invention of writing by the Egyptian King Thamos who seemed to anticipate the erosion of experiential, ontological accounts:

If men learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls: they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things into remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks; what you have discovered is a recipe not from

memory, but for reminder (Phaedrus 274-5).

Judge David Harvey is not as pessimistic as King Thamos about the consequences of literacy, but notes that documents leave little room for relational interpretations:

“The introduction of the scribal culture and the growth of recording events in writing as a substitute for an individual or collective memory initially preserved many of the attributes of oral law but also introduced some new characteristics. A document delimits memory and substitutes fixed terms for fluid recollections” (2004, p.5).

The fixity of documents was not required to sanction the laws of a preliterate Maori society, because orally bestowed privileges were binding. Frame and Meredith (2004, p.6) cite the occasion when Ngati Tuwharetoa chief, Iwikau Te Heu Heu, sang a waiata kakahu, literally, cloak-song, to Governor Grey in 1850 to safeguard his passage from Ngati Tuwharetoa lands. This waiata was a metaphorical mantle of Iwikau’s blessing and audibly signalled that any threat to Grey would be seen as a transgression against Iwikau himself. The authors draw attention to the performance aspect of customary Maori law, stating that this example:

... illustrates the role of performance in creating rights and obligations and might usefully be regarded as akin to the modern ‘non-molestation order’ – it cloaked the Governor in the protection of Iwikau, and placed would-be trouble-makers on notice that consequences would follow for any who might infringe (2004, p.7).

The supplanting of performative, oral law with a scribal culture delimited memory because these written words were not attended by a vivid, embodied enactment to ‘cloak’ them. It also delimited the phenomenological, localised, and adaptive nature of customary law, reducing it to more homogenous accounts.

Contemporary scribal culture often continues to alienate events from their sustaining contexts, especially in regard to Maori art. Curator Deidre Brown is concerned that writing about Maori art can turn it into a commodity that is just as tangible as, though less visible than, an art object. This happens when Maori art is reduced to a scholastic commodity for researchers who are under pressure to return a commercial profit. Brown maintains that writers like this tend to aestheticise, rather than intellectualise, Maori culture, often simplifying and neutralising their findings to appeal to a more general audience - in short, reducing their research to “a coffee table book” (2004, p.4). She condemns those writers who compromise their scholastic integrity this way as “cultural tourists” (2004, p.1).

The term ‘cultural tourist’ implies an outsider, a visitor, or an observing commentator, even though Deidre Brown is here referring to both Maori and non-Maori researchers. The ‘cultural tourist’ designation is a modern phenomenon, resulting from the erosion of precontact protocols that safeguarded and enshrined the transmission of all Maori learning. Knowledge as ‘te kaimanga a nga tupuna’ was regulated by the intimate cultural contract between mentors and learners. Even into the 19th century many Maori artists refused to defile this kaimanga by exacting monetary payment for artwork. Instead they were materially compensated by the exchange principle of koha (reciprocal gifts). The erosion of koha in the paid economy of the twentieth century discouraged young people from training as art practitioners, further cleaving the traditional bond between spiritual and material sustenance (2004, p.2).

The writing of Deidre Brown’s ‘cultural tourist’ has parallels with a similarly aestheticised new form of writing identified by J.J. Charlesworth. He dismisses this new style as “dandified copywriting” and believes it has replaced the former transformative criticism of the 1980s saying; “Art writing is a sign of increasing introspection, attending to art as if it were an immovable cultural phenomenon for which art writing should provide a complimentary service of sensitive interpretation” (2003).

The art writing of this study is intended to emancipate readers/viewers from the imposition of a 'sensitive interpretation' by *de-emphasising* the artworks as products, and emphasising instead the cultural, social context of their generation. This entails an interrogation of the role of contemporary Maori art and some of the tensions surrounding its reception.

Damien Skinner describes the book he has co-authored with Lyonel Grant, *Ihenga-Te Haerenga Hou*, as the intersection of three elements, namely, customary carving; the carver Lyonel Grant; and the whareni Ihenga. These are listed as diachronic elements that suggest connection and continuity, but because of the intervening decades between them, raise questions for the author. These are summarised on the back cover of this book as:

What happens when a traditionally trained Maori carver makes contact with contemporary Maori art? How might customary Maori culture adapt to meet new challenges without losing its identity? What does it take to create a whare whakairo that stands strong in the heritage of the 20th century while also looking boldly to the future?" (Grant & Skinner, 2007).

While Damian Skinner's three elements require separation to deal with their respective historical dimensions for his writing, it is unlikely that they are as disjunctive as the framing of his questions implies. I am convinced that these questions do not arouse the same academic anxiety for Lyonel Grant as they do for Damian Skinner, because the carver is not alone or without cultural precedent in addressing them. A traditionally trained carver cannot be insulated from contemporary Maori art, and traditional and contemporary Maori art practices are not mutually exclusive. Embracing contemporary practices need not imply a proportional undermining of traditional Maori art. Damien Skinner's questions seek evidence of disruption and intentional differences in a diachronic, linear art history: "The value of Modernism is established in practice as a kind of intentional difference with respect to the other current forms and styles and practices" (Harrison, 1997, p.14).

Reed's promotional abstract for *Ihenga – Te Haerenga Hou* describes the whareniui as "Lyonel Grant's carved house", bestowing authorial ownership as if carving the whareniui were simply an autonomous artistic exercise. Clearly the publishers do not consider this whareniui divorced from its holistic cultural context, as evidenced in the rest of their abstract, yet their possessive emphasis elevates the carver as a privileged generator of unique meaning. Hirini Mead (1999) also employs a Modernist description of Grant as "the creative genius behind the meeting house at Waiariki Polytechnic".

Roland Barthes demotes individual creativity with a reminder that "in ethnographic societies the responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or relator whose 'performance' - the mastery of the narrative code - may possibly be admired but never his 'genius'" (1977).

Lyonel Grant declares on his own (2008) website; "I would like to think that I am more than just a carver - a sculptor, perhaps, who can make an easy transition between classical and contemporary modes of art expression".

Grant's preference to be classified as a sculptor rather than "just" a carver implies that there is more merit to be gained from the former designation. The fine art term 'sculptor' may connote greater artistic versatility, with a corresponding dexterity with modern technologies and media. Also implicit is a capability to generate autonomous, Modernist art objects.

A Maori artist's ability to negotiate both classical carving and contemporary sculptural modes suggests that any autonomous art objects will be safeguarded by a Maori sensibility, even when they are removed from the cultural context that informs them. Bicultural versatility may also arise from a market demand for authenticity¹⁶, coupled with an advantageous belief that "Western artforms are able to appropriate and move on, remaining in their makers' perception on the cutting edge of developments in art" (Panoho, 1996, p.124).

¹⁶ Kai Tahu artist Peter Robinson mocks notions of establishing Maori authenticity in his 1993 *Percentage* series. Large scrawled numbers, 3.25, the exact statistical fraction of his Maori blood, feature in his painting, *Untitled*. This work conveys the facelessness of statistics and suggests the institutional futility of measuring the immensurable, ethnicity.

This chapter has considered differing cultural conventions in the transmission of knowledge. In particular it has considered the power and fixity of written words to represent meaning, define artists, and arbitrate on the 'cutting edge of developments in art'. The following chapter considers artists' awareness of art's reception and potential strategies of engagement with bicultural art audiences.

Art Audiences

Embracing the 'cutting edge of developments in art' or straddling old and new modes of expression may be more problematic for art critics than artists.

Rodney Wilson betrays a phallogocentric emphasis when he describes this dilemma for the Maori artist; "Does he betray his race and adopt a transposed art introduced from foreign cultures, or does he trust that a cross-fertilisation between the two cultures can bring forth a unique local variation of international idioms?" (in Panoho, 1998, p. 33).

Rodney Wilson seems to advance 'a unique local variation of international idioms' as a worthy objective, rather like a cosmopolitan ideal of a national identity, made unique by its hybridity of the global and the local. His choice of words predicates the local on the international. He does not consider consciously Maori art produced in a Maori context, as advocated by Hirini Mead, to be a viable alternative, calling it a "slavishly imitative facsimile fashion" (ibid, p.34).

Damien Skinner (2008) privileges Modernism as a liberating tool from this imitative tendency, crediting it with "opening up a space in which Maori art could negotiate modernity without recourse to concepts such as tradition or past or perpetuation" (p.207). He classifies many of the artists of the 1950s and 60s, such as Para Matchitt, Selwyn Muru, and Arnold Wilson, as "Maori Modernists", implying that they found modernity problematic, and were intent on disconnecting, at least artistically, with their traditions. This disconnection left these artists supposedly free to confront the problems intrinsic to art itself, rendering it autonomous from a cultural context. Damien Skinner's classification betrays a binary, essentialist bias when he claims; "These artists were modernists first, and Maori artists second" (ibid, p.115). Eurocentric priorities of Modernism have been projected on to the Maori artists under scrutiny, based on that which can be seen.

Brett Hopkins (2002) is keenly aware of the way Maori art is mediated in writing, often to fit predetermined theories; “Even as Maori artists claim their heritage and culture as necessary materials for their artworks, they too, can be caught in a web of language and can be misunderstood by an audience that should be their most appreciative.” Brett Hopkins implies that the elitist and often obfuscating language of prevailing art canons can alienate Maori artists from their own Maori audiences. He cites Maori artist Brett Graham, who observes an increasing gap between marae and market expectations. Graham attributes this difference to the fact that many Maori artists anticipate a non-Maori audience and modify their work accordingly, because they are “being promoted by voices outside the culture” (in Hopkins, 2002).

Maoricentric Art

Robert Jahnke (2006) proposes a stratagem of “negotiating the pae” to circumvent these misunderstandings. This entails adopting a position *between* the binary oppositions of traditional and contemporary Maori art. The pae is not the interface between Eurocentric and Maori art, but rather, a conceptual boundary *within* Maori art, resistant, but still receptive, to a Western art perspective. “Contemporary Maori art is part of a wider cultural discourse that seeks autonomy of expression as a right of citizenship on both sides of the pae” (p.13).

Here definitions of Maori artists in Modernist terms would not have ascendancy because all definitions would be mediated through a Maori lens. Here customary Maori practice would not be seen as compromised or undermined by new technologies and material, but as potentially enhanced by them. “What is critical in the process of reconfiguration is the construction of identity as an inseparable condition of the past and the future” (2006, p.18).

Rangihiroa Panoho suggests that Maori artists have always been inclined to avail themselves of innovation: “The boundaries between Maori and Pakeha art and culture have always been transmutable. The strongest argument that Maori

artists have to support change is that it's their tradition" (1996, p.124). Time-based separations of traditional and contemporary art would be less relevant at the pae because Western notions of time are subordinate to a Maori notion of a continuum. Negotiating the pae seems a useful construct to empower Maori artists to claim an autonomous space, one defined by a Maori frame of reference.

"Autonomy is the basis of interaction with the wider world by ways and means defined in one's own cultural frame of reference. Autonomy cannot be granted as an act of benevolence by the state because it belongs inherently to indigenous peoples in their own sphere" (O'Sullivan, 2007, p.7).

A position at the pae, as the literal space of speaking rights for tangatawhenua, is not so much claimed as *earned*. Negotiating the pae could be a kind of cultural quality assurance for Maori artists 'in their own sphere'. It could also ensure that Maori art produced from this space is another, *visual* form of te kaimanga a nga tupuna (food of the ancestors).

Robert Jahnke (2001) advances a Matauranga Maori approach for art education that reclaims and reaffirms a Maori world view. This is embedded in the pedagogical model that he has developed for the Bachelor of Maori Visual Arts at Massey University. This degree privileges Maori ethnicity over Eurocentrism, facilitated by operating within the indigenous context of the School of Maori studies, and by including compulsory theoretical papers comprising Te Reo, Te Tiriti, and Maori Visual Art. This offers an affirmative cultural grounding whereby Maori students might "recover part of their personal histories". Western perspectives are still available through electives in the Social Sciences and Humanities faculties, in recognition of the multiple or partial cultural positions that students may adopt.

Massey's pedagogical model is evidently not as essentialist as those courses which were denigrated as "stylistic cloning" in the 1998 McDermott Miller Report. Jahnke is convinced that this denigration was aimed at the Toihoukura

programme at Tairāwhiti Polytechnic. Toi Houkura was founded on the philosophy of senior Māori Artist, Sandy Adsett, who insisted that “Māori Art should be created for Māori”. This view echoes Hirini Mead’s somewhat fundamentalist definition of Māori art: “that which looks Māori, feels Māori, is done by Māori following Māori styles, canons of taste and values” (cited in Poland, 1999, p.6).

Hirini Mead laments that those artists who are already enculturated into the traditions of Western art and philosophy “have to learn how to be Māori” and suggests indigenous art can only be safeguarded by imposing some limits on its generation.

It is my view that Māori art cannot be opened out to the majority culture unless there are clear cut rules which protect its essence, its mauri or life principle, and its very soul from being assimilated into the dominant Western art of the Pakeha (1997, p.233).

Hirini Mead is concerned that Māori art could be severed from its holistic context if it was too accessible, denying it cultural nourishment. Once severed, ‘the dominant Western art of the Pakeha’ might prevail, subsuming Māori art under Modernism. This scenario seems likely to art educator Jill Smith, who indicts current art education for its disparagement of artistic precedent: “Such discrimination in pedagogy has to be seen as a refusal by the Pakeha dominated education system to acknowledge the effectiveness of an alternative model of art education which produces work of extraordinary vitality and quality” (Smith, 2001, p.97).

Jill Smith’s opinion seems to emphasise the *products* of this alternative education, rather than the cultural *process*¹⁷ that informs them, recalling Hirini Mead’s “Sherlock Holmes effect”. She implies a correlation between educational

¹⁷ The unseen cultural process that I refer to could be summarised as *manaakitanga*, an inclusive caring for others. Sandy Adsett once joked that an indicator of manaakitanga on the marae was the concentration of the drinking cordial offered, implying that only the best hospitality should be extended, and not compromised or diluted (Personal communication, 2002).

effectiveness and the quality of work produced, suggesting that comparative evaluations of art education are conducted according to positivist criteria which can be pointed to. The unseen cultural processes that nourished such works of 'extraordinary vitality and quality' are marginalised beneath the surface of academic scrutiny, as waahi ngaro, hidden spaces.

Waahi Ngaro

This section contends that the work of Maori artist Ralph Hotere conveys waahi ngaro (unseen places), and suggests that careful and receptive looking will reveal this dimension.

Hotere is famous for keeping his cultural motives beneath the surface of academic scrutiny. He declines to explain his work, deflectively stating: "I am Maori by birth and upbringing. As far as my work is concerned this is coincidental" (cited in Poland, 1999, p.7).

Ralph Hotere's reticence is not a problem for curator, Emma Bugden, who feels his work compensates for this with an 'eloquent silence'. "Black for Hotere resonates from very early on as a symbol of apocalypse, or annihilation, of anger; black steals thunder, black blazes admonitory, then cools into eloquent silence" (2004).

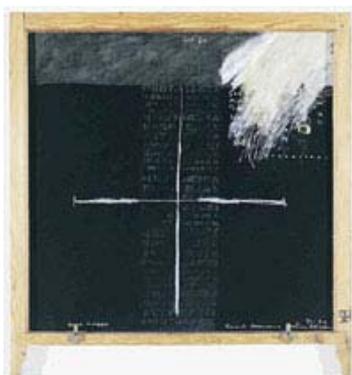


Figure 13 Ralph Hotere
1981/2 *Towards Aramoana*
(*Black Window*)



Figure 14 Ralph Hotere
1964 *Black Painting*



Figure 15 Ralph Hotere
1992 *Negro Sobre Lo Oro*

Ngahiraka Mason sees Hotere's black as a painterly expression of oral poetry, moteatea. It evokes the primal blacks contained in these ancient incantations, such as te po uriuri, the extreme dark; te po tangotango, the impenetrable night; te po oti atu, that to which we are all destined (1998, p.60). For Ngahiraka, these blacks are not silent, but encourage an oral performance; "When I see Hotere paintings that have moteatea, I like to read them aloud or hear them spoken."

To me, Hotere's black spaces are charged with an energy that is both extinguishing and life-giving. They bring to mind the intervening shadows of T.S. Eliot's poem, The Hollow Men:

*Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion and the response
Falls the shadow*

Poet Hone Tuwhare pays tribute to Hotere's painting, initially observing its austerity;

*When you offer only three
Vertical lines precisely drawn
And set into a dark pool of lacquer
It is a visual kind of starvation*

And concluding with heightened excitement;

*But when you score a superb orange
Circle on a purple thought-base
I shake my head and say; hell, what
Is this thing called aroha
Like I'm euchred, man. I'm eclipsed?*

(in O'Brien, 1994, p.84.)

Poet Bill Manhire describes these words as being about the inadequacy of language to convey the overwhelming visual power of Hotere's work (ibid, p.85). Similarly, Hamish Clayton (2008) implies that any words from Hotere would be superfluous when the paintings themselves resonate so articulately:

There is always a space between us and Hotere. And at the centre of *Aurora Painting* is, it seems, a dark core; something solid as though a planet. Things like silence become its gravity. Poetry orbits around it, never quite explaining things, never quite becoming concrete (honouring the artist's *modus operandi*), but also proving that the inner space of Hotere is an articulate one.

Hotere's 'inner space' may be his *waahi ngaro*, an inexplicable Maori dimension whose authority can be sensed. Robert Jahnke seems to view Ralph Hotere's silence as a cultural omission, preferring to prioritise a Maori dimension. He inverts Ralph's famous statement, to produce one of his own predicated on ethnicity; "I am a Maori and it is coincidental that I am an artist" (2001). Robert Jahnke expresses ambivalence at the term "artist", with its Western privileging of unique artistic sensibilities, as well as the appropriateness of the term "art" for Maori creative practice. This inversion acknowledges the inescapable cultural constitution of identity, expressed by Nicolas Bourriaud; "There is no mental place where the artist might exclude himself from the world he represents" (1998).

Ralph Hotere is often categorised as an Abstract Expressionist within the 'world' of Modernist canons, and he himself acknowledges a debt to the Post-painterly Abstractionist and Minimalist, Ad Reinhardt (O'Brien, 1998, p.19). Ad Reinhardt prioritises the internal world of the artwork rather than the external world, insisting "my painting has nothing to do with materials, any more than it has to do with ideas. Whatever I do has come from doing and only relates to what's done" (in Stewart, 1998, p.6).

Ralph Hotere seems to assume these same formalist priorities when he claims that his Maori upbringing is 'coincidental' to his work. However, this claim may

be a deliberate strategy to keep the limited referents of this *artwork* world separate from his *cultural* world. Relegating his Maori world to ‘coincidental’ status may protect it from the scrutiny of the artwork world, caustically described by Keith Stewart as “our imitative Western Atlantic fine art culture of commentary, curatory, and canon” (ibid). Ralph Hotere may be deflecting this sort of commentary, or any Western interpretation that he feels is incommensurable with Maori values.

Like the early carvers studied by Roger Neich (1994, p.140), Ralph Hotere may have so internalised his Maori dimension that it cannot be verbalised to outsiders. He may intend his paintings to accumulate words around them at their reception, words germinated in their own fertile silence. Jonathan Mane-Wheoki describes the dilemma of trying to account for Ralph Hotere’s work; “To write about it as art, merely, is to limit it; to write about it as Taonga is to situate it within something other than an art discourse”(1998, p.55).

Situating Ralph Hotere’s art for inspection within an art discourse might risk a surgical dissection of those cadences and spaces within his artistic repertoire that capture the pulse of moteatea. For this artist, such a dissection might be tantamount to desecration.¹⁸

The perils of looking too closely are conveyed by poet, Emily Dickinson:

*Surgeons must be very careful before they take the knife
For underneath their fine incisions beats the culprit, life*
(in Williams & Honig, 1962, p.187)

The following chapter looks closely at the artworks of Tangatarua, mindful of safeguarding the vitality and diversity of the ‘culprit, life.’

¹⁸ A fragile relationship between exposure, desecration, and destruction is intimated in a scene from Fellini’s 1972 film, *Roma*. Italian labourers, excavating a subway tunnel, are enthralled to discover an underground hall full of beautiful ancient Roman frescoes. At the same time, the labourers are resentful of the huge duty of care that this discovery imposes, to prevent them committing “crimes against history” through damaging the frescoes. Their dilemma is resolved with both sadness and relief when the tunnel is exposed to fresh air, instantly fading and destroying the frescoes’ fragile surfaces.

Encounters

This study is an invitation into the aesthetic 'world' of the small artworks of Tangatarua. These artworks contribute in unobtrusive ways to the narrative scheme of Tangatarua and are less palpable than the larger cohesive carvings and woven panels. Like whimsical creative fragments, they are unevenly dispersed across architecturally interstitial places, visible only upon close encounter. Here I aim to engender a close encounter with them.

I consider the aesthetic autonomy as well as the cultural connectedness of these artworks, mindful of an inextricable relationship between the two. I contend that revealing the dialogical conditions of their manufacture offers the potential of merging horizons between artists and viewers, and enhances an encounter with Tangatarua.

All of the artworks of Tangatarua are site-specific in that they respond to the spatial, architectural dimensions that they inhabit, and reference the genealogy of Ihenga and Hinetekakara. The large, ornate poupou (wall posts) of Ihenga symbolise this genealogy through structural, interconnected links, forming a palpable genealogical narrative with their figurative imagery.

This study is attentive to those unseen emotional intricacies. It places greater importance on artistic *reception* and viewer engagement than causal connections between artistic intention and expression.

Nicolas Bourriaud (1998, p.13) posits art as an encounter, contending that aesthetics are relational, rather than independent judgments, and cannot be imposed from the artist's private space. He sees the artwork as a kaleidoscope of *potential* meaning that is contextualised by its viewers, rather than a repository of *intended* meaning. "It is no longer possible to regard contemporary work as a space to be walked through... It is henceforth presented as a period of time to be lived through, like an opening to unlimited discussion..."

David Potter (2003) also emphasises art as an encounter, suggesting that its purpose is not intrinsic to it, but resides at its engagement with viewers: "The artwork instead evokes a world and seeks a meaning in the world it portrays. It transforms the material, physical world, not simply to represent or offer a likeness of the objects it portrays but rather to present an opportunity for reflection".

Paul Ricoeur implies that a degree of surrender and suspension of prejudice is necessary to achieve full engagement; "To understand oneself before, in front of, a world is the contrary to projecting one's beliefs and prejudices; it is to let the work and its world enlarge the horizon of my own understanding" (cited in Neich, 1993, page 14).

This section spans the perceptual and experiential 'horizons' of some of the artworks of Tangatarua through formalist descriptions and phenomenological accounts. My descriptions try to guard against ekphrasis, or over-enhancing words that might aesthetically exceed the art itself. It is not my intention to offer a "complimentary service of sensitive interpretation," (Charlesworth, 2003) but instead to engender a more open-ended and dynamic engagement with the small artworks. They are labelled either by location or by media to facilitate their identification, not to suggest a priority of any components and processes.

Art Elements

Inside the wharenui a textured wall assemblage¹⁹ has been inserted in the intervals below the papaka²⁰ and between the poupou. These intervals were once interstitial, negative spaces that had not been earmarked for artistic attention. The wall assemblage is a patchwork of mainly surplus wood off-cuts and ceramic tiles, which were assiduously salvaged and reconfigured by a student when the interior carving of the wharenui was almost complete. These pieces maintain a cultural continuity as ‘artistic offspring’ of the carvings, which in turn pay homage to traditional precedent.²¹ They also maintain a *visual* continuity of earthy, organic tones with the carvings and wall panels they derive from. Through conserving and recycling surplus materials, notions of interconnectedness and conservation have been evoked.



Figure 18 Wall assemblage below the papaka (skirting board) with inserted tile. Turapa (woven panels) are above the papaka.

¹⁹ Assemblages are made entirely or partly of preformed natural or manufactured materials, objects, or fragments not intended as art materials. The term originates from Jean Dubuffet, who created a series of collages in the 1950s comprised of butterfly wings, entitled *assemblages d'empreintes*.

²⁰ Papaka is the term for i) the skirting board; ii) a brownish-grey paddle crab.

²¹ Lyonel has honoured precedent in the wharenui, Ihenga, by installing Ngatoroirangi, a poupou from the 1870s, as the primary template for the ensuing carvings. For Lyonel Ngatoroirangi represents not only ancestral lineage, but also *artistic* lineage to a celebrated Te Arawa carver, Wero.



Figure 19 Wall assemblage in relation to the poupou (wall pillars) with bench seating below.

These ‘artistic offspring’ have in turn been honoured and developed by master carver Lyonel Grant in a new whareniui, Ngakau Mahaki, which was opened in March, 2009, in Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland). As models of cultural and artistic connectedness, the assemblages of Ihenga have themselves furnished a new artistic precedent.



Figure 20 Assemblages in the mahau (porch) of Ngakau Mahaki, Auckland (Natalie Robertson, 2009).

The rich patterns of Ihenga's assemblages evince a keen awareness of intrinsic material properties. The student who designed them attributes his awareness to contemporary Maori artists studied while a student on the Diploma in Craft Design-Maori course. Artists such as Ralph Hotere, Robert Jahnke, and Para Matchitt emboldened him to consider burnt wood, metal sheeting, and industrial construction methods as legitimate artistic materials, and to employ processes that were sympathetic to their respective qualities. He credits these artists with removing "many of the stereotypical restraints that young Maori artists may experience in their emergence into the art world."

While acknowledging such nationally prominent artists, this student also pays direct tribute to the mentoring offered by Lyonel Grant, and by his ceramics and sculpture tutor, George Andrews, saying; "Both men hold a level of reverence with my peers and me."

As a former tutor of the Whakairo (woodcarving) course, Lyonel Grant had familiarised his students with the marae plans years in advance, even administering a brief "to create maquettes of possible poupou for a wharenui named after Ihenga the renowned Te Arawa explorer". Thus students who were later engaged to help in varying capacities were already conversant with the total commemorative scheme;

The concepts within the house were very clear to us working within the house - traditional back wall, contemporary front wall, Tangaroa as the poutokomanawa, Ngatoroirangi, Captain Cook opposite Abel Tasman, Hine Nui te po,²² migration, colonisation; it was all explained, well to us anyway.

Tutor George Andrews had similarly readied his Ceramics students for the production of clay tiles that would bear imagery referencing the poupou. His role was not limited to his ceramic expertise; tutors, carvers and students alike became de facto engineers/carpenters/labourers. A student recalls;

²² Hine Nui te Po (great woman of darkness) personifies death.

Other experiences involved lifting various carvings into place even if it were only for a short period of time, long enough for Lyonel to make mental notes of changes to be made. Sometimes it involved fixing pieces in place for good, such as the hull of the waka, which involved George climbing inside it to guide a bolt connecting it to the ceiling. He was lucky to get out before the bolt was secured.

George Andrews' influence upon installation within the wharenuī was often serendipitous;

A clay tile managed to find its way from above the window where it was intended to be placed, and on to the wooden composition that I had been creating at the time. I can't remember exactly how it happened but I do remember George showing some enthusiasm toward the accidental occurrence.

The assemblage process gave an artistic latitude to arrange elements according to 'accidental occurrences' because there was no predetermined composition. This latitude was fully exploited by one student:

Whilst working on a large scale dealing with repetitive elements you tend to see things that were not present at the beginning. This was the case with the wooden compositions and after making three or four I could see a process in which I could incorporate elements of line and shape if desirable. This was not intended but as I recall it was not discouraged.

A lack of discouragement seemed to signal confidence in this graduate artist, who reciprocates; "They have instilled in me many of the tacit signifiers that help define quality, the quality that is perhaps timeless."

Postmodernist painter Imants Tillers consciously invests his own art with a timeless quality by incorporating the styles and iconography of other prominent artists. He considers all contemporary artists to be *processors*, not *producers* of data, who can only manipulate the imagery of the culture that precedes and

constitutes them (in Curnow, 1998).

Tillers exemplifies this belief in his own praxis by rejecting the pursuit of newness, instead reconstituting fragments from existing paintings into new painted assemblages.



Figure 21 Imants Tillers *Aftermath I* 1997 synthetic polymer paint, gouache, oilstick on 120 canvas boards

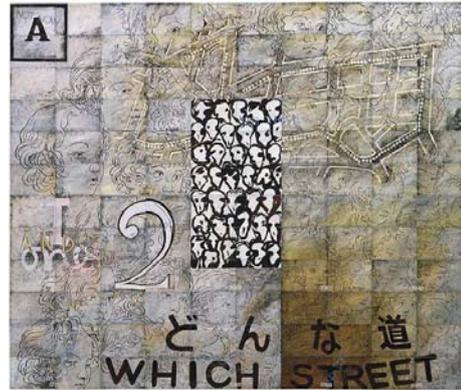


Figure 22 Imants Tillers *Aftermath II* 1997 synthetic polymer paint, gouache, oilstick on 120 canvas boards

Ihenga's assemblages also invite comparison with the work of Rosalie Gascoigne, who reconstituted discarded industrial fragments rather than ready-made imagery. Her tactile patchworks of weathered metal and timber are described as “a celebration of the extraordinary possibilities to be found in the wash of debris left in the wake of the everyday” (McDonald, 1999, in McAloon, p.38).



Figure 23 Rosalie Gascoigne *Big Yellow* 1988 Sawn up reflective road signs of plywood & aluminium



Figure 24 Rosalie Gascoigne *Rose Red City 4* 1992-3 Painted timber on composition board

While the rustic assemblages in Ihenga derive from ad hoc materials, they were not combined in an ad hoc way. They were manipulated according to the subjective judgment of the student who salvaged them, who states; “I like to see the artist’s hand in the work.” He also states that he is “still passionate about materials and processes”, and likes to use “a random chance aesthetic”, implying a judicious balance of aesthetic control and whimsy, constriction and liberation.

In her 2006 poem entitled “Everything counts in large amounts” assemblage artist Claudia Von der Heydt suggests;

Some things have been cut loose and are breathing.

Some things have been joined and are healing.

Cut loose or joined, the wood and clay fragments from Ihenga were viewed as a potential artistic cache. Fragments from the flax paper sheets lining the ceiling were also viewed as an artistic cache, even though they were as fragile as Dubuffet’s butterfly wings. The labour-intensive manufacture of the ceiling paper had involved many of the art students in a patient process of conservation and recycling, from flax harvesting to the final large translucent sheets. The process had been considered a triumph of technology, and any left-over fragments considered too valuable to waste. Hence these fragments were dexterously ‘welded’ into horizontal strips above the assemblages to form a thin papaka (skirting board) frieze.



Figure 25 Sections of harakeke (flax) paper frieze with transferred imagery on the rimu papaka.

Papermaking

In the year preceding the opening of the marae, 1995, papermaking had been formalised as a co-requisite subject with raranga (weaving) in the Diploma of Craft Design-Maori qualification. This gave students the requisite skills for the production of the vast quantities of paper that would line the ceiling of the wharenuī, and also formalised a time to ensure this could be done. Throughout the year all excess, off-cut, or discarded pieces of flax had been gathered and recycled for this purpose, in accordance with the strong conservation ethic of the weaving tutor, Tina Wirihana.

Initial focus was kept on the technical exploration and mastery of the papermaking process. Trial methodologies and variations of paper results were systematically recorded and analysed. One participant revelled in this evolving technology; “I was excited to be able to use my skills that I was still learning, and to see them used for this wharenuī.”

She recalls the sometimes improvised and domestic scale of the machinery employed: a humble washing machine proved more versatile and accessible than the large purpose-designed vats for boiling the flax; a large food-processor initially shredded the chopped flax fibre, until it was supplanted by a more efficient large mincer; a child’s paddling pool sufficed as a trough for the soaking and straining of pulp. The papermaking studio had hummed with the industry of preparing, processing, and pressing the large volumes of pulp derived from harakeke (flax) for its transformation into paper sheets. It was a collaborative industry, with an interdependent division of labour.

“It was a joyous, exciting time - an honour to be part of the team.”

This student considers it fortuitous that her final, graduating year at Waiariki coincided with the opening of Tangatarua, affording the chance to be involved. Throughout her course of study she had witnessed the site preparation and progressive building of Tangatarua, anticipating “the time would come for us to play our part to dress the marae with harakeke”. Being part of its formation was

like “being part of something historical” and bestowed “the right to call it *my marae*”.

In contrast to these optimistic recollections, those of another participant in the paper making are less positive. While his contribution was indispensable, he did not consider it such “an honour” to be part of the team, instead describing his involvement as akin to “slave labour”. His memories are of mostly menial preparative tasks that did not allow any creative latitude or new learning opportunities. He conveys a sense of disempowerment saying that he “just did as instructed”. When friends and colleagues learned of the mechanical nature of his contribution, they responded with incredulity, implying that they felt his skills were underutilised.

Being part of the multidisciplinary team meant that many aspects of the work were carried out in separate specialist studios, often in isolation, and often after normal working hours. A student recalls; “We were working on trust, with no time to correct or redo the work - it was like walking on eggshells!” Her sentiment was tempered by a conviction that nothing would go wrong, because of the optimism of the kaumatua, Hiko Hohepa, whom this student describes as “a beautiful man, as open as a child.”

‘Working on trust’ meant that participants could not envisage the final application of their artistic work, as it was produced in stages or in separate components according to the architectural readiness of the whareniui. Participants thus had a limited overview of the total configuration and did not view it in situ until the ceremonial dawn opening. This occasion was emotionally overwhelming for the weaver Tina Wirihana and me, and we both wept upon seeing the unimagined convergence of collective efforts.

One participant recalls being struck by the warm rawness of the interior of the whareniui, “the unpaintedness was a beautiful thing”. The ‘unpaintedness’ extended from the honeyed wood of the interior carvings to the irregular, trunk-like forms of the back wall that suggested a primeval forest. The branching irregularities of these forest forms reflected the physical elements of their former

natural environment, uncontrived by carvers' chisels, akin to a Wabi-sabi aesthetic.²³



Figure 26 Wabi-sabi in the whareniui: wood texture; copper patination; impressed tile; exposed weaving join; rust discolouration on flax.

This student appreciated the ‘unpaintedness’ of Ihenga because she had expected to see wood sealed under a layer of the red ochre enamel paint, the fate of many extant carvings in the Waiariki region. Roger Neich notes that coating carvings in red paint was part of the classicising orthodoxy imposed by museums in the late 1800s, simulating the “traditional” colour of red pigmented clay, kokowai (1993, p.28).



Figure 27 Red enamel paint not only cancelled the translucence of old carvings, but also concealed graphic accents of peach, black and white that had characterised the carvings of many late 19th century whareniui, such as Houmaitawhiti. These original maihi (front bargeboards), carved by Wero in 1875, were replaced during restoration and are now exhibited in monotonous red in the Rotorua Museum.

Archdeacon Walsh lamented in 1903 that the practice of painting carvings denied researchers the chance to observe the long-term benefits of kokowai (red clay):

²³ Wabi-sabi refers to an understated, unrefined beauty that exists in nature. It is often rustic, imperfect, or transient, such as the effects of organic decay and degradation.

Though it may have been well on aesthetic grounds, as a general rule, to restore the Maori carvings in our museums to something like their original appearance with a fresh coat of paint, I think it would be interesting to leave a few good specimens untouched, as, apart from the fact that these weather-worn objects have a beauty of their own which it is a pity to destroy, it would be an advantage to have an opportunity of seeing how this wonderful mixture is capable of enduring the most trying conditions (Walsh, 1903, p.10).

Archdeacon Walsh's research identified a variety of kokowai sourced from iron deposits in the water of creeks and streams, termed *horu*. He also implied an intriguing connection between this term and the similar name of the Egyptian Sun God, *Horus*, who was mythologically linked to iron (ibid, p.10).

The flax paper within Ihenga is mythologically linked to Tanemahuta, god of forests and flora, as it is sourced from the harakeke plants of his domain. Likewise, the carvings, architectural wood elements, and weaving also link to the flora of Tanemahuta's domain. This connection had been observed by a student, who, upon entering the finished wharenuī and viewing the multitude of ceramic tiles, mentally declared: "Papatuanuku at last!" She felt relieved that the female element was at last represented in these tiles of clay, sourced from the domain of the primal Earth Mother, Papatuanuku.



Figure 28 The name plaque for the wharekai (dining hall), Hinetekakara in faux bronze.

The female element had seemed mysteriously present during the firing of the bronze plaque (above) for the dining hall, bearing the name of Ihenga's wife, Hinetekakara. The mould unaccountably broke three times, necessitating a quick rescue in time for the opening. Lyonel Grant carved a wooden facsimile plaque on which I painted a faux bronze surface. Hiko was unperturbed at this mishap, remarking that perhaps Hinetekakara was exercising her *own* preference for her name plaque.

Ceramic Tiles

Ceramic tiles have been inlaid into the kahopaetara (rimu dado moulding) above the harakeke turapa (woven panels), conversing visually with the poupou on each side of them. Like the assemblages below the papaka, these small tiles are full of content that gradually reveals itself (pictured below).



Figure 29 A tile in relation to the kahopaetara (upper moulding), turapa (woven panels) beneath, papaka (lower moulding), and poupou (carved pillars).



Figure 30 Close-up of the tile featuring an image of Ngaruahoe mountain erupting. The cracks and imperfections in the tile surface were valued as part of a wabi-sabi aesthetic, evoking an analogy between the volatile firing process and the volcanic activity of the Waiariki region.

The tiles were designed and executed during a scheduled Ceramics class, giving students the opportunity to experiment with, and then consolidate, the processes used. This class took place as the marae was nearing completion, when the master carver, Lyonel Grant, was fully absorbed in the final carving components. His preoccupation was a chance for the students to be more adventurous with the ceramic tile imagery, knowing that he was unlikely to have time to monitor any designs prior to their installation on the walls! While this gave a measure of artistic autonomy, each tile was rendered site-specific through exhaustive historical research for its relevant imagery, and edited to suit the ceramic process. Quality control was ensured by a climate of continuous

information - sharing and dialogue with art tutors and the Kaumatua.

The ceramics tutor, George Andrews, had pioneered a technique for embedding the images into clay, but credits the students with the successful synchronising of *his* technique with *their* images. In the Tangatarua Marae Tenth Birthday celebration booklet he states; "I'm proud of my process getting used but I'm more proud of those students. The students were great, they were very involved and passionate about what they were doing. It was noisy, it was busy" (6 November 2006).

Further quality control was imposed by producing far more tiles than were required, and culling them. Culling was based on relevance, clarity, and innovation of the image itself, as well evidence of the Bauhaus canon, "truth to materials". Such 'truth' could not be guaranteed because of unpredictable firing processes and variable clay properties.

These variable factors have all converged in visible harmony on a tile that Andrews describes as "beautiful". This is the tile that corresponds to Rongomai, and features a small section of woven harakeke extracted from a student photograph of an entire woven panel. The panel was woven by Tina Wirihana specifically for Ihenga and is now installed on the walls of the wharenuī. The steps from the tangible weaving to its photograph, photocopy editing, transferral to porcelain, and ultimately to glazing and firing, involved many different student 'agents', each investing a personal signature without solely *authoring* this tile.



Figure 31 The tile in situ on the Kahopaetara. The woven pattern represents inanga, the tiny whitebait fish discovered by Ihenga's dog at Rotoiti, also home to the weaver, Tina Wirihana. The colouration is due to a cobalt and manganese dioxide glaze.

This tile has a deeply embossed illusional surface, which was achieved in an unexpected way. Hitherto, photocopied imagery had been transferred to the raw clay, then water-blasted to erode the negative areas, which were unprotected by the photocopier carbon. This process resulted in a relief image that could be enhanced with judicious glazing. Andrews attributes the difference in *this* tile to the freshness of the porcelain employed in its execution. He explains:

The first porcelain off the top of the bag is always wetter. This needs wedging to reduce the wetness. This wasn't done, and as a result the porcelain distorted during the removal of the sheet during the transfer process. The wetness of the porcelain adhered to the paper when it was being removed, stretching the porcelain upwards. The carbon of the image was thus imprinted deeper into the porcelain.

Usually the image was water-etched after transfer to give a positive relief, that is, a prominent image. In this case, the reverse effect had been achieved, with the image already embossed deeply into the surface. Andrews advised the students to omit the etching stage, as he felt the porcelain would not withstand further stress. His sensitivity to the structure of porcelain had produced a variation on the tile-making process, a variation he felt was potentially useful; “The result was great and a definite technique for making deeper embossed tiles.”

One of the students working in clay composed three tiles related to his tribal area of Tuhoe. While each poupou (carved wall pillar) of the wharenuui was paired with a single corresponding tile, this student found inventive ways of making his Tuhoe imagery correspond to others.

One example of this is a porcelain tile featuring a geometric, almost abstract design next to the poupou, Nukutawhiti, a Tai Tokerau ancestor. It comprises a symmetrical composition of two adzes, or *toki*, distinctive in cobalt blue against the white of the porcelain.



Figure 32 Tile with two toki (adzes).

This student grew up in the Tuhoe settlement of Ruatoki, which literally translates as two adzes. However, he resolutely denied that he had engineered a personal visual pun, insisting that his two adzes represented those that had hewed the hull of the famous northern waka (canoe) of Nukutawhiti, Ngatokimatawhaorua (Personal Communication, 2006).

Another tile created by this student was placed beneath the kahopaetara into the wooden mosaics of the papaka. This tile, according to Andrews, was the first one 'discovered' amongst the excess and rejected tiles, and was considered so visually arresting that it became the initial inspiration for the wall assemblages of the papaka. It features a rather distressed image of this student's own ancestral whareniui, Rongokarae, with images of foliage above it. Andrews remembers that this student "isolated and stepped up the flowers on the photocopier and arranged them above the image of the marae."

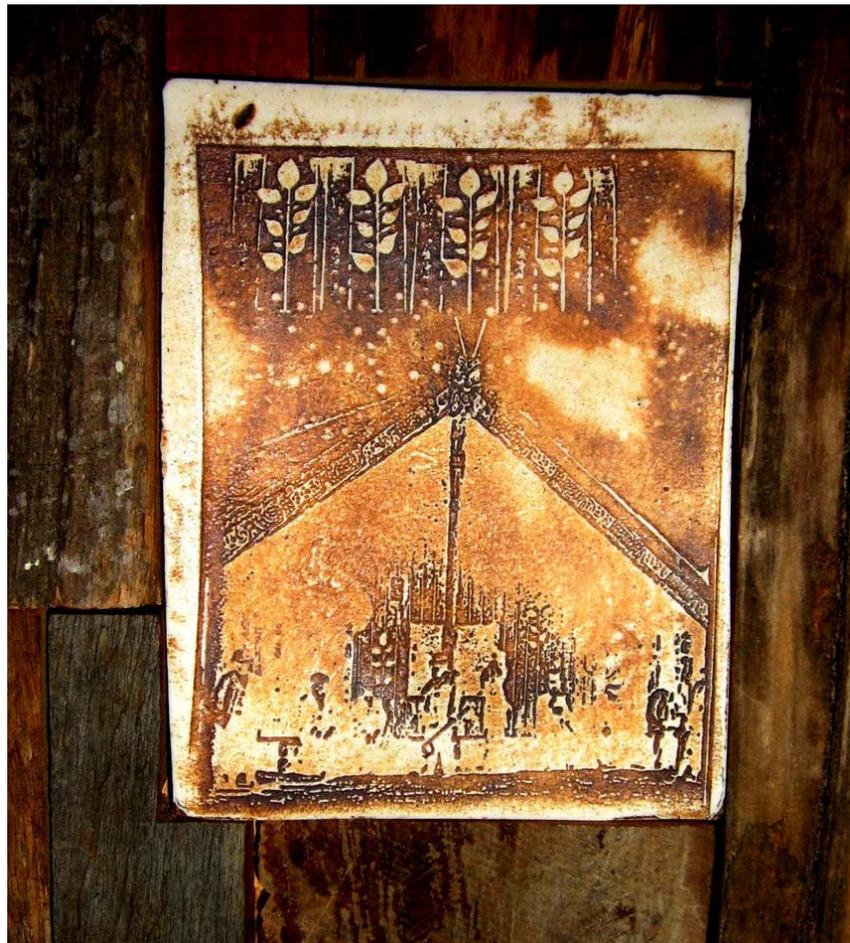


Figure 33 Ceramic tile of the whareniui Rongokarae, with detail of interior imagery above.

As a tutor, George Andrews could not resist offering advice that he felt would artistically balance the composition; “I suggested that he complete the line of flowers to complete a line across the top. Compositionally that would have been better. He ignored my direction. I like that.”

Although the motifs resemble flowers, they are in fact broad-leafed shrubs, identified by Roger Neich through their tracings under the latter coats of paint on the back wall of the porch of Rongokarae (1993, p.266). George Andrews recalls that this student “used the exact number of flower images as there are in the marae.” Symbolically representing one’s own marae was of more importance here than subscribing to any Western design imperatives. The distinctive, figurative painted innovations of this significant house did not need any contemporary editing. Roger Neich records; “At the base of the central porch rafter on one side was a small painting of a tree, and on the other side was a vignette of two people later overpainted by a tree.” This naturalistic imagery extends to the base of three matching pairs of rafters that display paintings of horses, fish, and trees (ibid).

Figurative painting like this had once been prevalent within whareniui in the 1870s, using a range of post-contact imagery that included plants and animals, biblical and political events, as well as text. Maori artisans had replaced chisels with expedient paintbrushes to meet a growing demand for new whareniui needed to host the many hui (meetings) that were convened to address land issues (Neich, 1993, p.2).



Figure 34 Late 19th century photo of the whareniui Rongokarae, with plant imagery still visible on the porch.



Figure 35 Portrait of Wi Pere in the Whareniui, Rongopai 1887
Enamel paint on wood



Figure 36 Heke from Hineringa, Te Arero, Mohaka 1880s

Painted imagery was expedient because it was quickly executed and exempt from the strict protocols and specialised training of carving, whilst still affirming tribal identity. Like polychrome carvings, painted figurative imagery was

dismissed as an aberration by early ethnographers, perhaps more readily because the colonial government associated its overt political content with the prophetic and 'rebellious' leader, Te Kooti.

A third tile made by the Tuhoe student commemorates the flag of a later prophetic tupuna (ancestor), Rua Kenana. The design on this flag was considered so politically contentious in 1916 that it led to Rua's arrest. It features the Union Jack with a message stitched onto it, "Kotahi te ture mo nga iwi e rua Maungapohatu" (One law for both peoples, Maungapohatu). Rua devised this flag in response to Prime Minister Joseph Ward's 1908 declaration 'there cannot be two suns shining in the sky at the one time'. Rua interpreted this as bicultural justice, implementing the same laws for Maori and Pakeha. He proudly flew this flag at Maungapohatu accompanied by his own ancestral flag, Te Tahī-o-te-rangi. Rua Kenana's contentious flags disappeared from view after a raft of repressive legislation²⁴ systematically undermined Tuhoe independence, culminating in Rua's arrest and conviction for sedition in 1916.

The flag tile is embedded low in the papaka, at seated eye-level, subtly insinuating its message without stridency. Vito Acconci (1997) maintains that art in community places has to devise a stratagem to attract attention because its public have not purposefully converged as art-viewers. The Oxford Dictionary (1950, p.63) offers various definitions of art, among them "stratagem" and "cunning". This tile with its once-seditious imagery may be exercising such stratagem and cunning within the community space of the marae.

Public art, in order to exist in the world, agrees to certain social conventions, certain rules of peaceful co-existence; the public artist gives up the gallery artist's privilege of imposition. Using manners as a cover, public art can lie low; instead of attacking, public art insinuates (Acconci, 1997).

²⁴The 1880 Maori Prisoners' Act meant that Maori could be imprisoned indefinitely without trial. The 1893 Native Land Purchase and Acquisition Act sped up the purchase of Maori Land. The 1894 Validation of Invalid Land Sales Act legitimised Pakeha land misdealings. The 1908 Tohunga Suppression Act penalised traditional spiritual healers and experts for their influence.



Figure 37 Small tile of Rua Kenana's flag placed about 20cm above the bench seating. It features a Union Jack with a message stitched onto it, "Kotahi te ture mo nga iwi e rua Maungapohatu" (One law for both peoples, Maungapohatu).

'Using manners as a cover' and 'insinuating meaning' in public places were practices that used to happen in a space not dissimilar to the marae, the Greek *agora*, an open gathering place. It was here that people used to socialise and exchange views. If the topic was politically contentious, it would be disguised or referred to obliquely, as openly airing dissent was considered seditious. In this respect, the marae differs from the agora because the expression of views, however contentious, is ritualised and sanctioned by whaikorero (speechmaking) protocols, which allow a democratic exchange of views with impunity. People who frequented the agora, on the other hand, needed to become adept at *clandestine* political conversations, intimating one view whilst expressing another. This secretive practice has furnished a contemporary artistic and literary term for coded or metaphorical meaning, allegory. It derives from collapsing the Greek word *allos*, meaning other, and *agora*, gathering place.

Papaka Frieze

There are many examples of allegory on the papaka frieze, those thin “welded” strips of recycled paper fragments that exhibit printed images seemingly too small to be strident, too dainty to be dissident. One such image features a carved plinth within a shelter that marks the entrance to the marae at Ohinemutu, in front of the Te Arawa wharenuī, Tamatekapua. The ornate shelter resembles a garden folly, a Victorian symbol of gentility that the Collins Dictionary describes as a “useless extravagant building” (2006, p.303). The carved plinth inside is a pedestal for a bust of Queen Victoria, presented in 1870 to Te Arawa by her son, the Duke of Edinburgh, as a token of its allegiance to the Crown during the land wars.

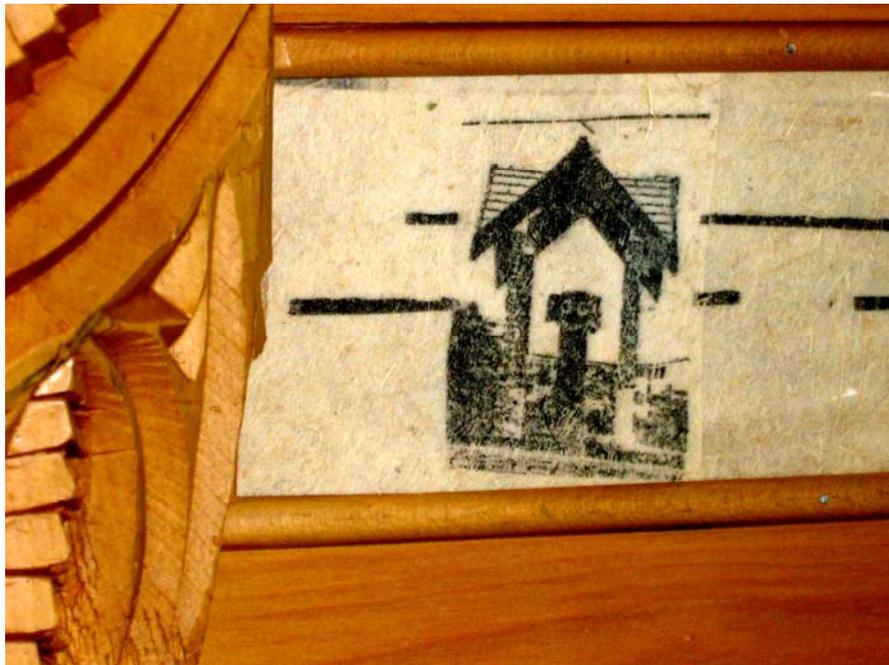


Figure 38 Empty Pedestal Ohinemutu 1996

For reasons unknown, but widely speculated upon, the bust mysteriously disappeared in 1996 and the empty plinth was photographed by one of the art students. The bust has since been restored, just as mysteriously.

Another allegorical reference to architecture occurs on the papaka frieze in a strip of pattern comprising deceptively similar units. They form an alternating arrangement of Rua Kenana’s tabernacle-style building, Hiona, at

Maungapohatu, with the Beehive, Wellington. The graphic rendition and similar scale of each exploits the ironic similarity between these two politically polarised institutions.



Figure 39 Houses of Power



Figure 40 Printed document on the papaka

There are also coded references to tutors on other sections of the papaka frieze. Figure 40 (above right) contains excerpts from a memo circulated by the former head of the Art department, Ross Hemera. This is an affectionate mockery of Hemera's infamous fondness for documented formality by another tutor who eschewed all bureaucracy.



Figure 41 A printed strip containing a collage of photocopied images of artworks by two tutors. They have been rescaled, redistributed, and reconstituted into new formats.

The printed papaka frieze was not a preplanned feature of the whareniui, but resulted from students' recognition of another *artistic cache* afforded by the surplus images that had been sourced for the tiles. These images were bricolaged²⁵, photocopied, and reprocessed into new contexts in a playful collaborative process that was unselfconsciously postmodern²⁶. Its postmodernity arose from the spontaneous, dialogical exchanges between students engaged upon an open-ended artistic practice, rather than from a deliberate theoretical stance. This reprocessing dispersed the former unitary meaning of the images, while the photocopier and fibrous paper further corroded their clarity, evoking a palimpsest. As a deliberate postmodern strategy, bricolage acknowledges the recursive nature of knowledge, and thus often extracts, overlays, and dissolves the authority of ready-made imagery pillaged from multi-media sources.

This breakdown of the discrete boundaries of each medium, together with a tendency to disperse or scatter objects in space, has been authorised by post-object art's critique of modernism. By supplanting an aesthetics of form with the epistemologies of content, the physical nature of contemporary practice has itself been rendered allegorical (Barton, 1992, p.182).

²⁵ This term derives from the French term *bricoler*, to do odd jobs from whatever materials are at hand.

²⁶ Postmodernism refuses the pursuit of originality, often revelling in pastiche, or undisguised copying and reconstituting of existing imagery.

Heke (ceiling rafters)

There was little opportunity for students to be playful with formats or to bricolage for potential imagery with the heke (ceiling rafters). The designs for these were drafted and transferred to computer-cut stencils for spraypainting, a mechanical process that precluded any artistic intervention until the paint stage. The heke were painted in the final year of the marae project, a time described by Lyonel Grant as “when the heat is on, budgets are stretched, and the countdown to the opening is in full swing, you are being stretched on all fronts” (2007, p.121). The enormity of the carving project had denied overall designer, Lyonel Grant, the time he wanted to invest in resolving the kowhaiwhai²⁷ (scroll designs) for the heke, a task “which always gets relegated down the pecking order in the creation of the whare” (ibid).

The heke form both a structural and genealogical link between the ancestors portrayed in the vertical poupou and the heavenly realm of the tahuhu, the horizontal ridgepole at the apex of the ceiling. The heke surfaces are embellished with unfurling, cursive kowhaiwhai patterns, conveying a sense of continuity and upward expansion. Their illusory movement is heightened by an optical interplay of figure and ground elements along a discernible manawa (heart) line, like a flowing arterial connector. The Manawa line is comprised of connecting solid motifs or the spaces surrounding them. These motifs derive predominantly from the growth symbols of koru (coils), pitau (shoots), and kape (crescents). The Manawa line is often referred to as aho (fishing line) or ara (pathway), terms that reinforce its linking function.

He kawai hue, he kawai tangata.

Genealogical links are like the runners of a gourd plant.

(Auckland Museum, 1998, p.5).

²⁷ Roger Neich records that earliest rafter painting occurred in the 1840s: the kowhaiwhai painting that had been used on paddles and monuments already carried the connotations of inherited authority and genealogical mana, so it was clearly a logical step to transfer this connotation to the new symbol of identity emerging in the form of the meeting house (1993, p.73).

The fluid layouts and genealogical, growth connotations of kowhaiwhai belie the formality of their compositions. Hanson (1983) observes; “Kowhaiwhai patterns on painted rafters... are studies in bilateral symmetry of virtually mathematical precision” (in Neich, 1994). Kowhaiwhai artists judiciously employ a range of patterning devices, such as repetition, inversion, and colour graduation to enrich the spatial configuration.

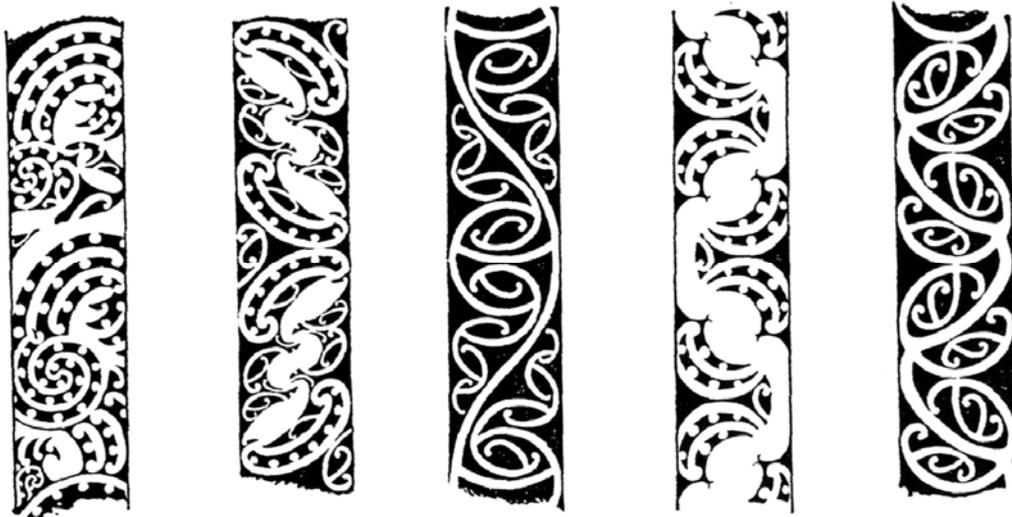


Figure 42 Kowhaiwhai designs from Augustus Hamilton's 1896-1901 book.

Appointed as Director of the Dominion Museum in 1903, Augustus Hamilton recorded and promoted orthodox models of “authentic” Maori art, such as these kowhaiwhai designs. He was also responsible for the repainting of all museum carvings in “traditional” red ochre, suppressing and denigrating a short-lived innovation of polychrome carvings.

In the case of Ihenga, the heke beams taper toward the apex to imply ascension. This has pronounced the sense of movement and distance, and invested the patterns with a soaring levity, evoking Arapeta's Tahana's analogy between the wharenui and the cathedral.

As the painting tutor of the Art School, I was designated the task of overseeing the painting of the heke. This would be done with the help of senior students in the spacious painting studio, exempt from the protocols of tapu. As we had not yet addressed the logistics or volume of this task, our optimism at participating

exceeded our practical appreciation of the task ahead. It was only when Lyonel Grant presented me with the designs and specifications that I realised how time-consuming the operation would be.

There were 24 heke in total whose lengths were approximately seven metres, and although most were designed as symmetrical pairs, the patterns were intricate and rhythmic, requiring exacting paint application to do them justice. I had anticipated projecting the linear designs from overhead transparencies and tracing the outlines directly on to the heke for manual painting. However, these heke were solid, wooden half-rounds that were too heavy and too long to manoeuvre easily within the studio for alignment with a projector. I entertained the alternative of projecting the designs to paper, and cutting them out as templates to guide the painting. Precise registration of the designs would be problematic this way, with a risk of 'bleeding' or paint seepage due to the irregular, convex surfaces. Even with the assistance of the most dexterous students, manual painting of the kowhaiwhai seemed an impossible feat in the fragmented time that was available. A less time consuming strategy was called for, one commended to me by sign-writing.

The Waiariki campus had a plethora of signs that had been computer generated, digitally traced, cut, and applied in adhesive vinyl. I considered this technology ideal as a means of producing temporary stencils for painting that could be peeled away once the paint had been applied. A local sign-writing firm was engaged to produce the ready-cut designs on lengths of adhesive masking film which we applied to the heke. We then proceeded to "weed", or peel and separate out, the positive parts of the design.

As a painter I had envisaged applying colour to these weeded parts of the heke with a broad brush, diluting the paint to achieve a translucency that would keep the woodgrain visible. The earliest recorded examples of kowhaiwhai seem to have an organic translucency, and Neich has suggested that the designs were probably applied with brushes made of feathers, hair, or flax fibres (1993, p.54). Such patient rituals held domestic appeal for me, but the restricted timeframe meant an airbrush was a far more expedient and cost-beneficial tool. Lyonel

Grant was so enamoured of the vinyl-cut process that he wanted to execute all of the designs himself with a compressor-driven airbrush, but after completing several he was forced to relinquish the task to the Art School, lamenting; “I was eventually overwhelmed by the volume of work I had to do” (2007, p.122).

Lyonel Grant had sketched a kaupapa (composition) for the heke, which was not colour specific but which detailed the respective characteristics of each. He envisaged these patterns in subtle hues that did not depart too radically from the wood tones of the larch beams on which they were to be applied. This would give an integrating harmony between the raw wood on the back wall entitled Te Wao Nui a Tane (the primal forest), the totara (wood species) of the poupou, and the honeyed colour of the weaving.

I purchased a base paint palette that offered a range of hues without intensity, with the potential to blend neutral browns. My reservations about the unfamiliar airbrush technology at our disposal were allayed by confident assurances of experience by the Graphics tutor, who volunteered to operate it. It soon became apparent that his experience was limited to the delicate mist of a small spray-booth, and that Lyonel's Grant's compressor was too vigorous for the task.

The translucent hues we aimed for quickly became densely opaque hues of treacle consistency on our first heke. We had also not anticipated needing protective masks, and were soon choking in a fog of coloured vapour. These designs were 'rescued' by a combination of wiping back, sanding, and neutralising the intense paint. The over-vigorous compressor was subsequently used only for the base colour, with tonal and colour graduations applied manually over this with a small bristle brush.



Figure 43 Heke design called Waiariki, representing thermal activity.



Figure 44 Heke design called He Tangata, resembling flowing hair (makawe). Makawe was a comet whose appearance was a portent of misfortune for Te Arawa.

Painting the heke did not coincide with a scheduled painting class, but many of the senior students had registered a willingness to help outside academic hours. Because of the temperamental airbrushing process, their help was mainly restricted to the tedious, but indispensable, weeding of the adhesive paper stencils. The painstaking tedium of this task was illustrated when a student and I were patiently weeding from opposite ends of the heke beam, converging to the middle. This task entailed using fine scalpels to peel back the intricate edges of the pattern, leaving an intact frame around our excisions. As we converged, and viewed the results of each other's labour, we realised that we had been working on *inverse* designs – I had been removing the “ground”, or negative spaces of the pattern, and the student had been working on the “figures”, or positive shapes of the pattern. The paper stencils had been applied in an unbroken adhesive length, and to continue weeding this way would have left the heke bare. Our only solution was to retrieve and re-apply my crumpled, discarded ground areas now littering the floor, because these pieces were more connected than the scattered “islands” of positive shapes.

Some of the heke designs were sufficiently abstract to allow either positive or negative rendering in this way, but others with more denotative, specific messages required a positive darker rendering in relation to their wood background. One such heke is entitled *Tohu a Tangata*, meaning people's signs or ways of communicating, and includes text and contemporary symbols associated with Waiariki. Rachel Ives, writing in a commemorative programme for the 10th "birthday" of Tangatarua (2006), describes these elements as "tiny tributes that speak volumes".



Figure 45 Part of the heke (ceiling rafter) called *Tohu a Tangata*, featuring the words of a whakatauaki (proverb).

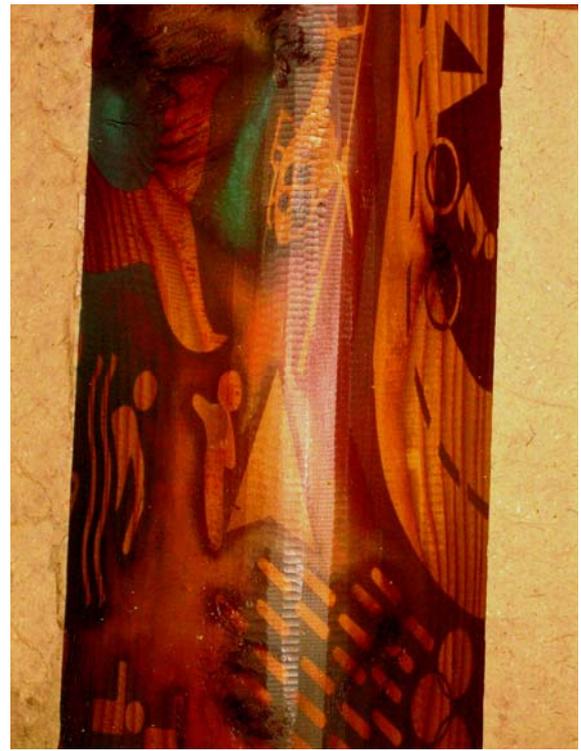


Figure 46 Another section of *Tohu a Tangata* featuring graphic symbols including a helicopter.

A whakatauaki (proverb) that uses the metaphor of a harakeke (flax) plant to convey that people are paramount, features at one end of the heke to acknowledge all participants, but especially the weaver, Tina Wirihana. Further along are conspicuously Kai Tahu designs that tribally connect to the former Head of the Art School, Ross Hemera, and to me. Fish motifs punctuated with my initials pay homage to my 1993 Bay of Plenty phonebook design. A cursive pot design and a cursive kangaroo acknowledge George Andrews, the ceramics

tutor, and John Weiland, the Australian graphics tutor, respectively. These designs are subtly inserted into the undulating flow of shapes, discernible only to those who are familiar with their origins. Like Emily Karaka and Imants Tillers, Lyonel Grant has bricolaged for imagery that pays homage to artistic colleagues.

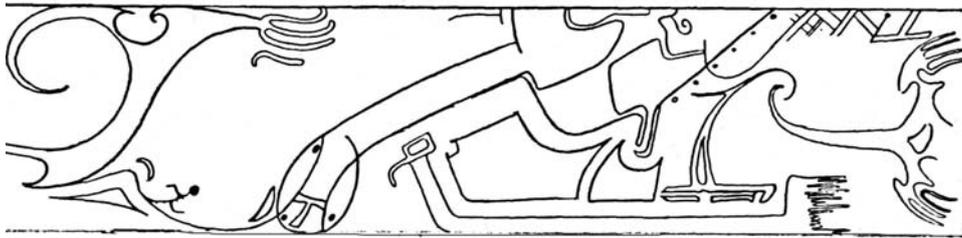


Figure 47 Preliminary drawing for Tohu a Tangata stencil by Lyonel Grant.

This section amplified the artworks within the wharenui (meeting house) of Tangatarua and furnished glimpses of some of the ad hoc processes undertaken. The next section amplifies collaborative artwork that was produced 10 years *after* the opening of Tangatarua and installed in the wharekai, dining hall. In turn, this artwork pays homage to the rich creative precedent afforded by the wharenui Ihenga.

Hinetekakara

Inside the wharekai, or dining hall, newer artwork insinuates its presence as a discreet interior backdrop, ephemeral and unimposing. The modular pieces of this artwork are randomly sprinkled on the wall, an expanding constellation of glossy perspex tiles and avian totara forms.



Figure 48 *He Korowai mo Hinetekakara* mixed media Debbi Thyne & Eugene Kara 2006

The pieces comprise an installation entitled, *He Korowai mo Hinetekakara*, a cloak for Hinetekakara, the personified wharekai. Genteel colours insinuate form over content on spartan walls that suggest a decontextualised space. But art objects cannot have primacy here, because the wharekai's function is *manaaki*²⁸, the sharing of food. The wharekai extends manaaki to those who have been ritually welcomed on to the marae, and who have crossed the tapu threshold of Ihenga where *manuhiri* (visitors) merge with *tangatawhenua* (hosts). Contemplating art in Hinetekakara is incidental to communal eating.

For almost ten years the austere walls of Hinetekakara had seemed neglected in relation to the creative attention accorded to the adjacent wharenuī, Ihenga, yet their roles are complementary. Ihenga has a richly embellished interior that reflects a commemorative, narrative function.

Hinetekakara has a prosaic interior that facilitates a hosting function. In 2006

²⁸ Manaaki was defined as the quality underpinning the *Feel the Spirit* brand for Tourism Rotorua in 1997: "Manaakitanga is a feeling, an invitation, and a responsibility. It implies guardianship – of the land (whenua) treasures (taonga) visitors (manuhiri) and people (tangata). When Manuhiri (visitors) tread their first footprint upon new land, manaakitanga begins. The invitation is issued."

two Waiariki art tutors decided to “cloak” her prosaic walls to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the opening of Tangatarua Marae.

He Korowai mo Hinetekakara is the result of the artistic collaboration between those two tutors, namely, myself and Eugene Kara. We wanted to acknowledge and recreate some of the multivocal artistic processes that had preceded us in Ihenga in 1996. Hence we consciously tried to avoid preconceived intentions, or to resort to habitual art imagery, surrendering instead to the potential of artistic exchange. This involved a continuous give and take of negotiating and contesting designs, forms, and formats.

Collaboration was a tentative, dialogical process that seemed to undermine our own confident artistic assumptions, as well as forestall a design synthesis. It meant encountering unstable and shifting ground as our individual boundaries dissolved toward aesthetic understanding.

“The act of aesthetic understanding is an act whereby the self is assimilated to the other; the subject virtually embodies, in a quasi-sensuous mode, the work, which is other” (Nicholsen, 1997, p.149).

By exchanging images we subverted autonomy. By cross-referencing each other’s ideas we subverted any claims to originality or authorship. Our creative fusion did not imply homogeneity - for us, it lent accents to respond and counter-respond to in a spontaneous, ad hoc way. Bakhtin considers that the distinctiveness of the other is illuminating for one’s own identity; “Let him rather remain outside of me, for in that position he can see and know what I myself do not see and do not know from my own place, and he can essentially enrich the event of my own life” (1990, p.87).

This mutuality enriched the event of our artmaking. We were familiar with motifs used by each other in former artworks that alluded to mouths/hearts/vessels, and growth. Eugene’s work had referenced the rituals and symbols of Maori oratory, conveying both the levity and the gravity with which the elders disseminate their profound knowledge. For him the waha (flying heart) and

tokotoko (walking stick) represented speech and the deployment of the voice and body. I had used waka/puta, vessel-like imagery, which for me referenced the female element, fecundity, and fertility. I had wanted to convey an optical and metaphorical Puawaitanga, or efflorescence. Our earlier forms had an interchangeability and suggestive potential that became a springboard for creative exploration.



Figure 49 Eugene's earlier imagery referencing oratory.



Figure 50 My earlier imagery referencing the female element.

We wanted to pay homage to the extant imagery of Ihenga without imitating or transposing that imagery. We were aware of the fixity of images in Ihenga, and the metanarrative of the carvings. We wanted to create something light and ephemeral for Hinetekakara - hence the korowai (cloak) metaphor. We hoped the pieces would seem light/alighted without cohesion or authority, conveying an accommodating cloak that could readily be reconfigured, or dismantled. We had no predetermined format other than to each produce 'units' of a similar size. We aimed to be receptive to the potential of the space and its context.

Adorno suggests that all autonomously generated artworks are enigmas in as much as they have a capacity to sustain a discrepancy between projected images and their actuality. They carry similarity while at the same time carrying difference (Carr, 2002, p.1).

Our artwork artistically exploited this affective dimension. Polka dots undermined clinical forms. Hearts and mouths transmuted. Avian shapes defied gravity. Confectionery colours camouflaged indigenous wood. My painted flat forms resembled sculpture. Eugene’s sculptural forms were flattened with painted pattern. Some pieces projected from the wall, while others ‘floated’ on transparent perspex, often invisible as light reflected from their glossy surfaces. We tried to conjure a tapestry of associations that carried both similarity and difference, abstraction and mimesis.



Figure 51 Close-up views of five modular pieces.

We *bricolaged* from the assorted pieces we had produced to form an unstructured layout, jettisoning those that didn’t enhance their juxtaposition or exceeded the allotted space, irrespective of their singularity or our personal attachment to them. Each layout decision was dependent on the position of the preceding piece bricolaged from our cardboard box cache of art pieces. The casualness of our layout was expedited by our anxiety at puncturing the pristine walls with too many holes; hence we did not rearrange any pieces once they were installed.



Figure 52 Close-up views of the layout of *He Korowai mo Hinetekakara*.

Whilst removal of the frame or boundary is a strategy devised to promote a more interactive engagement with art, it can be disconcerting for viewers. This

was evidenced when a fire damaged the wharekai, and our artwork was removed while repairs were undertaken. The marae administrator wanted our guidance on reinstalling it, assuming there was a planned layout. We assured her that it didn't matter, that she could arrange the pieces according to her own whim. She did not see this as a liberating option, and resorted to a photo that a colleague had taken of the work in situ to "get it right" (G. Woods, personal communication, September 2008).

Our project hoped to avoid the privileging or imposing of meaning, between each other, and between us and our viewers, because "meaning and sense are the outcome of an interaction between artist and beholder, and not an authoritarian fact" (Bourriaud, 1998, p.80). While we thought the random scattering of our installation avoided a sense of 'getting it right' the camera had frozen it as an authoritarian fact.

This study is concerned with demoting the assumed authority of the artist, so that the boundaries between artists and viewers dissolve, making art a more social, transactional process. Such a process deflects unitary interpretations, and encourages open-ended meaning. "The work of art consists in its being open in a limitless way to ever new integrations of meaning" (Gadamer, 1976, p.98).

During the course of this writing I attended a Design Workshop in France that, for me, encapsulated this definition of art. This workshop programme is offered conjointly each year by the Vitra Design Museum of Germany, the Georges Pompidou Centre of Paris, and the Centre International de Recherche et d'Education Culturelle et Agricole at Boisbuchet.

The workshop was intriguingly entitled *My Lovely Walking Stick*, and required participants to design and make a walking stick that explored its emotional and social attributes. I chose the walking stick workshop because its appealing and personalised title seemed to offer a more embodied experience than the others on offer, and because walking sticks evoked rich cultural and historical associations with Aotearoa. I was also mindful of the walking stick, or tokotoko,

that Eugene had included in our installation in Hinetekakara.



Figure 53 Installation showing tokotoko

This tokotoko projects from Hinetekakara's wall at an oblique angle, piercing the shallow relief of the scattered shapes and casting variant shadows as sunlight angles through the celestory windows. Its shifting shadows mimic its deployment within whaikorero (oratory), wielded to emphasise, dramatise, and punctuate the oral delivery of words.

My Lovely Walking Stick workshop in France viewed a walking stick as much more perfunctory than a tokotoko:

Apparently a walking stick is a very simple object, it helps us to walk through nature, but if we start to think about it is much more than that. It is the link between us (humans) and nature when we explore and enjoy the great outdoors... (Vitra Design Museum Brochure, 2008).

I include here an experiential account of this workshop because it involved confronting cultural differences while engaging as a participant in a dialogical

way of making art. Its emphasis on the walking stick as a physical aid ‘to walk through nature’ implied a binary between nature and culture, conveying the notion of ‘us’ as centred beings interacting with a natural world that was perceived as external. I wondered if a Eurocentric ‘us’ was more inclined to privilege a Cartesian separation of mind and body, which contrasts with a holistic Maori world view.

My Lovely Walking Stick

I begin this section revealing some of the differences between Maori and Eurocentric epistemologies by comparing cultural functions attributed to sticks and staffs. In my own family, a variety of sticks have been handed down from both Pakeha and Maori generations. From my father’s side I have several walking sticks of durable wood varieties (below left). These Spartan designs exploit the tactility and resonance of the wood, with a subtle addition of a band of silver on two of them to conceal the handle joint (now tarnished by the sulphur of Rotorua where I live). From my mother’s side I have a photo of my great-grandmother and some of her thirteen children in the bush with long staffs that resemble taiaha (below right).



Figure 54 Sticks from my father



Figure 55 Sticks from my mother

The photo 'from my mother' recalls the contrived scenes, replete with ancient artefacts that were popularised as 'authentically Maori' by the painters Lindauer and Goldie at the close of the 19th century. Their patronising perception of Maori was echoed by the historian James Cowan, who considered many of the elderly Maori people he interviewed "as survivors from a pristine age, as men and women who exemplified the most worthy features of their culture, which were destined for extinction" (King, 2003, p.372).

My family photo predates Goldie's famous 1903 portrait of Ina Te Papatahi, entitled *Darby and Joan*, by at least 15 years. In this portrait Goldie projected a fatalistic melancholy on to his Maori sitter through her hunched, defeated pose and averted eyes. I like to think that my great grandmother was immune to the colonial tendency to frame and freeze poetic images of a dying race, placed in what Micahel King calls a "kind of never-never-land, safely beyond the political and social preoccupations of contemporary New Zealand life" (ibid, p.373). I like to think that my great-grandmother is resisting the reduction to a sentimental or purified picture of the past. My great-grandmother and her children are steadfastly returning the gaze of the camera, assertive in their stance, and unconcerned at the incongruity of their formal Victorian clothing with the weapon-like staffs they carry. I like to read this photo as a refusal of Western gender expectations, and an affirmation of my Kai Tahu indigeneity.

My great-grandmother defiantly hails me from an era when Eurocentric art canons privileged the unattainable, the picturesque and the exotic, qualities exemplified in Romanticism.

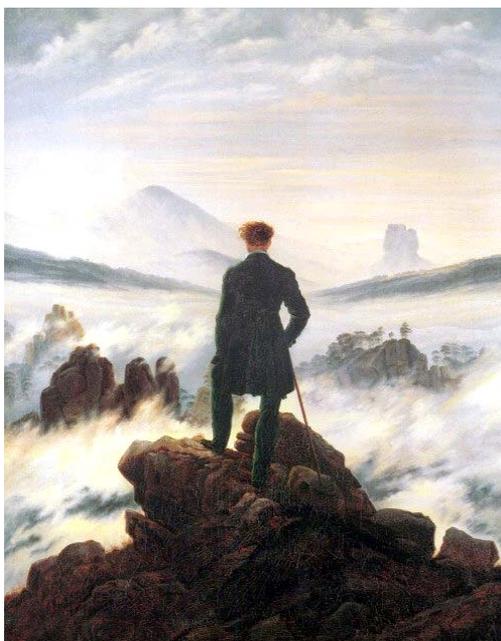


Figure 56 Caspar Friedrich *Wanderer above the Mist* 1818

I am mindful of Friedrich's 1818 *Wanderer above the Mist*, an allegory of triumph over literal and psychic unruly forces. This painting features a contemplative Romantic hero upon the summit of mist-obscured mountains. The monumental scale of the mountains dwarfs him, and yet he faces them with the rational confidence of a Modern man. His aristocratic and assured stance is complemented by an elegant walking stick, signifier of mastery over the sublime. Friedrich's solitary hero personifies *individual* accomplishment in the pursuit of *grand* ambitions. To me this visual allegory is the antithesis of the whakatauki (proverb) that underpins the collective power of the small collaborative artworks of Tangatarua:

Ahakoā he iti he pounamu

Small objects may be precious or significant

A stick of cultural significance for Maori is Poututerangi, an eponymous term with the autumn harvest. Poututerangi is the sturdy stick that Tane used to separate his primal parents, Ranginui (the sky) and Papatuanuku (the earth). Poututerangi literally means the pole that hoisted the sky aloft, thus admitting light to the surface of the earth for germination and eventual harvest.

*Te ngahuru titokikoiere,
Ko Poututerangi te matahi o te tau
Hence the bounteous harvest time
When Poututerangi brings forth the first fruits of the year*
(Batten, 2005, p.189).

Poututerangi personifies the autumn star, Altair, “when his feet alight upon the earth”, but “when but one foot has so alighted” he is deemed to be Rehua the summer star, or Antares, instead (ibid, p.190). The contact of one foot with the earth is insufficient to transform the season into fruitfulness; it requires Poututerangi’s full descent from the sky and full weight upon the earth. Poututerangi, the pole who once prised earth and sky asunder, now redeems himself as a kind of fertile connecting rod between the two realms.

Sticks are also viewed as a kind of connecting rod between the earth and the mortal realm by *My Lovely Walking Stick* Workshop tutor, Hector Serrano, who called them “the link between us (humans) and nature when we explore the great outdoors” (Personal Communication, August 2008). This terminology implies a recreational venturing into wild expanses, requiring the aid of a tool for balance, negotiating, and testing the terrain. It evokes a nature-culture dichotomy, and a tentative, untrusting relationship between the soles of our feet and the earth.

Juliet Batten laments this dichotomy, noting; “Our ancestors learned the art of close observation, developing a sensory acuteness that makes our present faculties seem like blunt instruments” (2005, p.21). Batten outlines the historical transition from partnership models of engaging with the environment to later dominator models, and advocates a reclaiming of the former. In Aotearoa this would entail a realignment of national festivals with the movement of the seasons, so that their meanings coincide with, and are relevant to, an indigenous calendar rather than a transposed one. “The vision of integration is also about sharing the cultural practices of both Maori and European traditions as they relate to the seasons, and discovering what is relevant for both Pakeha and Maori here, in this land, now” (2005, p.23).

The participants at *My Lovely Walking Stick* workshop in France did not seem to have any such cultural legacies or predetermined constructions about staffs and walking sticks. At our first seminar they were keen to invent new functions and bestow personalised attributes for this ‘simple object’, deeming it a blank canvas. Hector Serrano had encouraged individual creativity by describing the walking stick as “a very personal object with a very strong emotional value” and instructing participants to “design and make a walking stick that explores this role on its most emotional and social side” (Personal Communication, August 2008).

These instructions preceded a walk in the extensive woods and fields of the rural Boisbuchet estate, whose name derives from the abundance of wood varieties growing in the former huge forests. The walk was an opportunity to source local wood for prototypes and eventual resolved designs, as well as to engage with what was to be our rustic environment for the six day duration of the workshop. Hector had subverted any tendency to produce a straightforward walking aid by insisting that we first categorise ourselves, and then express the attributes of these categories in our respective walking sticks. These criteria suggested a product that would express both our site-specific responses and our personal identity.

There was scheduled time each day for personal observation, designing and reflection, which was followed by group information-sharing and critiquing. Hence our privately generated design intentions were mediated, revised, and sometimes jettisoned, after these shared dialogue sessions.



Figure 57 Dialogical interaction

This type of ongoing dialogical interaction aroused a more interactive, spontaneous engagement by participants than a reliance on formalist design methodology. John Shotter (2008, p.10) maintains that dialogical relations “...emerge and have their existence only in the moment-by-moment unfolding of their occurrence, and are 'shaped', to repeat, by a complex mixture of unique influences present at each moment, both within and between speaker-listeners, but also, most importantly, by influences in their extraverbal surroundings”.

This view places meaning in the spaces *between* participants, rather than derived from predetermined principles. My account of the small artworks in Tangatarua also places meaning in the spaces between participants. While my focus is the aesthetic meanings between *artist*-participants, it is also an invitation to viewers/readers to be receptive to the cultural nuances of these spaces, so that they in turn are empowered to be participants in negotiating meaning. Being receptive encourages a more transactional and relational meaning in contrast to “the representational-referential understanding we have of things as self-contained, stand-alone thinkers” (ibid).

The Boisbuchet workshop encouraged transactional design resolutions rather than ‘self-contained, stand-alone thinking.’ Its website (2008) had intimated an open-ended approach to the workshops which de-emphasised the product: “The goal of the workshops is not to design a ‘perfect’ product but rather to provide insights into the design process and the associated challenges of rational thinking, creativity and manual skills.” These ‘challenges’ evoked a principle of functional craftsmanship, while ‘insights into the design process’ encouraged a post-object sensibility. Peter Leech proposes: “A positive characterisation of post-object art, however, might be that it is an art of process rather than product: that its object is the nature of artistic thinking itself, not merely the final end or product of that thinking” (2008).

The Walking Stick workshop promoted the art of democratic *process* as its object. The walking stick was both an extension of the body, and an instrument of social interaction. Hector Serrano had hinted at its performative aspect in declaring that the project was a chance “to learn about Boisbuchet, about us,

about telling stories through objects” (Personal Communication, August 2008). This ‘telling of stories’ through the walking stick has parallels with the tokotoko, the tokowhaka-papa, and the pouwhenua.

I tried to suspend any preconceived designs for a walking stick and to let the wood I found commend a way of working. I was mindful of my family sticks that seemed to exploit the lustre, colour, and durability of the wood with minimal design intervention or embellishment. Although I was in a European country I was conscious of respecting the gifts of Te Wao Nui a Tane (natural forests). I resolved to enhance the inherent natural qualities of each stick, and to pay homage to nature.

Vestiges of art’s primordial nature are still within it: there is little doubt that it arose out of ritual and magic, the proto-art of ritual being to ensure survival by coaxing the earth to bear fruit. With sympathetic magic, humans hope to persuade nature, year after year, to be generous, to make the vegetative spirit spring again into the quick of the seed, to make the crops grow (Trussell in Beatson, 1994, p.74).

Nature was generous in providing me with an assortment of ergonomically suitable sticks that were already severed from their host tree. As the recycled wood, clay and paper fragments in the whare-nui Ihenga had commended new uses, this discarded material became my version of an artistic cache.



Figure 58 An assortment of found sticks

I was mindful of sticks, staffs, and tokotoko as taonga tuku iho (treasured legacies), and as palimpsest, inscribed with generations of meaning and the patina of personal marks. Hence on two sticks I focused on contouring the handles, emulating the silky tactility of worn surfaces that had been polished by generations of clasping and massaging.

One stick, retrieved from beside the river that bounded the estate, had intricate cursive furrows from the passage of worms on its entire surface. The Maori term *whakairo* literally means resembling the passage of worms or maggots, and is often used to connote carving or ornamentation since it describes the appearance of an incised surface. Tregear (1893) proposed an earlier, more profound meaning for ‘whakairo’ by tracing and comparing its Polynesian origins:

Here is an expression which signifies to make marks or signs which others can understand, and regard as the vehicle of wisdom and knowledge, by which they teach, communicate, and know beforehand; plainly, it is an inscribed character. Then it becomes used to signify making marks on the skin by which persons may be known or recognised; then, as the characters lose their interpreters, the word implies “dimly seen, imperfectly understood.” At last, the significance of the marks is quite lost, intelligence has gone out of them, and the word becomes merely a name for carved wood, or for the twisting of worms in rotten wood (Tregear, 1893, p.540).

Tregear contends that whakairo was once an esoteric abstract language that became more obscured with time, and eventually became a debased, generalised word describing only the physical traces of this language. New Zealand art critic Christina Barton (2000, p.67) maintains that writers are inclined to resort to ekphrasis, that is, positivist, descriptive accounts of art when meanings are obscure. Ekphrasis is an attempt to mentally conjure the affective dimension without an account of deeper significance. This tendency seems to parallel the contemporary definition of whakairo - that is, a focus on surface vestiges of a profound language whose holistic context is lost.

In terms of my worm-eaten walking stick, I wanted to allude to an erased language by enhancing its already incised surface. I skimmed the surface with dryish white paint to exaggerate the relief, and applied reddish stains to reference kokowai, red clay. This clay was applied during special Maori rituals, and was often referred to as *kura* (Beattie, 1994, p.62). *Kura* is also synonymous with “red feather” and “treasure”, because of its chiefly associations (Ryan, 1995, p.119). It is also the name given to my great-grandmother and in turn, my grandmother, which for me invested my French walking stick with a personal intimacy.²⁹

²⁹ The term *kurawaka*, meaning flax seed capsule, poetically extends the family metaphor, implying regeneration and the genetic transmission of a treasured resource.

Hence the walking sticks I fashioned were informed by both my responses to the environment I encountered at Boisbuchet and the cultural legacy I had brought with me. The latter was not a deliberate design intention and may have arisen from a need to affirm the familiar in a beautiful but unfamiliar location.

The following chapter considers how a European cultural legacy and the indigenous cultural legacy of Aotearoa might converge to inform an inclusive pedagogy.

CHAPTER 7 INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY

The Policy Framework for Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum (1999) declares that two educational philosophies have dominated art instruction in Aotearoa; progressivism and constructivism. It defines progressivism as emphasising an engagement with the creation of artworks, which includes learners as artists, as well as learners as viewers of art. Constructivism is given a more contextual definition, which “has been variously interpreted as an epistemological position and a pedagogical approach. It recognises the importance to learners of scaffolding new knowledge and skills from the familiar” (MOE, 1999).

These philosophies are interdependent within art education. Progressivism focuses more on the internal world of the artwork, including its generation and analysis. Constructivism is cognisant of the *relational* aesthetics of analysing and generating art, emphasising art’s inextricable connection to culture.

“Culture counts. Classrooms are places where learners can bring ‘who they are’ to the learning interactions in complete safety, and their knowledges are ‘acceptable’ and ‘legitimate’” (Bishop, R. 1999).³⁰

The classroom that Russell Bishop advocates is a biculturally inclusive place for art’s generation and reception. When learners are culturally confident of ‘who they are’ they are empowered to ‘scaffold’, or build upon, an existing knowledge base. The aim of this study is to make ‘culture count’ for those who have generated and those who apprehend the small artworks of Tangatarua. It is less about what the artworks *mean* than about where their meanings come from. It is hoped that illuminating this cultural context will promote a more meaningful encounter for participants within the marae.

Thus the ambit of this study has been the bicultural relations involved in the generation and reception of these artworks within a tertiary institution. This has entailed examining the physical and political site of the artworks and the

³⁰ From a conference paper discussing culturally relevant pedagogies for Maori.

discursive practices impinging upon them. Acknowledging such discursive practices is not merely a theoretical exercise; it carries a responsibility to unmask and dismantle mechanisms that marginalise.

In Aotearoa this means an awareness of those Eurocentric assumptions that generate hierarchies and legitimate what Bourriaud calls “authoritarian fact” (1998). For me it means reflexively analysing the paradigms that invisibly frame *how* I analyse and teach. Here at Waiariki it means embedding a bicultural epistemology into all aspects of art education and research.

“Indigeneity is more than moving over and making space: it is a direct challenge to prevailing patterns of power and privilege” (Fleras and Spoonley, 1999).

Russell Bishop (1999) argues that pedagogical patterns of power and privilege will be overturned when so-called traditional classrooms are replaced with *discursive* classrooms. He believes that a discursive classroom model will empower non-participant Maori students to become initiators of classroom interaction, validating and extending their *own* prior knowledges. Russell Bishop’s argument is an extrapolation of the paradigm shift that he has witnessed in research that empowers participants to become active co-creators of knowledge.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith directly challenges the *definition*, as well as the *execution*, of research in Aotearoa to ensure that research practices do not continue to reinscribe colonialist attitudes: “The spaces within the research domain through which indigenous research can operate are small spaces on a shifting ground. Negotiating and transforming institutional practices and research frameworks is as significant as the carrying out of actual research programmes” (1999, p.140).

Jan Jagodzinski (1999) contends that institutional practices will only be transformed if indigenous artists adopt subversive strategies. He insists; “the artist of colour must bite the hand that feeds him or her” in order to avoid being enslaved by an art world “predetermined by enlightenment ideas of individuality, avant-gardism, progressivism, value and originality of art, and the ability of an

artist to produce the transcendent art object of cult and market value” (in Boughton and Mason, p.309).

This exhortation, though specific to indigenous artists, is similar to Lucy Lippard’s metaphor of Trojan horses.³¹ Lippard (in Wallis, 1984, p.341) contends that artists can only be agents of change from positions *within* the citadels of power, sabotaging and dismantling that power with its own mechanisms.

Jan Jagodzinski (1999) warns that adopting a critical position is problematic “because there is no clear line of demarcation separating ideology from reality” yet believes that art educators must continue to try and maintain the “tension that keeps the critique of ideology alive” to avoid perpetuating hegemony (in Boughton & Mason, p.303).

Heron and Reason (2007) articulate a participatory paradigm that would facilitate this task. Their paradigm integrates action and knowing - it involves practical, experiential knowledge that is validated only through social encounters, because “knowing presupposes mutual participative awareness. It presupposes participation, through meeting and dialogue, in a culture of shared art and shared language, shared values, norms and beliefs” (p.6).

The collaborative artmaking in Tangatarua has embodied this dialogical model. Participants were engaged upon seemingly external and seemingly internal artistic purposes; the former governed by the *kawa* (protocols) of Tangatarua, and the latter governed by intrinsic design problems. Negotiating and reconciling these purposes presented both limitations and opportunities; there was no ultimate methodology other than that forged by interaction and dialogue, evoking Gregory Bateson’s metaphor of “a region where you are partly blown

³¹ A Maori version of the Trojan horse gives its name to the Ngati Kuri tribe of Muriwhenua (*kuri* means dog). Ngati Kuri concealed 100 warriors under dogskin cloaks on the shore by an enemy *pa*, huddled closely together to resemble a beached whale. When the unsuspecting enemy went to retrieve what they thought was valuable whale meat, they were attacked (Te Ara Encyclopedia).

by the winds of reality and partly an artist creating a composite out of inner and outer events” (in Heron & Reason, 1977, p.5).

Gregory Bateson alludes to an ontology that resides between binary opposites of structure and agency, between subject and object, between inner and outer experience. The language of binaries tends to reify such distinctions as if they are mutually exclusive, creating conceptual boundaries between artists and viewers, readers and writers, Maori and non-Maori. Homi Bhaba argues that it is *between* the boundaries of cultures that real meaning is translated, negotiated, and mutually assimilated. ”I am conscious of myself and become myself while revealing myself for another... every internal experience ends up on the boundary” (1984, p.287).

Richard Bird, now Human Relations Director at Waiariki Institute of Technology, had warned against turning boundaries into barriers, declaring in an article entitled “Pakeha Reflections” in 1992: “The boundaries we must be prepared to transcend are probably largely of our creation. They are often the boundaries of our own narrow mindedness and prejudice, or our fear of the unknown, or even our unselfconscious assumption that our world view is superior.”

Hamish Clayton (2006) alludes to the difficulty and discomfort of inhabiting the boundary. He refers to the art of Ralph Hotere;

Over there, on the other side, behind that veil is the place we are compelled by, but this is the side we come away on, and here is where we are compelled towards our own expression, towards theories of poetry and the poetry of theory. The different alchemies of communication are paramount, on either side of the veil.

In this instance Clayton is in the ‘world’ of a painting whose materiality conveys the intangible, which he can only apprehend and articulate with the conceptual tools on ‘his side’, that is, the canons of art theory. Clayton implies that the ‘veil’ or boundary can be negotiated, or at least glimpsed, when the alchemies of communication, or world views, of each respective realm are acknowledged,

however inadequately. His metaphor of the veil suggests an immortal realm³² in Maori terms, while offering transparency, but not direct access, to a waahi ngaro, hidden dimension.

Maaka and Fleras are also aware of the difficulties in communicating different world views within biculturalism, using a geological analogy of “continental drift” to convey its partiality. They speak of competing paradigms that talk and slide over and past each other like stubborn tectonic plates, in “discordant amalgams of progress and reaction”. They consider that only a conceptual “seismic shift” can reconcile any discord and bring about meaningful new social contracts that empower each partner in “a post-colonial alternative for living together differently without drifting apart” (2005, p.300).

Ian Hunter (1994, p.17) also uses a metaphor that is geographically pertinent to Aotearoa, employing the term “littoral zone” to denote the boundary where art and life meet. The littoral zone is a coastal term describing that strip of beach between high and low tides, and as such implies shifting, accretion, and erosion - a blurring of the cultural ebb and flow. It also implies instability and lack of definition through ongoing cycles of gaining and losing ground. It was upon this littoral zone, the boundary between land and sea, that the two brothers, Tangaroa, god of the ocean domain, and Tanemahuta, god of the forest domain, aired their irreconcilable differences.

Tanemahuta had incurred his brother’s wrath by separating their parents, Papatuanuku and Ranginui,³³ with Poututerangi (the pole that hoisted the sky aloft), referred to in *My Lovely Walking Stick* chapter. Tanemahuta sought to appease Tangaroa by extracting his verdant eyebrows, the golden sedge grass, and gifting them to his aquatic brother. Unimpressed, Tangaroa flung them back on to the sandy shore, which became their natural habitat. Today this rejected peace offering, the golden sedge called Pingao, continues to grow on the boundary between earth and sea, nurtured by the soil of Tanemahuta and

³² Arai is the Maori word for veil. Orators describe the deceased as having passed *i tua o te arai*, to the other side of the veil.

³³ Papatuanuku is the primal earth mother and partner to Ranginui, primal sky father.

assailed by the tides of Tangaroa.

Pingao is a valued weaving fibre exclusive to Aotearoa and is often employed in tukutuku³⁴ panels of whareniui where its natural golden accents contrast with the silver-grey of kiekie³⁵ fibre, and the dyed black of harakeke (flax) fibre. It is less abundant on the coasts than it used to be, due to the adverse combination of animal and human trampling, urbanisation, exotic plant invasion, and not least the fury of Tangaroa, god of the sea (Herbert & Oliphant, 1991, p.3).



Figure 59 Pingao growing in abundance in the 1950s at Mauao beach.



Figure 60 Pingao turapa (woven panel) on Te Ao Hurihuri (changing world) wall of the whareniui Ihenga.

A whakatauaki (proverb) exhorts people to safeguard Pingao as it struggles to thrive on this contested boundary:

Manaakitia nga tukemata o Tane
Take special care of Tane's eyebrows
(ibid, p.4)

³⁴ Tukutuku are wall panels of ornamental lattice weaving.

³⁵ Kiekie is an epiphyte vine.

While this whakatauaki is a conservation plea, it can also be seen as a plea to safeguard cultural relationships. Through an analogy of the friction between sea and sand, it acknowledges the friction of apparently irreconcilable differences between people. It suggests that even when compatibility or forgiveness seems unattainable, a safe space for growth can be created at the boundary. A space for potential growth is also a space for potential dialogue.

To me this whakatauaki offers an apt model for negotiating the tensions of biculturalism because it insists on manaaki (commitment) to furnish a space for negotiation. This space is then reliant upon committed custodians for its tenuous existence, including those educators whom Ted Bracey says 'have responsibility for the social life of art'. Being a committed custodian of such a space could fulfil Heron & Reason's 'participatory paradigm', where knowledge is continually forged via a mutual give and take, akin to the jostling of tectonic plates, contesting without drifting apart. Such jostling could allow room for 'the potential to displace, replace or misplace dominant and familiar forms of thought' that Wystan Curnow attributes to art. It could also dislodge the monocultural institutional practices that Linda Tuhiwai Smith derides. It would not be the 'safe territory' scorned by Carole Shephard, but a territory mediated by encounters, confrontations, and transformations.

Here, between the boundaries, a more attentive seeing and listening to creative voices could be practised, one that is less amenable to Cartesian categories. A more attentive seeing and listening curtails the imposition of speaking in order to be spoken to, liberating small creative voices, like those in Tangatarua.

Negotiating a conceptual boundary space in Tangatarua encourages receptiveness to its small creative encounters. It encourages awareness that these small creative encounters are an ensemble of communal causes and effects. It behoves art educators to become careful custodians of such a boundary space that not only legitimises the voices of others, but also surrenders to their transformative power. This is a space where dialogue, like the fragile Pingao, can be engendered and nurtured.

CHAPTER 8 REFLECTIONS

Because “the only things in the world which we can talk about are those to which we can point” (Lundquist, 1999), this study set out initially to talk about visible, collaborative artworks in Tangatarua Marae and the conditions of their making. However, those things to which we can point have a habit of pointing *back* to us, making our talking autodidactic. Hence my scrutiny of this art necessitated a scrutiny of some of the discursive practices that implicate me as a researcher, artist, and art tutor, as well as the bicultural and pedagogical context of art in Aotearoa itself.

I dismantled those discursive practices to show that the ideals of bicultural policies and art education are not value-free. My account of the establishment of Tangatarua discussed how incommensurable paradigms can confound bicultural politics. I contrasted the origins of contemporary Western worldviews and Maori worldviews to illustrate the way their respective epistemologies, or ways of knowing, are linked to language and power.

My chapter on *Pedagogy* showed how some of the tenets of Modernism impacted on formal art instruction at Waiariki Institute of Technology in particular, and how pedagogical power is exercised and maintained, in general, through prevailing artistic canons. I tried not to reify Modernism, but to acknowledge my own collusion and ambivalence as a tutor in utilising some of its tools. I conclude that while the small artworks of Tangatarua evince an emphasis on Modernism’s media disciplines, this has enriched, rather than eroded their cultural kaupapa (intent).

I contended that the hidden dimensions of a Maori sensibility constitute a meaningful aesthetic even though they were not amenable to a positivist translation in my writing. I discussed cultural expectations of artists to compare what might be meaningful for indigenous and western perspectives. My comparison guarded against reduction to tidy binary oppositions or mutually exclusive categories, and instead invoked a conceptual space between them. I focused on transmutations between traditional and contemporary culture,

between indigenous and western imperatives that are apparent in the collaborative artwork of Tangatarua. I believe these transmutations offer a liberating model of bicultural art.

In *Art Discourse* I discussed theorisations of art and the recursive way they are informed by culture. Here I introduced the notion of a Poststructuralist artist who is constituted in culture, occupying multiple subject-positions. I applied this definition to myself in my chapter on *Situatedness*, revealing my own multiple subject-positions as art educator, artist, and researcher. I tried to maintain my awareness of these ambiguous roles by applying a constant and reflexive critiquing. This entailed not only an awareness of the way that discourse mediates my seeing, but also the way that *writing* mediates what I have seen, blurring the objectivity I pursued.

I discussed the tangible artworks of Tangatarua using formalism as my analytical method, while simultaneously questioning the very discourse that constitutes formalism. I was constantly aware of the irony of using conceptual tools to discredit those same conceptual tools, as well as the dissolving nature of the discrete frames that I constructed for each topic. I tried to allude to the instability and lack of cohesion this created, and to resist seeking a palatable foreclosure. To this end I employed different narrative voices such as anecdotes, whakatauki (proverbs), and direct participant quotes. These voices are less rational in a scholastic sense, offering intuitive insights that seem resistant to a logocentric analysis. Many exhibit an indigenous figurative tenor which misaligns with academic theory. I have tried to illuminate this misalignment and to encourage multivocality, that is, a speaking across differing paradigms.

I have posited the art of Tangatarua as a *site* for multivocality. By amplifying the voices involved in the inception, generation, and reception of this art I have tried to engender a receptive listening to their registers. I hope this receptiveness hints at sacrosanct spaces, *waahi ngaro*, where communal networks of meaning are sensed rather than empirically proven. I have implied that a dialogical model is more receptive to *waahi ngaro*. Upon reflection I believe it is

waahi ngaro *itself* that is transitive, giving agency to a dialogical engagement with the art in Tangatarua.

Throughout this writing I have been mindful of Laura Brearley's assertion that "those who engage can become co-creators of meaning" (2001, p.2). I have thus prioritised the phenomenological construction of meaning rather than definitive meaning itself, placing it in the space of encounter between artists and viewers. My aim is to enhance an encounter with the bicultural art of Tangatarua, empowering viewers to become arbiters themselves of this and all creativity. A receptive encounter with the art of Tangatarua offers the liberating potential of reciprocal communication.

Kaua e whakaarohia te mahinga otira te otinga.

Don't only consider the work, but also its connective impact.

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| <p>Participant Questionnaire</p> <p>Please e-mail or post your responses to: Debbi Thyne Waiariki Institute of Technology Private Bag 3028 Rotorua thyned@waiariki.ac.nz</p> | |  |
| <p>Project Title: <i>Walls that Speak – creative multivocality within the bicultural marae, Tangatarua</i></p> | | |
| Question One | What was your artistic brief within Tangatarua? | |
| Question Two | Did you have flexibility in terms of: | i) imagery/designs ii) materials/media used iii) interpretation of concepts? |
| Question Three | What are your enduring impressions of your artistic involvement? | |
| Question Four | What responses/feedback have you had about the artwork? | |