

PITO TO POU

An Artist-Mother's Guide to Cutting the Cord

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Abstract

Mother Practice, as I have termed it, lives in between the tensions of its foundations and supports. My *Art Practice* investigates the balance and imbalance of these vital constructs through a whakapapa lens, by using a vocabulary of *gathered*, *gifted*, *inherited*, *made* and *made-for-this-moment* archives within sculptural installation. Through a methodology of engaging with technologies and techniques at the margins of my experience, my Art Practice holds a mirror to Mother Practice, where growth and change in children compel mothers to repeatedly work at the edges of knowing.

So, if the fertile ground within which I dig down to make my foundation is the profane and sacred ground of Mother, then the resulting matrescence through which I've grown makes this foundation strong. If, in the levelling of my foundation, I discovered what was of vital importance, then this sculptural installation project is a distillation of those discoveries. If the weight that my foundation can bear is the fracture and *mamae* resulting from my birth, then may the load now be lessened for my daughters.

Attestation of Authorship

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

Signed

7 May 2026

Acknowledgements

Dedicated to:

The taxi driver in May 1976, who delivered me home. My mother, for the gift of staying, which was no small thing.

With deep gratitude to:

My husband, Damen. I see the ghosts of our younger selves haunting the studios and print labs, looking sort of gorgeous and clueless. Imagine if we could have told them then that, after marriage, children, and with all the joys, griefs and rhythms of daily living etched into us, we would be back. Back to make art about it all. I can do it all because of your limitless support; there is no (he)art without you, not for me anyway.

My incredible daughters, Maire & Tui, for whom I strive. You arrived cloaked in beautiful song, and you lay down your wero for me. At this life's end, I hope I will have met that challenge with the ferocity of love and commitment you both deserve.

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The academic staff of MVA, especially my brilliant supervisors, Emily O'Hara and Monique Redmond, for effortlessly keeping the fear *out* of the room and the curiosity *in*. Mon & Emily, your insights, knowledge and ability to say exactly the right thing at the right time, along with your belief that I could do it, meant I could always do it. This was a masterclass in support, and for that I thank you.

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Lastly, to my vast whānau of in-laws for showing me first how to build a foundation and then how to support it. I paid attention.

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Pepeha

I was born in 1976.

I was born to a young Pākehā Mother.

I was born to a Pākehā Grandfather.

I was born to an English Grandmother.

I was born to a young Māori Father (Ngāti Kahungunu/Ngāti Porou).

I was born to a Māori Grandfather (Ngāti Kahungunu).

I was born to a Māori Grandmother (Ngāti Porou).

I married a man of Māori (Tainui)/Chinese/Irish/Croatian /Lebanese descent.

We have two daughters together who have inherited all the above whakapapa.

I was raised by my mother.

I have two younger Pākehā brothers through her.

I met my father for the first time when I was 16.

I have two younger brothers and one younger sister through him.

All are Pākehā through their mother and Māori through our shared father.

I have never been to my tribal rohe, where my father grew up, but I received a whakapapa booklet (from my stepmother) from a reunion

there in 2007. Because of this booklet, I do know my correct Pepeha, but I feel disingenuous claiming it here.

All my Māori knowledge, understanding, and connection have come through school, university¹, books, art, media, friends, my in-laws, and my experience of growing up in New Zealand as wahine Māori.

My foundational knowledge was greatly informed by being raised entirely by a Pākehā family steeped in English traditions.

I disclose this information to allow the reader and viewer of this document and the resulting artworks to have my foundational whakapapa as context.

Pito to Pou is not exclusively about my whakapapa but is greatly informed by it.

Ngā mihi,
Amy

¹ Bachelor of Arts, Major: Māori Studies, 1996-1999 (incomplete).

Kaupapa One

To hold a mirror to Mother Practice by engaging with technologies and techniques in Art Practice, at the margins of my experience, reflecting the continual growth of children, which compels Mothers to repeatedly work at the edges of their knowledge.

Kaupapa Two

To recognise, appreciate, and actively build the support systems necessary for my immediate Mother Practice and Art Practice. Support systems, including but not limited to: domestic, familial, emotional, academic, technical, and artistic, while also exploring their interconnectedness, strength, and function thematically within *Pito to Pou*.

Kaupapa Three

To further develop my vocabulary of Art Practice installations from objects and text, enabling me to speak across time to my experiences, so they may speak back to me. To recognise my vocabulary of Mother Practice, experiences, and knowledge earned, used in relation to my children, so that we may speak into our relationship and be understood by one another. Both vocabularies are built using a taxonomy detailed below.

Vocabulary of Objects and Text

Gathered

Not made by me, *perhaps* bought by me, *often* landed in my possession in ways forgotten, and held onto for purposes unknown.

Gifted

Someone knew I might find it useful, beautiful, interesting, *or* that I was there at the right time.

Inherited

Passed down to me, not necessarily from a relative.

Made

I made it at a past point in time, for a different reason, a different occasion; it has been kept beyond that time and found a new purpose in this moment.

Made-for-this-moment

I made this item to express something for this specific moment in time.



“That cut will need to be lived through in their souls.”²

² My daughter’s Class Kaitiaki, in relation to a big life transition. Feb. 2026.

Nau mai, Haere mai ki a Pito to Pou: *An Artist-Mother's Guide to Cutting the Cord*

This Master's Project began as an investigation into my belief that the *wairua of mothering and the wairua of Art Practice lived in the same place within a woman*. My research proposed to interrogate that belief; its whakapapa, its consequences and its manifestations.

From this starting point, I read widely around meeting points of mothering and Art Practice. A foundational text, referenced in many of those readings is Adrienne Rich's 1976 book, *Of Women Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. In the second edition (1986), she spoke of her purpose in writing the original:

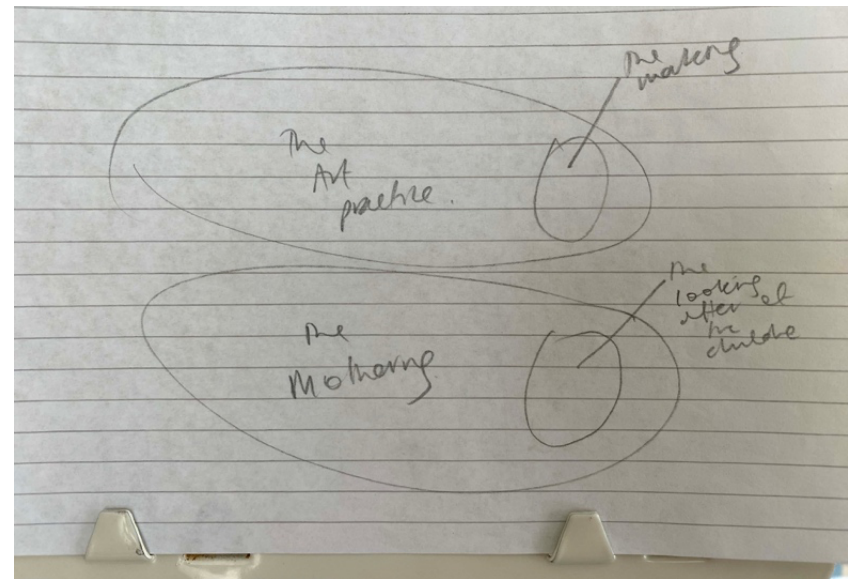
I wanted to examine motherhood – my own included – in a social context, as embedded in a political institution: in feminist terms.³

I clambered onto the shoulders of this feminist and literary icon and reworked her text for my own purpose. In doing so, I gained much greater clarity about the kaupapa of my research:

I want to examine motherhood – my own included – in an artistic context, as embedded in a cultural framework: in mana wāhine terms.

³ Adrienne Rich et al., *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Norton paperback edition (W. W. Norton & Company, 2021), xxvii.

My research occupies the meeting place between Art Practice and motherhood, considered in relation to one another. I visualise both as broad spectra, where 'the making' and 'the looking after of children' are only partial expressions. In Whakaahua 1, large ovals hold the full scope of Art Practice and motherhood, while smaller forms mark these acts. From this diagram, I adopt the terms motherhood, mothering, and mother-becoming under the term Mother Practice.⁴



Whakaahua 2. Amy Joe, Visualising the Practices, 2025.

⁴ This project uses the term 'mother' to reflect the specific relational and experiential focus of the work, while acknowledging that not all who give birth or parent identify with this term.

*Mother Practice*⁵ becomes the term I use in relation to Art Practice. It has been helpful to consider these practices as they sit side by side in my life; different purposes and goals, yet both in relation to me and my approach. In my Art Practice, I accept that it reflects who I am, but it does not define who I am; it does not encompass all of who I am. My art is not created without me, but it is not me.

If I consider Mother Practice in this way, then it becomes detached from gender roles and patriarchal definitions of a 'natural mother'.⁶ The decisions each practising Mother makes can go beyond the binary of 'good' or 'bad' and broaden to consider the multitude of choices and decisions each mother is making. Informed by the historical context within which they were mothered and the contemporary context within which they mother.

Mother Practice, as the phrase suggests, is something I *practise* to become good at. A living, breathing, responsive practice that is allowed to grow and evolve as the practitioner does. What might begin as a set of ideals, coupled with conscious and unconscious patterning from previous generations, may, in the experiential practice, move beyond that, into a fallible yet grounded and specific practice that is allowed to develop exponentially.

Pito to Pou is organised into three chapters: Mother Practice, Mana Wahine, and Wairua as Methodology in Mother Practice and Art Practice. Each of these chapters, along with key installations made throughout my research: *The Apple of My Eye* (2025), *You Keep it Next to Your Kai?! (2025)*, and *Points of Tension* (2025), charts my progression and approach to understanding Mother Practice through Art Practice.

Threaded throughout these chapters are small vignettes, which I call tuitui/stitches. These tuitui arose within me as I worked on narrating my research: small, embedded stories from my life that in some way reflected the landscape my research occupied.⁷

⁵ Both Mother Practice and Art Practice will be capitalised throughout to denote these as terms specific to this research.

⁶ Lucy Jones, *Matrescence: On the Metamorphosis of Pregnancy, Childbirth and Motherhood* (Penguin Books, 2024), 8.

⁷ Each tuitui sits within an image of the home we moved into during this research period, Oct. 2025.

1.

MOTHER PRACTICE: Matrescence

Tuitui

I am 10 years old.

My friends and I are sitting on the grass down the back of the field at school, dangerously close to the flax bushes, where older children kiss and/or smoke.

We are not yet interested in kissing or smoking; we are discussing what we will do when we are grown-ups, and we are all curiously fixated on the cars we will drive. I am enamoured with a future red outfit I will wear that can only be described as a power suit (it was the 80's after all). I have no clear sense of the job I was going to have in my power suit, secretary, I assumed.

I am clear about one thing. No children. I had heard that childbirth was excruciating. So, that was me out, end of story.

"Having children", I announce broadly to my friends, "is too painful."

Tui



Leaving Home

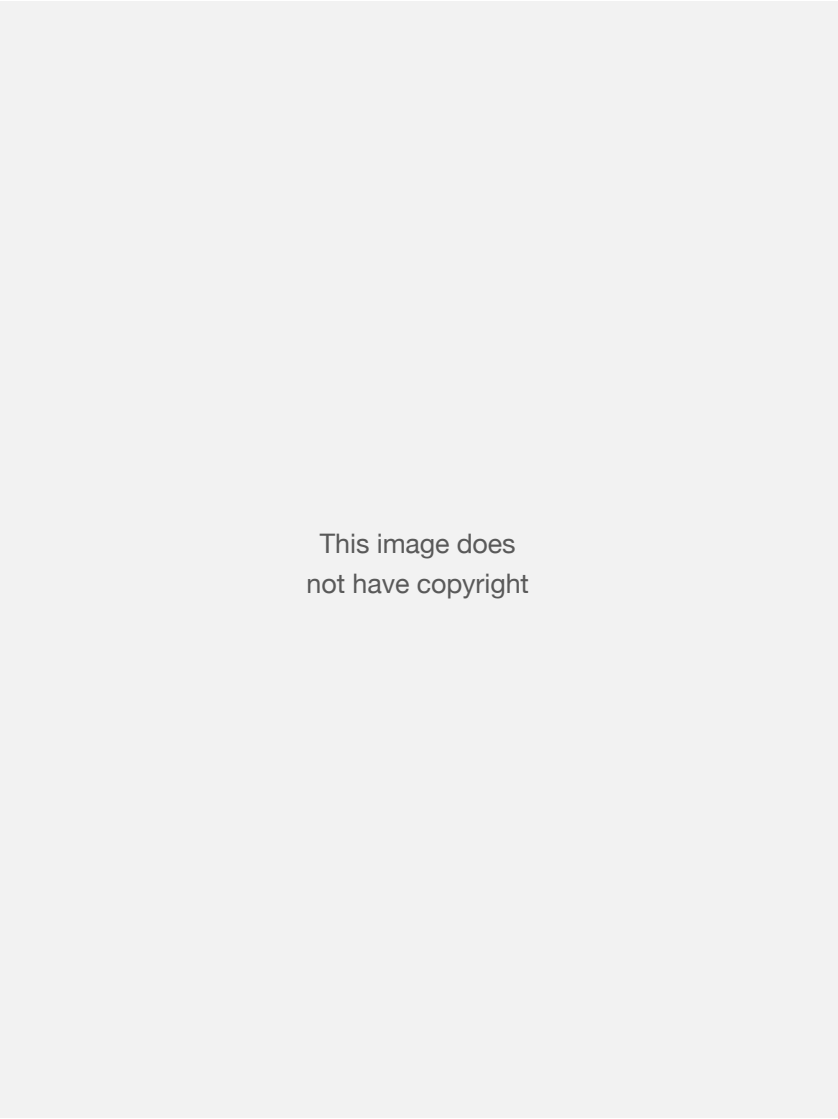
When I had my first baby in 2010, my mother-in-law taught me the importance of the birth story. A woman has a baby, you visit her, meet the beautiful baby, and give her the opportunity to tell her birth story. The entirety of her experience, as she understands it.

This exercise in listening taught me that every woman needs an opportunity to tell her birth story to someone willing to listen. This helps her process the experience and reminds her that, despite the common occurrence of childbirth, her experience was extraordinary and unique to her. This also signals to her that even though this beautiful baby is now starring in her life, she is still the protagonist of her own story.

Artist Rineke Dijkstra's series of three 1994 photographic works: *Julie, Den Haag, Nederland, 29 februari 1994*, *Saskia, Harderwijk, Nederland, 16 maart 1994*, *Tecla, Amsterdam, Nederland, 16 mei 1994*, for me, captures the sentiment of what I was taught: to bear witness. In these photographs, each woman stands, directly facing the camera, holding their newborn baby with either post-birth sanitary underwear, a visible caesarean scar, or blood dripping down her leg. As a viewer of these works, I am reminded of how unromantic birth is, how vulnerable a state it is for both the mother and the baby and how this moment of physical brutality and resilience is the beginning of what will be an ongoing relationship with vulnerability, brutality and resilience.

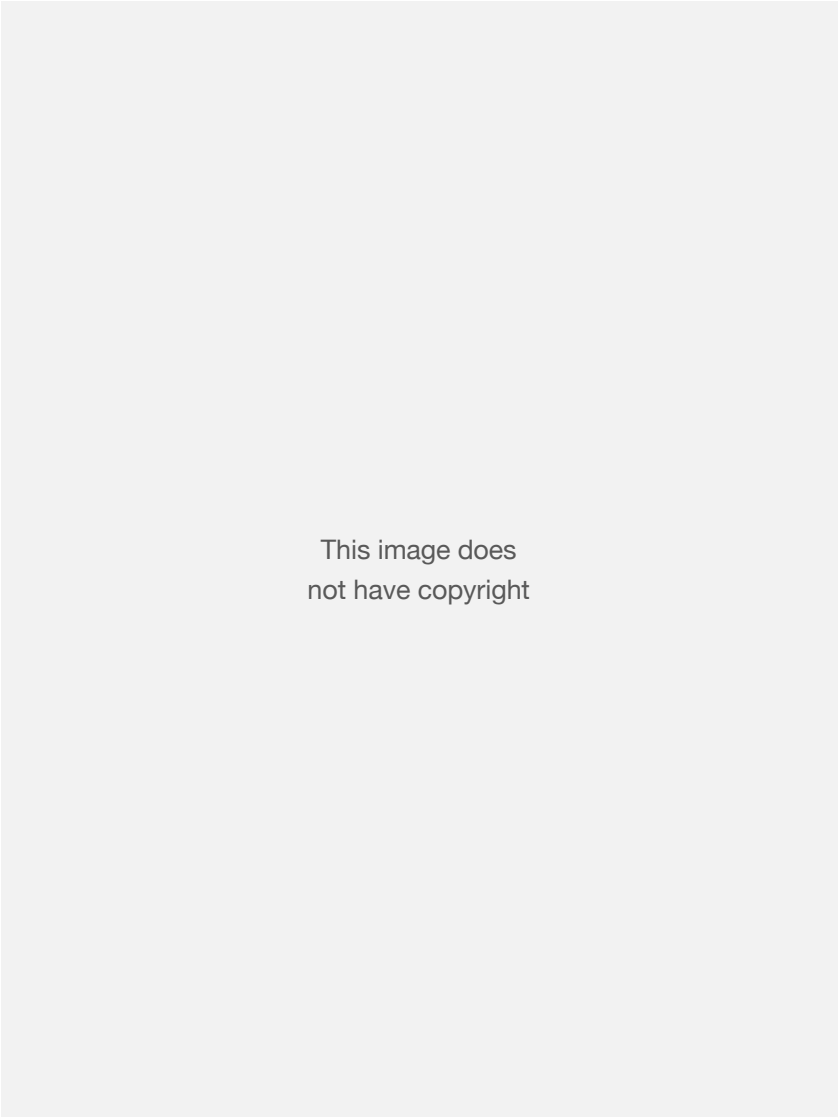
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Whakaahua 3. Rineke Dijkstra, *Julie, Den Haag, Nederland, 29 februari 1994*, 1994, in Laurie Cluitmans et al., eds., *Mothering Myths: An ABC of Art, Birth and Care* (Valiz, 2025), 73.



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Whakaahua 4. Rineke Dijkstra, *Tecla*, Amsterdam, Nederland, 16 mei 1994, 1994, in Cluitmans et al., *Mothering Myths*, 75.



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Whakaahua 5. Rineke Dijkstra, *Saskia*, Harderwijk, Nederland, 16 maart 1994, 1994, in Cluitmans et al., *Mothering Myths*, 74.

My second child arrived in a perfect storm of grief (mine, over the death of a friend) and pain (hers, physiological) in 2012. Her arrival, six years after my first pregnancy,⁸ turned me into a Mother, with a capital M. I had crossed a threshold. The question I lived every day through her first months was: “Can I turn all of myself toward mothering, through grief, even when my actions cannot soothe my child’s pain?”

Through the fire of those months, I developed an embodied knowledge that my consciousness would catch up with years later. I learned that my job as a mother was not to prevent my child from feeling pain, as I had believed; the true strength of my work was my ability to sit with her in her pain, which meant I also had to sit in mine.

This witnessing required a resilience beyond what I had previously endured. With these embodied yet not fully articulated experiences in mind, I wanted to find a way to process what I was experiencing, to reach out and connect, beyond the fences into the sequestered lives of mothers and children, in the hope someone would reach back. So, I asked mothers I knew probing questions on how they felt about the change they had experienced, with a view to making art from these conversations. Novelist Rachel Cusk describes looking after children as “a low-status occupation”. So, for me, the notion of recognition in making these artworks felt like a small yet

valuable ongoing contribution I could make. Cusk further describes the conundrum of looking after children:

It is isolating, frequently boring, relentlessly demanding and exhausting. It erodes your self-esteem and your membership of the adult world. The more it is separated from the rest of life, the harder it gets; and yet to bring your children to your own existence, rather than move yourself to theirs, is hard too.⁹

Interspersed with long spells away from this project,¹⁰ as I tended to my family and our immediate needs, I found myself caught in the conundrum of being both a mother and an artist simultaneously—in a web of ‘giving without expectation of resolution’, the home of Mother Practice.

I arrived, proposal in hand, for this Master’s degree, keen to see if I could disentangle my Art Practice from this web and, through the process of disentanglement, learn how I came to be both the one weaving and the one entrapped.

⁸ My first pregnancy in 2007 resulted in miscarriage.

⁹ Rachel Cusk, *A Life’s Work: On Becoming a Mother*, Paperback edition (Faber & Faber, 2019), 13.

¹⁰ I worked on this project intermittently from 2016–2024.



Whakaahua 6. *Paula*, in-studio work for Mother's Interview series, 2022. *Inherited* tablecloth with block-printed poutama pattern, hand-stitched herringbone in wool, hand-stamped text (from interview) on bias binding sewn to hand-printed pattern on pillowslip off-cuts, which joins red embroidery thread weighted by red, hand-dipped painted fishing weights in various sizes.

Tuitui

I am 42 years old.

My family and I are strapped into our car, heading far north, for a wedding and running late. We miscalculated how long it would take, and the kids are hot in the sun, straining at their seatbelts.

We finally arrive at our accommodation, and cousins, aunties, and uncles quickly appear, kisses and hellos! And quickly! Get dressed! Go in that room! I dress myself and help my daughters into our wedding finery.

We are back in the car, and now we are at the wedding venue, more kisses and hellos! And gosh, it's so beautiful! There are speeches to begin, and we are gathering silently as a crowd to witness. My 6-year-old is now pulling with all her might on my arm, making strange sounds. I look down, and I don't see my daughter. I see a storm cloud in a pretty frock, rain and thunder about to burst forth until all there will be is a frock.

Information hits me all at once. I see our day through her eyes; I feel it through her skin. I look around us at this beautiful, remote wedding venue.

I think, shit.

My husband and I look at each other with fear in our eyes. And we pass her between us, each trying our best to keep the storm inside the frock.

When the ceremony is finally over, I take my daughter away from the crowds, so she can rain her pain down on me. I soothe her with my understanding, but remind her we have quite a long evening ahead of us.

We walk around and try to come up with a solution that doesn't involve leaving (her idea). Or just sucking it up (my idea).

Then, as we walk and look out, we see an ENORMOUS rock at the edge of the hill we are on. We walk over to it, and I see that, on the side facing the view, a nook has been carved out. I suggest that she tuck herself into that nook and see how it feels. She likes it. I suggest that she join us at the reception, but whenever she is feeling like it's too much, she runs out here to this big rock, tuck herself in and gather her strength from this rock, this maunga, this view.

She asks, Will she have to tell me every time?

I say, no, I will keep an eye out.

She does anyway, conspiratorially mouthing ROCK at me across dinner plates, speeches and dance breaks.

Aunties come up to me during the evening to tell me my daughter keeps running off behind the marquee.

I know, I say.

She's with her rock.

Vocabulary

Through all the phases of growing children, vocabulary swirls around them. Mothers grow through a vocabulary of mothering. Learning to speak in the words of pregnancy, the words of birth, of babyhood and so on. We may get very attached to this newly learned language and find ourselves in a war of words with other mother practitioners over our sleep, or feeding practices, believing that the vocabulary we use is the language of love, not a temporary loan we will one day forget.

In conversation with other mothers, I hear their own vocabulary of meaning. A vocabulary which sits between a mother and their child; sensitive and reflexive, an evolving practice that holds signifiers of their own creation, each with a specific meaning relative to shared experiences. The language I learned to speak in my family of origin was a vocabulary of craft and objects. In lieu of words of affirmation, small ornaments with your name might reside in the china cabinet¹¹. In lieu of physical affection, lines of meticulous knitting would be given, made into warm clothing or blankets.

If this was the language I learned to speak, then the arrangement and placement of craft and objects – first for my dolls, then in my bedrooms, and then in my homes – were conversations I was inherently having with a line of women in my family: stretching back in time with my maternal ancestors, and forward in time with my daughters.

¹¹ My mother would often buy figurines from mail-order catalogues if they were named *Amy*.

If arranging is for me a conversation across time and a way to reflect parts of myself and my experiences, then installation practice exists on the same spectrum, but to different ends and in different contexts. This conversation is in my own visual vocabulary: objects & text *gathered, gifted, inherited, made, and made-for-this-moment*; (see Vocabulary of objects and text. P.8) a vocabulary spoken in spatial sentences.

This is a vocabulary that can adapt and become circular. A *made-for-this-moment* piece may take new form as *made* in a future installation. An *inherited*, partially stitched tablecloth, embroidered with *gifted* text, becomes a *made-for-this-moment* object, as in Following pages: Whakaahua , *The Apple of My Eye* (2025).



Whakaahua 7. *The Perfect Possession of Aspirational High Ideals*, 2025. Lipstick on silver napkin rings, *Gifted* text from interview series. *Gathered* napkin rings, Revlon ColourStay lipstick: 'Real Deal'.

When I use *gathered*, *inherited*, and *gifted* objects as my starting point, I can, through interaction, explore a conversation across time. In Whakaahua 9, *Thinking of You* (2025), I scanned and printed, in large format, *inherited* polaroids taken by my grandmother in 1987. *No Etiquette* (2025) and *The Perfect Possession of Aspirational High Ideals* (2025) (see Whakaahua 7 and Whakaahua 8) include themes and text *gifted* to me and incorporated into *inherited* and *gathered* objects.

Through studio research, I have come to understand my use of this vocabulary, its adaptability, and scope when incorporated with new-to-me technologies and techniques. My video work, *Ways to Break (and be Broken)* (2025) (see Whakaahua 10–Whakaahua 12), uses *inherited* cut glass and crystal in a video performance exploring the visceral frustrations of Mother Practice. By using another format to consider themes of tension and time, this experience helped me broaden the ways I could express myself through my visual vocabulary.



Whakaahua 8. *No Etiquette*, 2025. Stitch on a dissected tablecloth. Text redacted from interview: No crying, No anger.



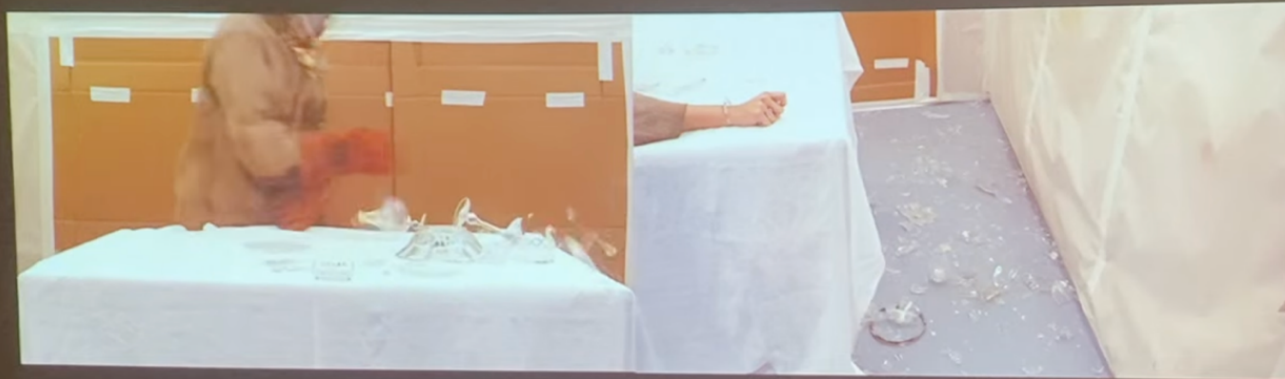
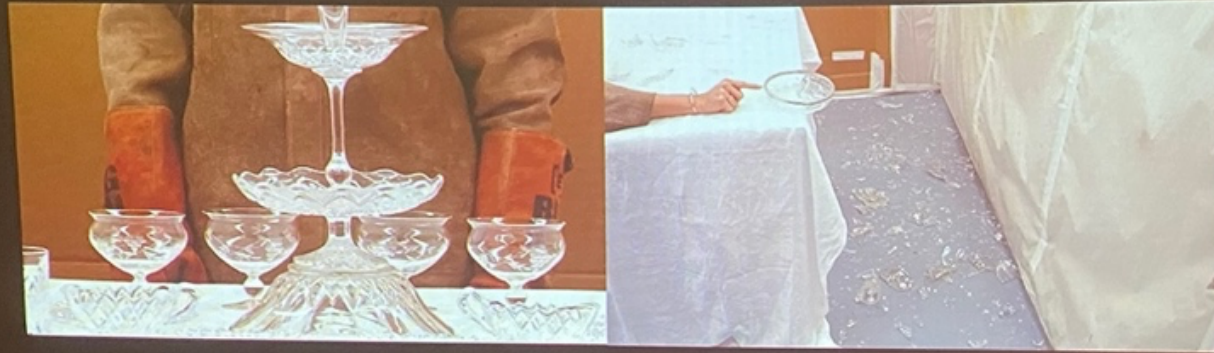
Whakaahua 9. *Thinking of You in 2025*, large format prints, 605 x 670 mm, 2025. Two polaroids taken by my grandmother at her home, of the bouquets she was given for Mother's Day, 1987. Both are out of focus because my grandmother would shake the camera as she pushed the button. Traces of her ballpoint pen on the bottom of the Polaroid mark where she tried to document who the bouquets were from. In my grandmother's collection of photographs, there are many of bouquets and presents received, placed on sideboards for documentation.



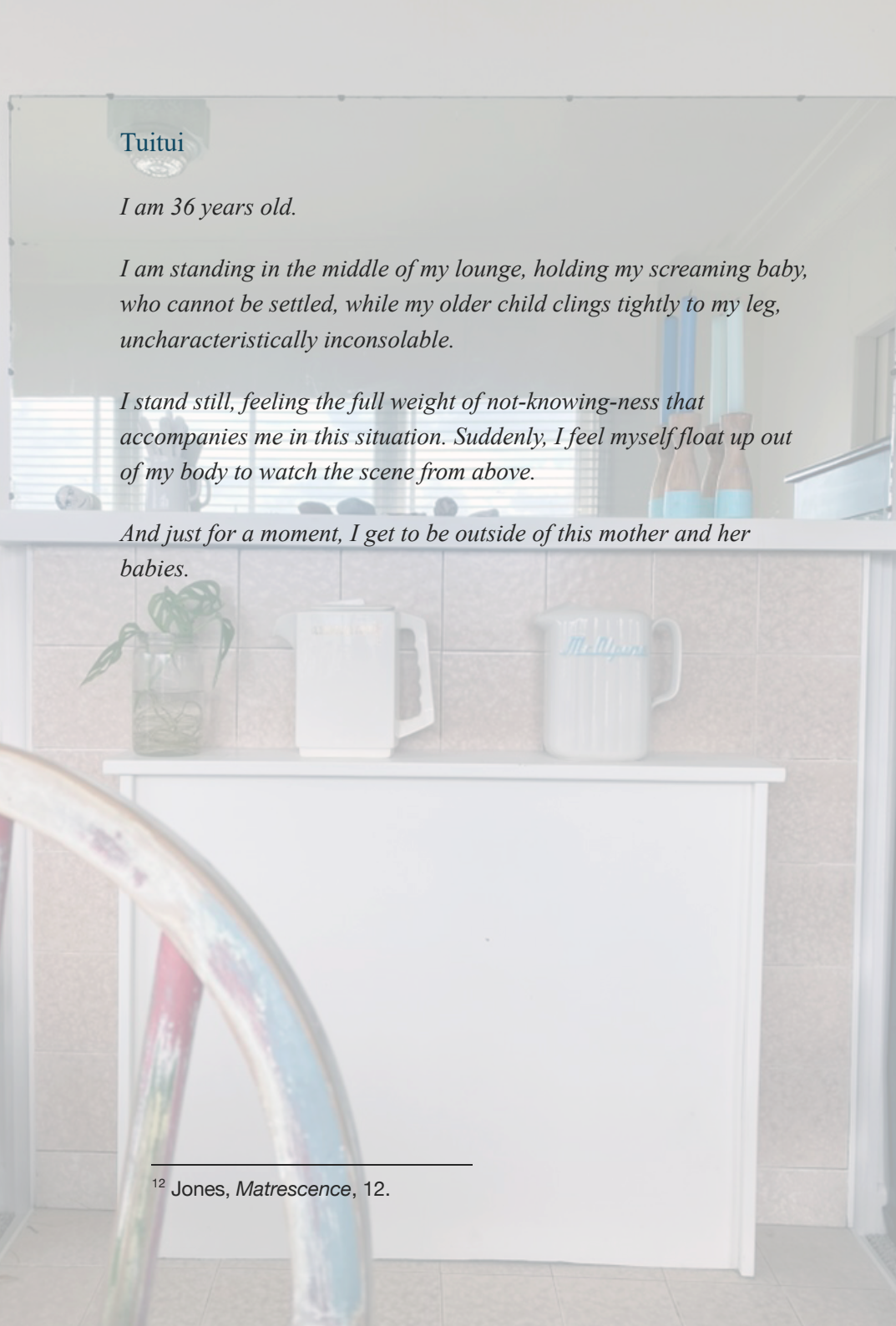
Whakaahua 10. *Ways to Break (and be broken)*, video still, 2025.
With the assistance of Malachi McKay.



Whakaahua 11. *Ways to Break (and be broken)*, video still, 2025.
With the assistance of Malachi McKay.



Whakaahua 12. *Ways to Break (and be broken)*, installation video still, 2025. With the assistance of Malachi McKay. Split-screen, separate timing; right-side begins first. A finger slowly and deliberately pushes a crystal-and-silver bowl toward the edge of the table. The left side begins with a close-up of stacked crystalware and a gloved figure. Zooms out to reveal a figure in a safety mask and a silk scarf covering their face. The figure stands back and, in one fast, aggressive motion, pushes all of the glass from the table. At the same time, the singular hand on the right side gives one last delicate, final push.



Tuitui

I am 36 years old.

I am standing in the middle of my lounge, holding my screaming baby, who cannot be settled, while my older child clings tightly to my leg, uncharacteristically inconsolable.

I stand still, feeling the full weight of not-knowing-ness that accompanies me in this situation. Suddenly, I feel myself float up out of my body to watch the scene from above.

And just for a moment, I get to be outside of this mother and her babies.

The Divided Self

When I became pregnant, I knew I would change. What I didn't know was the extent to which these changes would permeate all of me, not only the physiological, but also who I believed myself to be.

In 2023, journalist Lucy Jones published *Matrescence: On the Metamorphosis of Pregnancy, Childbirth and Motherhood*. Her book examines these changes: the ones we know and can point to, and the ephemeral changes that are harder to define, and therefore, to navigate. The title of her book is the name given to that transformation, first by medical anthropologist Dana Raphael in 1973 and now by Jones. She writes, "after childhood and adolescence, there is no other time in an adult human's life course which entails such dramatic psychological, social and physical change."¹²

In naming this transformation, I felt a recognition of the kind I had been trying to understand and articulate through conversations and within my Art Practice. Adrienne Rich also writes, "to have borne and reared a child... can mean the experiencing of one's own body and emotions in a powerful way. We experience not only physical, fleshly changes but the feeling of a change in character."¹³ In alignment, novelist Rachel Cusk evokes a similar sentiment in *A Life's Work*, saying, "Birth is not merely that which divides women from men: it also divides women from themselves, so that a

¹² Jones, *Matrescence*, 12.

¹³ Rich et al., *Of Woman Born*, 19.

woman's understanding of what it is to exist is profoundly changed."¹⁴

I became divided through three pregnancies: one miscarriage followed by two daughters. The physical space of change was our home, the domestic space where I experienced profound growth through Mother Practice. Reflecting on Rich's 1976 work and the patriarchal archetype of a 'natural' mother, Jones writes that the expectation and "isolation of mothers and children together in the home must be taken for granted; that maternal love is, and should be, quite literally selfless."¹⁵ Jones reflects on how little this has changed and her surprise at how deeply this archetype was "sewn into" her, despite living a life defined by feminist literature and modern-day realities.¹⁶ This archetype was 'deeply sewn' into me also.

My work, *Pull Here (I Struggled with Her All-Consumingness and Still Do)* (2025), is made with *gathered* wine glass doilies, *gifted* text, and *made-for-this-moment* felted wool. In the work, there are pull tabs which sit in small metal stirrups. When the tabs are pulled, the lips part to reveal the text inside (see whakaahua 16–20). A deliberation on the ideal and the reality of being a 'natural mother'.

Artist Louise Bourgeois' work *Do not abandon me* (1999), (see Whakaahua 13), "reflects on the complexity of birth as an experience – the body rupturing, breaking its borders, splitting into two individuals. It is a trauma which inscribes itself on body and

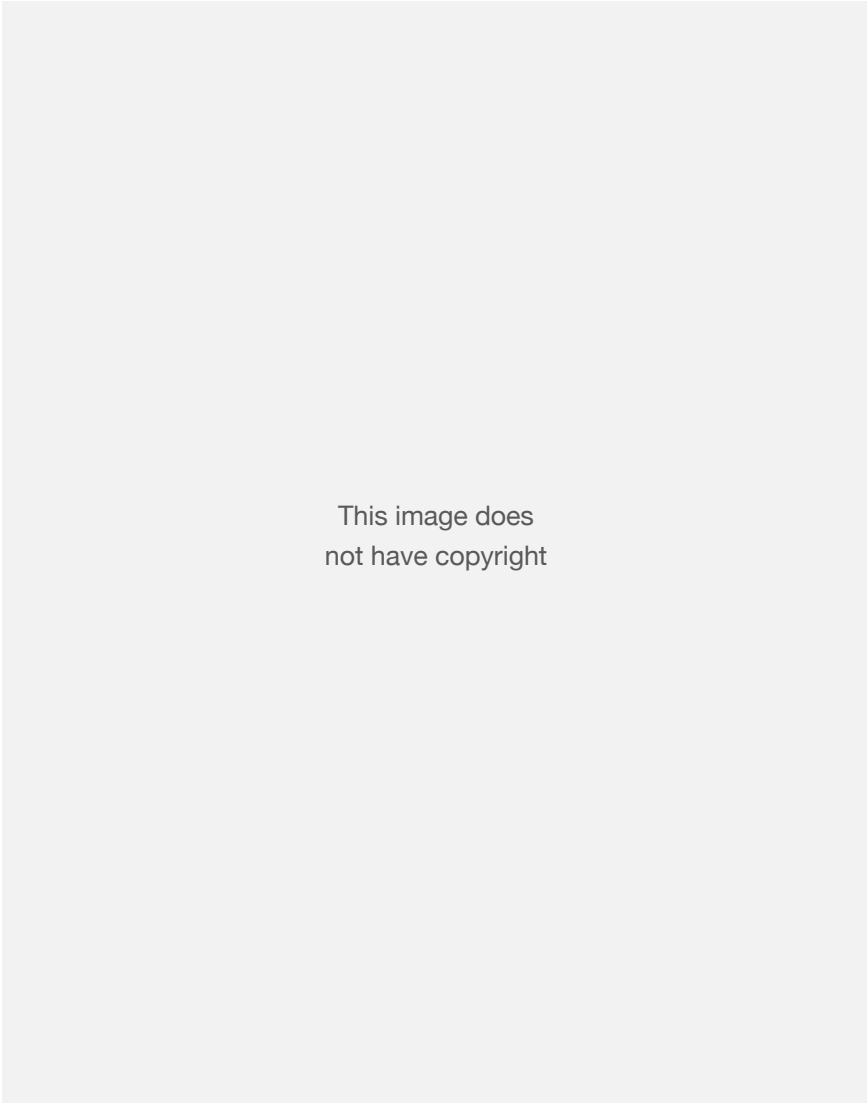
mind."¹⁷ In this work, a soft sculpture of domestic textiles depicts a mother and baby attached by an umbilical cord, navel to navel rather than navel to placenta. Taken with the title's entreaty, this biologically impossible connection between mother and child reveals a kind of intergenerational bond rendered in shorthand – the mother's navel connection to her own mother, and mothers beyond, through an umbilical shortcut.

¹⁴ Cusk, *A Life's Work*, 12.

¹⁵ Rich et al., *Of Woman Born*, 48.

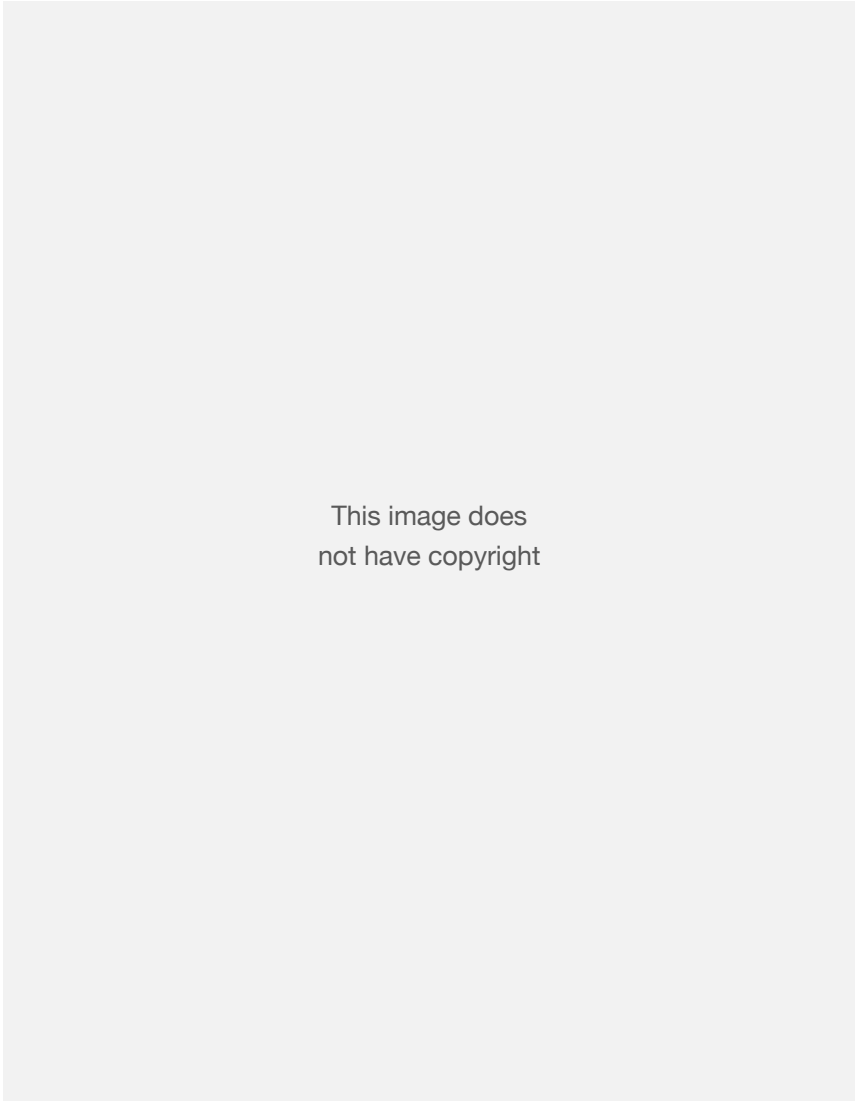
¹⁶ Jones, *Matrescence*, 8.

¹⁷ Judah, *Acts of Creation*, 128.



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Whakaahua 13. Louise Bourgeois, *Do Not Abandon Me*, 1999, in Ralph Rugoff, ed., *Louise Bourgeois: The Woven Child* (Hatje Cantz, 2022), 45.



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Whakaahua 14. Louise Bourgeois, *The Good Mother*, 2003, in Rugoff, *The Woven Child*, 64.

These soft sculptures of Bourgeois's later practice, which, among other things, "draw on and explore her relationship with her mother,"¹⁸ and are described as "a means of transforming as well as preserving the past,"¹⁹ have been influential on my research, particularly *The Good Mother* (2003) (see Whakaahua 14-15). A small, patched-cloth figure, on her knees atop a stainless-steel surface with five spools of thread attached to her breasts, sits within a glass cabinet.

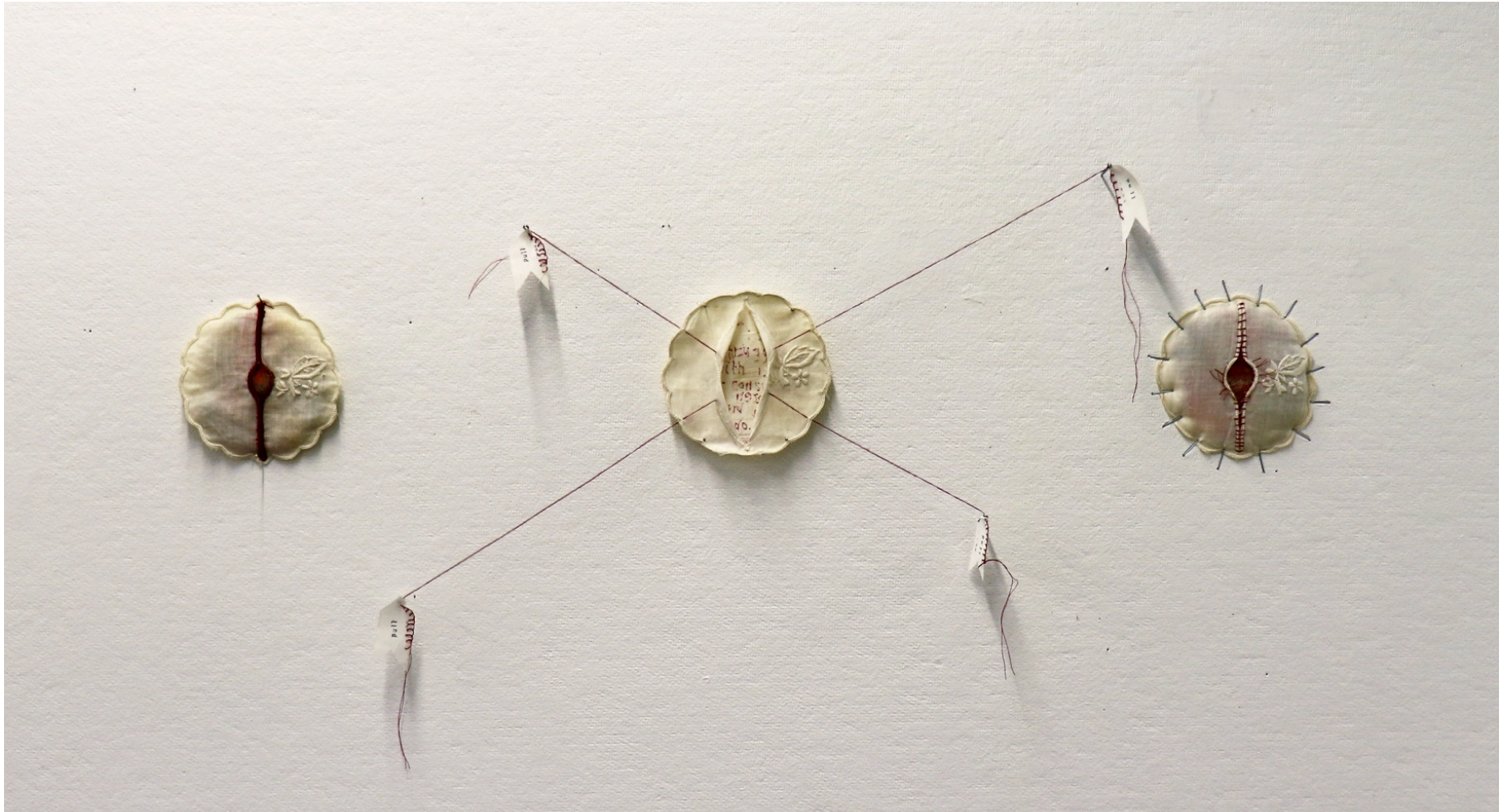
I experienced this work as a representation of a 'natural mother' and her endless requirement to nurture, to weave her family, the threads of which require constant replenishment. Yet I also saw my research as occupying the viewer's space outside the cabinet, examining this mother from all perspectives and leaving her no respite.

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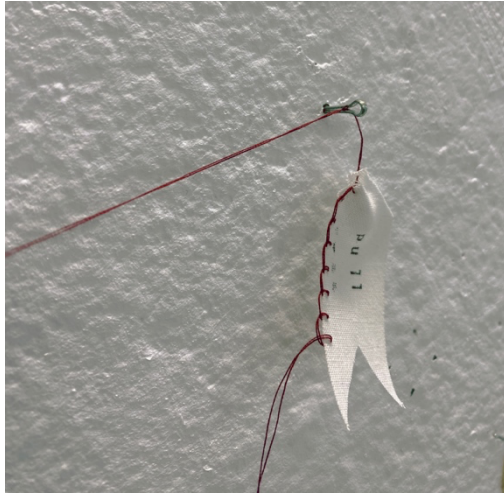
Whakaahua 15. Louise Bourgeois, *The Good Mother*, 2003, in Rugoff, *The Woven Child*, 65.

¹⁸ Louise Bourgeois, *Louise Bourgeois - The Woven Child*, ed. Ralph Rugoff, with Julianne Lorz et al. (Hatje Cantz, 2022), 37.

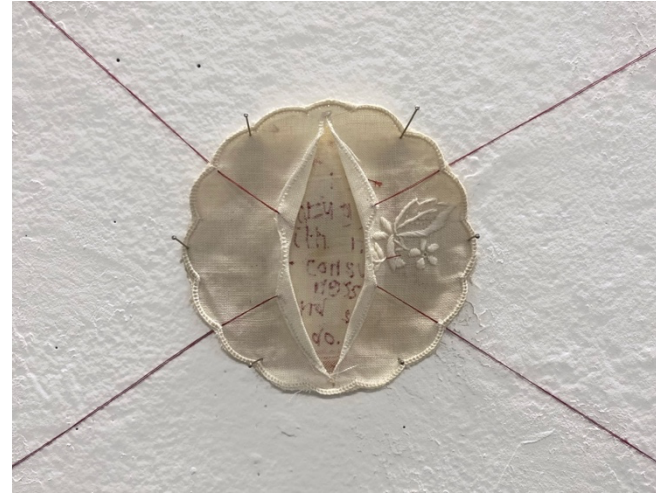
¹⁹ Bourgeois, *Louise Bourgeois - The Woven Child*, 8.



Whakaahua 16. *Pull Here (I struggled with her all-consuming-ness and still do)*, 2025. Wine glass doilies, felted wool, embroidery thread, bias binding, hand-stamped lettering, monoprinted text, staples, split pins, pins.



Whakaahua 17. *Pull Here (I struggled with her all-consumingness and still do)*, detail, 2025. Little metal stirrup for the 'Pull' tab.



Whakaahua 19. *Pull Here (I struggled with her all-consumingness and still do)*, detail, 2025. Detail of monoprint with natural opening.



Whakaahua 18. *Pull Here (I struggled with her all-consumingness and still do)*, detail, 2025. Detail of stapled doilie.



Whakaahua 20. *Pull Here (I struggled with her all-consumingness and still do)*, detail, 2025. Detail of opening when pull tabs are enacted.



Tuitui

I am 38 years old.

I can no longer stand merely looking at the dining room chairs that I want to paint. So, I have barricaded myself at the end of the hallway. I am bordered on my right-hand side by the washing machine, the laundry sink and a multitude of nappy buckets in various stages of attendance. The wall that borders the bathroom is on my left, and between myself and the back door, I have placed two dining room chairs. I sit on the floor with the paint between me and the first chair. Then I paint with my right arm, while my back serves as a shield, and my left arm 'plays defence' against the two toddlers who run down the hall at full speed toward me.

When my mother-friend visits, she sees the painted chairs, looks at me and asks in a faintly accusatory tone, "How did you do that?"

Life Lines

Author and biographer Julie Phillips published *The Baby on the Fire Escape* in 2023. The cover art is a painting by artist Alice Neel, a self-portrait of Neel holding her baby. The book takes its title from a false accusation Neel's parents-in-law made that she would put the baby out on her New York apartment's fire escape so she could paint.

Phillips' book is a group biography of well-known twentieth-century writers, poets, and artists who were also mothers. She explores their personal histories, artistic practices, and relationship to motherhood. What becomes clear through reading these portraits, examined across a century of circumstance, is how much the social and cultural context each woman was born into characterises the choices they had to work with, within, or outside of. Phillips brings up the mother/child relationship of these artists to their children, but also to their own mothers. By exploring how they were mothered and how their mothers were mothered, a line of women tracing backwards becomes illuminated.

When these complex relationships are combined with their contemporary cultural context, a fraught picture of the artist-mother emerges. Alice Neel, born in 1900, to an "intelligent and dissatisfied"²⁰ mother, strives to live as a painter, with four children: her eldest daughter raised by her father's family, another child died in infancy, and two sons she raises on her own. In a time when "no

²⁰ Julie Phillips, *The Baby on the Fire Escape: Creativity, Motherhood, and the Mind-Baby Problem* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2023), 29.

matter where they lived, it was too early in the world's history for household equality."²¹

The interviews I conducted prior to this study (described earlier in *Leaving Home*) gave me a view into the biographies of the women I was mothering alongside. These women gifted me with words. Lots of lovely words, laid out in sentences, punctuated by laughs, and stacked in paragraphs. Their deepest feelings about these changes they experienced. I would roll these words around in my mind on any given day. On my worst days, I would take those stacks of paragraphs and use them as a stepping stool to reach my best intentions.

It was out of these gifts that the installation, *The Apple of My Eye* (2025), was created. The words this mother gifted me spoke to the beauty and luxury of slowing down to meet the pace of your baby, seeing your surroundings anew, through the magical view of your child's eyes. I knew the experience of the other side of this beauty and luxury, shared by many women. That there were silent bargains and IOUs made with future versions of ourselves, without knowing if we would ever be able to make good on them. I knew that those moments of beauty and luxury were punctuations in the circular economy of repetitive actions that accompany the raising of children.

I made *The Apple of My Eye* with the intention of allowing these facets of experience to sit, as in life, in conversation with each other: the beauty, the banal, the brutal.

The installation has five key material elements: cloth, thread, plaster, timber, and tape. Each element bridging an invisible tie between the material and personal: the cape an *inherited* tablecloth, partially embroidered by its previous owner; the timber, gathered from a skip bin of my home's fence off-cuts; the coat-hangers, make-shift replicas from my wardrobe; the plaster apple stems and cores I made from a mould of my daughter's discarded snack; while the singular plaster piece of apple came from a mould I made of a piece bitten out of my own apple.

The number of repetitive actions this work required – stitching the tablecloth-cum-cape, casting the apple cores – meant that a labour of attention was built into this work. Filling in embroidery lines, stitch after stitch, with time, focus, and effort. With the apple cores, requiring precise measurements of weight and time, I found myself in service to this process; it was not in service to me.

Because of these exacting, repetitive actions, these processes became a container to hold any fear or uncertainty within my Art Practice. While I was attending so carefully to one aspect, further ideas presented themselves to me, as if in reward for my diligence.

²¹ Phillips, *The Baby on the Fire Escape*, 32.

Artist Lenka Clayton created *An Artist Residency in Motherhood* in 2012: a conceptual space for artist-mothers to occupy. In 2019, members “were invited to simultaneously record the events of July 15th, 2019, in as much or as little detail as they chose.”²² She writes that:

Though parenthood is an ongoing dance of tasks and experiences and near-constant engagement, I'd often find myself at the end of the day thinking I had done nothing all day. Mothers' Days is a 388-page document of what happens when nothing happens.

For me, the resulting work, *Mothers' Days* (2019), is a perfect example of recognition. Seeing your Mother Practice refracted through the minutiae of others' experiences links your practices and validates your experiences. That this work exists in an art context offers Mother Practice recognition as a valid and valuable subject of exploration, a fecund starting point for the artist, mother or not.

The mother-friend who gifted me her words came to look at my installation. She walked around, taking it all in carefully. On seeing the golden threads that held the apple stems and tied around the piece of plaster cast apple, she said quietly, “You know, I have always visualised my connection to my sons as a thin golden thread that travels from me to them.”²³



Whakaahua 21. Lenka Clayton, *Mothers' Days*, published by An Artist Residency in Motherhood, 2020.

²² “Mothers' Days,” Lenka Clayton, accessed April 12, 2026, <https://www.lenkaclayton.com/mothersdays>.

²³ In conversation with Emma Page, August 2025.

Installation 1.

THE APPLE OF MY EYE

Gathered: Fencing post off-cuts for all wood elements, nails, screws, and embroidery thread.

Gifted: Text from Interview Series (Emma), Rusted no.8 Wire, plastic-coated hook, masking tape (all from my husband's collection).

Inherited: Partially embroidered (four trees and the circle of flowers) tablecloth for a side table.

Made: Embroidered text* and four trees on the tablecloth (embroidered by me pre-MVA)

Made-for-this-Moment: Hydro-stone²⁴ Plaster; apple cores, stems, apple piece, coat-hangers.

Supported by: Emma, Heather, Damen, Harriet, Mon, Emily.

*.When it was good/It was so lovely being at home/with a baby
You'd just get into those cycles
You really notice seasons and/what a tree looks like
In Winter/And in Summer/And in Spring/And in Autumn
It's so beautiful/Just the small things/And to go slow
Yeah

²⁴ Hydro-stone plaster is a high strength gypsum cement



Whakaahua 22. *The Apple of my eye*, installation detail, 2025. Empty plaster-cast coat hanger with a singular golden thread tied to it's arm, swooping down and up to tie in a bow around a singlar piece of plaster cast apple.

Following pages: Whakaahua 23. *The Apple of My Eye*, installation, 2025. A self-supporting, spindly wooden structure stands, like the shadow of a child's hangman drawing. From one side of this lop-sided 'T', an embroidered cape is draped loosely on a white plaster coat-hanger, connected by a rough hook of no. 8 wire, bent then coiling upwards to a makeshift knot. On the opposite side of the structure, seven thin golden threads drape in a spaced line over its arm. Each thread, longer than the last, forms a stepped sequence, tied to its own tiny plaster apple stem. Beneath these dangling stems, 31 plaster apple cores are arranged on the floor in an offset grid of rows, forming 5, 7, 7, 7, 5.



WHEN IT WAS GOOD
TO LOVELY BEING AT HOME
WITH A BAST.
WHENSET GOT INTO THOSE CITIES
THE BUILT NOTICE DEASONS AND
WAS A TREE LOOKS LIKE.
IN WINTER
AND IN SUMMER
AND IN SPRING
AND IN AUTUMN
IT'S SO GOOD, JUST THE SMALL THINGS
AND TO GO SLOW.
YEAH





Whakaahua 24. *Apple of My Eye*, installation detail, 2025. Offering shelf.



Whakaahua 26. *Apple of My Eye*, installation detail, 2025. A plaster cast coat-hanger rests on a plastic-coated hook, with a small piece of masking tape used as a protective moment against the point of the screw coming through the wood.



Whakaahua 25. *Apple of My Eye*, installation detail, 2025. Plaster cast piece of an apple bitten from my apple, tied with a bow.



Whakaahua 27. *Apple of My Eye*, installation detail, 2025. 31 plaster cast apple cores in the configuration 5,7,7,7,5.

Tuitui

I am 12 years old.

My mother buys a new washing machine. A big extravagance, but we are a family of four, including a baby, with a broken washing machine. The father of her sons (and ex-husband) offers to carry it up the steep path to our house with his friend. My mother gratefully accepts.

The father/ex-husband and his friend snigger as they carry it, saying under their breath, "Must be nice. 'The benefit' must be good".

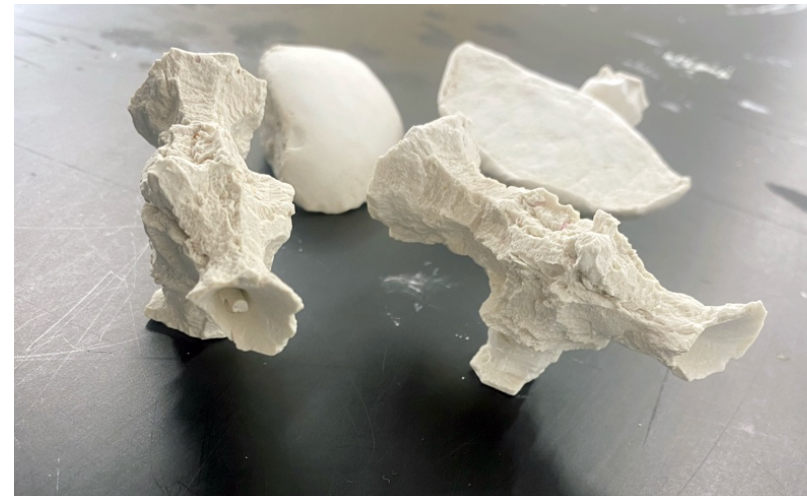
My mother doesn't tell them that the washing machine was paid for by the small inheritance her father had just left her in his passing.

I am 36 years old.

I have two small children. My mother buys me a washing machine and a vacuum cleaner. She makes sure we will not have to wait for a small inheritance.

The Return: Assimilation

It is August, and through the winter days, I pour plaster into an apple core mould. Core after core appears as I watch the clock zealously, keeping to my apple-making schedule. Once lifted from their moulds, the apple cores sit upright on their little sprues, waiting to be sawn free.



Whakaahua 28. Plaster cast apple cores with sprues attached, 2025.

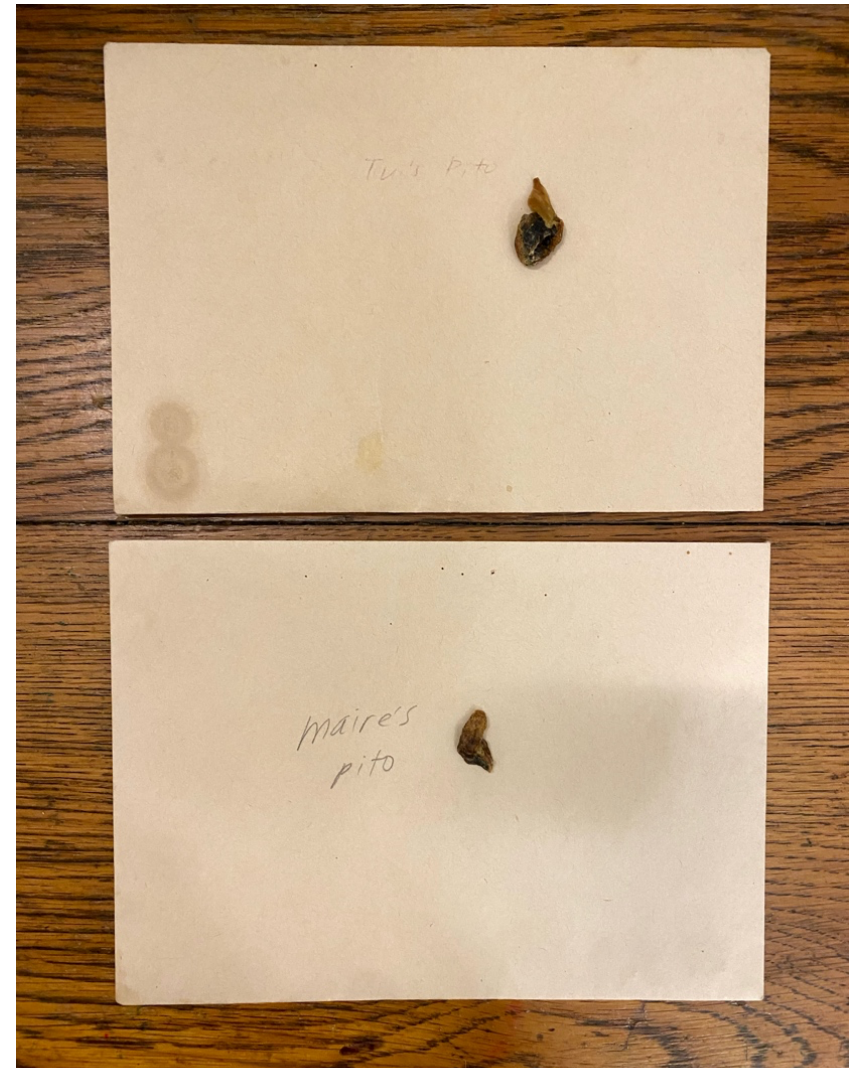
I pile the sprues, and they become interesting objects in their own right: both integral and sacrificial parts of the original. The more I consider them, the more they remind me of a pito, the umbilical stump that remains attached to the baby for days till it dries and falls off – its work complete.



Whakaahua 29. Sprues piling up, 2025.

My next thought – I still have both my daughters’ pito somewhere – and my resulting actions, I would describe as the fulcrum upon which my entire research project pivoted. It was from this moment that my project would evolve into *Pito to Pou*. As I held these pito in my hands, the project’s focus quite literally turned inward.

My immediate actions were to make replica pito in varying sizes and materials, to begin to understand these objects and their purpose in my research, how I could interact with them, and what it meant for me to use them.



Whakaahua 30. Leftover wedding envelopes with my daughters’ pito, 2025.



Whakaahua 31. Pito in Plasticine ready for scanning, 2025.



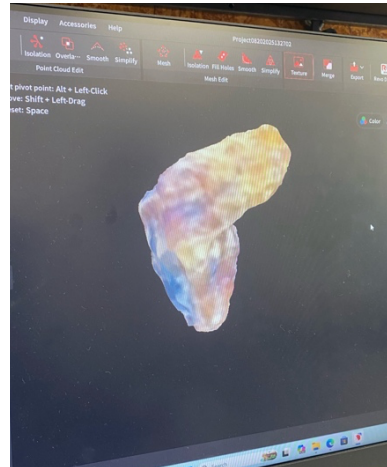
Whakaahua 32. 3D scanning pito, 2025.



Whakaahua 33. Sterling silver lost wax cast pito, 2025. Pito1:12x5mm, Pito 2: 16x10mm.



Whakaahua 34. 3D print ready for wax casting, 2025.



Whakaahua 35. Scanned digital image, 2025.



Whakaahua 36. *Felted Pito 1*, 2025. Needle felted, Stuffed 320x320mm.



Whakaahua 37. *Felted Pito 2*, 2025. Needle felted, stuffed, 430x280mm.

years old.

Her tells me, "I hadn't decided if I was going to keep you. You were in the taxi on the way home from the hospital, and the taxi must have sensed this. He was an island guy. He said that he and would take you. They had ten sons and wanted a daughter. I had you as the only girl with ten boys and decided in that moment you."

Whakapapa

How do we cut the cord? Is it all at once? Is it slowly over time? Is it never?

In *Whose Futures*, Hana Burgess and Te Kahuratai Painting's chapter "Onamata, Anamata: A Whakapapa Perspective of Māori Futurisms", describes whakapapa as derived "from the root 'papa', meaning a base or foundation. Whakapapa denotes a layering, adding to that foundation. Rooted in creation, generations layer upon each other, creating a reality of intergenerational relationships."²⁵

How might language reveal my conception of whakapapa? Burgess and Painting say that "whakapapa is often translated to the western concept of genealogy"²⁶, which is inaccurate given the breadth of its meaning. I have been considering a term I hear in American popular culture²⁷, 'being raised up'. I wondered what this means in relation to a genealogical view of being descended (down).

My consideration of being 'raised up' led, in part, to my work, *You Keep it Next to Your Kai?!*. I had a table my husband made for our kitchen that had been lowered to become my desk. I wanted to 'raise it up' to think with objects, through what and who might have raised me up. I placed a protective enclosure²⁸ for a book – usually protecting my *inherited* edition of Mrs Beeton's Household

Management – under one leg. Under each back leg, I placed a piece of house cladding, the same width as the table legs, salvaged from the home where my husband grew up, and his parents still live. Under the fourth leg, I placed a *made-for-this-moment* Hydro-stone plaster cast ice cream container, denoting my taha Māori.

In my reading of "Onamata, Anamata", I see that the Māori concept of whakapapa is that "in laying down our whakapapa, we are not standing on top of our whakapapa, we are immersed in it."²⁹ Onamata is described as seeing through the eyes of tūpuna, and anamata, seeing through the eyes of mokopuna. Through this vision, we embody a way of being that is in constant conversation with tūpuna and mokopuna, our "sense of self, a beautiful embodiment of this fleeting moment of intimate relationship [between tūpuna and mokopuna]."³⁰ In *You Keep It Next to Your Kai?!*, a 7lb weight with a kapok- and-wool felted placenta/whenua was held within a harakeke kete. This kete was attached to the central beam on the underside of the table, acting as an anchor and ballast to the table's imbalanced foundations.

Through this act, I began to consider that my Māori whakapapa – something I felt I had not earned the right to – was not subject to my level of reo, or mātauranga Māori; instead, it was, because I was. Burgess and Painting write, "no matter how little you know your whakapapa, it is there for you, waiting, calling you even."³¹

²⁵ Anna-Maria Murtola and Shannon Walsh, eds., *Whose Futures?* (Economic and Social Research Aotearoa, 2020), 209.

²⁶ Murtola and Walsh, *Whose Futures?*, 209.

²⁷ In Black American pop culture, such as music by Beyonce, comedy by Chris Rock.

²⁸ A heritage conservation item.

²⁹ Murtola and Walsh, *Whose Futures?*, 219.

³⁰ Murtola and Walsh, *Whose Futures?*, 218.

³¹ Murtola and Walsh, *Whose Futures?*, 230.

That “even in crisis, whanaungatanga can always be restored. We can always return to balance.”³²

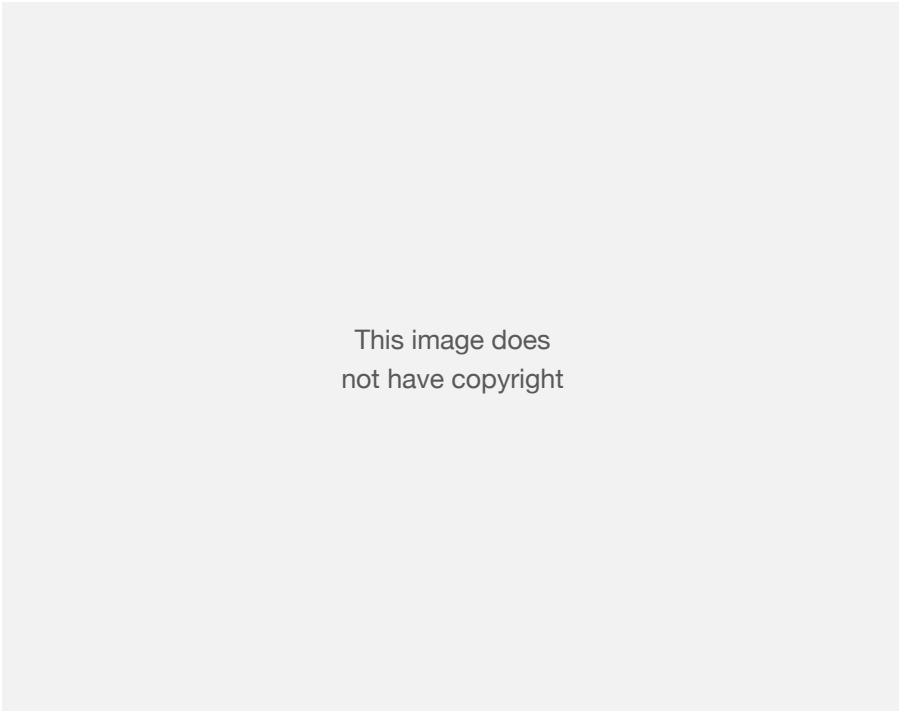
Artist Peata Larkin says the loss of her ‘Māori self’ had a profound effect on her wellbeing. Through her paintings, she is reclaiming her whakapapa. In a collaboration with her cousin and writer Whiti Hereaka, she describes “finding our way back home to our Māori roots”³³ through their art and words. Larkin’s painting of embroidered transparent silk, with drips of acrylic paint pushed through the weave, spoke to me of a contemporary conversation with traditional knowledge, holding the nuance of experience, longing and connection, all markers of where my own Art Practice continually tries to take me.



Whakaahua 38. *You Keep It Next to Your Kai?!*, detail of 7lb weight in kete, October 2025.

³² Murtola and Walsh, *Whose Futures?*, 230.

³³ Whiti Hereaka, *You Are Here*, with Peata Larkin (Massey University Press, 2025).



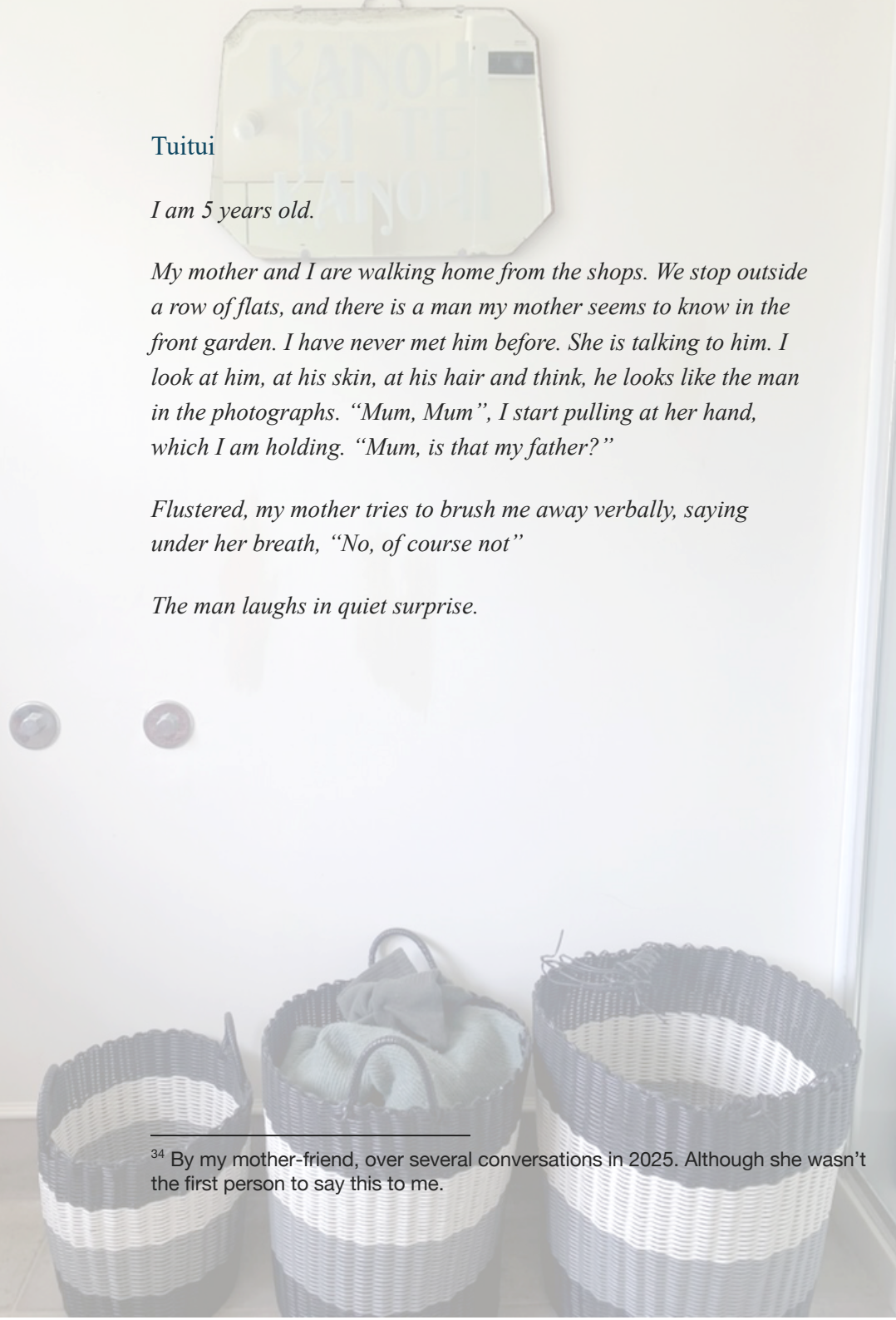
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Whakaahua 39. Peata Larkin, *They Have Watched Your Line Grow*, 2024, acrylic on embroidered silk, 1250mm x 2050 mm, Two Rooms Gallery, Auckland. Photograph by Author.



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Whakaahua 40, 41. Peata Larkin, *Their Names and Stories are Here*, 2025, acrylic on embroidered silk (detail), 1250mm x 1250 mm, Two Rooms Gallery, Auckland. Photograph by Author.



Tuitui

I am 5 years old.

My mother and I are walking home from the shops. We stop outside a row of flats, and there is a man my mother seems to know in the front garden. I have never met him before. She is talking to him. I look at him, at his skin, at his hair and think, he looks like the man in the photographs. “Mum, Mum”, I start pulling at her hand, which I am holding. “Mum, is that my father?”

Flustered, my mother tries to brush me away verbally, saying under her breath, “No, of course not”

The man laughs in quiet surprise.

Fracture

In making two placenta/whenua out of kapok, felted wool, and pounamu, I realised I was exploring the identity loss and cultural fracture in the circumstances of my birth, as well as the desire I had to heal that fracture with the births of my daughters.

My understanding of colonisation is that its impacts can occur across all stages of a life: acutely, chronically, and subtly. One of those stages of my life was the birth of my children. Suddenly, I was not only feeling the loss for myself (which I might previously have been resigned to), but also the pain of failing to pass the culture on.

I used ice cream containers to store the whenua of my babies in the freezer. This was exciting to me, as I felt I was participating in a culture I had previously felt separate from. I believed I was giving my children a sense of participation in a Māori tradition by burying their whenua in the land/whenua.

However, I learned the way I had done it was not right, was not tika. “*You keep it next to your kai?!*” was what was said to me.³⁴ So, I discovered that in trying to tie myself to my culture through my children, I had pushed myself further away. If we were disconnected from tribal rohe and family were without ancestral land, where would we place these precious whenua? We needed time to think, to feel, to find, and the ice cream containers and our freezer gave us that time. My friend explained that she had woven baskets for her children’s whenua and buried them in large plant pots until they

³⁴ By my mother-friend, over several conversations in 2025. Although she wasn’t the first person to say this to me.

could be transferred to whenua. “If I had known better, I would have done better”, is what I said in response.

The ice cream container has become a part of my story of trying to connect with my culture. It is flawed, but it is part of my story of colonisation. This humble container has become part of the whakapapa of my children’s lives. In the painstaking recreation of an ice cream container into plaster. I learned that, by putting so much energy and effort into creating this object, I was honouring that rite of passage in my own way. I was saying, *This might seem plastic to you, but to me, it’s a conduit for connection.*

As if in answer, during the process of pouring moulds – at a particularly fraught moment of discouragement – the next mould revealed a perfect etching of a large tree in the base of the plaster cast. Now the story of the ice-cream container and my whakapapa story were becoming one. I also felt, in that moment, that this was part of a larger story of colonisation, not just mine.

Hereaka writes,

There is no story that exists by itself; a story in its nature is about creating connections – moments in which we can see ourselves as we really are. Moments that join the past to the future, moments that join us together.³⁵

If the language I learned in my family of origin was that of objects and craft, then it stands to reason that the way I would

unconsciously attempt to weave myself into my disconnected culture would be through that culture’s mahi toi and taonga.

Pounamu to me was one of those ways, a verb as well as a noun³⁶. My relationship to pounamu has been woven throughout my adult life - a story of receiving, gifting, loss and longing. I had two examples from my life of pounamu casualties: the remains of a pounamu teething necklace I had worn for my babies, and a pounamu rolling pin given to me by a maternal aunt, years prior.

I chose to bring both casualties into my studio. Although this happened in a way I could describe as coincidental, I know a better word is ‘*incidental*’. That, in setting my intention to make work about motherhood and then bringing these two objects into my studio, meant I was asking myself to explore a deeper personal layer. A layer that spoke to fracture, to my whakapapa, which I had not initially intended to explore. For *You Keep It Next to Your Kai?! I* used this broken pounamu rolling pin to double down on exploring a dis/mis-connection. Through the merging of pounamu and whenua in the context of kai, I have considered that food space, that kitchen counter. So I brought it in, then I raised it up.

I look at this installation and see that I set the ground for myself, in all of its pain, disconnection, support, ballast and love. This is where I stand – at my bench, working with what I have.

From here I go forward.

³⁵ Hereaka, *You Are Here*, 35.

³⁶ A conduit to connect with and the name of the connecting.

Installation 2.

YOU KEEP IT NEXT TO YOUR KAI?!

Gathered: Harakeke Kete owned since 1999; Wooden Table (made by my husband for our kitchen with crate wood marked with Wolsely, England origins; also the home of my childhood family car); Wood Blocks (remnants from my in-laws' house cladding); Harakeke Rope (bought from local Opshop).

Gifted: Kapok material (from my Mother-in-law), Pounamu Rolling Pin (from my maternal Aunt), Protective Enclosure for a Book (made by my husband for Mrs Beeton).

Inherited: Book: Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management (gifted from my great-grandmother to my grandmother, to my mother, to me)

Made-for-this-moment: Hydrostone Plaster: Ice cream container, Tree Image at the bottom of the cast ice cream container. Plaster of Paris: Interior Ice cream mould to hold Pounamu, two Kapok & felted wool: whenua/placenta.

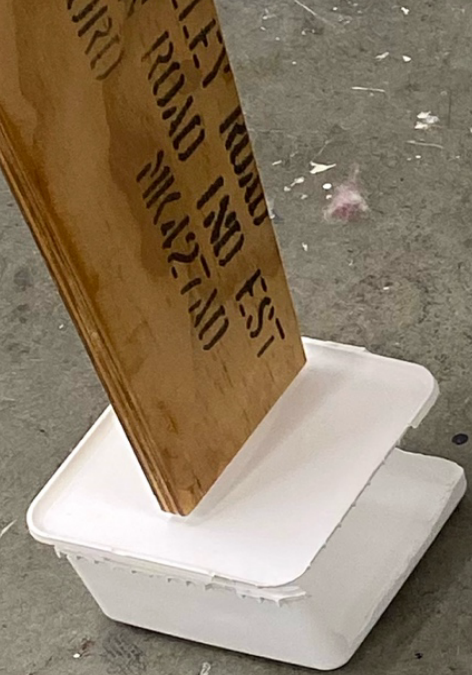
Supported by: Damen, Chilali, Harriet, Michelle, Tricia, Mon, Emily



Whakaahua 42. *You Keep it Next to Your Kai?!*, (detail) left leg support, 2025. Pieces of a plaster-cast ice cream container, balanced together.

Following pages: Whakaahua 43. *You Keep it Next to Your Kai?!*, installation detail, 2025.







Whakaahua 44. *You Keep it Next to Your Kai?!*, detail of cast family tree, 2025. Supporting shelf as part of the installation, which held the above work, small pieces of plaster cast ice-cream container, a piece of house cladding and Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management.



Whakaahua 45. *You Keep it Next to Your Kai?!*, detail of supporting shelf with Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management (Artists' copy), 2025.



Tuitui

I am 8 years old.

My mother tells me that when she became pregnant with me, her father said to her, “You’ve made your bed, now you can lie in it.”

He means, she’s on her own.

And she was, on her own.

³⁷ A bold and committed person is compared to the maire, a hardwood.

Support

E, ko te matakahi maire. (like a wedge of maire)³⁷

The umbilical cord connects the placenta to the foetus: attached to the womb lining, the placenta filters and diverts the mother’s nutrients through this cord to the baby. When cut, this umbilical conduit is severed, and after delivery of the placenta, an enormous wound remains on the uterus of the mother. Artist Celine Condorelli writes on the temporary nature of support:

The irresolvable paradox of support is that it relies on appearing temporary in order to sustain and perpetuate the inherent, naive hope or belief that what is being supported will eventually be able to support itself; support is geared towards the independence of the object of concern and is a process towards its own obsolescence and disappearance.³⁸

This ‘irresolvable paradox’ highlights one of the functions of Mother Practice: that each stage and each age move the mother practitioner and her children incrementally closer to the obsolescence of their fundamental relationship of supporter and supported.

As time passes, their support structures must adapt and evolve. Put simply, what is essential in babyhood will differ from the needs of teenagehood. It is these evolving support structures – allowing the

³⁸ Céline Condorelli et al., eds., *Support Structures*, Second printing (Sternberg Press, 2014), 21.

Mother Practitioner to hold their child – which have held my interest. Condorelli describes support structures as “what bears, sustains, props, and holds up.” Through my practice, an exploration of who and what do this bearing, sustaining, propping, and holding up, is of vital importance.

My third installation, *Points of Tension* (2025), explores support structures and the tension points they create. Central elements are a sole-standing 2.4m wall and an industrial sash clamp. The wall, a sheet of painted ply, fixed to a support structure of framing timber. This resulting wall rests on short, angled struts at its base, while lightweight steel cables extend from each upper side, backwards, to attach to a temporary wheeled studio wall.

This assortment of supports and fixtures is counterbalanced by the sash clamp, projecting through a hole in the wall, cut to the exact shape of the clamp’s “T” profile, extending the structure’s centre of gravity into the forward space. The clamp, once buried in long lawn and missing a jaw and screwing mechanism, connects the remaining elements of aluminium-bronze, wood, pounamu, silver, wool, and ceramic. The singular remaining jaw of the clamp device is replicated in aluminium-bronze, so that now, at the farthest end, the clamps – the original and its mirror – hold two pieces of pounamu (once as a whole, shaped for teething babies), within its jaws.

The broken pounamu itself holds an amorphous slip of silver shaped to the break’s space like a filling. This sequence of

pounamu/silver/pounamu is suspended in space by two maire wood wedges, wedging each jaw in place; holding the pounamu and silver in a fragile tension – too little and they fall, too much and they burst out.

Along the length of this sash clamp, a series of holes mark points at which the clamp, in full function, might adjust to. Now, these holes hold multiple strands of thin red wool, creating swooping connections to a textile knit on the wall beyond and a ceramic kete on the floor opposite. The 100cm-square textile is an industrial machine-knit merino, based on a pattern from a 1970’s Māori designs pattern book³⁹. The knit is pinned to the wall, with sewing pins at each point where the pattern begins (or ends). These woollen threads, curled on the concrete floor, come to rest at and around the delicate form of a slip-cast ceramic. The ceramic holds the form of an empty, woven kete. Lying on the floor, surrounded by shards of its own structure, the kete threatens its final collapse at any moment as it sits, the most vulnerable element, extending into the viewer’s walking space.

The final elements are two wildly enlarged ceramic-printed pito. The pito, threaded with the same wool as the knit, lie as anchors, their individual threads looped through a hole at the end of the clamp and tied to one another; both pito in their own push-and-pull relationship.

Each element in this installation reflects a transitory verb of bearing, sustaining, propping, or holding. Some elements, in physical

³⁹ Maori Design Knitwear from New Zealand Woman Magazine, 1975. Pattern: Whakakanae, pg. 24.

relationship to others: a wall that holds a sash clamp, the struts that prop the wall up, the tensioning cables that bear the weight of the wall, or the wedges that sustain the tension of the pounamu. Some, in the inherent nature of the object.

Inasmuch as these elements reflect functions of support, they also embody an *inability* to bear, sustain, prop or hold: a broken pounamu whose function as a teething necklace is no longer viable; a sash clamp no longer fit for purpose; a knit, whose pattern is unable to continue weaving, interrupted at some point in time; a ceramic kete, the fibres that once supported its structure, burnt out in the kiln.

If I consider my Mother Practice in relation to *Points of Tension*, I am, in turn and all at once, the central wall, the supporting wall, the sash clamp, the jaws, the knit, the kete, the wedges, the silver spacer, the wool. I am not the pounamu or pito: the entire structure is set up for them. They are both precious stones that need to be held and are the grounding for the whole structure. This support system might be about me, but it is for them.

Ceramic Printing

As I was sitting watching and witnessing my ceramic umbilical cord print ever upwards, on a particularly long print, Matt came and asked me if I'd like him to 'babysit' for a while. "Oh yes, please", I said, realising that I needed a break.^{40 41}

I watched intently as these ceramic prints came to life. I don't always need to, but as they have been growing upward, especially in the early iterations, they have needed heat-gunning to stabilise them before they collapse. So, I have taken to sitting and watching them. Sometimes intently, sometimes distractedly, sometimes bored, sometimes burdened with what feel like profound insights.

This babysitting has been a fecund process in general. I sit quietly and watch each layer print by the machine, feeling as if I am in conversation with it. I feel that my presence is important, a valuable contribution to the success of its creation. Whether or not that is always true is by the by.

This slightly meditative witnessing has allowed me to consider the different structures inside and outside of the object. And make choices and decisions that have arisen from that witnessing. It has also allowed me to reflect on my own practice.

As I watch these works come to fruition, I consider the distinct parts of the process: the physical (readying the clay by hand), the

mechanical (the actual arm of the machine), the digital (the way one has to communicate with the machine), and the layering of each of these processes.



Whakaahua 39. Babysitting. Sep. 2025.

⁴⁰ Diary notes, Sep. 2025.

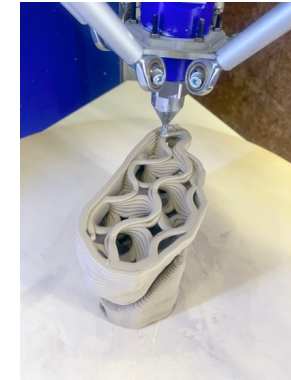
⁴¹ Matt is the Digital Lab Technician.

The nature of this ceramic printing process is inherently tied to my interest in support structures. Because my pito are not structurally self-supporting, recreating their misshapen and awkward shapes required significant experimentation with the objects' internal and external support structures, the speed and flow of the clay and the communication between the digital source and the mechanical arm.

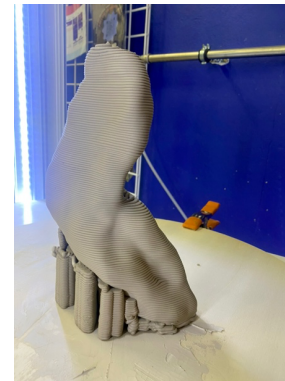
Finally, I wonder about the *intensity* of my noticing in this process, and it occurs to me that perhaps this is unusual. It also occurs to me that this is how I live my life and, crucially, how I mother. I scan my daughters constantly. Looking for clues and signs for things that need support or attention. I question whether this intensity is only appropriate in Art Practice, not in Mother Practice.



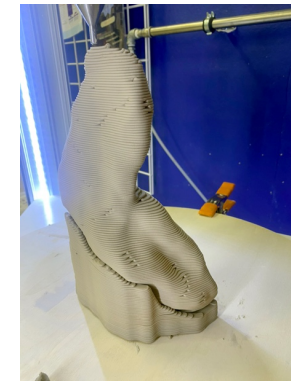
Whakaahua 46. Pito 1, without internal supports, with Matt-made⁴² external support.



Whakaahua 47. Pito 2, with automated internal support, with Matt-made external support.



Whakaahua 48. Pito1 with automated external support.



Whakaahua 49. Pito 1 with Matt-made external support.

⁴² 'Matt-made' refers to the difference between the structures Matt designed himself and the supports that were automatically generated within the ceramic printing software.



Whakaahua 50. Pito with different support structures: internal & external, Oct. 2025.

Installation 3.

POINTS OF TENSION

Gathered: Sash Clamp (found abandoned, in disrepair, in the long grass of our neighbours' front yard), Pearl head sewing pins.

Gifted: Pattern book, provided a pattern called Whakakanae, for the knit; pounamu pieces (once whole as a teething necklace, remnants of which were found in the long grass of our backyard); use of my daughters' pito, by my daughters.

Inherited: n/a

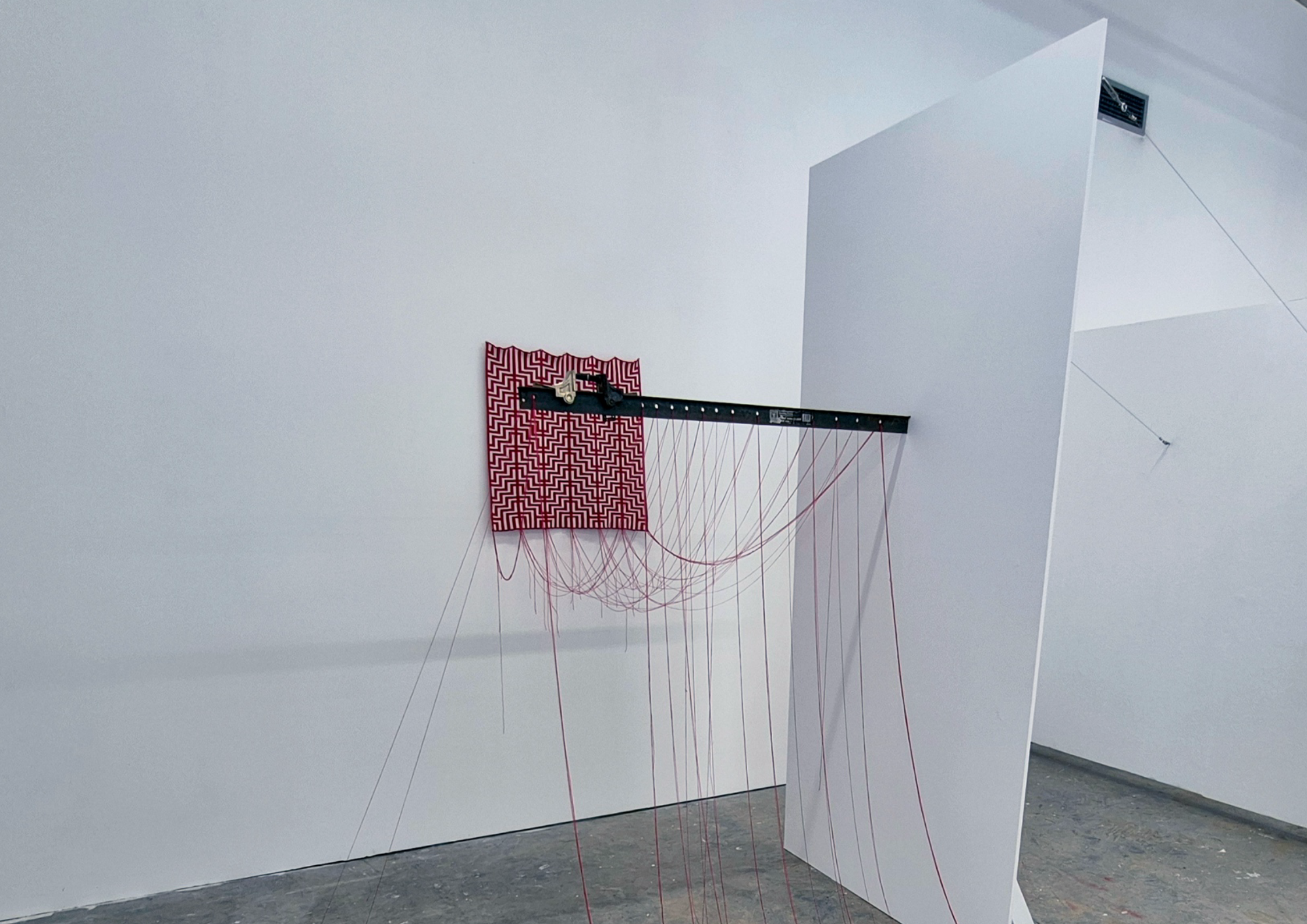
Made: Harakeke kete (from a 2001 flax-weaving course).

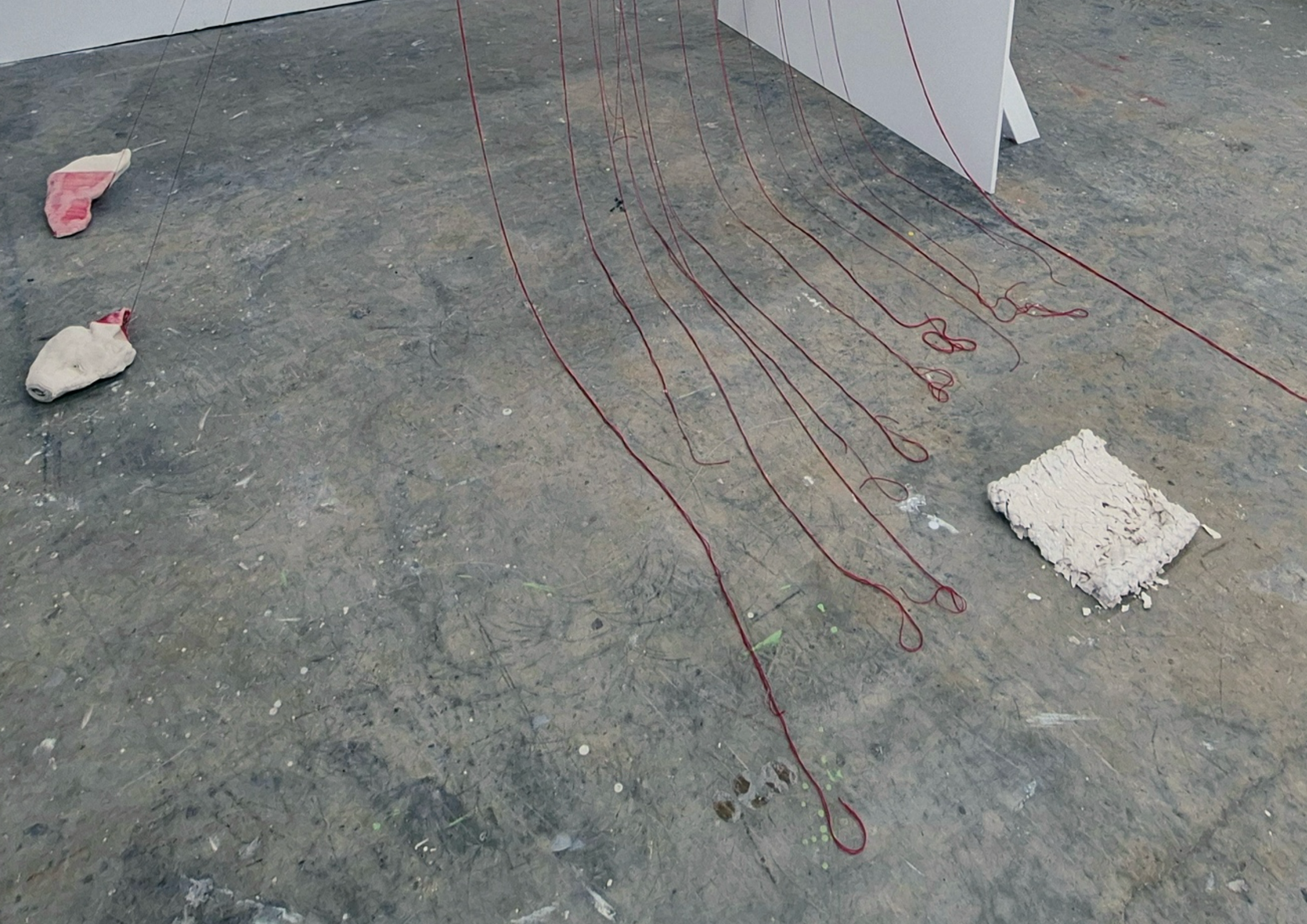
Made-for-this-Moment: Slip-cast of the harakeke kete; lost wax cast for sterling silver spacer between the broken pounamu pieces; replacement jaw cast in aluminium-bronze; industrial machine-knitted fabric; ceramic 3D printed pito; plywood wall & support tensions; 3x maire wood wedges.

Supported by: Damen, Matt, Harriet, Angus, Glen, Finn, E.T., Sav, Erika, Mon, Emily.



Whakaahua 52. *Points of Tension*, (detail), 2025. Replacement jaw made by 3D scanning the original, digitally recreating it, 3D printing, then bronze-casting a 3D print.



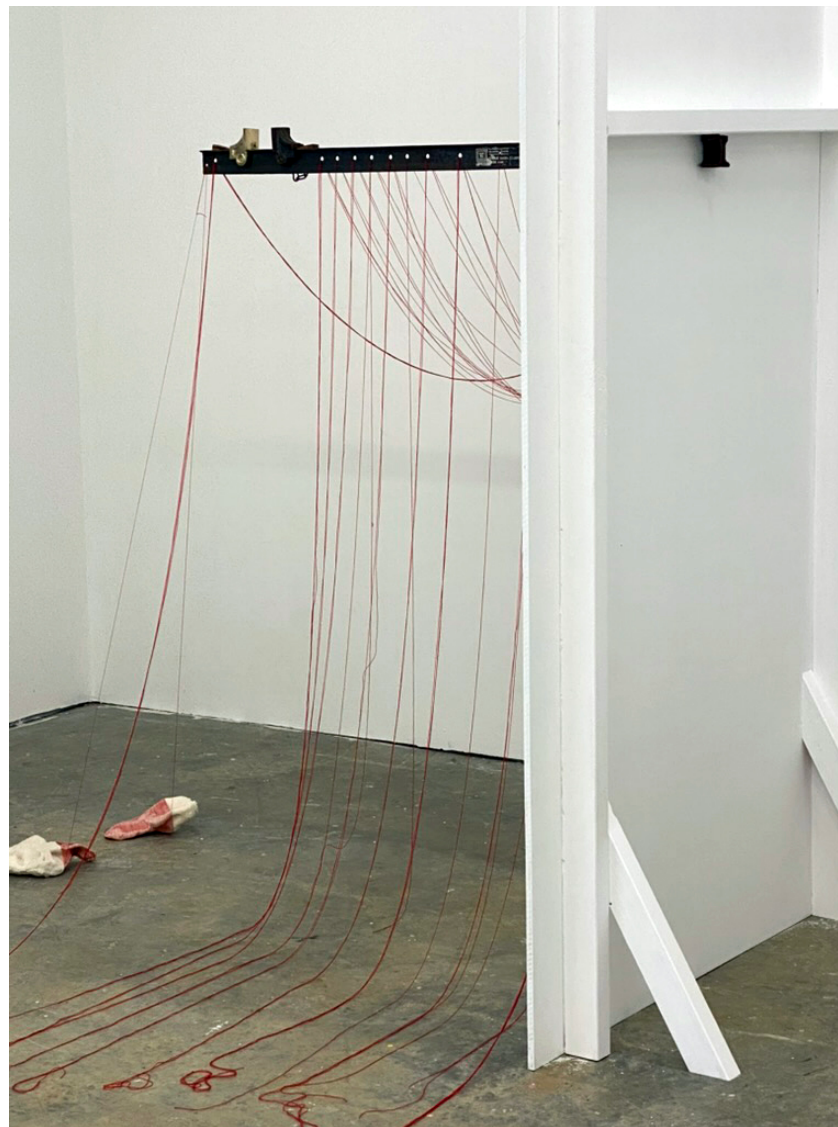




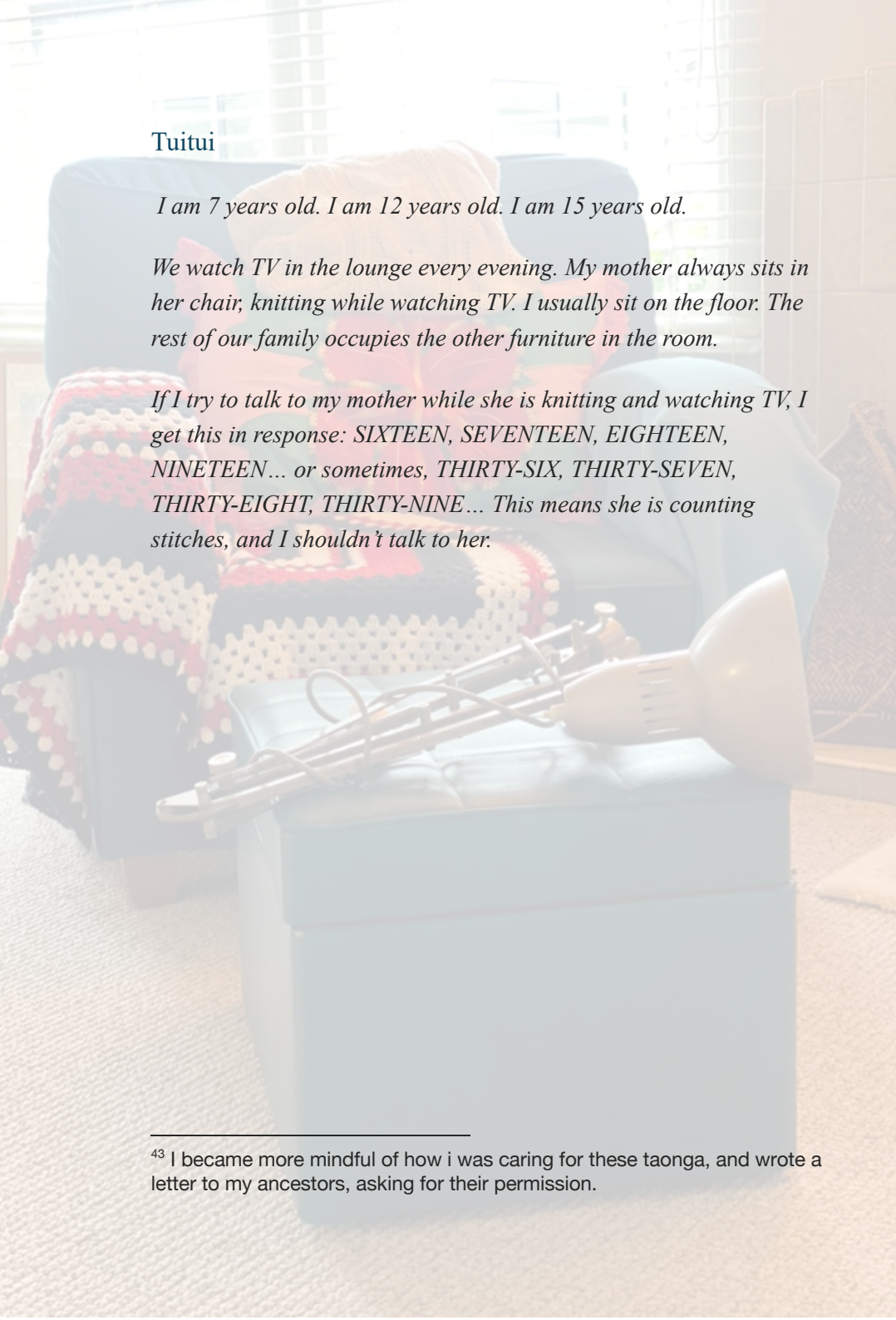
Whakaahua 53. *Points of Tension*, (detail), 2025. Slipcast kete, glazed.



Whakaahua 54. *Points of Tension*, (detail), 2025. End of sash clamp, maire wood wedge.



Whakaahua 55. *Points of Tension*, (detail), 2025. Back view of support wall with sash clamp, pounamu not yet in place.



Tuitui

I am 7 years old. I am 12 years old. I am 15 years old.

We watch TV in the lounge every evening. My mother always sits in her chair, knitting while watching TV. I usually sit on the floor. The rest of our family occupies the other furniture in the room.

If I try to talk to my mother while she is knitting and watching TV, I get this in response: SIXTEEN, SEVENTEEN, EIGHTEEN, NINETEEN... or sometimes, THIRTY-SIX, THIRTY-SEVEN, THIRTY-EIGHT, THIRTY-NINE... This means she is counting stitches, and I shouldn't talk to her.

⁴³ I became more mindful of how I was caring for these taonga, and wrote a letter to my ancestors, asking for their permission.

Permissions: Personal and Political

I had been scanning my pito, translating them into plastic, wax, silver, and felt. There were digital variations on shared lab computers, and physical versions in all sizes lying around my studio. As a ceramic pito was being printed, a passerby asked if they could take a photograph of it. In that moment, I realised I hadn't yet given enough thought to permissions.⁴³

In *Points of Tension*, using an industrial knitting machine, I knitted a textile from a Māori pattern in a *gifted* 1975 knitting supplement, *Maori Design Knitwear*. What did it mean to use this conduit form of connection? I had no reservations in using this pattern for personal use, but in an art context, it gave me pause.

In the book *The Loving Stitch: a history of knitting and spinning* in New Zealand, author Heather Nicholson includes this 1975 supplement and describes its creation as being commissioned by the magazine, *Woman: New Zealand Woman and Stitch*, to design a "monthly series of garments featuring Maori designs". Describing the project, Tania Webb, in her thesis, *Unravelling Yarns: How might knitting narratives inform a critical pedagogical practice?* points to the lack of documented Māori input in this series, and the cultural appropriation it implies.

The question I ask of myself is, if I am using these designs in my Art Practice today to speak about a dis/re-connection, would this then be another act of appropriation, given I don't have good knowledge

of their origins or inherent meanings? Or is this tentative outreach a valid path of reclaiming within a knitting methodology of adapting patterns, a deeply woven, inherited practice for me?

Artist and carver, Ngaroma Riley's 2025 work, *Tihei... Mauri Ora* was part of a group show at Artspace Aotearoa, whose theme drew on the Greek myth of Echo and Narcissus, whereupon Echo, cursed to lose her speech, is doomed to only repeat the last few words spoken to her. According to the exhibition catalogue, the artists in this show were invited to "resist Echo's curse of repetition by forging new narratives, developing vocabularies that speak to their own experience of the world."⁴⁴ Riley's work is described as "playfully draw[ing] together a range of creation stories pertaining to Māori cosmology, popular culture, and autobiography."⁴⁵

This installation features a tekoteko, a carved human figure, holding a hand drill emitting a light to represent the transferral of mauri, or life force, into a smaller carved figure. Both figures have paua embedded in their forehead, chest, and stomach to represent the manawa ora, pūmanawa, and whatumanawa – the physical heart, emotional heart, and the spiritual heart.⁴⁶

My research perspective informs my reading of *Tihei... Mauri Ora!*, meaning I read the figures as Mother and child. The child is placed on the surgical table, but a life force doesn't transfer instantly, naturally. The mother decides when to transfer, and she has decided it's time.

Riley says that "at its core, it's a whakapapa story", that this work is a "self-portrait of the artist's journey to whakairo, through the navigation of customary and contemporary knowledge systems."⁴⁷ A story of her coming into being as a carver. So perhaps another reading could be that it is she who is the figure on the table, receiving wisdom through the drill/light and being brought to life, to her calling, and in doing so, receiving the transfer of knowledge and permission. The mother of all permissions.

If I position myself and my research within this invitation to resist "Echo's curse of repetition by forging new narratives", then from this space I can create a new narrative for my children: a narrative of connection and permission, and, in doing so, of becoming a Māori mother.

⁴⁴ Ruth Buchanan, "Echo: Erika Holm, Ngaroma Riley, Tarika Sabherwal," Artspace Aotearoa, December 18, 2025.

⁴⁵ Buchanan, "Echo," 2.

⁴⁶ Buchanan, "Echo," 3.

⁴⁷ Buchanan, "Echo," 2.



Whakaahua 56. *Maori Design Knitwear*, pattern book, 1975. *Gifted* pattern book, sitting on a made-for-this-moment Industrial-machine knitted sample of the Whakakanae pattern, seen in the cover image. 2025.



Whakaahua 57. Ngaroma Riley, *Tihei... Mauri Ora!*, 2025. Elm, macrocarpa, mother of pearl, paua, hand-drill, acrylic rod, LED electrical components, 1600 x 1200 x 970 mm, Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland. Photograph by Amy Joe.



Tuitui

I am 46 years old.

My father-in-law is teaching me how to dig a hole for a foundation pole. He can no longer dig holes, but he tells me how and supervises.

I begin digging down.

He tells me, "Pour a bit of water into the hole, not too much. Good. Now mash up the dirt in the bottom of the hole and scrape the sides down. Now dig that out."

The bottom of the hole comes away easily.

I keep at this method. Watering, scraping, mashing, removing. Soon my hole is deep.

I watch as my husband and his father set the pole in the hole I have dug, level it, mix the concrete, pour it, and check the level again. Working until it is right.

I am transfixed.

When the hole and the pole have become a foundation, it unlocks a deep shift within me.

Repair

Te Papa Tongarewa, Museum of New Zealand, through its dedicated outreach team, National Services Te Paerangi, hui at various marae to share knowledge and support whānau in caring for their taonga. My daughters and I were invited to attend.⁴⁸ We were fortunate to listen to the wisdom of fibre, photo, painting, and book conservators as they discussed conservation specific to taonga Māori.

After the kōrero, whānau shared their personal taonga: photographs of ancestors, pounamu, and kākahu were among the collections. The conservators taught them, using archival materials, how to protect them. We were all enlisted to help, learning how to clean, wrap, stuff, and make protective enclosures by cutting and shaping each enclosure, customised specifically for each taonga.

As the weekend progressed, it felt like we were all pulling tight the threads of our whakapapa to hold these precious objects and honour their personal connections. I watched as each person's mana seemed to lift when they had completed their protective enclosures. My sense was they felt they were now properly honouring their ancestors' stories, and that gave them a great sense of peace.

One of the whānau members had an army uniform from her ancestor. While it had been in her whānau's care, a brother had at some point taken to it with scissors for light remodelling in a fashion moment. She was embarrassed and frustrated by what she

⁴⁸ My husband is a Māori preventive conservator of books and paper.

described as desecration. But the conservator assured her that this was okay, it's part of the garment's whakapapa now.

Conservators ask themselves: how much of this can I repair to maintain its function, and can my repair be an unobtrusive testament to the object's history and time? Where is the balance? I ask myself similar questions: How much will I repair in my whakapapa? Will it be so that the scars are not visible to my children? How much do I preserve for them, so they may understand the fullness of what existed in the making of their foundations?

Writing on the pito as a scar, Hereaka says:

Or does the shape remind you of your pito, your first scar after birth, a reminder of the cord that once supported you? They say that if you were wounded in combat, let it be here so everyone would know you were brave and faced your battle. Isn't your pito then, a sign that you fought to be here?⁴⁹

Thus I ask: are these explorations of pito my own workings with scars that show I fought to be here?

⁴⁹ Hereaka, *You Are Here*, 35.

Following page: Whakaahua 58. *Raku-fired Pito*. 2025. Ceramic printed pito with black clay and raku glaze. As part of my ceramics learning, I initiated a raku firing at my daughter's school with their outdoor classroom teacher to learn the process. I have since been in a support role for other raku firings at the school.



3.

WAIRUA AS METHODOLOGY: Mother Practice and Art Practice

Tuitui

I am 49 years old.

I am with my mother-in-law, my husband and our two daughters. We are standing in a field with a man who is called to retrieve swamp kauri when needed. His field is a canvas for a beautiful grid of timber slabs, stacked with hand-cut spacers.

We are there for me to choose some kauri for my next installation project. My mother-in-law introduced us. When he heard I am an artist, he told her, "She needs to come and choose for herself."

So, on this Saturday morning, here we are, in his field.

He shares that when he cuts the kauri, he often sees a figure standing next to the tree, watching him. "Only for the kauri trees, though, not the other natives." My mother-in-law asks if it is a good feeling. Sometimes, he says, not always. He is now selective about where he'll retrieve from.

I always work on the presumption that I will know what I need when I see it. But in this field of beautifully stacked timber, I do not know. I try to describe what I need, but I also do not know how. We all walk and talk

and admire the wood and the stories it tells, as I try to summon decisiveness.

Finally, I say, "I want something this size," and indicate a shape by cupping my two hands together. "And this tall", I indicate my rough height. But I could also use some of this height, and I indicate my knees. We all laugh at my ludicrous measuring system.

"That's roughly what I want, but I'll take whatever you can get out of a piece," I say for further clarification.

He sizes me up, not unkindly, and says "Gotcha. I'll let you know what I can get out, probably after Thursday."

Then we leave.

I say to my husband, I thought I would know, but I didn't. I don't know enough about wood to know.

No, he says, you needed to work in conversation.

Yes, when I gave him rough estimates, I was trying to say, "I would like to work in the space between what you know and what I know."

My husband says somewhat drily, "I think if he can see the kaitiaki of the kauri, he'll be able to see the direction of your wairua." We laugh.

Two hours later, I get a message. He got 4 pieces from a slab, measuring 2.2 metres x 100mm x 150mm.

I am beyond thrilled.

If my taha Māori is characterised by fracture and disconnection, then the associated longing and shame bring with them a sense of push toward and pull away. In the centre of this push and pull is my Mother Practice and Art Practice, which live in the currents of wairua. Wairua is how I mother, and how I make art.⁵⁰ My use of the word wairua helps me connect and ground my practice in te ao Māori. In the *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, Manulani Alulimeyer discusses an indigenous epistemology, claiming “Knowledge that endures is spirit driven. It is a life force connected to all other life forces.”⁵¹

My experiences, such as the two outlined below, have helped me to trust in those connections:

I was 7 months pregnant with my second daughter, standing on our back deck, with two Croatian relatives of my husband’s.

They had never been to Aotearoa before, but this Croatian kuia’s father had lived here as a young man. He had fallen in love with the sound of the Tūi, and when he returned to Croatia, he named his daughter Tui. This kuia on our deck was Tui’s younger sister, and as we were standing on our deck, a large Tūi flew in, sat low on a branch next to us and sang and sang and sang. The kuia was very emotional at this moment of understanding and connection with her father and sister.

The pēpi in my puku kicked and kicked and kicked, hard. I heard a voice in my mind say, “Tui is my name.” It was as clear as the kick from

the inside out. A knowing filled my body, and we gave her the name she asked for.

And:

At a wānanga of my husband’s whanau, their kaumatua introduced us to the ancestors represented in the carvings. He introduced us to Māhanga, who had subsumed his twin brother in utero. His mother named him Māhanga to remind others that he was a twin.

“How did they know that happened?” a cousin asked.

“Through wairua”, their kaumatua replied. “Despite the lack of technology in the 1600’s, our tupuna knew”, elaborating that there would have been a knowing by the mother that this is what happened.⁵²

“Whakairia ki Rua: The Many Dimensions of Wairua”, in the *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, discusses a search for wairua through interviews with Māori participants to gain a deeper understanding of this concept and how we might better consider well-being through wairua. This text has been useful to my research, as it considers the importance of lived experience and highlights the significance of wairua as a cultural foundation in contemporary daily life.

In my daily life, wairua is for me, a conversation. A conversation I am having within myself, in concert with ancestors, with the wairua of another person, with objects in time and across time. In my Art

⁵⁰ I am using a Māori term to express my own relationship to spirit: to a wisdom greater than my intellect, bigger than my embodied knowledge, and to a personal whakapapa of ancestors and mokopuna within which I sit. I do not use the term wairua with knowledge of wider culturally appropriate tikanga.

⁵¹ Norman K. Denzin et al., eds., *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (Sage, 2008), 257.

⁵² Personal Experience with Kaumatua Milton Ngaruhe of Te Papa o Rotu Marae, April 2025.

Practice, wairua is what music producer Rick Rubin, in his book *The Creative Act*, might describe as “an inexhaustible wisdom surrounding us” he suggests that “we either sense it, remember it, or tune into it.”⁵³ And that in doing so, “precious wisps arise from the unconscious like vapour and condense to form a thought, an idea.”⁵⁴

This work of being *in conversation* involves asking questions of the object or space I am working with and answering the questions asked of me. David Bayles and Ted Orland, authors of *Art & Fear*, suggest you “ask your work what it needs, not what you need. Then set aside your fears and listen, the way a good parent listens to a child.”⁵⁵ This listening and responding provide me with a robust studio practice, allowing my work to evolve beyond what I might have planned or thought possible. At each point in my Art Practice, I can see an unbroken chain of linking and connecting, guided by *what arises*, and using that as the signpost for my next steps.

Listening to wairua is not a passive experience; it is a full-bodied, activated, reflexive relationship that requires listening with full senses. The pito is the part of the umbilical cord/iho attached to the baby, and the rauru is the part that connects to the whenua to receive nourishment. Rauru is also used to describe the activated points of a person where they are most open to receive information through wairua from te taiao and tupuna.⁵⁶ Aluli Meyer says that

“[spirit] allows knowing to be an act of consciousness that reaches beyond the mundane into connection and alignment with an essence that finds its renewal throughout the generations.”⁵⁷ *Pito to Pou* could be characterised by my desire to secure renewal for future generations.

Kaupapa One for my research has been to “work at the edges of my knowledge and experience”. An unexpected result of this methodology has been the relationships formed to work at those edges. In an outward reach for learning, I have become more supported in my practice, as I drew more people into conversations and collaborations, my practice and its support grew exponentially.

I used this method to mirror Mother Practice, and what was reflected back was that support is the crucial element for sustaining both practices. Adrienne Rich observes, “Children grow up, not in a smooth ascending curve, but jaggedly, their needs as inconstant as weather.”⁵⁸ Echoing this, the support required in Mother Practice and Art Practice could be described as idiosyncratic or idiomatic.

Being in a constant state of leaning into new processes was at times mentally and emotionally taxing, but it meant I learnt and developed new skills. As I learned, I felt more comfortable making decisions that incorporated what I was learning, and I felt braver in my thinking. To keep myself in a state of learning, required continuous levelling up and incorporating new processes until I

⁵³ Rick Rubin and Neil Strauss, *The Creative Act: A Way of Being* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2023), 14.

⁵⁴ Rubin and Strauss, 14.

⁵⁵ David Bayles and Ted Orland, *Art & Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking* (New York: Image Continuum Press, 2010), 36.

⁵⁶ Amy Joe, discussion with Karl Johnstone, Director of Haumi, April 8, 2026.

⁵⁷ Denzin et al., *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, 258.

⁵⁸ Rich et al., *Of Woman Born*, 38.

discovered that I was working in an entirely new way. Allowing myself to be vulnerable to judgment (imagined or real) and embarrassment (from my lack of knowledge) made curiosity the dominant force guiding me. This curiosity led to questions, allowing the technicians to offer their thoughts and insights, giving me more information to work with and a broader range of knowledge to draw from.

In each process, I am almost always a novice, meaning I have had no scale to judge its difficulty. Wairua would lead me to an idea, and I would follow. Without a sense of the idea's technical pitfalls, I only began to understand its difficulties during the process; I understood it properly only after the entire process was complete. Mould-making the shape of an ice-cream container and slip-casting an entire pot are two examples of understanding the process and its difficulties only at the conclusion.

Between my methodology of allowing wairua to lead and my kaupapa of exploring the edges of my knowledge, my practice has at times felt heart-stoppingly tenuous, living in the ephemeral space of relationship and experimentation. I had to develop an artistic decision-making process that didn't rely solely on what I could manage with just my hands. I needed to rely on my innate ability to make the best decisions, even when I didn't understand the whole process or the technology, and wouldn't be the one executing it.

In Emma Cocker's conference paper, *Kairos Time: The Performativity of Timing and Timeliness... or; Between Biding One's Time and Knowing When to Act*, she writes:

An experimental practice locates itself on the trembling edge as time unfolds, uncertain. No longer scripted in advance, here, every next action has to be called or conjured, summoned into play. The temptation might be to fall back onto a repertoire of familiar forms and practiced rhythms. The body wavers at the cusp of action, stalls from making too swift a move. Instead, remains expectant, anticipatory. Hopeful. Intrepid. Not without some unease. For, it takes some nerve to lean into the unknown, to be open or vulnerable to what lies therein.⁵⁹

The ancient Greek term, Kairos: "a fleeting opportunity that needs to be grasped before it passes"⁶⁰, describes the state of mind I was aspiring to be in; knowing when to act, when to wait, when to push, and when to pull. Because many of my ideas required coordination across processes in different labs, I had to keep track of the order of events, which processes required my time, and which required others. As an example of this multi-layered process, a ceramic pot to nestle within a timber ice-cream-shaped block required the work and coordination of three technical labs, four technicians, and me.

⁵⁹ Emma Cocker, "Kairos Time: The Performativity of Timing and Timeliness ... or; Between Biding One's Time and Knowing When to Act," *Reader in Fine Art* (United Kingdom), 2015, 8.

⁶⁰ Cocker, "Kairos Time: The Performativity of Timing and Timeliness ... or; Between Biding One's Time and Knowing When to Act," 1.

Cocker writes, “the art of ‘knowing how’ and ‘knowing when’ central to Kairos, ‘is difficult to gauge, let alone teach, and it must be achieved through practice.’”⁶¹ I would say that working with wairua requires the same amount of practice. A lifetime of learning how to decipher information and a trust in your ability to perceive it.



Whakaahua 59, 60. Ceramic printed Pito 1 and 2 in CNC timber test ice-cream block, studio shot, work in progress, pito & timber, 2026.

⁶¹ D. Hawhee, *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece* (University of Texas Press, 2004), 70, quoted in Emma Cocker, *Kairos Time* (United Kingdom), 10.

Following page: Whakaahua 61. *Maori Knit Designs*, from this *gifted* item, I previously used a pattern: Whakakanae. On closer inspection, I discovered a pattern called Nuhaka, the birthplace of my father and the home of his Marae. I have used Nuhaka and a herringbone pattern in a blanket shown here and in whakaahua 63 .



NUHAKA

MATERIALS:

Bust size 34 36 ins.
Wool required
Fontana Superquick
or Fontana Quicknit
or Fontana Caprice with Courtelle.

Main shade 14 15 ozs.
1st contrast 3 3 ozs.
2nd contrast 2 2 ozs.
1 pair each Nos 10 and 8
Fontana knitting needles.

MEASUREMENTS:

Length from shoulder 23 23 ins.
Sleeve seam 17 18 ins.

TENSION:

5½ sts to 1 inch.

ABBREVIATIONS:

K, knit; p, purl; sts, stitches;
rep, repeat; tog, together; ins,
inches; cont, continues(ing);
inc, increase; dec, decrease;
beg, beginning; alt, alternate;
foll, following; st, slip; rem,
remains(ing); past, pattern;
M, main shade; stst, stocking
stitch (right side k, wrong
side p).

NOTE: The body of the garment up to armholes is worked in one piece.

Using No 10 needles and M, cast on 211 sts and work in k 1, p 1 rib for 2 ins.

Change to No 8 needles and work 2 rows in stst. Cut M and join in 1st contrast. Now work in patt as shown on chart, starting from A and working to B, repeating these 30 sts to end, finishing row with C. Each square represents 1 st and 1 row. Read k rows from right to left and p rows from left to right. When the 30 rows of patt are worked, cut the con-

trasting shades and join in M. For size 34, dec 8 sts evenly across last row.

Cont on these 203 (211) sts until work measures 14½ ins, or length required from beginning, ending after a p row.

Shape Armholes:

K 46 (48) sts, cast off 9, k 93 (97), cast off 9, k 46 (48).

Work on last group of sts only. Keeping front edge straight, dec 1 st at armhole edge on every alt row until 38 (40) sts rem. Cont without shaping until armhole measures 5½ (5½) ins on the straight, ending at neck edge.

Shape Neck:
Cast off 8 sts, work to end. Dec 1 st at neck edge on every alt row 5 times. 25 (27) sts rem. When armhole measures 7½ (8) ins, shape shoulder. Cast off 8 (9) sts at armhole edge on next 2 alt rows, then cast off rem sts.

THE BACK:
Return to 93 (97) sts and dec 1 st each end of every alt row until 77 (81) sts rem. Work straight until armholes measure 7½ (8) ins. Cast off 8 (9) sts at beg of next 4 rows, then 9 (9) sts at beg of next 2 rows. Cast off rem 27 (27) sts.

Return to left front and work to correspond with right front.

SLEEVES:
Cast on 46 sts and work in k 1, p 1 rib for 2½ ins.

Change to No 8 needles and work 2 rows in stst, inc 3 (7) sts in first row. Join on 1st contrast and work from chart, increasing 1 st at both ends of the 4th and every foll 6th row as shown. When the 30 rows

of chart have been completed, cont in M, still inc every 6th row until there are 75 (79) sts on the needle.

Work straight until sleeve measures 17 (18) ins, or length required, ending after a p row.

Shape Top:

Cast off 5 sts at beg of next 2 rows, then dec 1 st at both ends of every alt row 12 times, then cast off 3 sts at beg of next 6 rows. Cast off rem 23 (27) sts.

NECK BAND:
Sew shoulder seams. Using No 10 needles and with rsf, pick up and k 8 sts from centre front, 18 sts up side of neck, 27 sts across back, 18 sts down side of neck and 8 sts from centre front. Work in k 1, p 1 rib for 1½ ins. Cast off.

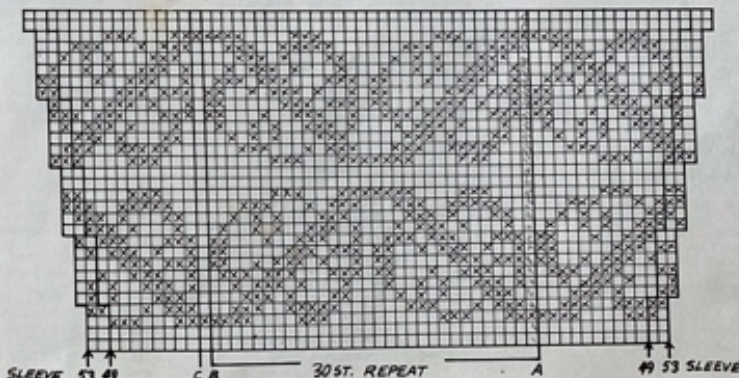
Left Front Band:
Using No 10 needles, cast on 10 sts and work in k 1, p 1 rib for length required. Cast off.

Right Front Band:
Cast on 10 sts and work as left front, but placing 9 buttonholes evenly spaced; the first to be 1 inch above casting on, and the last one 1 inch above neckline.

To work buttonhole, k 4, cast off 3, k 3. On the foll row, cast on 3 sts over the 3 cast off sts.

TO MAKE UP:
Sew sleeves neatly into armholes. Sew sleeve seams. Neatly stitch front bands to body of garment. Lightly steam press. Sew on buttons to correspond with buttonholes. **END**

□ = 2nd Contrast
■ = 1st Contrast



Whakamutunga

I have been taught to witness others and their stories. I hope I have also learned to share mine within the story of my research: how I arrived with my kete of experiences and curiosities, and how, by steadily following every thread that appeared before me, I travelled back to my beginning.

Following these threads, I traversed historical and contemporary Art Practices relating to Mother as subject and as Artist. In wanting to understand how Mother could be Artist and Artist, Mother, I took a stroll down the biographical paths of mother artists such as Alice Neel and Louise Bourgeois. I discovered many contemporary Art Practices by artist-mothers that were witty, clever and thoughtful in concept and execution.

I extended my physical practice outwards from what my hands could hold, to include the knowledge and participation of others and what their hands could offer. I expanded my conceptual practice by allowing my starting point to move from *outwards*, *in* to create a new future starting point: *inwards*, *out*.

Kia whakatōmuri haere whakamua, is a Māori whakatauki meaning: I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on the past. At the conclusion of this phase of my research, I have discovered that

this whakatauki has unconsciously guided me to consider whakapapa and my place within it.

At the beginning of my research, I set off to “unweave the weaving I had made of motherhood”. Through that process of metaphorical unweaving, I discovered its whakapapa, its consequences, and its manifestations, and they all begin and end with my foundations and my internal and external support structures.

As I approach the concluding installations for this research project, I explore these ideas. I look back at my inheritance, reflect on how Mother Practice has shaped me, and consider the inheritance of my daughters.

Out of these explorations are works in progress entitled *You’ve Made Your Bed (now you can lie in it)* (2026), a studio photography series based on Hidden Mother⁶² imagery. In these, I sit under four blankets⁶³: two woollen, one candlewick, and one merino knit *made-for-this-moment* with a Nuhaka pattern. I am holding my raku-fired ceramic pito, my feet rest on small bronze pillars (all *made-for-this-moment*).

To shoot this work, I enlisted a photographer⁶⁴ who also had to place and arrange the blankets on me. Once all the blankets were laid on, the weight was almost unbearable; the force meant I was unable to lift my head. In that moment, I felt myself as my young mother and all of the weight that rested on her as she held me.

⁶² Early studio portraits of children, where mothers or studio assistants are draped with cloth or in some way camouflaged in order to hold the baby while keeping them as the solo subject.

⁶³ A wooden chair and two NZ-made plain and honeycomb woollen blankets all items from my childhood.

⁶⁴ Another AUT MVA student and photographer, Camden Jackson.

From under the pile of blankets, I contemplated that physical and emotional reality. Meanwhile, the photographer was very concerned about the weight on me and kept trying to find solutions or work faster to alleviate the pressure. He decided I needed a stand behind me to take the bulk of the weight.

As I sat under the blankets and felt the weight lift as a temporary support structure was erected behind me, I thought, "This is a beautiful metaphor for the support Mother Practice needs." A need is recognised, and a *made-for-this-moment* solution, designed to support the mother in holding the baby, is put in place until it is no longer needed.



Whakaahua 62. *You've Made Your Bed (now you can lie in it)*, work in progress. 2026. Me on a wooden chair, underneath four bed blankets; holding raku-fired-pito 1, with original wallpaper from my current home, Bronze pillars under heels, Exotic Monstera in a bucket from Op shop. A temporary support structure behind me is taking extra blanket weight.

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Appendix

Pito to Pou.

MVA graduating exhibition
Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery
AUT University
11–15 June 2026

My graduating exhibition, entitled *Pito to Pou*, incorporated three artworks installed across two spaces.

Window Box

You've Made Your Bed (now you can lie in it), 2026. Digital inkjet photographs, timber fence post, ceramic post, glass foundations.

Gallery One

Pillar to Pou, 2026. Swamp kauri posts, bronze bands & wedges, merino wool knit, four-ply muka cord, concrete foundations, ceramic printed pito, black maire wood, puriri wood.

First Wounds (yours, ours, mine), 2026. Rimu mirror box, plaster ice cream container, bronze wedges.



Whakaahua 63. *You've Made Your Bed (now you can lie in it)*, Installation view, 2026.

PILLAR TO POU

Gathered: Four-ply muka cord (made by a friend), Concrete foundations (from our current home), steel sewing pins, Swamp Kauri (bought from a licensed retriever).

Gifted: Black Maire wood, Puriri wood, Bronze sheet metal, Knit patterns: Nuhaka & Whakakanae, which form the two patterns in the blanket.

Inherited: Pounamu (from my grandfather).

Made: 3D-scanned, scaled, and ceramic-printed pito (of the original pito belonging to my two daughters).

Made-for-this-Moment: Merino wool industrial machine-made knits, Black Maire & Puriri ice cream container pito holders, Sand-cast bronze wedges, Swamp Kauri posts with bronze bands.

Supported by: Damen, Tricia, Jason, Glen, Angus, Matt, Harriet, Erika, Sav, Covery, Finn, Katie, Mon, Emily.



Whakaahua 64. *Pillar to Pou*, Installation Detail, Merino-knit blankets, whakakanae pattern, internal thread binding two panels together. 2026. Photo taken by Paul Chapman.

Following page: Whakaahua 65. *Pillar to Pou*, Installation Full View, 2026. Photo taken by Paul Chapman.





Whakaahua 67. *Pillar to Pou*, 2026. Detail, Ceramic printed pitō with merino wool sitting in Black Maire wood support. Photo taken by Paul Chapman.



Whakaahua 66. *Pillar to Pou*, 2026. Installation Detail, Ceramic printed pitō with merino wool sitting in Puriri wood support, concrete cast foundation with steel tensioning wire. Photo taken by Paul Chapman.

Pillar to Pou, a made-for-this-moment installation, is comprised of two swamp kauri posts cut from a single slab. I planed and sanded them back to their protected timber heart, allowing them to exist in the shape they were moving towards as they gradually responded to their new environment. Both posts can stand freely unsupported but are held in relation to each other by a muka cord, steel tensioning wire and uprooted concrete cast foundations.

One post is bound by three bronze bands that wrap around, pull, and dig into the edges of the kauri. The other has four sand-cast bronze wedges driven into the naturally occurring splits in the wood, gently widening them. One wedge positioned at the base of the post pushes it slightly off balance.

Between the posts, four industrial knit blankets are bound to a four-ply muka cord. The patterns of these knits describe degrees of whakapapa and inheritance, as they are pulled toward and away from each other. The patterns themselves are derived from a 1975 Māori knitting booklet; the central kōwhaiwhai is in a state of mending, held together with steel pins and pieces of thread, pulling the pattern into cohesion. This pattern, named “Nuhaka” in the booklet, is also the name of the rohe I whakapapa to. The other pattern, named “Whakakanae,” hosts the pito pathway.

On the floor, two ceramic-printed pito shapes wrapped in merino wool sit within CNC-cut wooden forms resembling an ice cream container. These two forms have carefully shaped interiors to exactly nestle the individual shape of the pito they hold. The wood each pito nestles within or grows out from corresponds to the species of tree under which we buried our daughters’ whenua. Black Maire for our older daughter, Puriri for our younger.



Whakaahua 68. *Pillar to Pou*, 2026. Installation Detail, Swamp Kauri post, sand-cast bronze wedge, Four-Ply Muka cord, merino thread, Steel wire, Merino Knit. Photo taken by Damen Joe.



Whakaahua 69. *Pillar to Pou*, 2026. Installation Detail, Concrete cast foundation, steel tensioning wire, Kauri post with bronze bands, merino knit, merino wool. Photo taken by Paul Chapman.



Whakaahua 70. *Pillar to Pou*, Installation Detail, Merino knit, merino wool and Pounamu. 2026. Photo taken by Paul Chapman.

FIRST WOUNDS (YOURS. OURS. MINE)

Gathered: Rimu framing & Mirror (both found amongst previous tenants' leftovers in the garage of our current home).

Made: Plaster-cast ice cream container.

Made-for-this-Moment: Bronze sand-cast wedges, making a box from the rimu and mirror.

Supported by: Damen, Harriet, E.T., Erika, Mon, Emily.



Whakaahua 71. *First Wounds (yours, ours, mine)*, 2026. Photo taken by Paul Chapman.

Following page: Whakaahua 72. *First Wounds (yours, ours, mine)*, 2026. Installation view with *Pillar to Pou* 2026 in the background. Photo taken by Monique Redmond.





Whakaahua 73. *First Wounds (yours, ours, mine)*, 2026. Detail of stacked sand-cast bronze wedges and rimu box. Photo taken by Damen Joe.

YOU'VE MADE YOUR BED (NOW YOU CAN LIE IN IT)

Gathered: Candlewick bedspread, Monstera plant, Fence post & Wallpaper (found in our current home).

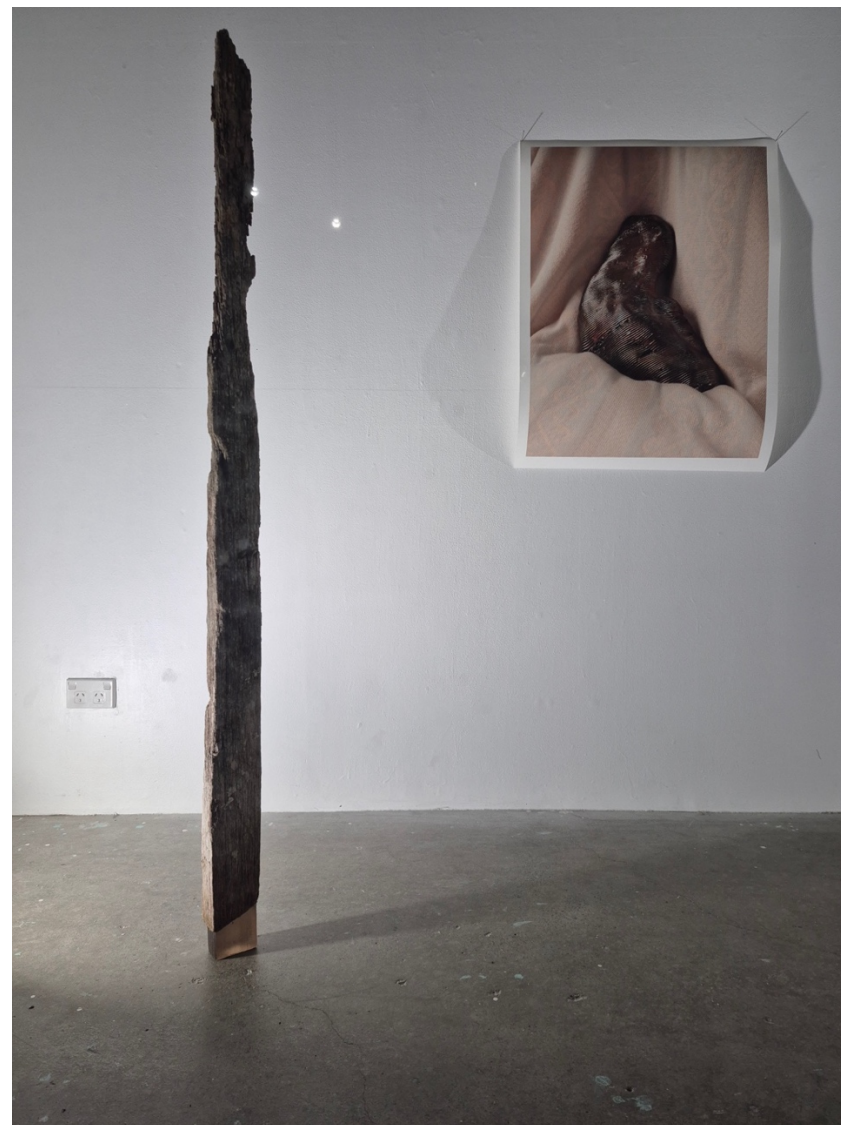
Gifted: Knit pattern: Nuhaka, which forms the pink & grey knit.

Inherited: NZ woollen blankets: blue with satin edge, yellow honeycomb with satin edge, wooden chair.

Made: Paint-work on the wooden chair.

Made-for-this-Moment: Pink & Grey industrial machine-made blanket, Bronze-cast pillars, Glass-cast foundations, Slip-cast ceramic post.

Supported by: Damen, Covery, Camden, Cornelius, Matt, Sav, Harriet, Angus, Mon, Emily.



Whakaahua 74. *You've Made Your Bed (now you can lie in it)*, 2026. Detail, timber fence post resting freely on bronze coloured glass-cast foundation, photograph of raku-fired pito resting on merino blanket. Photo taken by Damen Joe.

Following page: Whakaahua 75. *You've Made Your Bed (now you can lie in it)*, 2026. Full Installation View at night. Window Box. Photo taken by Paul Chapman.





Previous page: Whakaahua 77. *You've Made Your Bed (now you can lie in it)*, 2026.
Installed photographs in Window Box. Photo taken by Paul Chapman.



Whakaahua 76. *You've Made Your Bed (now you can lie in it)*, Detail of slip-cast ceramic post resting freely on glass-cast foundation, 2026.
Photo taken by Monique Redmond.

You've Made Your Bed (now you can lie in it) (2026) comprises four large-format photographs that show details of a studio photography installation in which I sit on a wooden chair, my feet resting on two made-for-this-moment bronze-cast pillars, with four blankets draped over me; two woollen from my childhood, one candlewick reminiscent of my childhood bedspread, and one made-for-this-moment pink & grey industrial machine made merino. Through the blankets, I hold, in turn, ceramic printed and raku-fired pito.

Marking the perimeter of the space, two boundary posts stand on either side – a gathered fence post, and its echo in the ceramic facsimile opposite. Each post balances freely on glass-cast foundations made to fill the space needed for these posts to stand.