

**Tauwehe; a photographic exploration of dislocation and displacement themes in Māori oral histories of te hononga (land kinship)**

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This thesis is submitted to the Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Art & Design 2011.

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**Attestation of Authorship**

I 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marsha Davis', written in a cursive style.**Marsha Davis****2011**

## Acknowledgements

*For My Mother, and her Mother, and her Mother...*

Whenever she sees the need, my Mother reminds me to use a certain approach when raising issues at hui (a meeting). *Marsha, when you stand up and speak, you say, I am only speaking for myself. You do this and no one will think that you are speaking for them and be offended.* Mum's way of opening a subject for discussion at hui is based on tikanga (Māori customary correct practice). My Mother was raised in the old ways by her Mother who was one of the last Ngāti Rāhiri to be raised in a pā (fortification) lifestyle in the ways of the old people, of Ngati Manu of Kāretu and Ngāti Rāhiri<sup>1</sup> of Waitangi had lived for centuries before her and, for whom hui (meetings) were a process of formal interaction based on courtesy and respect. My Mother is a fierce protector of her tupunas' (ancestors') whenua (land) at Te Tii Waitangi (Crying Waters), Aotearoa (New Zealand). For many years, kaitiaki (custodians) have fought to protect our cultural practice and whenua from the insidiousness of coloniality<sup>2</sup>. Their struggle brings no momentous glory, just the deep satisfaction of honouring their tupuna and a culture that was once autonomous.

My thanks to kaitiaki of Waitangi for remembering our tupuna while moving forward. With much gratitude, I acknowledge my sister Donna Baker for turning me toward Te Tii Waitangi when I was looking elsewhere, Natalie Robertson for uncovering stories that matter to Māori, which should matter to all, Fiona Amundsen for asking questions that unbalance me and my husband Duane, for always giving. Tēnā koe mo to ū kaha tonu.

**Whakapapa**

Taku ingoa ko Marsha Davis

Taku kainga kei Kororareka

Ko Waitangi te whenua

Ko Waitangi te awa

I pikipiki i whiti ki Tapeka Point i Kororareka

**Abstract**

**Tauwehe; a photographic exploration of dislocation and displacement themes in Māori oral histories of te hononga (land kinship)**

*Aue, Marsha, it's awful...look what they've done to the whenua, aue, aue.*

I heard inflections of despair, sadness and regret in my Mother's voice as she saw the new coastal residential development cutting into what was once our tupunas' whenua. Taking in its mutilated topography scraped of all vegetation and its 'Bare Land for Sale' sign, my Mother felt she and Māori culture were under assault.

The Tauwehe project originates with the cry of my Mother and is in response to it. Tauwehe considers the oral histories of Te Tii Waitangi kaitiaki and how the loss of whenua and dislocation and displacement from traditional cultural resources continue to affect cultural living practices. It explores the possibility that these instances of cultural dislocation and displacement may be rendered visually perceptible through abstracted photography to weave new stories of and for Te Tii Waitangi.

## Introduction

The thesis is comprised of practice-based work 80% with an accompanying exegesis 20%.

This exegesis discusses conceptual and contextual fields of study applicable to the landscape that informs my practice. Tauwehe, a Ngapuhi<sup>3</sup> word which means *boundary lines, whenua that's been separated for years, to step on to the whenua*, is an important intuitive concept which informs the project. Also discussed is creative visual practice undertaken along with outcomes generated. This exegesis concludes with an account of the graduate exhibition.



## *1:0 The intuitive construct of evoking*

### **1:1 Introduction**

The Tauwehe project seeks to explore and develop threads of tacit knowledge of dislocation and displacement common in Māori oral histories of te honongo. As an investigation into the intuitive construct of evoking emotive and rational knowing, the project explores how and what part abstracted photography may play in externalizing the knowledge gained. Tauwehe provides a construct in which to open abstracted photography and test its suitability to draw forth, suggest, or to make known the effects of dislocation and displacement of te hononga, the concept of belonging to a place (te hono ki te whenua me te moana). The Tauwehe project is, by nature, a journey of observation, experimentation, assessment and reflection of the creative practice and involves immersion within the landscape of inquiry. It is through abstracted photography, a problematic medium through its lack of symbols, that I seek to visibly articulate a *visual equivalent*<sup>4</sup> of oral histories or narratives, through art.

### **1:2 A personal dislocation**

It was summer 2005 and I was driving my Mother from Kororareka (Russell) to a meeting in Whangarei. As we left Kororareka my Mother became agitated. Her face screwed up as if in pain and she began waving an arm and gesticulating in the direction of Uruti Bay where Whareumu's pa once stood.<sup>5</sup> As we turned the corner and Uruti Bay came in to view, she became more distressed.

*Aue, Marsha, it's awful...look what they've done to the land, aue, aue. Tears streamed down her face. It's awful Marsha, just awful. This is where our tupuna lived, and look what they've done. It's awful, aue.*

I loved being home on holiday. Aotearoa was fresh and alive to me. Encouraged by a noticeable increase of Māori in the arts, politics, tourism, education, media and television, I was considering moving back home. Mum's reaction unsettled me. Here was that old issue of Māori whenua my Mother had been talking about for ages lodged like a warped skeleton under the new face of Māori. Was this new face a lie? Could I re-enter a society again where I was noticeably the cultural Other? That summer, feelings of love for my whanau (family) and the whenua won out and I moved home. Later, I realized Mum had a right to cry as the increased visibility of Māori I had initially observed didn't equate to any real increase in power. (Phelan, Peggy. 2001).<sup>6</sup>

### **1:3 Oral histories of Te Tii Waitangi**

Before the early 1800s, Te Tii Waitangi included Paihia and stretched from the maunga (mountain) Nihonui northwest, along the coastline of Te Pewhairangi (Bay of Islands) across the Waitangi River, the source of which originates near Lake Omapere, then inland to encompass Kaipatiki and Waitangi Falls. Rich in fresh water, wood, seafood, flat coastal land and surrounded by undulating hills, Te Tii Waitangi, with a view of the mouth to the Bay of Islands, was Ngati Rāhiris' summer place. When winter came,

the old people journeyed to Waitata, Oromahoe and Otau where they stayed until summer returned.

*I have always been led to believe that Waitangi was Ngati Rāhiris' place, that they moved from the inland areas, for example Pouerua, Pakaraka, Oromahoe, Otau, in the summer months to fish and gather seafood which they harvested and stored and took back with them to their inland settlements. (Wiremu Tane, in conversation with the author, 2008.)*

It was a time when Rangatira<sup>7</sup> and Tohunga<sup>8</sup> governed by consensus, and customary regulatory devices established movement and flow between hapu and resources.

*Traditional Māori boundaries overlapped. They traded with each other, were able to utilize the same kai (food) areas, they had territories set by maunga (mountain), awa (rivers), moana (oceans). Each hapu (individual group) and whanau (family group) had governing laws dependent on which area they occupied. If it was in the Hokianga, their laws were a bit different. There were governing laws according to living near the ocean, if the papakainga (original home) was established in the valleys, there were different laws. The laws were set by the tohunga (priest), the main regulator of the law in terms of the divine law, he looked after the governance and the rangatira*

*(chief) looked after the territory.* (Carla White, in conversation with the author, 2008.)

Te Tii Waitangi whenua, maunga, awa (river), and ngahere (forest) were named by the old people; after their ancestors, events, places of specific use and sacred places. Their names describe places where fierce battles were won or lost, where kumara (sweet potato) grew best, where people lived, where the dead were prepared for interment and where women buried the whenua (placenta) of their children to acknowledge they were part of the whenua and to ensure they should always return to their place of birth where they belonged. Through generations intimate, deep knowledge that constituted the whenua was collected. It functioned as a multi-layered historical recording device originating with Papatuanuku (Earth Mother) and was continually added to and reinforced through practice. Whakairo (carving), tukutuku (woven panels), kowhaiwhai (rafter patterns) and oral histories make reference to this sacred relationship between whenua (placenta) and whenua (land). In the old times, conservation was a part of cultural practice but with the coming of Pakeha (white man) this was displaced. The old relationship of whenua (land) and whenua (placenta) is embodied in the whakataurangi (proverb), *You can never be lost; you are a seed sown at Rangiātea.*<sup>9</sup>

*In the 1820s, Te Tii Waitangi was around eight hundred acres and Paihia and Waitangi were one.* (Elizabeth Baker, in conversation with the author, 2008.)

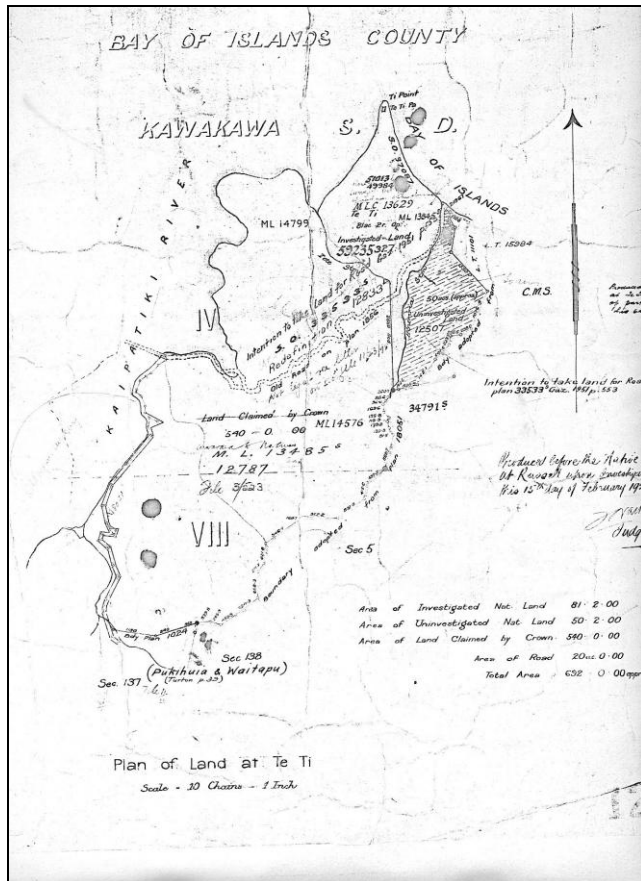


Fig. 1.0 Bay of Islands County Map, (1927)  
 Plan of Land at Te Tii  
 Department of Lands and Survey map No. 12543

#### 1:4 The skeleton of dislocation and displacement

*Getting rid of the 'Other' was not a primary goal of colonisation in most parts of the Pacific. What was intended was displacement. (Goldsmith. M, 2002, p. 89)*

In the 1700s paths Ngati Rāhiri traveled to and from Waitangi followed the natural contours of the Waitangi hills and shoreline. One walkway, being well used became an established track. To the left of the track, at the Te Tii Waitangi entry point, there was a carefully managed mānuka and kānuka reserve that supplied tangata whenua with firewood for the summer. Further to the left and rear of the gully there was a tapu (sacred) area where deceased were placed in a large Puriri tree to dry before being wrapped and interred in caves around the area. The late 1700s saw first contact between Māori and Pakeha and during the next thirty years early missionaries, whalers and sailors began to settle and trade in the Bay of Islands. Missionaries at Rangihou, Paihia and Russell established colonial customs, schools, farms and settlements and began using the track. As more settlers arrived with horses and wagons, later cars and trucks, the track was widened into a narrow dirt road. On the 1927 N.L.C. sketch No. 12543 of Te Tii Waitangi (fig. 1) it is noted: *Intention to take Land for Road plan 33533 Gaz. 1951 p. 553*. Firewood reserves were decimated and customary burials discontinued. The whenua was officially taken and the road, known as Puketona Road or State Highway 11, was built cutting Te Tii Waitangi in two. Te Tii Waitangi became bound and previously fluid



Fig. 1. 2. *Te Tiriti o Waitangi Marae, Treaty Hall*  
(date unknown)  
Photographer, Frederick George Radcliffe  
Courtesy of Russell Museum/Te Whare Taonga O Kororareka

cultural boundaries were fixed and *marked*,<sup>10</sup> divided and constrained by colonizers' foreign classification. Cultural connection between whenua and tangata was *matata* (split) and although it was against traditional custom, concerned leaders worked to bind the remaining whenua and tangata together under a colonial system of trusts and courts for safe keeping. The impossibility of continuing traditional migratory patterns and living practices, as British rule was imposed, meant tangata whenua, whanau, cousins, relatives found themselves dislocated from each other by being confined to shares in the ownership of a piece of land that Pakeha referred to as a 'block'.

*Manāki Whenua, Manāki Tangata, Haere whakamua, Care for the land, care for the people, go forward.* Anonymous.<sup>11</sup>

Today, Te Tii Waitangi consists of twenty three of the thirty blocks or eight hundred acres returned by Archdeacon Williams to Ngāti Rāhiri tohunga, Te Kemara<sup>12</sup>. The word *block* appears on all legal titles. Seven blocks were lost, some converted from Māori Land to General Land titles were sold, some taken by the government during WW2 and never returned. Originally Te Tii Waitangi spanned both sides of the Waitangi River. Today it consists of the south side of the river, the Waitangi hills and the basin where Te Tiriti O Waitangi Marae (fig. 1. 2) was erected in remembrance of the chiefs and manuhiri (visitors) who gathered to discuss signing Te Tiriti o Waitangi in February, 1840.<sup>13</sup> On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February each year the signing of Te Tiriti is celebrated and Waitangi marae (a complex of buildings with a



Fig. 1. 3. *Te Tii Waitangi*, (1934)

Photographer unknown

Courtesy of Russell Museum/Te Whare Taonga O Kororareka.



Fig. 1. 4. *Marking the place where Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed, Waitangi Treaty grounds*

(date unknown)

Photographer Unknown

Courtesy of the Russell Museum/Te Whare Taonga o Kororareka

meeting house, dining hall, ablution block and education centre) hosts visitors. For the duration of the celebrations Te Tii Waitangi kaumatua and kuia defer to leaders, dignitaries from other areas while the marae hosts those who protest against as well as support Te Tiriti (the original document signed in Te Reo (Māori language) and those who only visit occasionally such as politicians looking to further political causes. They host Destiny Church members, who march storm trooper like onto the marae atea, supporters for gay rights and those for the legalization of marijuana. Therein lays the conflict, for although Te Tiriti O Waitangi marae the hapu marae of Te Tii Waitangi, it is taken over and assumed as the “national marae” of New Zealand, continuing the legacy of colonization.

As sacred places, historical sites, and physical reference points disappear, daily living practices change and dislocation occurs through loss. Each small encroachment by developers or council,<sup>14</sup> every environmental abuse,<sup>15</sup> eats away<sup>16</sup> at the Te Tii Waitangi whenua, environment and an old cultural lifestyle. The road separating foreshore from marae built to provide convenient transport route for Queen Elizabeth’s visit in 1953, severed customary access from the marae to the beach and today prevents waka (canoe) being pulled up to the marae as was once the custom. Another custom of not passing in front of the marae when a tangi (funeral) is in progress is now frequently broken by unsuspecting tourists using the road to visit the Waitangi Treaty Grounds. (fig. 1. 4) Where private and council marina now stands, kaimoana (seafood) is less plentiful. The Far North District council prevents fresh water reserves deep under the Te Tii

Waitangi whenua from being used by the people, instead charge them for council supplied water. Traditional resources remain within the custodial 'landscape' as kaitiaki remain physically proximate to the environment that once was theirs and as a result, power to enact kaitiakitanga is removed, while custodial obligations remain. In this gap between what once was and what is now loss and regret, exclusion and *othering* exist.

Questions rise out of the collective oral histories of Te Tii Waitangi kaitiaki which shape and define my practical research. For example, what are the determinants within the shared oral histories that identify dislocation and displacement? How will I identify them?

### **1:5 The face of Māori research**

Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith<sup>17</sup> places Māori in the context of the global indigenous who are raising their voices for parity. Like Merata Mita, Smith raises her voice for research of Māori by Māori. She does this because as Mita says *the ones doing the looking are giving themselves the power to define* (Mita. M, 1989, p. 30). Smith see research founded on Kaupapa (Māori ideology) Māori,<sup>18</sup> as a critical theory for the *development of insider methodologies that incorporate a critique of research and ways for carrying out research for Māori, with Māori and by Māori*. Deliverability of Kaupapa Māori research outcomes and the problem of adaptation within its theory is discussed by Rangimarie Mahuika<sup>19</sup> in her paper, *Kaupapa Māori research is critical and anti-colonial* (2008). She suggests Kaupapa Māori as a critical theory may not been fully resolved. What is importantly established by



Smith, Mita and Mahuika's research is Māori research is a growing site of power for Māori. As a Māori developing an understanding of what it's like to research inside my own culture, Kaupapa Māori critically frames how I carry out my practice-based research. G. H. Smith (1990), in his summary of Kaupapa Māori research<sup>20</sup> establishes its theoretical framework as;

- *related to being Māori,*
- *connected to Māori philosophy and principle,*
- *taking for granted the validity and legitimacy of Māori, the importance of Māori language and culture,*
- *concerned with "the struggle for autonomy over our own cultural wellbeing."<sup>21</sup>*

Each of these areas of Kaupapa Māori research is a strand of Māori culture woven together to form a cultural environment, weaving and overlapping important areas of knowledge together. This network of strands is repeated in principles such as whakawhanaungatanga a process,

*of establishing whānau relationships, literally by means of identifying, through culturally appropriate means, your bodily linkage, your engagement, your connectedness, and therefore, an unspoken but implicit commitment to other people. (Bishop, 1988, pp. 203)*

Kaupapa Māori research is a woven construct. It acknowledges the

important contribution of relationships between individuals, individuals in a whanau family) setting and relationships between whanau in a hapu (tribal group) relationship. Researching within this structure can be more involved than is often anticipated. Each group and member has the ability to agree to or decline to assist in a process of openness. This intense system of networking ensures democratic speaking rights, knowledge sharing and commitment to decisions reached. When starting my research project I asked kaumatua (elder) and Te Tii Waitangi people for permission to research amongst them. This was given and recorded with the stipulation that I was to return the research to tangata whenua of Te Tii Waitangi. My Mother became the strand connecting me to people who would support my research journey. Kaupapa Māori<sup>22</sup> principles of kānohi te kānohi (meeting face to face), whakawhanaungatanga, aroha (love, respect), tikanga (right way), māhaki (humbleness), and mana (power, dignity) were engaged. Kaupapa Māori research helps me evaluate why I am doing what I am doing, giving vibrancy to research and a certain expectation of how research will enhance others, not just through the research itself, but through collective contribution of a community coming together. Kaupapa Māori is an insider theory and offers a code of conduct centred on values of equivalent worth. As a Māori researcher, I find Kaupapa Māori theory symbiotic and durable because it is experiential research that considers a wider weave to reposition research within a communal environment, giving shared control of learning. Since Linda Smith's paper on Kaupapa Māori research was first presented in 1999 her argument has gained currency. Identified in her paper as well as her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*

(1999) is a set of Māori standards for collecting, interpreting and publishing Māori cultural data. It is a theory for constructing a platform for self-determination under conditions of coloniality.

### 1:6 Abstracted photography

Contributors to the blog [www.ipernity.com](http://www.ipernity.com) (June 2008)<sup>23</sup> discuss the difficulty of defining abstracted (abstract) photography. The following definitions of abstracted photography are included in the initial post:

- *Abstract photography can be subdivided into two subfields: Non-objective or non-representational abstract photography.*
- *A special case of non-objective abstract photography is geometric abstract photography, which is based on the use of simple geometric forms combined into non-objective compositions.*  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geometric\\_abstraction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geometric_abstraction)
- *Representational abstract photography is: a photographic composition representing a real object in an unusual way which illustrates a pattern or abstract concept.*

The discussion in this blog suggests abstracted photography is being defined in terms of art theory<sup>24</sup> and sub-fields are organized according to characteristics of representation or non representation. In *Looking at Photographs*,<sup>25</sup> Victor Burgin discusses how, if we are confronted with a photograph that is a *puzzle* to us, we consciously *refer to information the image itself does not contain* and, the instant we *discover* that information,

the photograph shows us *a thing*. Only then can we *invest a full identity* in the photograph. Burgin further explains this investiture or *unconscious coherent identification takes place naturally as an imaginary projection on our part*.<sup>26</sup> Through Burgin we arrive at an understanding of the abstracted photograph by way of Lacan's<sup>27</sup> psychoanalytic approach which is predicated on recognition of the self. It seems probable from this discourse, that above all, we require recognition of subject matter (content) within the photograph in order to legitimize it. However, the abstracted photograph often lacks those very *things*, i.e. subject matter and symbols and so, outside of imaginary projection, often remains unresolved or difficult to resolve. It is this idea of the unresolved in relation to dislocation and displacement which holds potential for exploration as an exploratory research pathway and guides my research to understand the abstracted photograph through the lens of Māori culture.

### **1:7 The interplay of movement and boundaries**

Movement is an identifiable element in the act of dislocation and displacement, but, while in the state of dislocation and displacement it may also become bound, restricted. Movement does not activate but at the same time it is both the act and the conclusion of the act. Movement is the basis for the dichotomy between location and dislocation as well as place and displacement and is especially meaningful in the contextual definition and physical act of Tauwehe. In my studio practice, ideas around movement are explored through abstracted photography's consideration of the interplay between movement and boundaries in relation to place. Yi-Fu

Tuan, in his book *Space and Place*,<sup>28</sup> suggests place may be seen as a pause in which we create an image of place. He suggests this is contingent on how we perceive place stating, *culture affects perception*. Is there a comparison between place and the constructed abstracted photograph as a pause? The abstracted photograph as a constructed abstraction, dependent on codification (the act of arranging in a systematic code) of the perception of place is something I investigate as part of my artwork.

*If we are to make photographs that raise questions or make assertions about what is in and around the picture, we must first be aware of what the ideological premises are that underlie our chosen mode(s) of representation. Such awareness will structure the aesthetic, editorial, and technical decisions that are made with the goal of communicating ideas in a provocative (and yes, creative!) way. (Bright, Deborah. 1992)*<sup>29</sup>

## 2:0 Methodology

### 2:1 The Kete model

Although the kete (woven basket or container) (fig. 1. 5) is a container that is not unique to Māori, the traditional legend of *Tane and the Three Baskets of Knowledge*<sup>30</sup> is. In this legend we see the three kete are recorded as being containers that hold distinct areas of knowledge. The kete are named and the their contents are listed.



Fig. 1. 5. Kete, round, flat base, no handles, (1994)  
Ngāti Rāhiri weaver, Donna Baker  
Courtesy of the weaver

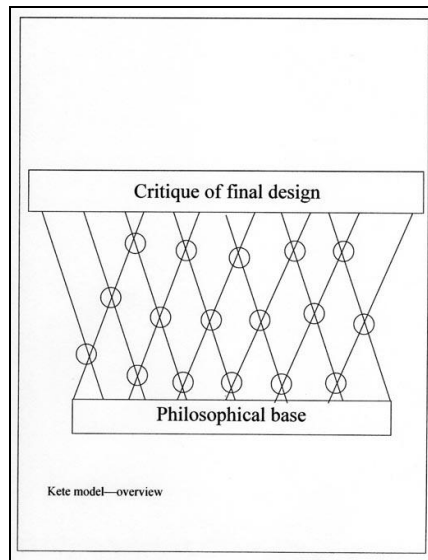


Fig. 1. 6. Kete model overview, 2008. Marsha Davis

- *Ko te kete tuauri* – knowledge of ritual, memory and prayer,
- *Ko to kete tuatea* – knowledge that is evil and harmful to mankind,
- *Ko te kete aronui* – knowledge to help mankind.

That the kete have names is an indication of their uniqueness and the role they play in their formation and how the knowledge inside is to be applied. Tāne te wānanga ā rangi (Tāne, bringer of knowledge from the sky) fought adversity to gain the kete for man. A notion considered through my practical and theoretical engagement in my studio practice is the concept of the kete as a suitable methodology for the Tauwehe project. An inquiry is developed around the kete itself being a theoretical and practical model through which knowledge is formed, instead of the kete being only a receptacle of knowledge. Tauwehe explores a repositioning of the kete to consider its value in understanding how and why my practice develops. The potential for the kete model to support Kaupapa Māori research may be in its ability to be used in conjunction with Kaupapa Māori principles.

The kete as a research model has been recently explored and documented by Junette Ward in her AUT Masters thesis, *Interwoven dress cultures of New Zealand* (2006) and there are similarities between our inquiries. Ward applies the kete model as an approach to investigate the historical influence of Māori clothing or parts of it on western clothing, photographing and describing her findings and then seeks to connect the examples with their

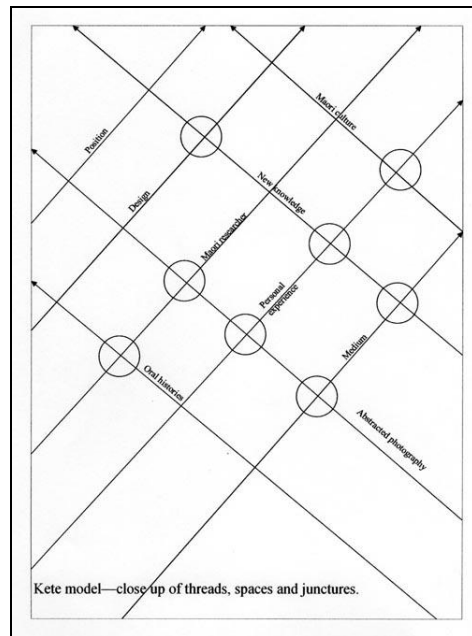


Fig. 1. 7. Kete model close up, 2008. Marsha Davis

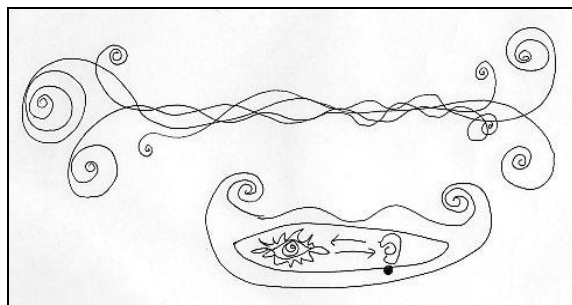


Fig. 1. 8. Visual abstract, 2008. Marsha Davis

originators or wearers. This idea of a whakapapa (ancestral lineage) of objects, ideas and actions is inherent in Māori culture and may be seen as connecting strands that suggest traces of the original object, concept or action, inform the contemporary. A similar example is how tacit knowledge, sometime implied but not always revealed in Māori culture, surfaces through hui and wananga (tribal knowledge forum) and how the strands of knowledge, having been taught, discussed and memorized at an earlier time are brought together, often from many memories and externalized as a whole 'object' or agreed understanding. In this way the kete model may be seen as one that is brought into practice or activated by a communal form of knowledge weaving and sharing. By engaging the kete model Ward and I both acknowledge the cultural uniqueness of the kete as a model derived from Māori culture and its potential to represent both the framework and the theory. It is this cross movement, this weave of information that informs my practice. The kete model (fig. 1.6) is a coherent whole, consisting of design and construction with interwoven research strands formed from a philosophical base. The threads have characteristics of a physical kete such as uneven thickness and length implying intense research in some areas and less in others. Inter-woven threads are pliable and secured by the weave. Where they overlap an operational space of tension occurs where information rubs adjusts, is redirected, and is re-informed. In kete making the spaces are made to be pliable, to shift and move information or research (fig. 1. 7). This denotes if the kete will be used for collecting, as in kai moana (seafood) or more important occasions. The kete model does not discard less applicable

knowledge. It is woven in as supportive research paths and acknowledged as unrealized paths from which other ideas and critical decisions and reflection are based.

Contemporary examples of the kete model may be seen in the online initiatives, Te Kete Ipurangi<sup>31</sup> and Kete Horowhenua.<sup>32</sup> These virtual kete rely on community contributions; strands of information to weave their knowledge bases, increasing knowledge within an environment constructed for sharing information freely. Kete Horowhenua, not limited to Māori content is an example of the kete model working outside of Māori culture.

## **2:2 Rationale**

The two visual abstracts in Fig. 1. 8 are consistent and stable forms that I have referred to throughout this journey. An intuitive construct, the Tauwehe project is positioned within Māori culture and brings a moral undercurrent to the research in contemporary exploration of historical occurrences. The lower map symbolizes the insider researcher embedded within the landscape of research and refers to the oral histories as well as the process of the visual clarification of them in relation to how historical records of our people relate to the whenua and refer to praxis. The lower map symbolizes praxis. The upper visual abstract of strands weaving back and forth, crossing over and under, reference linearity and considers knowledge as traveling back and forth between people, places and time and symbolizes theory as an active and reflective process. The Māori concept of time is one of moving toward the future while looking backward and the



analogy of the warrior who, stands at the front of a waka (canoe), looks back urging his paddlers to action while the waka moves forward through the ocean and may be applied to the upper visual abstract. In Māori culture, the koru (fern bud) represented by the spiral symbolizes birth and new life. The spirals at each end of the upper visual abstract may be interpreted, in this project, as knowledge and the beginnings and birth of new stories.

### **2:3 Introduction to creative practice**

Equipment I work with in my creative practice consists of two cameras, a small but useful Olympus Stylus 770SW digital camera with underwater capabilities, an ancient Rolleicord square format film camera, a computer with the applications Photoshop, Paint and PowerPoint, an Epson photo scanner with film scanning capabilities, an Epson photo printer as well as a small Hewlett Packard inkjet printer.

In *From reflection to theory*, Brown and Sorensen's contribution to the book *Practice-led research, research-led practice*, both agree with Donald Schon's findings (1967) that *reflection in action* is crucial in assisting the artist to develop and understand their practice, convey knowledge and consider their results. Applied in my creative practice, *reflection in action* manifests as a purely creative instinctual perception of an action recognized, suggesting the nature of knowing is simultaneously a physical and mental construct. Brown and Sorensen note,

*...practical knowledge is inherent in doing and is often*

*considered implicit and as such may not be identified or valued without explicit attention paid to it.*<sup>33</sup>

If movement is an identifiable element in the act of dislocation and displacement, then the realization of *knowing* movement may be perceived within a physical and mental construct. There are a number of instances in the Tauwehe project where movement takes place and where *reflection in action* opens the creative practice to knowing movement as physical and mental knowing. An example is when ideology, cultural anthropology, technology, dislocation and displacement as a social practice, kaupapa Māori research, culture and art forms, moral undertones, writing research and the abstracted photograph, all constituents of this project, intersect to create an operational space in which boundaries are blurred and defining clear and focused praxis and theory becomes problematic. In this instance the nature of *reflection in action* may be seen to be associated with time. How then does time relate to *reflection in action* or does it relate at all? Brown and Sorensen's statement *practical knowledge is inherent in doing and is often considered implicit and as such may not be identified or valued without explicit attention paid to it* suggests it does. Therefore the nature of knowledge is that knowledge moves with our understanding of knowledge. It's added to, updated, modified over time, to the extent that when strands of knowledge come together the component of *reflection in action* or *knowing* movement assumes an active form that materializes a rearrangement in the hierarchy of *knowing*. This hierarchical arrangement is the link between movement and time and the process by which a number

of constituents are focused. Brown and Sorensen suggest this takes place as *transforming personal knowledge into communal knowledge*.<sup>34</sup>

#### **2:4 That which has been removed**

The concept of *that which has been removed* engages the hierarchy of *knowing* and starts with the oral histories which continue as a dominant referent to which other themes refer for the duration of the research. The oral histories, although dominant take the form of stimulus of a subliminal nature reacting to and referring continually to *that which has been removed*. The oral histories are only revealed in the research when absolutely necessary and could be said to function like a conscience that informs and impels. The concept of *that which has been removed* is one of an operational space to which notions of removal, oppression, power as cause and effect, omission, dislocation and displacement contribute. In this way *that which has been removed* is conceptually linked to te honongo or kinship with the land and contextually positioned as a recording of history evolving to include the contemporary landscape of Te Tii Waitangi.

#### **2:5 Walking the whenua**

Walking the whenua and taking photographs as research art practice looks to the transient experience of *walking the whenua* as an exploration of retracing movement across (lateral) the whenua while considering the historical layering (depth) of the whenua. Walking the whenu looks at the practice of making art (taking photographs) while exploring transience in relation to removal, displacement and dislocation and suggests the act of



Fig. 1. 9. Pieta or Bertha's rock, Tii Point, 2007  
Marsha Davis

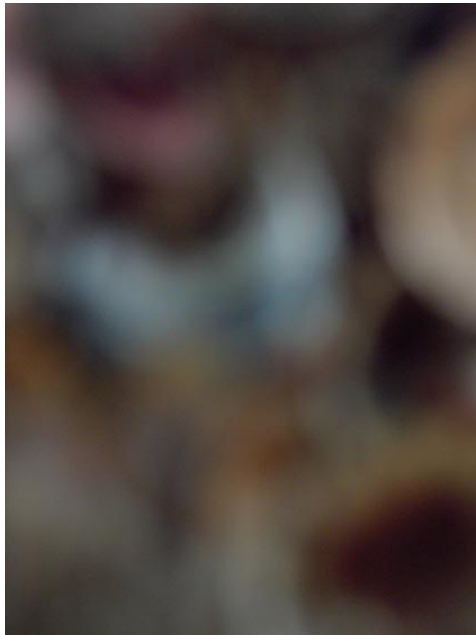


Fig. 1. 10. Untitled, 2007  
Marsha Davis

walking and taking photographs is a condition of visiting or revisiting a field or environment the artist doesn't normally occupy. Introducing the concept of whakapapa (ancestral lineage) informs the research art practice by settling on the perspective of revisiting or reconnecting through my relationship as researcher to the whenua as a condition of taking the photographs. As a Māori researcher, I am culturally reconnecting to the whenua, establishing the condition of an artist's immersion in the research field. Informed by the precondition of familial links to the whenua and its history, the question asked is, How does walking the whenua as creative art practice inform the Tauwehe project?

*Walking the whenua* as a framework for making art is discussed in *Doing Art and Doing Cultural Geography: the fieldwork/field walking project (2004)*.<sup>35</sup> As part of her PhD project, contemporary artist Perdita Phillips explores *the area of walking and fieldwork in art, and as art*. Phillips art making explores issues of *place, landscapes, power, identity and representation in art*. Repeating her art making over several periods she seeks to contribute to *new ways of seeing landscape*.

The idea of returning to my tupuna's whenua is a continuance of a narrative started by my tupuna centuries ago. It is a strong emotional experience, made more powerful by the physical act of returning in the sense that through time, a return becomes a form of replacing a prior condition. Opening the site of inquiry necessitates a decision as to what photographic genre will be used to make art while walking the whenua. I settle on



Fig. 1. 11. Te Tii Waitangi Bridge, 2007  
Marsha Davis



Fig. 1. 12. Untitled, 2007  
Marsha Davis

landscape photography which implies the photograph will render an account of the landscape in a realistic form, however, the act of walking and photographing (photographing while moving) opens the photographic process to that of abstracted photography. Examples of different results Figs. 1. 9 to 12. Figs. 1. 9 and 1. 11 indicate a landscape that is read through its referents, trees, rocks, water, mangroves, land features. Through readable content these photographs document a landscape while Figs. 1. 10 and 1. 12 which are taken while in the process of walking in the same landscape. They read as abstracted photographs through their lack of identifiable symbols. Movement as blur is a developed consideration of abstracted photography and evolving these photographs became a response to those sacred areas of whenua dislocated and displaced through colonial legislation as expressed by kaitiaki in their oral histories.

In archaeologist Kevin L. Jones's book *Ngā Tohuwhenua mai Te Rangi: A New Zealand Archeology in Aerial Photographs*<sup>36</sup> an idea is raised about another form of landscape photography, that of the remote sensing or aerial photography. Between science and art this method of landscape photography is used by Jones to record areas of historic whenua. Jones says, *To an archaeologist, the primary record is not written at all on paper – for the purpose of this book, it is on the land, and photographs are a primary record.* The archaeological concept of primary records being different types of records, such as written, site, photographic, object and artifact, brings an interesting perspective to the research that suggests my abstracted photographs may be understood as primary archaeological artifacts. Jones

application of the term *primary records* raises the fundamental question of the realness of photography which critic Susan Sontag in her book *On Photography* (1977) discusses.

*Although there is a sense in which the camera does indeed capture reality, not just interpret it, photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are.*<sup>37</sup>

If, according to Sontag, the photograph is an interpretation then the fundamental question is, *How is the photograph an interpretation and what is the nature of interpretation?* In my inquiry of the abstracted nature of the photograph, Sontag's clarity is important. Victor Burgin suggests the abstracted photograph refers to contexts, outside of the photograph<sup>38</sup> to be read. The idea of the photograph as a bound object that records and is then liberated through the symbols on the photographic surface being connected to those objects and concepts they refer to outside the photograph is a generally accepted concept. Taking the view of a concerned archaeologist, Jones directly relates the photography as a means of uncovering changes in the landscape expressing concern at *the manner in which changes come to be layered on the landscape, and how later activity may destroy the earlier.* His referral to photographs as primary evidence suggests photographs may be classified by their mode of use and not just the subject and content they contain.

Through the creative practice of walking the whenua, the physical act of

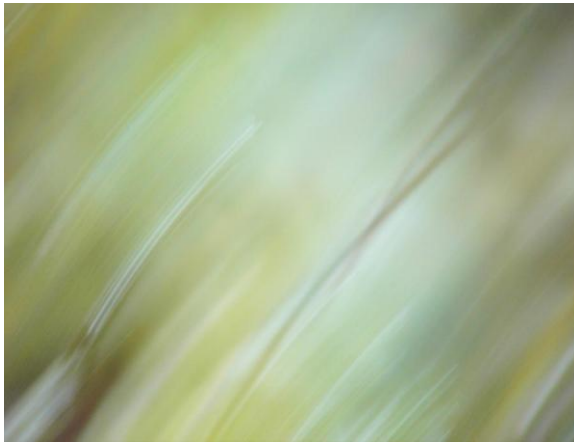


Fig. 1. 13. Untitled, 2007  
Marsha Davis



Fig. 1. 14. Untitled, 2007  
Marsha Davis

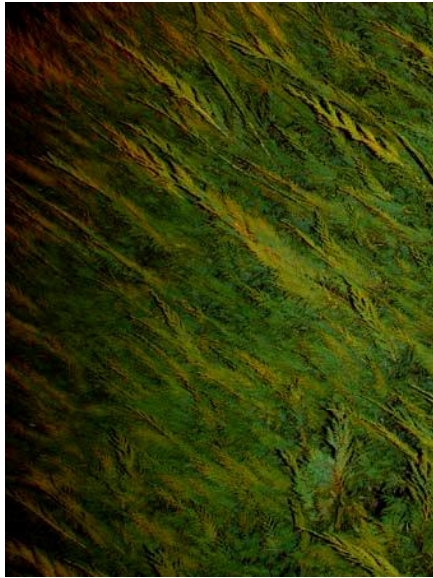


Fig 1. 15. Untitled, 2007  
Marsha Davis



Fig. 1. 16. Where they washed  
the blood away. 2007 Marsha Davis

taking photographs is questioned as holding the potential to find new ways of investigating dislocation and displacement and concepts of the binary relation between of location and dislocation, place and displacement, activated by the creative use of the cameras and photographic environment expand the visual interpretation of representation. In considering the classification of the abstracted photograph, my attention is turned to the technical methods that visualize the narrative and how they may relate to the conceptual potential of the creative process. Detail and shadow seen in the abstracted photographs raise inquiry of the connection between revealing and withholding photographic information and ideas of privilege and omission (acts of power); the compositional image as a space and place through the placement of tangents and accents to construct abstracted forms and connections between forms; the distortion of form through availability of light; the use of artificial light as holding the potential to create an aesthetic dimension of unreality (fig. 1.15). For this project, these inquiries add to the understanding of a photographic language informed by the intuitive concept of Tauwehe.

Within the kete model, this initial research phase may be compared to identifying the type of kete to be produced and how to weave it. *Walking the whenua* as a method sits within the conceptual weave of the insider researcher and is activated through immersion within the space or gap (fig. 1.7). *Walking the whenua* produces information through a process of extraction and abstraction and considers the physical act of retracing *what had been removed* from the whenua. Kaitiaki of Te Tii Waitangi often refer



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Fig. 1. 17. Blush 3, 2006  
Drift, Vavasour Godkin Gallery  
Lisa Benson

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Fig. 1. 18. Blush 4, 2006  
Drift, Vavasour Godkin Gallery  
Lisa Benson

to their tupuna as living on *that piece of whenua* and fishing in *that part of the river* or hunting in *that area of bush*. The concept of tupuna and whenua being slowly displaced from the original Te Tii Waitangi landscape denotes the state of time as being an important contributor to systems of dislocation and displacement. *That which has been removed*, is a cumbersome phrase, but one which encompasses a conceptual approach to a condition of dislocation: removal. (fig. 1. 16).

## 2:6 Artists

New Zealand artist **Lisa Benson**<sup>39</sup> explores abstracted photography arriving at different outcomes by different processes in a form of self expression through process. Benson's photographs are considered. Her ideas, formed around abstracted photography, are already ingrained with intention when selecting processes like exposing light sensitive paper over time. Her photographs of outlines and shapes are of the paper themselves (fig. 1. 17), as they are moved randomly and repositioned in different arrangements over time, are an example of this intent.

Several factors may be seen to contribute to Benson's abstracted images. First, there is no camera involved in her process therefore no lens with fleeting exposure. Secondly, there is no film or computer chip to receive the exposure between the source and the end product (fig. 1. 18). It is clear that Benson's photographic process is based on the natural process of exposure, negating the technical clutter which most photographers engage and one of denying reliance on technology. Its absence implies a pure



arrangement of primary experience, light on paper and as such, Benson's intent explores exposing ideas about what photography is.

Benson's example suggests the abstracted photograph is a conception; as an object being arrived at through a set of circumstances. Once an object, it represents itself and its process. It is a notion about something else, a referral card in two-dimensional form. Abstracted photography is a vehicle for thought and intention and is informed by absence and presence.<sup>40</sup> Benson's practice helps me clarify aspects of the condition of the abstracted photograph. In exploring processes, it is easy to forget about the photographs themselves; the tangible end product which represent the process, intent and artifact.

My abstracted photographs hold other conditions of the abstracted that are important qualities. (fig. 1. 19) In my images, emotion and the aesthetic are important because these states are emotions conjoined with the experience of the abstracted photograph and of love, hope and nobility through endurance and relate directly to the oral history themes of displacement. Exploring the condition of dislocation through the abstracted photograph amplifies the oral histories as narratives (fig. 1.20) in a spatial form.

Benson constructs environments on photographic paper initiating a discussion on the condition of narrative as an impression or trace of that environment. My images also operate in this way by tracing an impression of *things*, tangata, the whenua, events and the intangible as a condition of



Fig. 1. 19: Scraping the whenua, 2007  
Marsha Davis



Fig. 1. 20: The track, 2007  
Marsha Davis

dislocation and displacement.

*Do you think we can only know things by comparing them to other things? (Barth. Uta, 2006)<sup>41</sup>*

**Uta Barth**, Professor of Art at UC Riverside College of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences in California, recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship in 2005, and Emeritus Professor, 2008, has been researching in the field of abstracted photography for more than twenty years. It is through her images and discussion of her research that I find a personal inquiry for my use of abstracted photography in the Tauwehe project. Uta Barth's question<sup>42</sup> is at the heart of her photographic exploration of looking. It frames her aesthetic application of ocular viewing and epistemological interest in what kinds and forms of knowledge may be known through abstracted photography. Barth's looking is not the ordinary kind of looking we do without thinking, but the kind of looking that happens when we are asked to look but think there is *nothing to see* (fig. 1. 21).

Importantly, Barth's photographs locate beyond simple aesthetic categorization. Her images are a result of research based around using abstracted photography as a tool which investigates how the abstracted activates memory. In doing so, Barth's use of the abstracted questions viewer attachment to photography as a recording device of the real. It would be inaccurate to categorize Barth's blurry, undirected and anonymous images as abstracted and unessential and stop there as if that

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Fig. 1. 21: Uta Barth, Untitled (Ground Nr. 9) 1992-93, Courtesy Uta Barth, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, ACME, Los Angeles

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Fig 1. 22: Uta Barth, Field Nr. 19, 1996, Courtesy Uta Barth, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, ACME, Los Angeles

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Fig. 1.23. Uta Barth, Untitled (02.12), 2002  
Courtesy Uta Barth, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York,  
ACME, Los Angeles

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Fig. 1. 24. Uta Barth, Untitled (00.1), 2000  
Deutsche Bank Collection

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Fig. 1. 25. Untitled: 98.7 (diptych). Uta Barth, 1998.  
Henry Art Gallery. <http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/2aa/2aa239.htm>

were the main intention of her images (fig. 1. 22). Commonalities arise in how our images may be read and interpreted which locate Barth's photographs and mine as a conceptual inquiry of the relation between the viewer, memory and abstracted photography as a tool. Uta Barth shows a considered approach to photographic practice that moves beyond conventional exploration by repositioning the viewer. This is also an inquiry we have in common.<sup>43</sup>

Although my research practice is inspired by Barth's practical and theoretical work and our aesthetic outcomes seem similar, there are some differences in our practice and approach. Whereas, Barth's creative pathway is to directly employ abstraction as a form of dislocation to activate memory in order to query the viewer's experience of memory, my research path starts with memories as records of culture, places, events and people and develops from there as a visual representation: abstracted photographs as memories and memories as objects. Barth's direct use of the abstracted to query the viewer to look beyond is a juncture in our respective practices. I see the abstracted photograph as a means to investigate the narrative of displacement and displacement as it relates to Māori cultural experience and this is consolidated through stages of practice, reflection and practice-led research.

Barth's research in questioning the *real* has led me to examine how my research about being *othered* may be made visible. For example, there is an interesting superior-inferior dynamic which occurs in Barth's work, as is

seen in her photograph *Untitled (02.12)*, 2002, (fig. 1. 23) and *Untitled (00.1)*, 2002, (fig. 1. 24), where an object is singled out and compared with another that is not. My interpretation is that the process of selective focus may be an approach for exploring privilege. The notion of privilege interests me as do the relations between privilege and subservience, external and internal, subservience and the internal and privilege and the internal. The tension and movement between these states becomes a form of visual language that I develop during a conceptual and visual inquiry in my practice. In Barth's *Untitled 98.7*, 1998, (fig. 1. 25) the use of refocusing and repetition of the landscape is suggestive of an interruption within the narrative that is internal, perhaps even a rupture. As there are no points of reference in this work the unidentified subject matter suggests a landscape. Barth's photographs are not about subverting codes of recognition<sup>44</sup> but about enlightening our visual understanding of them.



Fig. 1. 26. Untitled, 2007. Marsha Davis



Fig. 1. 27. Untitled, 2007. Marsha Davis



Fig. 1. 28. Untitled, 2007. Marsha Davis

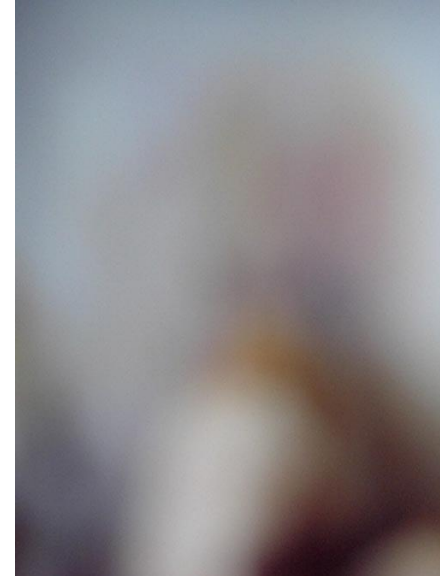


Fig. 1. 29. Untitled, 2007. Marsha Davis

*Tupuna* (Ancestor)



Fig. 1. 30. Untitled, 2007. Marsha Davis



Fig. 1. 32. Untitled, 2007. Marsha Davis



Fig. 1. 31. Untitled, 2007. Marsha Davis



Fig. 1. 33. Untitled, 2007. Marsha Davis

*Kahu (cloak)*

## 2:7 Digital drawings

A critical development occurred as a result of assessing the practical outcomes of 2:4 *That which has been removed*. I began to question the lack of cultural indicators and visual references to Māori culture in the abstracted photographs. At this time I moved outside photography to draw out through other forms of creative practice what a consideration of Māori symbolism may bring to the abstracted photograph. As a way of re-evaluating I considered the following questions:

- Should my photographs contain Māori symbols, or recognizable content, such as colours associated with Māori?
- In what way am I able to visually understand movement of colonialism on the whenua in relation to Māori culture?
- Did these two questions relate to each other and to my practice?

As a result of this dilemma, I engaged in creative play by changing mediums. I began practice in the digital workspace of Paint, a simple computer drawing application. I started simply by drawing lines. The focus for this new phase was to address the above questions by changing perspective and starting point to explore the concept of Māori symbolism and what it may bring to the abstracted photograph. In this phase of praxis I also focused on possible methods of developing a simple understanding of how codes operated within the abstracted photograph and why. The practice resulted in what I can best describe as an engagement of topography. It was a

distinct research stage considering the movement of dislocation and displacement the conclusion of the act.

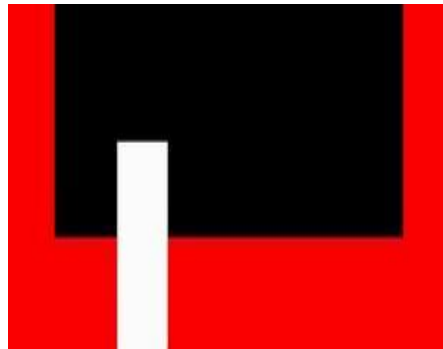


Fig. 1. 34. Tau whakawhiti 1, 2007  
Marsha Davis

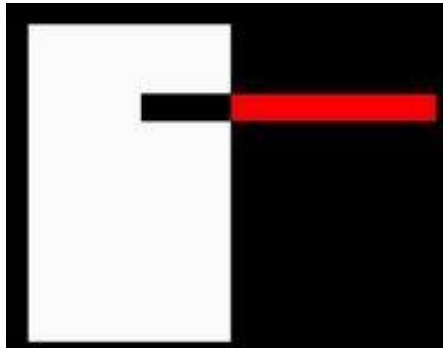


Fig. 1. 35. Tau whakawhiti 2, 2007  
Marsha Davis

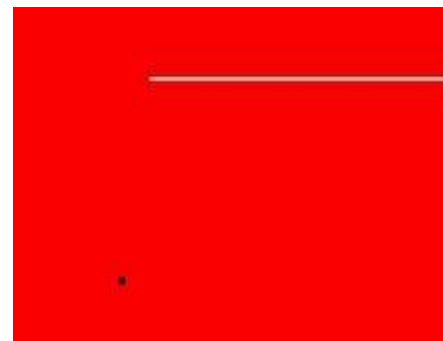


Fig. 1. 36. Tau whakawhiti 3, 2007  
Marsha Davis

I began defining and blocking areas (fig 1. 34 - 1. 36) in the *Paint* workspace with colour combinations associated with Māori: colours such as *whero* (red) for Papatuanuku (earth Mother), *mangu* (black) for Ranginui and *mā* (white) for the light that appeared when they were separated. These colours however could be associated symbolically with any reading. The simplistic act of defining spaces through filling it with colour became symbolically linked to other concepts, such as, if colour occupies space then it is externalized, knowledge visible and active. The emphasis on graphic and spatial forms developed a form of remote sensing, a basic topography which dictionary.com defines as *a field of study, or society, reflecting a division into distinct areas having a specific relation or a specific position relative to one another* occurred. Playing with Paint resulted in quicker decision making and feedback and through this the preciousness of taking photographs was negated. Notions of individuality moved to notions of sets and reading groups of paint blocks developed into a narrative in which colours represented groups of people and movement across the workspace or *whenua*. Tension between the areas of colour became important in that when ever I moved a colour by expanding or erasing it I gained a sense of how the *whenua* of Te Tii Waitangi paralleled a territory to be fought over and the process of blocking colours became symbolic of dislocation. In some way this mindset added a sense of responsibility to my decision making, whether to increase or decrease a colour area and the notion of





Fig. 1. 37. Block, 2007  
Marsha Davis

tension through personal interaction in research grew. I began to associate these colours and borders with a gradual change from the traditional governing structure of Māori to a colonial one as blocks of colour within colour were bound. Although it was a simple way of visualizing a narrative, the theme itself was complex; being about control and loss of control.

*Block, 2007* (fig 1. 37) explores movement of people across the whenua. Having established a simple code, I explored the concept of what individual movement across Te Tii Waitangi may look like as a comparison of hapu and tupuna. Drawings consisted of a solid colour base on which lines were laid down. As I drew lines across the base, I chose where the lines should start, end, and what sort of movement would occur between these two points. I also questioned in what order to lay the colours, and when to stop. The work surface became covered with lines. Whereas the previous drawings associated distinct areas of colour with groups of people, this phase of drawings portrayed a narrative tracking of individual people across the whenua and what that might look like, over time. These drawings function as a visual record of movement. *Paint* drawing tools are simple. Their colours do not blend. In *Paint*, colours can not occupy the same space. As a result of exploring this property, notions of privilege were developed as a line of inquiry. I became conscious of lines erasing others and at times I fought to keep Papatuanuku prominent. With each new white line I saw Ngāti Rāhiri being dislocated from the whenua and when the red base was covered by white or black, I would re-introduce it. This constant battle between colour choices was a surprise to me. Tension was occurring at a

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Fig. 1. 38. Haua Baker, Hopaea Te Hana, Weno Tahiwi (Ngāti Raukawa), Pirihira Heketa (Te Āti Awa), and others, *Tukutuku (woven panel), poutama pattern*, 1936, pīngao (sand sedge), kiekie (tree-perching plant), kākaho (toetoe reed). Commissioned for the Dominion Museum

personal level of research which I see as a result of tension generated in the visual exploration of weaving individual's movements on the whenua. As a process, my drawings became an experience of *redefining history*. In laying down more black than white, more red than black, I realized I was attempting to answer my Mother's cry; the drawings had become a rectification for redress. These insights became a turning point in my practical research and although not conducted within photography, are an important part of the creative process that support of my exploration of evoking codes in abstracted photographs.

In this phase a connection is made between the concept of my line drawings and the abstract form of traditional Māori art which suggests the possibility of considering a deeper level of abstraction at a personal level. My digital drawings exploring both individual and group boundaries was one strand of the kete model of reweaving new stories for Te Tii Waitangi. The idea of a visual narrative being a linear embodiment of form over time began to interest me as a possible way in which the oral histories may be seen in a contemporary form yet reference traditional Māori art forms. Within the kete methodology a juncture, a space opened relating to storytelling and record keeping, that of tukutuku.

## 2:8 Drawing on tukutuku

Tukutuku,<sup>45</sup> a traditional Māori art form of repetitive geometric patterns such as the poutama pattern that reference the steps in gaining knowledge (fig. 1.38). In traditional form, tukutuku is woven on to kākaho (vertical)

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Table 1. Algebra units, [www.nzmaths.co.nz](http://www.nzmaths.co.nz)

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Table 2. Algebra units, [www.nzmaths.co.nz](http://www.nzmaths.co.nz)

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Table 3. Helix. [www.mindspaceart.com](http://www.mindspaceart.com)

and kaho (horizontal) backing slats. Large tukutuku panels often displaying multiple tukutuku patterns are traditionally placed between carvings of ancestors (tupuna), lining the walls of the wharehau (meeting house). Tukutuku performs the function of telling the tribal and philosophical context of the carved ancestors in the wharehau (meeting house) as well as of the hapu for whom the wharehau is built. Tukutuku interlinks with other Māori traditions such as whakapapa and oratory. Historically, tukutuku was women's art<sup>46</sup> and construction of tukutuku for the wharehau is governed by tapu (restrictions), although in the 1920 Māori leader Sir Apirana Ngata, tutor at the Rotorua School of Arts and Craft (1927) would instruct and weave tukutuku. Tukutuku patterns are coded representations of the unified Māori history and mythology. The geometric designs have fixed meanings and function as a form of visual narrative. Today the traditional practice of making tukutuku is rarely practiced and its visual likeness is being appropriated. As Māori culture continues to be superseded by western culture, art form such as tukutuku is being applied in diverse non-traditional locales. They are:

- *applied as a filing structure for Ngā Ūpoko Tukutuku, to display un-preferred terms in Māori as part of the Māori Subject Headings Project jointly sponsored by LIANZA, Te Rōpū Whakahau and the National Library of New Zealand.*<sup>47</sup>
- *applied to triangular numbers and patiki [flounder] patterns and used as a powerful way to introduce patterns leading to quadratic and linear formulae; a number of alternative geometric views are suggested; establishing that the formulae*



Fig. 1.39. Block 2, 2007  
Marsha Davis

*are in fact identical is a useful application of quadratic algebra skills<sup>48</sup> (table 1 & 2).*

- *used as helix. This line of investigation actually started with trying to represent Tukatuku. These are also a form of double helix - if you one of the pairs of threads and rotate them about 120 degrees you get a pretty close approximation of the double helix of life<sup>49</sup> (table 3).*

The oral histories of kaitiaki of Te Tii Waitangi exist within the digital drawings as a layer of knowledge as a result of the process of translating oral histories to the visual. As with traditional tukutuku the viewer may need to know the oral history in order to read the symbols although interpreting them may be accomplished from different starting points; one with the oral history and the other from the symbol. Components of the digital drawings are space, colour and line. Where two colours meet and don't blend I have called this the hard edge or border. The use of space, colour and line in the digital drawings activate design components associated with abstracted minimalism and the digital drawings may be categorized as such. When compared we see both digital drawings and abstracted photographs share two components, colour and space but the digital drawings employ the border or hard edge while the abstracted photographs employ the blur or soft edge. The blur or soft edge of the abstracted photograph suggests liminality is the dominant component. Both digital drawings and abstracted photographs are examples of abstracted minimalism. In traditional tukutuku the line is arrived at through the

weaving process. The symbolism of traditional tukutuku is taken from elements of the histories they represent. The digital drawings, however, are not copies of tukutuku but are loaded with symbols that refers to tukutuku and are an intuitive construct for dislocating the traditional tukutuku pattern (figs. 1. 39 – 45). Removed three times from the original narratives the digital drawings investigate political conflict through a form of remote sensing as well as the removal or distancing of the original.

## **2:9 Exploring codes**

This phase of studio practice was conducted outside the medium of abstracted photography and explored questions of the lack of Māori symbolism in the abstracted photographs, a way to express movement of groups and individuals and, if the two questions are related. Digital drawings raise an inquiry into how, cultural identify and identification of components of visibility, privilege, dislocation (removal) and power may be presented visually to identify a practical transferable understanding of notions of simple colour codes associated with space. It was found that a topographical narrative was possible, through the use of colour symbolism, activating references to the topographical process of showing occupation, use and motion across the Te Tii Waitangi whenua. Colour symbolism also activates codes associated with understanding information through forms such as mapping, statistics, and graphs. These components suggest the tools and components employed are able to generate a consideration of how colour and spatial elements create tension. Tension, activated through an arrangement of colour areas and lines either balances or unbalances. As

in other strands of inquiry I felt an emotional investment in this phase of praxis as a result of knowing the intimate history and historical nature of the original source material in the oral histories and having to apply some actions that I interpreted as further removing the original from view.

A code based on colour that is culturally specific, brought out the anomalies of colour symbolism. For instance, Māori associate black with mourning, Japanese associate with white as a result of cultural differences and ideological beliefs. However, the graphic form itself is loaded with simple code for isolating elements of dislocation such as loss of territory and power, group and individual movement and colour. Any colour or pattern, not just ones culturally associated, will have similar results. When codes already associated with symbolism, such as tukutuku, were introduced, the graphic and colour elements were overridden by the referent and I note the tukutuku panels themselves as achieving this. This line of inquiry did however suggest potential for an interwoven traditional and contemporary inquiry of the abstracted narrative as generating a new narrative around the notion of removal. This phase of inquiry increased spatial knowledge of how boundaries may be drawn out as topographical codes to refer to cultural and physical territory. Codes uncovered were: spatiality, movement, stasis, repetition, territory, and emotion. *Paint* contributed both a process and an environment through which to test privilege and tension. The following are examples.





Fig. 1.40. Roimata, Whenua 7, 2007  
Marsha Davis



Fig. 1.42. Roimata, Whenua 12, 2007  
Marsha Davis

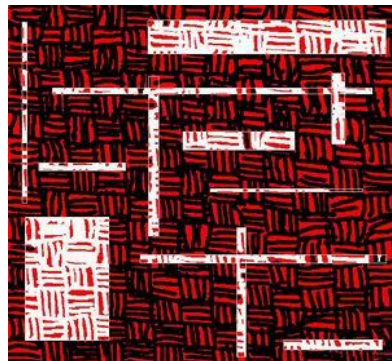


Fig. 1.44. Roimata, Whenua 3, 2007  
Marsha Davis

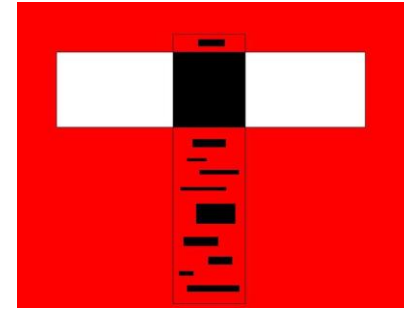


Fig. 1.41. Tiriti O Roimata, 2007  
Marsha Davis

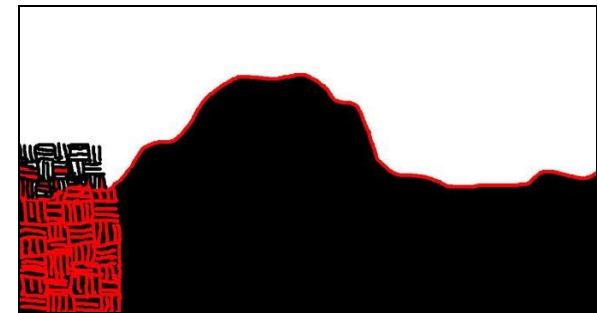


Fig. 1.43. Roimata, Matata, 2007  
Marsha Davis



Fig. 1.45. Aue, Roimata, 2007  
Marsha Davis

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Fig. 1. 46. Saffron Te Ratana, t.k.l.Pl:S, 2001

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Fig. 1. 47. Saffron Te Ratana, t.r.p.l.z's. 2001

### 3:0 Artists

*When does a visual statement cease to no longer connects to or identify the original?* The notions of externalness or endless continuation (permanence) and internalness or situated within (inside) may have relevance to this question.

**Saffron Te Ratana's** paintings<sup>50</sup> touch on a number of concepts that raise questions about Māori culture in a changing social environment and the relevance and impact of internalness and externalness may have on this. In Te Ratana's paintings these concepts are addressed in the form of abstracted figuration and abstract minimalism. The notion of society subsuming and absorbing Māori culture is developed in relation to the potentiality of Māori through the coded use of the ovoid or egg suggesting Te Ratana is exploring how distancing from the original, through assimilation and integration, will affect the potentiality Māori culture. Edward B. Tylor was the first to classify culture as,

*...that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and any habits acquired by man as a member of society.*<sup>51</sup>

Kuia Edrys Armstrong of Te Tii Waitangi gives an intimate perspective of how cultural belief is part of internalness, a fragile artifact that informs how we view the world in relation to our externalness. A Waitangi Tribunal claimant, her insight of te hononga is appropriate;



*Maoris' special relationship with the whenua as coming through their culture, how whakapapa connects them to the whole universe of creation, and therefore, they [Māori] have an affinity to every living thing on this planet because the same heartbeat pulsates through the whole universe and the primal parents, Papatuanuku and Ranginui (father). All living things come from Papatuanuku. They themselves come from the dust of the earth and they go back because they love their mother.*

(Edrys Armstrong, in conversation with the author, 2008).

Kuia Edrys's knowledge of internalness and externalness would have been passed on to kuia Edrys by her tupuna to situate her in the mauri (life force) understanding of how and why knowledge is distributed. Te Ratana's concepts of continuation and potentiality are a visual conversation about being in knowledge and being part of what makes knowledge. Te Ratana's paintings, as anthropological artifacts, hold a series of beliefs on: environment, life force, renewal and suspension. Knowledge and belief in culture exists in our minds and as a manifestation of its eternalness. Māori cultural knowledge is also internalized with whakapapa showing us our place in the connectedness of this world.

*E hara te kai a te tangata ke, he kai titongi kaki. [Food obtained from another person does not satisfy one's taste and appetite.]*

(Hovell. John, 1967)

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Fig.1. 47. John Hovell. East Cape Garden, 1975.  
(The Carver and the Artist, 2008. p. 157.)

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Fig. 1. 48. John Hovell. East Coast Garden: Weeders, 1967.  
(The Carver and the Artist, 2008. p.113.)

**John Hovell** is a New Zealand painter. While teaching on the East Coast of New Zealand between 1967 and 1982 he painted the series *East Cape Garden* of which figs. 1. 48 & 1. 49 are examples.

Through the *visual language of hemispheres, circles, squares and rectangles*,<sup>52</sup> refined from the landscape he paints, Hovell defines a rhythmic and representative translation of the symbolic myth of growth and rebirth of the earth and of the simple pleasure gained from working with the earth. Repetition, undulating soft forms give visual description to his awareness of the character of the earth as being female, soft and less angular. Hovell's minimalistic painting style may be categorized as simplification, but the way he engages his subject matter suggests one of his greater influences may come from music. The rise from the foreground as well as the use of falls, tone and perspective are similarly composed.

Because it's included in the series, the coded message of the whakatauki may perhaps be interpreted as Hovell's view of praxis. It allows a wonderful insight into why his paintings look the way they do as well as how he approaches painting. The main theme I see in Hovell referring to the whakatauki is his council to artists that they need to engage their work by intimately and elementally doing, to understand and appreciate how and why work is. The concept of looking within the work is a significant theme in practice-led research. Evolving the work in this way gives the ability to innovate, test, resolve, diversify and experience.

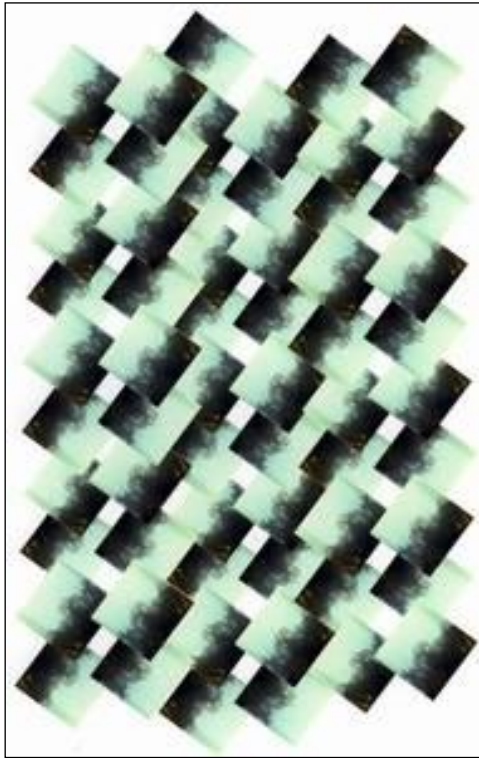


Fig. 1. 49. Untitled, 2008  
Marsha Davis

### 3:1 Weaving new stories

The movement back and forth between being in the field and in the studio is reminiscent of being in the weaving process as each time I crossed from the field, after a series of visits photographing, to the studio environment, new perspectives opened by this creative process led to new research strands. This brought an appreciation of the semi-nomadic lifestyle of my ancestors as a cyclic, rhythmic one in harmony with Papatuakuku and the difference between two forms of industry, the consequences of both and how that might be applied as a method to inform the visual work. As I was preparing a PowerPoint presentation I became aware of PowerPoint's limitations and how this may perform under cross application. The simple editing function, allows a number of images to occupy a space by overlaying but the previously placed image(s) are hidden by the most recent. This form of image hierarchy is time determinant. Experimenting with PowerPoint software hierarchy became an art making method for weaving tukutuku in a digital space and by incorporating traces of the whenua and oral histories it paralleled the traditional system of working with material from the whenua.

The abstracted photographs woven in digital tukutuku were not digitally enhanced. They were generated while *walking the whenua* and are representative of the narrative of it. I felt this was important in keeping the integrity of the image in relation to the subject matter being photographed. The digital tukutuku process engages repetition, simulation, privilege which unbalances stasis and the concept of privilege as *having a right of way*.

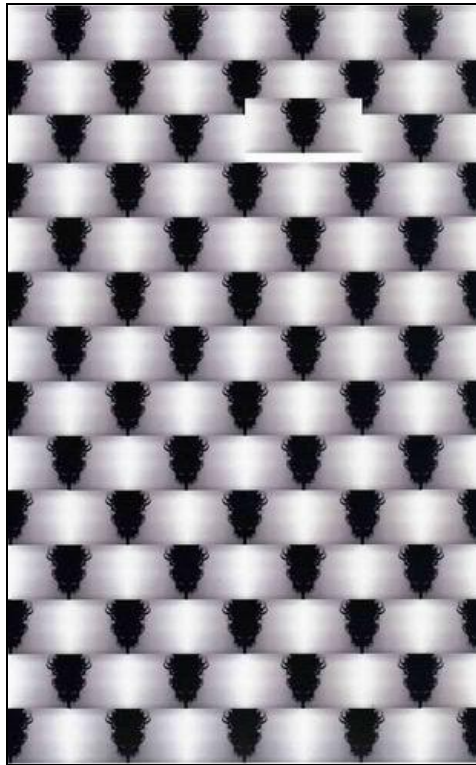


Fig. 1. 50. Untitled, 2008  
Marsha Davis

In walking the whenua the abstracted photographs are generated as part of the process or method of walking. Outcomes were specifically related to the process and notions of movement, connections, transience and removal. All themes are located in the abstracted photographs. However, the concept of restriction, being bound, control, power and omission was not. Mostly, the abstracted photographs lacked a controlling form. Tukutuku is both specific and anonymous. It is geometrically uniform but the traditional materials have imperfections. The material used in constructing traditional tukutuku is primary, coming from nature. Contemporary tukutuku is constructed with contemporary materials, wood, plastic, paint; having been processed by machines before being used. Does this change the narrative contained in the tukutuku coding? I suggest it doesn't, because the narrative is encoded as referent by the tukutuku symbol which is not reliant on the container or artifact, to be understood. Changing the container or artifact does shift the perception of traditional tukutuku through further removing it from the original construction process and material and therefore the original artifact, through reclassification.

### 3:2 Exploring codes

The idea of tukutuku as an exemplar comes from Māori cultures frequent application and use of codes in customary activities. Codes are an integral part of Māori pedagogy. It is our tupuna who encoding large amounts of information by breaking it down into smaller more readable pieces, much like good computer programmers do. In the absence of text, and without knowledge of how text operates, tupuna retained customary information in

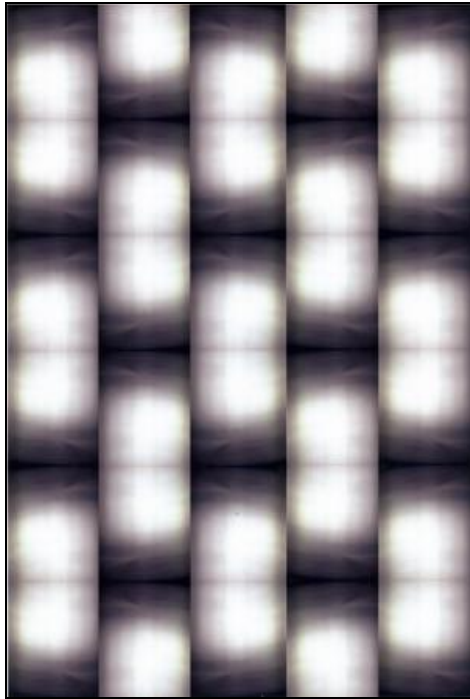


Fig.1. 51. Untitled, 2008  
Marsha Davis

code or smaller 'bytes', making the information easier to remember, understand and transfer. Other examples of cultural customs and activities containing code are whakatauki, tapu, kappa haka.

Codes in this field of digital tukutuku are symbolic of dislocation, represented in the grid through the design element of the repeated 'byte' or block. In the grid, each block is an individual unit of code, separate and contained. Although each block is an individual unit, a grid symbolizes unity, impenetrability, strength, loss of individualism, power. The grid evokes dislocation through imperviousness. Dislocation is also identified in the dissimilarity of angled and straight vertical digital tukutuku (grid) to the traditional look of tukutuku (fig. 1.52).

Constructing the digital tukutuku in the PowerPoint uncovered other codes embedded in the design and construction of the grid which suggest the grid brings change and power while being activated and control and power when stable. This action and reaction is intermittently observed during and after the construction process is complete. It is the code of stasis. Minimalist painter Adolph Reinhard's eleventh line of his *Lines of Words on Art: Statement (1958)* comments on this.

11. VERTICALITY AND HORIZONTALITY, RECTLINEARITY,  
PARALLELISM, STASIS<sup>53</sup>

During construction of digital tukutuku, blocks are positioned in lines with

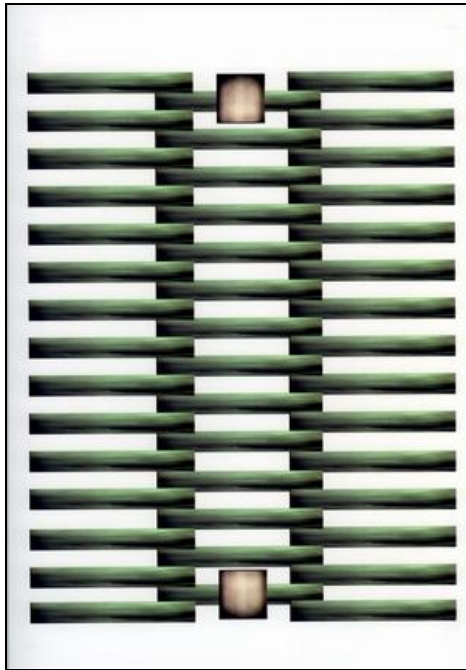


Fig. 1. 52. Untitled, 2008  
Marsha Davis

the edges matching. This process is repeated vertically and horizontally. Each block will eventually rest its four sides next to another, except for the outside blocks of which the corner blocks will rest two and non-corner outer blocks will rest three (fig. 1. 51). The edge of each block is an area of potential tension but between each block a liminal place of stasis exists. If the blocks move then surface tension or energy is generated and the liminal place, along with stasis, is destabilized. In terms of strategies the grid may be seen as a model for power and industry for although one unit (fig. 1. 51.), or more, may displace, the overall integrity of the grid often remains stable.

Through the inherent design of the grid place is positioned between borders while space is the expanse. When the grid is stable place is paused, in stasis. Yi-Fu Tuan observes,

*The ideas of “space” and “place” require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is a pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.*<sup>54</sup>

In considering the comments of Yi-Fu Tuan and Adolf Reinhardt the digital tukutuku may be symbols that reflect the condition of place for contemporary Māori.

*This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.*

Fig. 1. 53. Tukutuku  
Tanya Ruka 2007

*This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.*

Fig. 1. 54. Kawhia & Kete #81  
Lisa Reihana  
Digital video still on paper  
330mm x 600 mm  
Courtesy Webbs.co.nz

### 3:3 Artists

Tukutuku has moved from being constructed in traditional materials to those of popular culture, such as plastic, cool, rubber, light boxes and particle board and placed in the marae. Tukutuku constructed from car seat belts hung in a cafe is an indication of the many ways in which artists today are revisiting the idea of tukutuku's narrative coding in an attempt to voice their culture. An artist who explores tukutuku as an online art form and through projections is Tanya Ruka. (fig. 1. 58). Her digital projections inhabit the environment of technology, the internet, a paradise of visual culture where the coded nature of her tukutuku is contextually supported. Ruka is interested in sensory overload through simulacrum and repetition and is developing her work in the medium of film through an investigation into film stills. The temporary quality or transience of the film still draws on contexts of loss although examples of Ruka's tukutuku projections on her website, along with commentary of her process and her ongoing work exploring *moving images sensory overload (film)*,<sup>55</sup> suggests her interest is in visual dialogue.

**Lisa Reihana**, a talented and recognized artist, included projections of tukutuku on to panels of previous work as a new development in her evolving artwork, Digital Marae. Reihana's tukutuku video installations, *Kawhia and Kete*, were placed in the cross-over art space of Italy and Kitchens, Auckland as part of a group exhibition.<sup>56</sup> Reihana repositions tukutuku as a contemporary discussion of art, digital culture and popular culture as known in the intimate and ordinary environment of home suggesting a layering of the new over old.

*This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.*

Fig. 1. 55. Patikitiki 4  
Peata Larkin  
Acrylic on mixed media 1200mm2  
Courtesy Two Rooms  
Photograph by Kallan McLeod

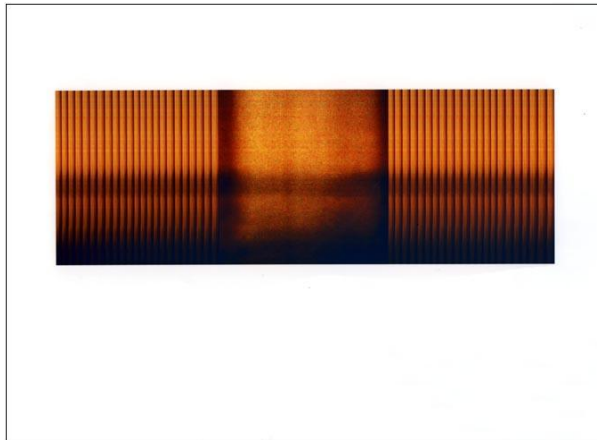


Fig. 1. 56. Untitled, 2008  
Marsha Davis

Artist **Peata Larkin's** Patikitiki <sup>57</sup> was also included in the Italy and Kitchens exhibition. The two large acrylic illuminated paintings as installations are considerations of the traditional role of women as providers for whanau and hapu and perhaps a tribute to them as well as a reminder to contemporary Māori women not to forget to provide for the family. Patikitiki 4 (fig. 1. 60), and Patikitiki 6 draws on the traditional flounder (fish) pattern. What one notices about Larkin's paintings is the technique of filling in small squares embedded in the canvas with paint. The unevenness of the medium is a reminder of original tukutuku.

### 3:4 Place-displacement, location-dislocation continuum

Abstracted photographs of digital tukutuku generated and discussed in 3:2 & 3:3 explore codes of privilege and stasis as contradictory codes within dislocation and displacement. It becomes clear during the process that privilege, as an individual code, is about layering as a structural technique within my creative art practice as well as being a state within cultural geography, archaeology, colonialism and colonality. Layering is a mechanism of oppression that results in the loss of power. Although I was unclear of how the abstracted photographs would contribute to the project and questioned the line of inquiry, I had a clear understanding of the process. A reading by Hal Foster on simulation and representation assisted me and on this basis I reassessed the line of inquiry. An insight of how simulacra works as a code for understanding dislocation was gained through Foster's discussion of Jean Baudrillard's writing which states,

*Ideology only corresponds to a betrayal of reality by signs;*



*simulation corresponds to a short circuit of reality and its reduplication by signs<sup>58</sup>*

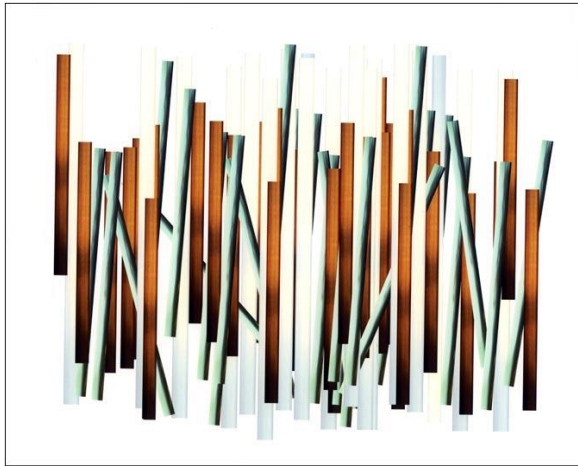


Fig. 1. 57. Untitled, 2008  
Marsha Davis

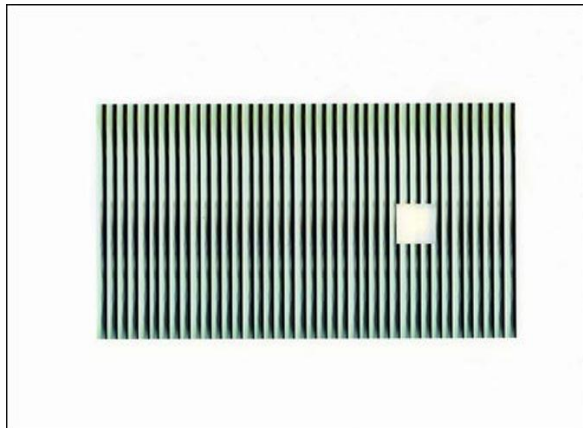


Fig. 1. 58. Untitled, 2008  
Marsha Davis

Dislocation and displacement are the removal, reversal or distancing of location and place as a direct result of force, movement or action and in the digital tukutuku are developed through the use of repetition or duplication and simulation in the reduplication of signs. This short circuit of reality is achieved by not allowing a visual narrative to fully play out and by then re-presenting and confirming the shortened narrative as a pretense of the real. *If dislocation is represented by abstraction through duplication, how might a visual distinction be made between place and displacement?* Working in PowerPoint, I began to explore place and displacement not with duplication but through placing images in privileged positions over others. I had previously explored this in 2:9 *Drawing on tukutuku*, in relation to digital weaving, and found through process, digital weaving is a means to understand displacement through power and hierarchy.

Displacement and dislocation may also be experienced as a shortening of time. An example would be if a person revisits a place after a long absence and the memory of the place and the contemporary meet, the experience being a comparison of past and present. Proximating non-objective or non-representational abstract photography and abstracted landscape photography achieves a visual distinction between place and displacement. This comparative method is not one of short circuiting but of placing a pause or space within visualness and asking the signs to bridge it. Signs

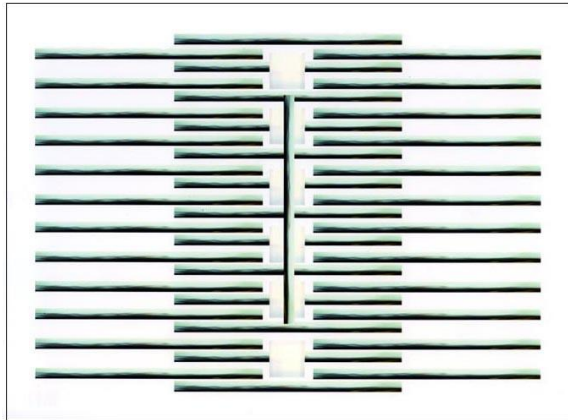


Fig. 1. 59. Untitled, 2008  
Marsha Davis

referencing location-dislocation as a continuum result in a third element or code; space. This is seen in the notion of the hard edge or borders and the limen or between. Space and place became codes that are recognized as displacing place (figs. 1. 61 - 70). It is in this last phase that developments from previous phases were of the most influence as spatiality and narrative became stronger elements within the abstracted photographs with the inclusion of non-objective or non representational abstraction within the abstracted photographs. This was pivotal in that it led to a series of photographs when displayed horizontally beside each other resembled a codified language of displacement and dislocation.

### **The abstracted photograph *is* representational.**

*To invest a photograph with meaning is always a sad delusion...*

(Linfield. 2010, p. 11).



Fig. 1. 60. Untitled  
Marsha Davis 2008

Linfield's comment must be taken in the context of her examination of a group of influential postmodern critics', namely Susan Sontag, Roland Barthe, John Berger, Rosalind Krause and John Bergin, who sang a dirge in unison about photography as part of the postmodern desire to bury all things thought to be modern or in support of capitalism namely mass production, imitated, repetition. In particular her comment was directed at Victor Burgin's criticism of the photograph as being *impoverished reality*. Linfield responds to critics by discussing the role of the photojournalist in informing society of the atrocities being committed and the role graphic



Fig. 1.61. Untitled  
Marsha Davis 2008



Fig. 1.62. Untitled  
Marsha Davis 2008

photographs of violence play in matters of social consciousness.

Popular contemporary theory on photography suggests that in order to understand what a photograph means one cannot rely on the content of the photograph; one has to look outside the photograph to its referents and context, for meaning. Applying this theory to abstracted photographs produces a particular set of problems and this is evident in the early part of the research where an understanding of the meaning of the abstracted photograph is not yet clear. Through the process of *doing* many characteristics of the abstracted photograph were identified from which several strands of research were woven. An understanding reached about the fundamental lack of content inherent in the abstracted photograph is that the abstracted photograph may be viewed as an obstruction, but not in the sense that it is solid. Instead the obstruction is fluid in nature and, when presenting itself, is open to be viewed and analyzed. This obstruction has a binary characteristic and it presents an elusive challenge by impeding through its fluidity. The obstruction suggests to the viewer to expect that finding mechanisms or codes to locate for cipher will not be easy and is sometimes off-putting in its abstractedness. But because something is gained and lost as a result of the binary nature of the abstracted photograph this is felt as a sensory and personal experience in the mind, body and spirit and then it is denied. As such the abstracted photograph represents and functions as a site of resistance.

*Walking the whenua* as an intuitive act of *doing* may be seen as an



Fig. 1.63. Untitled  
Marsha Davis 2008

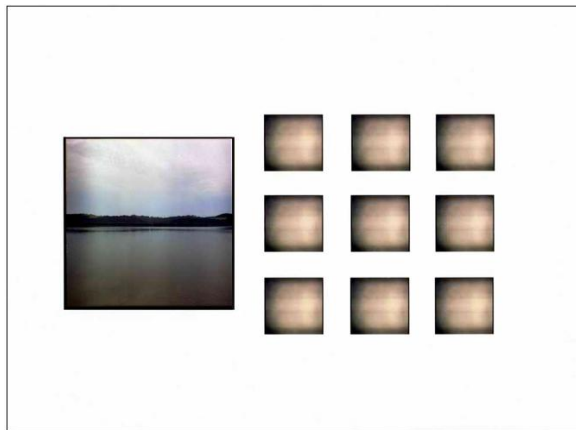


Fig. 1.64. Untitled  
Marsha Davis 2008

investment in the sensory nature of memories of others' and a desire to directly engage dislocation as a way of *satisfy[ing] one's taste and appetite*. The abstracted photographs generated by *walking the whenua* are artifacts of the experiential.

Tukutuku is a visual symbol of Māori oral histories and it is also an art form. Its function is that of a communication portal between present inquiry and the past which is the knowledge base. Applying tukutuku as an exemplar led to research in;

- design pathways
- identifying codes
- weaving photographs

### 3:5 Conclusion

As a result of testing abstracted photographs a number of conclusions have been reached. The abstracted photograph suggests it functions as an object of dislocation as its content is presented in a form that is non-real. The abstracted photograph *is* representational through codes and symbols rather than subject matter that is clearly identified through referents. If devoid of symbols, the abstracted photograph becomes a space within a space and may be read by contextual codes and offers a number of concepts through which to examine why it performs differently to other photographic genre and reads the way it does. One method is to examine the production process and context of the process. The following common

codes, relative to my research were generated:

### **The emotive code**

This is a subjective code producing emotion. Its formal qualities are colour, repetition, and movement. Movement is characterized as any form that is blurred, unfocused or unreadable. The emotive code is suggestive of sensation and is a visceral, experiential and aesthetic code.

### **The code of simulation**

This is a code which relies on repetition or continued duplication from the original object, suggesting a continued removal from and of the real. This code relies mainly on repetition, which prevents the viewer from relating to the content of the abstracted photograph, except through a graphic element or form. It gives a sense of information overload through repetition. Simulation is a sterile code which is graphically repetitive. The term graphically repetitive may also be applied to emotive codes but the element of diversity of colour and the influence of space in the emotive code breaks or disrupts elements of simulation.

### **The graphic code**

This code relies on colour, design, spatial elements in an arrangement of objects or patterns. This code is primarily spatial and relies on areas or lines of colour or patterns. It refers to other disciplines such as topography, design or graphs where the element of colour defines areas and groups of objects.

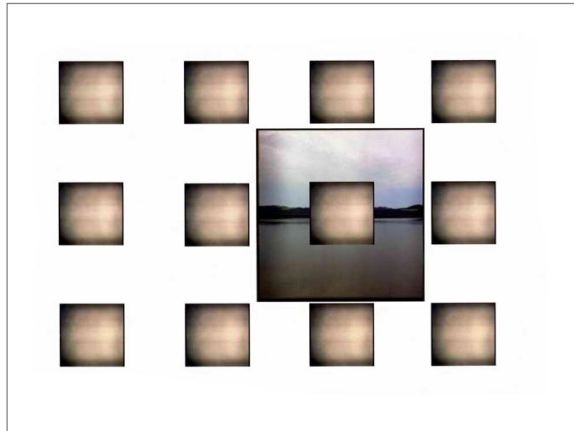


Fig. 1. 65. Untitled  
Marsha Davis 2008

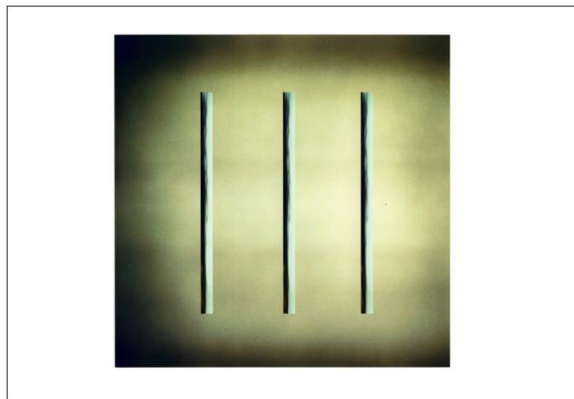


Fig. 1. 66. Untitled  
Marsha Davis 2008

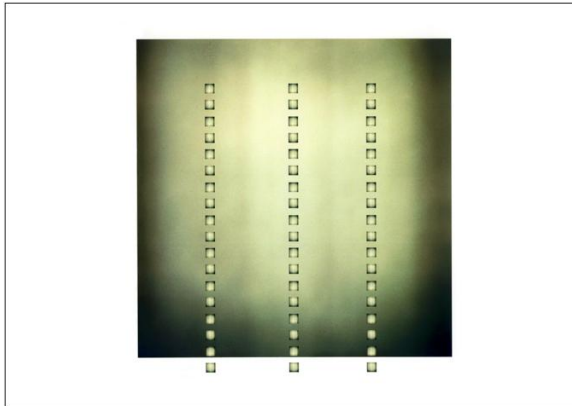


Fig. 1. 67. Untitled  
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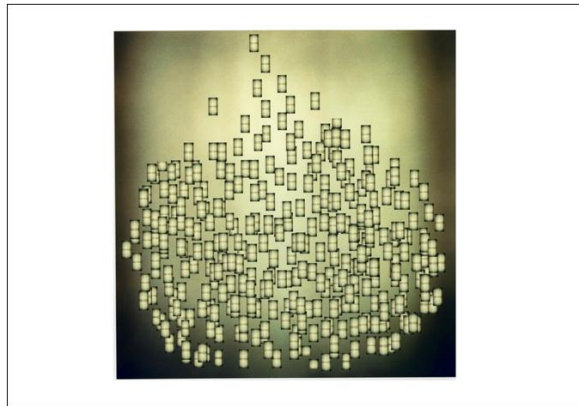


Fig. 1. 68. Untitled  
Marsha Davis 2008

### The code of privilege

This code relies on the use of selective focus or is the result of a process which privileges one *thing* over another. This is a form of abstraction of the symbol within the abstracted photograph itself. It relies on comparison and/or contrast to be read suggesting the removal of the *original thing*. It is a code that reflects loss. The code of privilege also relies on layering, a structural technique of oppression related to the application of power in order to displace. It is also a code of omission.

### 3:6 Aesthetic manifestations of abstracted photography

Aesthetic manifestations cannot be confined within the two-dimensional space of an abstracted photograph as the symbolic meaning, assumed to be explicit, expands beyond its locale and beyond the edge of the frame for confirmation. In this way the abstracted photograph's boundary is surpassed. This process is the beginning of the exchange of data where the concept of the sign in the photograph exchanges with the context the viewer brings to the photograph. Adding to the philosophical value of the abstracted photograph is a number of codes concerned with a *sense* of the object as opposed to its validity and evidential state as in other forms of photography, such as medical photography. Codes that place value on the abstracted photograph from an emotional reading are aesthetic observances which may be summed up as noting that the abstracted photograph possesses a weighty sculptural presence.

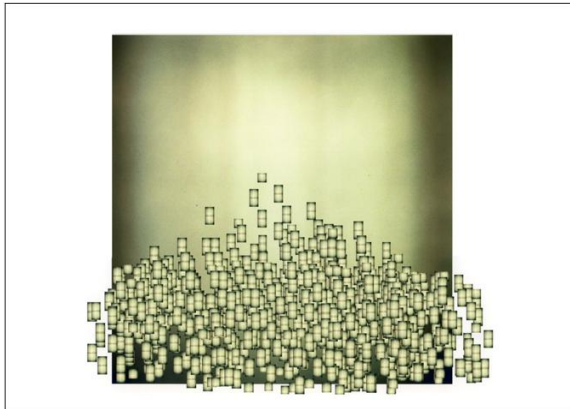


Fig. 1. 69. Untitled  
Marsha Davis 2008

### 3:7 Performance of the kete model

The kete model offers a research framework for the Māori researcher that is appropriate not appropriated by Māori. As a methodology it is informed by Māori ideology and secured by whakapapa and tacit cultural knowing. It is grounded by an *insider* perspective in a site that is governed by what Māori value highly: relationships.

Knowledge is expansive and research following Western models that focus and narrow a research inquiry can be reductive. Relationships are operative systems of communication and in Māori culture the strands of knowing come by way of a complexity of codes and networks. The kete model allowed me to put down a strand and take up a new one without losing that unit of information because it is held in place by other strands of research. Because research starts with an idea or question it is informed by a *thing*. In that way research is inseparable from its origin. The kete model operates beside kaupapa Māori research appropriately enabling Māori engagement of their cultural values, learning theory, ideology and knowledge. *Walking the whenu* was an amazingly intense period of practice returning outcomes that were failing. Applying the kete model to my research practice has helped me conceptually separate each research component as individual strands and see their worth. When confronted with a question I could not answer I restored to an earlier time and so the kete's strength is in its interconnectedness and ability;

- To inform a multiple number of research strands at any one time,



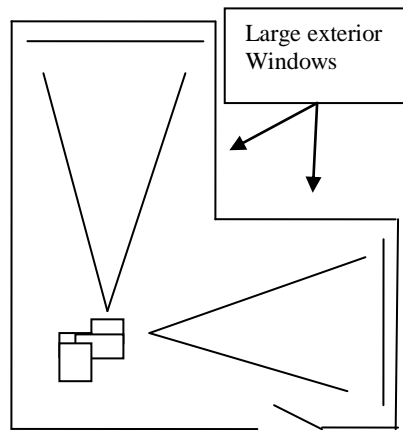


Fig. 1. 70. Proposed layout for Graduate Exhibition, 2009 in the upstairs gallery space of the Jeff Wilson Gallery, NorthTec, Whangarei, New Zealand.

- Allows the lateral and vertical application and transference of knowledge,
- To reinforce and stabilize research in tandem with kaupapa Māori research,
- To provide a culturally appropriate ideology to address design and function.

## Appendix

Post Graduate Exhibition 2009

Date: Thursday 26 February 2009

Time: 11:30 pm to 1:30 pm

Exhibition Location: Upstairs gallery space, Jeff Wilson Gallery, Art Department, NorthTec, Whangarei.

The Graduate Exhibition considered space, design, light and its absence, interpose. The abstracted photographs (stills) were presented as projections.

## Space

The upstairs gallery of the Jeff Wilson Gallery is an L-shaped space. I chose to utilize this space because of its architectural design and the ability it gave me to run separately two projectors without light from either projection overlapping. Exterior light sources posed a number of concerns and in order for my projections to be visible these were addressed in the following manner.





Fig. 1. 71. Preparation of right wing upstairs gallery, 2009. Jeff Wilson Gallery, NorthTec, Whangarei.



Fig. 1. 72. Preparation of left wing upstairs gallery, 2009. Jeff Wilson Gallery, NorthTec, Whangarei.

## Light

The gallery has four exterior light sources in the form of two large windows, one small skylight and a connecting window overlooking the main gallery. Daylight floods into the upstairs gallery through all four windows. The north facing exterior wall has a triangular window measuring 4.7 metres at the floor, the adjoining west facing exterior wall contains a large window starting 2.3 metres from the floor and which extends to the ceiling and the length of the 5.2 metre wall. The two smaller windows measure 1.5 metre high by 1 metre wide and the skylight is 1.4 metres square. The two smaller windows were covered with black polythene as were the two large exterior windows and the entire walls in which they were inset. The exclusion of exterior light from the room created a dark space. The gallery walls were cleaned and touched up with paint to present an even and unmarked surface on which to project.

Two data projectors, a Panasonic PTLM2E and a Toshiba TDPS35 connected to two laptops were set at right angles on plinths between 180 and 200 cm high and the projectors were set on top and directed toward each end of the L-shaped space. The projected area of an individual still was approximately 280 cm wide by 210 cm high. I did not include audio in the exhibition.

## Dark Space

In a dark space, in the absence of light, a repositioning of the visual, the sensory and place occurs. If the notion that a dark space is an environment

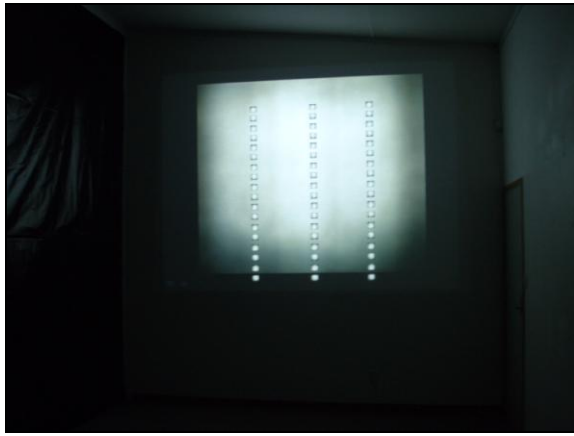


Fig. 1. 73. Still from *Tauwehe 2*. Marsha Davis. Graduate exhibition 2009. Jeff Wilson Gallery, NorthTec, Whangarei, New Zealand.



Fig 1. 74. Still from *Tauwehe 2*. Marsha Davis. Graduate exhibition 2009. Jeff Wilson Gallery, NorthTec, Whangarei, New Zealand.

of sensory atrophy then the stills projected within that space may be considered as a convergence of information equally weighted giving rise to an environment of exposure and interpose. As part of the final exhibition layout I chose to consider a John Tagg's discussion on Michel Foucault's assertion of the "constant articulation of power on knowledge and knowledge on power...what Foucault calls a regime of truth". Tagg (IR) suggests, "What defines and creates 'truth' in any society is a system of more or less ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution and circulation of statements". In this context I considered how the delivery (projection) of my statements (photographs) may consider dislocation as part of the process of delivery. In order to test the location of dislocation as a process I sought to divide the attention of the viewer by presenting two projections at right angles to each other. This meant the viewer could only view one projection at a time. In order to view the other projection the viewer had to turn 90°.

### **Tauwehe 1**

This series of stills comprises the early works addressing the nature of cultural loss through impressions captured in abstracted photographs while 'walking the whenua' as creative art practice. The stills are interactions, tracings and explorations of the notion of loss, removal of place, memories of place and ancestor who experienced omission and exclusion from their cultural landscape subsumed by a new social framework. *Tauwehe 1* stills address exploration of themes emerging from the work such as alienation and separation of Māori cultural mores from the perspective of the

dispossessed. Tawehe 1 stills explore in the landscape of loss.

### Tauwehe 2

The second set of stills consist of later works emerging during a period of intense digital production and reflection on the “constraints of boundary” and tension as a condition of control and loss of power. Tauwehe 2 examples tukutuku weaving in which emerging codes are applied as a means for understanding *that which has been removed* to draws out cultural narrative in new representations with origins in the landscape of Te Tii Waitangi.

### Exhibition Conclusion

Projected on a large scale the stills were powerful and strongly emanated form and function. The abstracted content of individual still was enhanced by size and by being illuminated by projected light. I felt some images, particularly those with referents to boundaries, were more successful. The few containing the human form were unsuccessful and destabilized the abstraction by introducing a known and recognizable referent. The abstracted photographs were successful as an environment. Being large and bold they became individual statements of narrative within a space.

In relation to the abstracted nature of the stills, during the exhibition; that brief dark space or interval when a still ceased to be and the screen and environment was enclosed by darkness became an intriguing space in its own right and a site of potential absence. Juxtaposed with light emanating

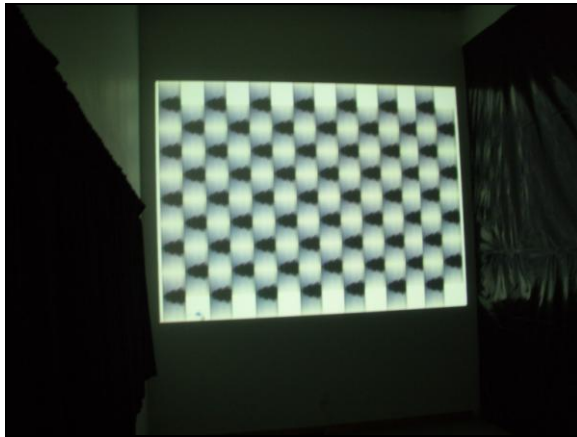


Fig 1. 75. Still from Tauwehe 1. Marsha Davis. Graduate exhibition 2009. Jeff Wilson Gallery, NorthTec, Whangarei, New Zealand.

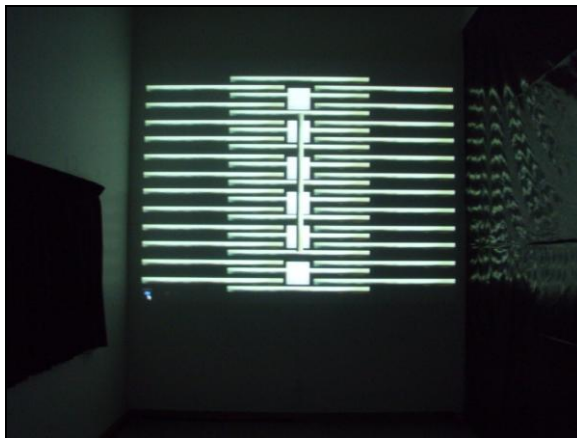


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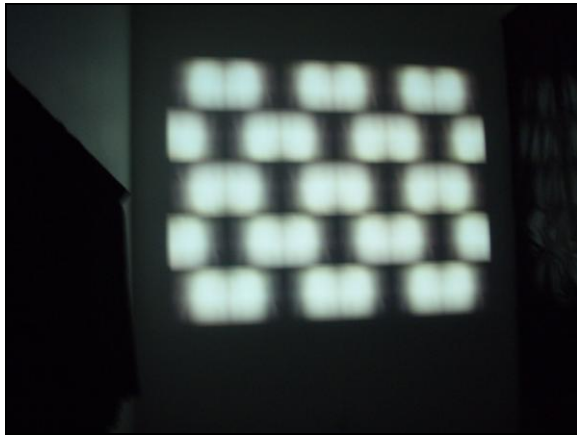


Fig 1. 77. Still from Tauwehe 1. Marsha Davis. Graduate exhibition 2009. Jeff Wilson Gallery, NorthTec, Whangarei, New Zealand.

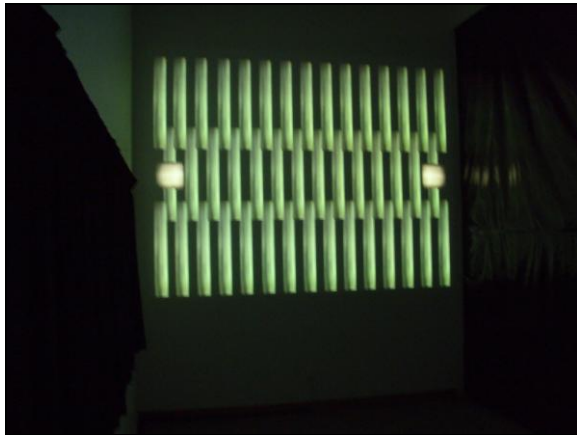


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from the stills which seemed tangible evidence of a photographs inclusive field when projected, interpose became a liminal space of potential and through the repetitive interplay of light and dark became a site of experiential engagement.

The spatial design of the exhibition, or L-shaped space, achieved an effect of displacement by creating a sense of non-reconciliation. The requirement of disengaging physically from one set of stills to engage the other although arranged to engage the viewer in an element of physical control beyond the power of the viewer provided the viewer with a confused encounter. The L-shaped space successfully achieved the desired outcome aim but gave the viewer a dislocated experience.

### General conclusion

The Tauwehe project originates with kaitiaki of Te Tii Waitangi, Aotearoa, describing how the loss of our whenua and resources affects living practices. It explores the possibility that, in relation to Te Tii Waitangi, these instances of cultural dislocation and displacement may be rendered visually perceptible. Tauwehe is a visual arts research project, which responds to and explores dislocation and displacement themes in Te Tii Waitangi oral histories. For this research project Tauwehe, a Ngapuhi<sup>59</sup> word which means: *boundary lines, whenua that's been separated for years, to step on to the whenua*, provides an intuitive construct, in which I explore how abstracted photography may evoke dislocation and displacement while weaving new stories for Te Tii Waitangi.

On Monday 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2010, Stage One of Te Paparahi o Te Raki (Northland Inquiry) into He Whakaputanga o Rangatira o Nu Tireni (The Declaration of Independence) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi), began. With over 300 claims originating with representatives of Northland, New Zealand hapu, the hearings are likely to span a period of approximately four years. My Mother claims on behalf of Ngati Manu hapu. For my Mother and many other claimants it is the time to seek amendment of the wrongs committed against Māori by the British Government who colonized Aotearoa and the Colonial Government that perpetuated their example. She and many other Northland claimants who continue to gather oral histories and produce records proving indigenous sovereignty now join in a collective outpouring to make known past and contemporary injustices through a *cultural voice*.<sup>60</sup> However, embedded in the treaty claims process are the codes of dislocation and displacement, for the hearings are a system structured and controlled by the New Zealand Government who is both the Oppressor and the Judge.

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Department of Lands and Survey map No. 12543

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