

FIVE MĀORI  
PAINTERS

FIVE  
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*For Elizabeth Aroha Ellis in recognition of her lifelong support for  
Māori artists and advocacy for contemporary Māori art at Auckland  
Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki*

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MĀNOIRI  
PAINTERS

# CONTENTS

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## FIVE MĀORI PAINTERS

Original typography in *Five Māori Painters* was developed by Neil Pardington (Kāi Tahu, Kāti Mamoe, Kāti Waewae). The typography used in the masthead and headings was inspired by traditional raranga, tāniko and tukutuku designs, and carved lettering in 19th-century whakairo.

07	Foreword	Rhana Devenport
09	He Karanga ki te Tokorima Kaikōwaiwai Māori	Elizabeth Ellis
11	Five Māori Painters	Ngahiraka Mason
27	Star Gossage: Tōna Whatumanawa Māori	Ngahiraka Mason
35	Robyn Kahukiwa: Painting Resistance	Jonathan Mane-Wheoki
45	Emily Karaka: Painting without Constraint	Ngahiraka Mason
55	Saffronn Te Ratana: Tikanga Toi	Anna-Marie White
65	Kura Te Waru Rewiri: Ngā Momo Whakaaro	Nigel Borell
75	Use of Kōkōwai in Traditional Māori Society	Louise Furey
81	The Paint in Painting	Sarah Hillary
86	Glossary	
87	Further Reading	
88	List of Works	
92	Artist Biographies	
94	Contributors	

# FOREWORD

Rhana Devenport – Director, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

*Five Māori Painters* continues the commitment of Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki to the work of Māori artists through exhibition, collection and, importantly, through associated research, knowledge sharing and dialogue. The exhibition investigates the place of painting today and highlights the sustaining power of the painted form as an energised medium for expressive communication, investigation and human empathy. This project builds on the Gallery's 2008 exhibition *Turuki Turuki! Paneke Paneke! – When Māori Art Became Contemporary*, which mapped a generation of pioneering artists who became cultural leaders as artists, educators and mentors to Māori, including the artists in *Five Māori Painters*.

The five artists are Kura Te Waru Rewiri, Emily Karaka, Robyn Kahukiwa, Star Gossage and Saffronn Te Ratana; collectively, their work forms a major contribution to the cultural life of Aotearoa New Zealand. The exhibition illustrates this contribution and highlights threads of influence to past centuries through ancestral knowledge, aesthetic form and philosophy. This publication and the exhibition follow each artist's unique development in their approach to form, ideology and their handling of materials.

The wider project, including artist interviews, a symposium, conservation research and the essays included here, begins from the contemporary to trace time and tradition, drawn from both Māori and European sources. How do these intergenerational artists make paintings today? Why does painting still hold such potency and power as a communicative and investigative avenue for artists? How do paintings connect audiences to ideas, knowledge and emotional states? These are all questions that *Five Māori Painters* explores.

To enhance our understanding of the materials of painting and their rich and diverse traditional usage by Māori, *Five Māori Painters* includes 19th- and 20th-century objects on loan from Auckland War Memorial Museum Tamaki Paenga Hira and works on paper that depict scenes of 19th-century life in Aotearoa New Zealand. The contemporary paintings in *Five Māori Painters* live firmly in their own time and are engaged with the fundamental questions that art asks of today's world; be they questions about spiritual or interpersonal concerns, or about land, language, culture and power. All five artists are women, offering a welcome rebalance to the dominance of male artists in international

museum collections and exhibitions, while contributing another layer of shared experience among the parallel practices within the exhibition.

I wish to thank Ngahiraka Mason, Indigenous Curator, Māori Art, for her dedicated work in conceiving and developing this important exhibition; and the Haerewa Advisory Group for their sustaining and heartfelt guidance. I also wish to thank Creative New Zealand and JBWere for generously supporting the presentation of this project for our audiences. Thanks to Zara Stanhope for her curatorial management, Clare McIntosh in an editorial capacity, Jaenine Parkinson for project support, Julia Waite for assistance with interpretation, and our marketing, conservation, registration and design teams. Finally, and most importantly, I wish to thank the artists for their faith in painting as both a precarious and precious medium.

# HE KARANGA KI TE TOKORIMA KAIKŌWAIWAI MĀORI

*Karanga mai, karanga mai, karanga mai  
i te mana o te wahine.*

Haerewa welcomes Kura Te Waru Rewiri, Emily Karaka, Robyn Kahukiwa, Star Gossage and Saffron Te Ratana to Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. We celebrate this landmark exhibition of your works. We acknowledge your voices and the messages that resonate through your paintings addressing issues that are historical, contemporary and visionary, and which reflect Te Ao Māori, our world. He mihi aroha tēnei ki a koutou.

These artists represent the increasing numbers of Māori women of all ages who keep our culture alive and dynamic. Women have always held a pivotal and active role in Māori society. Traditionally, many of the artworks made by women comprised materials that did not endure and recognition of their brilliant techniques and innovative designs in fibre were therefore not always fully acknowledged. Times have changed and women are now being actively promoted in all artistic disciplines and excel in the contemporary art arena. *Five Māori Painters* is an example of this.

This exhibition is a celebration of the achievements of Māori women artists. We look forward to this being the turning point and beginning of a new era for exhibitions of contemporary Māori artists in our Gallery.

Haerewa is the group of Māori artists and scholars who have been cultural advisors to the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki since 1994. We are proud to support Mana Wahine and the *Five Māori Painters* exhibition.

*Te toi whakairo, ka ihiihi, ka wehiwehi, ka aweawe te ao katoa.  
Artistic excellence makes the world sit up in wonder.*

Elizabeth Ellis CNZM JP, Ngāti Porou, Ngāpuhi  
Chair of Haerewa

Haerewa Members  
Fred Graham, Ngāti Korokī Kahukura, Raukawa (Kaumātua)  
Mere Harrison Lodge, Ngāti Porou  
Bernard Makoare, Ngāti Whatua Heru Hāpai  
Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, Ngāpuhi, Te Aupōuri, Ngāti Kurī  
Selwyn Murupaenga, Ngāti Kurī (Kaumātua)  
Lisa Reihana, Ngāpuhi



Five Māori Painters (installation views)

# FIVE MĀORI PAINTERS

Ngahiraka Mason

*Function is the cornerstone of indigenous epistemology.*<sup>1</sup>

## Changing the Story

*Five Māori Painters* focuses on contemporary Māori painting, highlighting the different approaches taken to working in this medium by artists Robyn Kahukiwa (Ngāti Porou, Te Aitanga-a-Hauti, Ngāti Konohi, Te Whānau a Ruataupare), Kura Te Waru Rewiri (Ngāti Kahu, Ngāti Rangi, Ngāti Kauwhata), Emily Karaka (Waikato, Ngāpuhi), Star Gossage (Ngāti Wai, Ngāti Manuhiri, Ngāti Ruahine) and Saffronn Te Ratana (Ngāi Tūhoe). Artworks by these contemporary painters are exhibited with taonga Māori (heritage art), objects of material culture and the art of ancestors as documented by colonial artists in the 19th century. Together, the contemporary and historical material in the exhibition illustrates a diversity of art practice and thinking that is further examined by contributors of the essays published here.

This exhibition seeks to reposition Māori painting by offering an understanding of its early origins and by looking at how painting traditions have persisted while also undergoing continual development. Examining Māori art practices raises questions and encourages us to explore Māori epistemology – our thinking, our relationship to people and the natural environment. This expansive exercise makes clear the qualities of Māori creativity and purpose.

Curator Anne-Marie White has written on how tikanga Māori (Māori custom) informs the painting practice of Saffronn Te Ratana. White plots the career of the artist, identifying where Te Ratana draws on her Ngāi Tūhoe whakapapa (genealogy) for creative direction and how she applies tribal knowledge in her three-dimensional painting. A return to Māori thinking and philosophy in Te Ratana's painting marks a welcome and radical departure from being drawn into imitating trends in contemporary art practice, and it has the effect of exposing the conventions and conservative nature of painting in Aotearoa New Zealand today.

Art historian Jonathan Mane-Wheoki addresses the politicisation of Robyn Kahukiwa and discusses art as a form of political activism, looking to international historic and modern examples. Mane-Wheoki explores the connections between Jacques Callot and Francisco Goya, and explains influence of Pablo Picasso's celebrated anti-war painting, *Guernica*, 1937

on Kahukiwa's arresting *War*, 2012. The rise of indigenous rights movements generally and the fluid yet powerful Māori rights movement specifically are key drivers in Kahukiwa's practice, which Mane-Wheoki's essay charts.

Emily Karaka is without doubt Aotearoa's painter of political discourse with reference to the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. Her position is important as a descendant of signatories to the Treaty. I have written the essay on her work with this in mind in order to show the power of coming to a political subject with experience, being involved in Treaty claims and settlement processes, and finding a way to thoughtfully record the experiences of a living, controversial document. In this way Karaka strikes a balance between life, people and politics through the cultural practice of mahi ngawari (staying flexible).

For more than a decade Star Gossage has painted at the intersection of land and wairua (spiritual essence) specific to her tūrangawaewae (home/place to stand) at Pakiri, north of Auckland. Her family whakapapa locates her ancestors at Pakiri and Hauturu since the beginning of time. In my essay on Gossage I aim to give a sense of the places and thinking that inspire her work and the international influences that encircle it.

Curator Nigel Borell traces Kura Te Waru Rewiri's training and career to provide a broader backstory to the artist's painting practice. An emphasis on the carved figurative form derived from whakairo (carving) is discussed to demonstrate its importance in her art and to illustrate how she treats the carved form in painting. The essay provides insight into Te Waru Rewiri's research process and tikanga practices.

Two essays were commissioned to highlight the painting medium of kōkōwai (ochre) used by Māori ancestors; and the painting techniques of the artists in *Five Māori Painters*. Archaeologist Louise Furey provides insight into the pigments that Māori ancestors used, explaining how they turned a raw product into a painting medium and the technologies they used to extract the material, grind it and mix it to make paint. Furey provides important historic discussion of a painting practice that is represented by examples of kōkōwai and grinding stones in the exhibition. Painting conservator Sarah Hillary has written about how each artist makes use of paint and has surveyed their approaches to the medium to help us understand brushwork,



Five Māori Painters (installation view)

modelling, underpainting, and preparatory processes. Her essay reveals more about how the artists made their paintings.

A selection of taonga Māori provides evidence of a Māori painting tradition. These much older examples of Māori art forms, artist materials and 19th-century depictions of life in Aotearoa make the connection between the contemporary and the traditional. They confirm the enduring nature of Māori creativity, show the development of Māori painting and celebrate a continuum of artistic expression.

The challenge of the exhibition, catalogue and symposium is to raise the consciousness of New Zealanders to the beauty of a Māori worldview and to make Māori painting more relevant to our culture at large. The overarching framework for the exhibition aims to reignite understanding of the basics of customary approaches to Māori art while simultaneously illustrating recent, connected developments in contemporary practice. Changing the story, so that it takes on a Māori focus, is the fundamental ambition of this project.

### Critical Forerunners

*Five Māori Painters* owes much to the work of previous generations of Māori and non-Māori curators, especially those who have pioneered the development of kaitiakitanga (stewardship) in museums and galleries of both taonga and contemporary visual art. The title for the exhibition acknowledges the publication *Seven Maori Artists* (1986), which paved the way for Māori to write about Māori thinking and vision in relation to contemporary

Māori art practice. A chapter written by the late Dame Katerina Mataira in *The Maori People in the Nineteen-Sixties* (1969) introduced observations on the changes taking place in Māori art. The benchmark for discourse on Māori art, however, is set by the scholarship of Sir Hirini Moko Mead's *Māori Art on the World Scene: Essays on Māori Art* (1997). Mead's controversial keynote address 'Māori Art Restructured, Reorganised, Re-Examined and Reclaimed', presented at the Toiho ki Apiti Māori Art Conference at Massey University, Palmerston North, June 1996, provides a focus for the exhibition's symposium, *Changing the Story*.

### Why These Artists?

There is both individual and collective depth of practice in the art displayed in *Five Māori Painters*. Robyn Kahukiwa, Emily Karaka, Kura Te Waru Rewiri, Star Gossage and Saffronn Te Ratana exhibit a continuous whakapapa (lineage) of cultural ideas related to whenua (land), tūrangawaewae (place), tangata (people), te ao tūroa (the natural world) and wairua (spiritual connectedness). These artists each have a talent for unpacking Māori cultural concepts, and they have well developed personal philosophies related to this subject.

This project was necessarily intergenerational. The artists, all women, were selected in a concern for coherent visual expressions of Māori thought, rather than descriptions of a Māori worldview. The artists' creative impulses and the specifics of their experiences, awareness and impressions of life are unique to them, yet deeply meaningful to and in part shared by other indigenous peoples. Their creativity is powerful in our going forward because embedded in their making is an exciting return to being Māori. This may produce a state of tension in some non-Māori, but we are all better off for this tension.

### What is Māori Painting?

Ancestors developed a process for identifying and harvesting raw ochre to grind into pigment. They added and mixed in oil or water to make the paint adhere to rock, wood, animal bone, human remains and the human body. Māori preferred the colour red for its immediate vibrancy and it took on great symbolic meaning. Red kōkōwai, or more correctly its function when painted onto objects or people, is embedded in customary culture representing tapu (the sacred).

The interruption of colonisation and the imposition of European art history onto Māori art has changed the way we consider and ultimately understand Māori art from the past and the present. Ancestors developed a language of signs and symbols – Māori semiotics – in which meanings were tied up with how people viewed each other and how they existed through their multi-dimensional lived and spiritual connections with the natural world.

The elaborate rock paintings in the Canterbury region and rock paintings at Lake Tarawera tell us that the rendering of people, waka (canoes) and animals is a visual language suited to painting. This painting not only set the foundations for a Māori painting practice, it was a catalyst for shifting painting from two dimensions to three through sculptural forms such as pou (posts) and carved functional containers and other objects. It was on hoe (paddles) that kōwhaiwhai (abstract painting) patterns were first



Maker unknown  
Hoe, Canoe Paddle c18th century  
wood, kōkōwai paint  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
gift of Sir George Grey, 1887

Riwai Pakerau  
Heke date unknown  
paint, wood  
rafter from the meeting house  
Mauitikitikitaranga  
Collection of the Pewhairangi whanau  
courtesy of Auckland War Memorial  
Museum Tamaki Paenga Hira [45995]



Alfred Burton  
*Wharepuni at Koroniti, Wanganui River*  
 c1898–9  
 gelatin silver print  
 Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
 The Ilene and Laurence Dakin Bequest  
 purchased 1999

detected, followed by kōwhaiwhai painting of the hulls of waka. Repeating kōwhaiwhai patterns on heke (rafters) inside a wharepuni (meeting house) was another turning point for Māori painting. The form of a heke with kōwhaiwhai painting and its prominence within a house evolved stylistically at a quicker rate, in part because as canoe building went into decline, house building increased. This had the added effect of presenting abstract painting inside Māori architecture for the purposes of being admired and of connecting to the natural world through pattern. Underlying kōwhaiwhai art is an appreciation for extending the uniformity of the form and conceiving new, multiple and diverse combinations of pattern. The pītau (curved stalk with bulb), koru (spiral elaborated) and kape (crescent pattern) are the basic foundation of kōwhaiwhai and in various combinations these three motifs are capable of generating great depth and variety in design. The wharepuni is the equivalent of an art gallery for Māori; it is where all the arts are presented for appraisal and enjoyment and kōwhaiwhai holds a place of prominence. The place of carving in relation to Māori painting owes much to the evolution of the curvilinear art form developed by Māori ancestors. This was extended to kōwhaiwhai and tā moko (permanent decoration of the skin) and these things combined had a practical significance in the lives of people.

Narrative naturalistic painting of scenes of Māori life make an appearance during the years following the arrival of settlers in the 1800s. The arrival of manufactured paints enabled an approach to painting that detailed Māori ways of life and practices, and



which resulted in the painted interior of wharepuni becoming more elaborate. The teachings of Maori prophet Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki and the houses built for the Hāhi Ringatū (Ringatū religion) are models for this shift in Māori painting. The Hāhi Rātana (Ratana religion) also adopted a language of painted symbols, colour and meaning in their simple houses.

Some critics believe contemporary Māori art has sold out to the fast economies of the art market and that it no longer connects with Māori culture. However, while the context of art production has changed, it does not necessarily mean that Māori painting no longer expresses the beliefs and values of ancestors. All of the essays in this catalogue touch on this idea in their investigations into the practices of these five artists. Better explanations related to this are needed in the wider contemporary painting discourse, especially because Māori art is no longer the sole preserve of Māori. What should always be remembered as this discourse evolves is that Māori painting is, arguably, most meaningful when Māori cultural concepts are understood as being foundational.

### Whenua, Tangata, Tūrangawaewae

Whenua (land), tangata (people) and tūrangawaewae are basic to Māori art and are made evident in Emily Karaka's painting *Waste the Man, Maumau Whenua, Maumau Tangata Wasteland, Wasteman,*

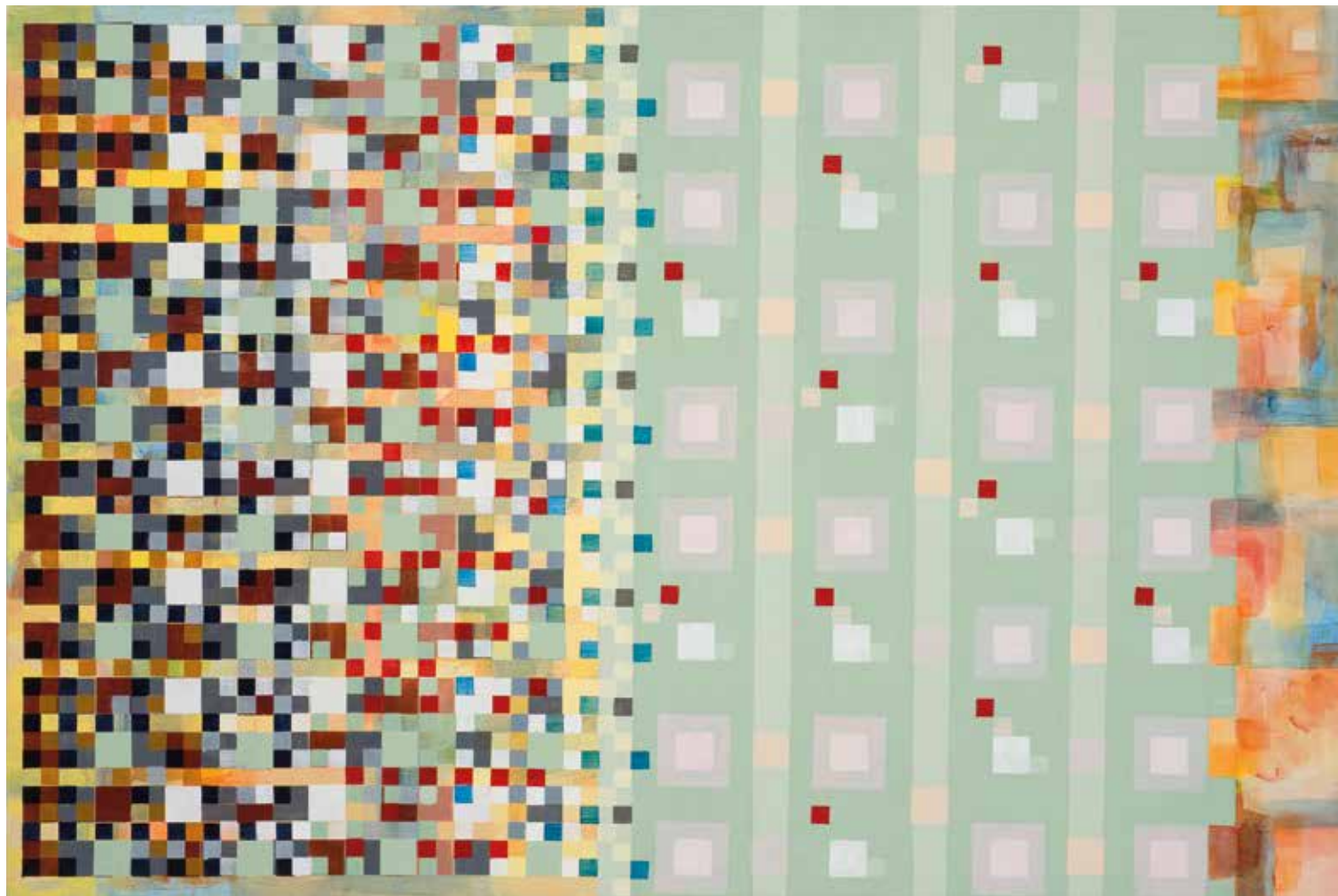
J W Giles & George French Angas  
*Tomb of Huriwhenua, a Late Chief of the*  
*Nga Ti Toa Tribe, Queen Charlotte Sound*  
 1844  
 hand-coloured lithograph  
 Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
 purchased with funds from the M A Serra  
 Trust, 1987



Robyn Kahukiwa  
*Whakapapa Birth & Death* 2005  
 oil on canvas  
 Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
 purchased 2008



Emily Karaka  
*Vision Hauraki* 1997  
 acrylic and oil on canvas  
 Collection of John Hood and Anne Hood,  
 on loan to The University of Auckland



Kura Te Waru Rewiri  
 Front 2003  
 acrylic on canvas  
 Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
 purchased 2012

created in 1986. The painting is a response to the Auckland Waste Land Act of 1858, which alienated Māori from their land, perceived at the time to be wastelands which would be put to a better use in the hands of settlers. These 'wastelands' include sacred sites. Painted and carved figures and a waka are attached to the painting and could be read in two distinct ways. The waka has sailed and any control of inevitable change to Māori ways of life since the times of ancestors has long passed. Alternatively, the painting in its entirety suggests another way to create the future, if we see it differently. That is, we can manifest change for the better that is centred on the arts, culture and wellbeing of Māori.

Tūrangawaewae is critical but also no longer a reality for Māori dispossessed or separated from their homelands for many years. Robyn Kahukiwa is the consummate carrier of this message, and it is a personal experience for her, one that is wrapped up in her adult identity. The importance she places on staying in the present and documenting both the successes and failures of Māori is notable. The facts of shifting demographics, low employment opportunities, the Treaty settlement process and the power to define how we are today is powerfully expressed in Kahukiwa's painting *Power to Define* (p 37) and its companion painting *Resistance, Te Tohenga* (p 39), both from 2009.

The Treaty of Waitangi is the document many New Zealanders would identify as the cause of disagreement and separation between Māori and Pākehā. Treaty claims and Treaty settlements are the domain of Karaka. The artist has spent much of her life as a political watchdog for matters related to Māori rights and the Treaty of Waitangi. In a Māori context, issues that need resolving and redress are brought forward for wānanga (discussion) and debated until agreement is reached. In ancestral times, taonga items, land, women and even carved meeting houses were offered to a wronged party to bring things back into balance. In a sense, the act of painting and the subject matter she chooses are Karaka's way back to a state of equilibrium. A little known fact about Karaka is that she is a strong conservation advocate, supporting the protection of sacred sites and the native flora and fauna on Motutapu, in the Hauraki Gulf, for future generations.

In these ways, Kahukiwa and Karaka are actively engaged with their uri (relatives) and with the causes that impact them, their children and mokopuna (grandchildren). Karaka and Kahukiwa are single-minded in their desire to reverse the disconnection some Māori people have from Māori culture. They hold concerns for the basics required for proper childrearing. Providing the bare necessities of life – food and shelter – have become important issues for both women, along with strengthening communities. Not only is art considered taonga; healthy environments are too.

Three-dimensional objects combined with painted artworks or works that are philosophically positioned as political and social statements are part of the discourse that maintains the histories of the past in the present. The arrival of missionaries in the Far North in the early 19th century drove Ngāpuhi carving literally and metaphorically underground. Carvings were destroyed because they were considered heathen images, incongruent with Christian values and beliefs. Kura Te Waru Rewiri grew up without a carved wharenui (meeting house) and instead went to meeting places that were simple structures modestly adorned with paint.



Saffron Te Ratana  
*Whakarongo ki te Karanga* 2014 (detail)  
 fabric, acrylic paint, paintbrushes, steel pins  
 courtesy of the artist

The eight painted panels in *Whenua/Wahine/Whenua (Land/Woman/Land)*, 1989 (p 64) reflect Te Waru Rewiri's affection for ancestral land and her whakapapa to the Hāhi Rātana. Attached to the work are eight rākau (sticks) which were gathered from a wahi tapu (sacred place) known to her whānau (family). Her father gave permission for the harvesting of the kānuka sticks and blessed them with appropriate karakia (prayers). *Whenua/Wahine/Whenua* is Te Waru Rewiri's way of conveying the importance of land, and this whakataukī (proverb) illustrates the idea: Toitū he whenua, whatungarongaro he tangata (The land remains after the people have gone).

### Te Ao Tūroa, Wairua

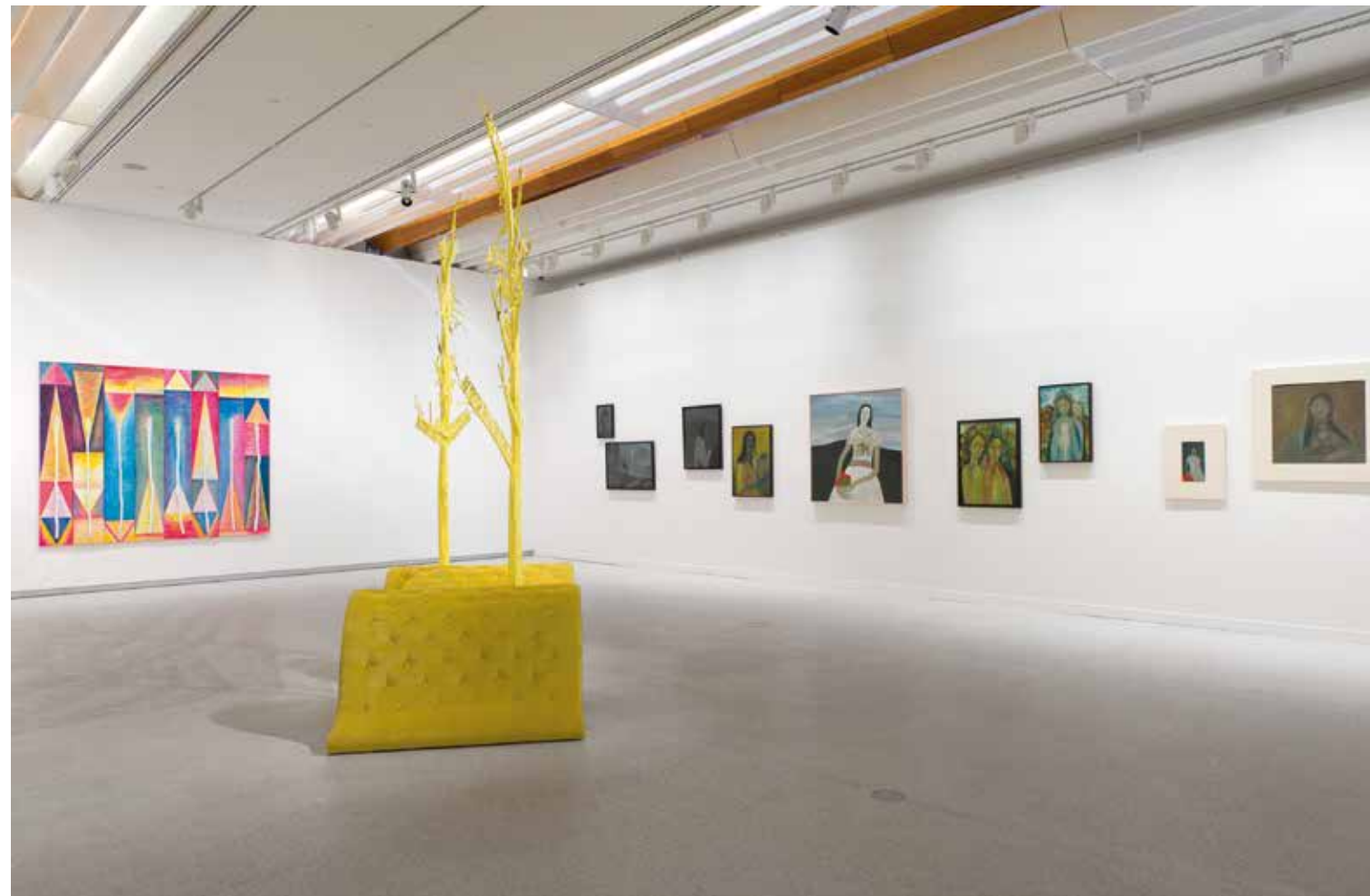
Customary Māori artists worked with a purpose and function; they marked milestones in the culture, and their making, thinking, visioning and transmission of ideas in visual and material culture underpin the future of Māori art. Te ao tūroa and wairua reside in all the artists' oeuvre. Acceptance of the importance of these two ideas has brought forward a noticeable shift in thinking about and approaches to Māori painting. Saffron Te Ratana's work of the past decade shows an evolution in her thinking and practice, which has literally moved from the wall to the floor and ceiling, and from two dimensions to three. Her approach to a new way of making paintings and the process she developed has transformed her practice several times over.

Te Ratana recognised that paint was more than something to manipulate as a material on a two-dimensional plane and this revelation changed everything. With land, people and the Māori language at the centre of her practice, and a keen awareness of Western ideas concerning painted Māori histories, she embarked on a radical shift in her practice. Te Ratana's paintings are the renderings of her lived and art historical histories. *Whakarongo ki te Karanga*, 2014 (p 62) is an undulating landscape in Te Urewera. Two trees stand tall in the construction adorned with reo Māori (Māori language) and carved birds. The work focuses on language retention and on ensuring her children are exposed to her thought processes. Typical of her generation, Te Ratana wants an integral Māori cultural upbringing for her children, which extends to raising them in a Māori-speaking home. She also exposes herself through her whānau to deeper understanding of belonging and longing for homelands and connecting to the essence and wairua of land and people.

Star Gossage's style is moody, raw, dark and cerebral. Her content is heartfelt and tends to generate emotional responses in viewers. The artist paints with vigour, which has the effect of transmitting energy that remains in the painting after its completion. Gossage has established an approach to portraiture that is new in New Zealand painting. Her double portraits dating back to the early 2000s were exclusively female, sometimes conjoined, other times separated, and they reflect the ebb and flow of life and its uncertainties. Gossage's picturing of her tūrangawaewae, Pakiri, is haunting. Te ao tūroa, people and the avian world mingle and coalesce in her complex and forceful narration of self-discovery and mystical activity.



Star Gossage  
*Whai* 2011  
 oil on board  
 Private collection, Auckland



Five Māori Painters (installation views)



*Five Māori Painters* (installation view)

### Culture in Art – Art in Culture

Through their artistic endeavours the artists in *Five Māori Painters* demonstrate that they understand concepts of Māori life and culture as these pertain to them. Rather than look to conventional Western theories and thinking, they choose to employ Māori conventions and thinking when creating their paintings. In this way, the artists make art with an understanding of who they are today and communicate this through direct experience.

Focusing on contemporary Māori painting is not a new idea. It is worth noting, however, that a 'type' of contemporary painting has found success in national and international exhibitions, but the intellectual and spiritual Māori legacies associated with Māori painting have not been recognised at the same pace – if at all. Tradition is still seen as something that belongs in the past and which is therefore not relevant today, but it is the key to a deeper understanding of who Māori are as a contemporary people. Just because we live in a different time from our ancestors does not mean we have nothing to learn or gain from them in order to contribute to a continuum of visual culture stretching into the future. Describing Māori painting only in one dimension or in Western terms has the effect of controlling it, separating art from its origins and alienating it from Māori people.

Māori possess understandings of the philosophies behind a diversity of practices, which include the ideas that produced heritage objects and deliver the contemporary art of the present. Art produced across generations records the stories of people and reminds them of their histories and development as a culture. A society without art is unimaginable, and one in which art has false depth or restricted, shallow meanings is unconscionable.

### Toi Pīwari

A Māori approach to discussing the art practices of Māori guides people to the changes occurring in Māori visual culture. It also identifies the expanded circumference of Māori art, commenting on what is sent out into the world, rejected and received as contemporary art practice. Influences from other parts of the world, the rise in the visibility of indigenous contemporary art on the world scene, and the shift in international indigenous discourse has moved toward exhibiting *how we are* rather than *who we are*, and this is a necessary next step in discussing Māori art production.

Creativity is a simple awakening system. It is the life purpose of some artists and instructs the interest and focus of curators and historians. Māori ancestors considered our creative production as *toi pīwari* (beautiful art) and something to speculate on – forward and back across time and space. *Toi pīwari* will endure if it functions within a culture that allows it its own meaning for its own renewal.

### Notes

- 1 M Meyer, *Ho'oulu: Hawaiian Epistemology and Early Writings*, 'Ai Pohaku Press, Honolulu, 2001.



Figure 1  
*Early Spring 2004*  
 oil on hardboard  
 Chandra Family Trust, Auckland

# STAR GOSSAGE

TŌNA WHATUMANAWA MĀORI

Ngahiraka Mason

## Tohu Mana

At the beginning of a conversation with Star Gossage at her whānau (family) property at Pakiri on top of tall sand dunes overlooking the ocean, a small bird appeared from nowhere and flitted about trying to attract our attention. Its high-pitched trill was a surprise wero (challenge) rather than a karanga (call). The artist quickly identified the bird as her favourite – the skylark. This provocation from the avian world caused me to acknowledge that I was both visitor and intruder to its territory, and a manuhiri (guest) to the ancestral homeland of Gossage. While trilling, the skylark ascended steeply and rested in space as if on some invisible platform. I decided to view the experience as a tohu mana or good omen.

## The Early Years

Star Fleur Gossage was born on 1 March 1973 in Auckland. She obtained her Diploma of Fine Arts majoring in computer art and film from Otago Polytechnic School of Art in 1995. While studying at the polytechnic she took a year off to explore film and theatre production, and studied playwriting at the University of Otago. Gossage made her film acting debut in Barry Barclay's *The Feathers of Peace* (2000). The following year she showed three paintings in an exhibition entitled *Ora* at Oedipus Rex Gallery, Auckland. The same gallery presented her first solo exhibition, *Grey*, in 2002.

This formative period of Gossage's painting practice marks the beginning of an emotional journey during which she painted herself into reality as an artist. The conventions of art school training taught Gossage not so much the technical aspects of painting, such as colour theory or the formal qualities required of European painting, as an appreciation of the value of the creative process. At the end of her studies, when forced to choose a medium, she decided to teach herself to paint.

The physical supports Gossage used for her early paintings were discarded board and wood scavenged from her neighbourhood as well as other materials she could acquire cheaply. She blended small containers of paint in her studio, sourcing local clays, sand and tar, and mixing these with house paints. Gossage naively thought painters made and mixed their own paints; she would gather lime from the side of the road

to achieve, for instance, an opaque white. Her brushes were necessarily inexpensive, and she developed a push-and-pull technique with rags. Looking back on this period of making it is apparent that certain features of the paintings were left to chance; the images were put together through process rather than intent, and Gossage destroyed works that she felt were not 'strong' enough. At this time, introspection and self-doubt were balanced by gardening, hard work and play.

Gossage's physical isolation in rural Pakiri, northeast of Auckland, combined with a talent for experimenting with materials, meant she sometimes discovered things the hard way, finding success through mistakes. Although her paintings from this time may feel laboured, they are not overworked. A trademark of this time is a fast-paced approach in which surfaces were roughly worked and drawing combined with painting wet-on-wet so that the paint dried evenly. One effect of Gossage's ferocious method was that her brushes would be worn to stubs, remnants that would be later discarded in a pyre. Multiple paintings were often created in a single session, delivering both a visual weightiness and a concentration of focus.

Gossage communicates an evolved intuition that is older than her years and in her painting is able to imagine, point to and paint places where dreams and secrets intersect. *Out of the Gate*, 2002 (fig 2) depicts a lone ethereal figure floating in a wild and moody Pakiri landscape of trees that have endured and survived the torturous elements. The ghostly figure draws your eye in, claims the pictorial space and evokes the ascension of Christ after his agonising death. Despite its title implying a 'freeing' or a 'release', *Out of the Gate* is an unsettling and haunting work.

Gossage is not a member of a religious faith, nor restricted in her thinking about belief systems, whakapapa (genealogy), Māori values or Māori spirituality, however she was named for the 'star' symbol of the Rātana faith. Her parents were married by a Rātana minister and her father converted to Rātana after the marriage, so a connection to Tahupōtiki Wiremu Rātana can be seen as a natural link. The Māori prophet is said to have had the gift of healing through prayer and had a vision of the Holy Spirit which he described as being like 'a whirlwind cloud'. Rātana received spiritual messages for his people and 'visioning' was part of his



Figure 2  
*Out of the Gate* 2002  
enamel on board  
Private collection, Auckland



Figure 3  
*Fortrose Ruru* 2002  
oil on board  
Private collection, Auckland



Figure 4  
*Two Tiki and the World Is Your Oyster* 2002  
oil on board  
Brian Wood Collection, Auckland

function in society at the time. His purpose was also to bring about an understanding of spiritual destiny for his Māori followers. In this way, *Out of the Gate* might be seen as picturing a presence rather than an unnamed identity, location or event. The floating figure is a metaphor for Gossage's emotional state; at the centre of the painting, an open road leads into a distant and unknowable place.

Gossage's poems, written at art school in 1995, touch on deeply personal emotions and thoughts. She narrates fact in a way that does not separate it from fantasy or reverie. In her paintings, too, a melancholic impulse is wonderfully described. Her parents required mental health support from an early age, both before they were married and after, so the artist grew up visiting mental health institutions. Gossage's early life experience was quite different from that of her peers and associates which, on its own, provides some insight into her intellectual processes and emotional capacity. The artist struggled with depression before the birth of her daughter in November 2004, and it could be said that in some ways painting became her medicine.

#### Hitting a Pawpaw with a Stick

One day in summer outside a church in Ponsonby Auckland  
My Māori mother held a golden geranium in her hand  
wearing a long white dress with a high waistband  
My Pākehā father wore a black suit with smart shiny shoes  
My Māori mother and Pākehā father were married in  
nineteen seventy-one.  
A Rātana priest married them . . .

The paintings in her first exhibition, *Grey* (2002), offered a new take on Romantic painting and included visionary events and dark, illusionary landscapes. The heartfelt layers of rawness in these early works evoked strong responses from viewers, who were drawn to her unconstrained expression of feeling. This is borne out in paintings such as *Fortrose Ruru* and *Two Tiki and the World Is Your Oyster*, both from 2002 (figs 3 & 4). Interestingly, *Small Bird* (fig 5) and *Girl with Lily*, both painted four years later in 2006, appear less 'anxious', despite being equally tightly and tensely rendered. In works painted early in her career there is evidence that Gossage did not hold back her feelings; her responses to her life were painted for all to witness, and viewers were attracted by her emotional freedom and what they could experience of her mind in the artworks.

#### Interiority

Introspection abounds in Gossage's painting practice. Between working on paintings in her Pakiri studio, the artist focused on developing her understanding of paint as a medium and painting as a contemporary practice linked to a European tradition. This quest took her to Spain, Rarotonga and Australia. Her travel to Spain critically informed the expansion of her style and opened up a range of approaches to the painting of her own interiority. Her imagery continued to alternate between reality and non-reality with the greatest emphasis placed on emotion as the means by which to identify the processes of her consciousness.

Gossage looked carefully at Abstractionist Antoni Tàpies, Surrealist Salvador Dalí and the Cubist works of Pablo Picasso.



Figure 5  
*Small Bird* 2006  
oil on board  
courtesy of the artist and Tim Melville  
Gallery, Auckland



Figure 6  
*The Last Fisherwoman of Cadaques*  
*(La ultima pescadora de Cadaques)* 2013  
 oil on canvas  
 Private collection



Figure 7  
*Woman with Veil* 2006  
 oil on board  
 Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
 purchased 2013

Later she studied Odilon Redon, the French symbolist famous for saying that he wanted to 'place the visible at the service of the invisible'. Gossage strives to represent pictorially the things that exist in her mind and studying these artists helped her form a plan of action. The type of creativity to which she is drawn suggests she shares an empathy with others. Gossage's identification with the work of Spanish poet Federico García Lorca, together with her interest in the ebb and flow of complex life patterns and the state of introspection, is evident in the paintings *I saw myself in your eyes* and *Under a Frond of Stars*, both from 2006.

While travelling and researching, Gossage spent time in the fishing village of Cadaqués, located just south of the French border where the Pyrenees mountains meet the Mediterranean Sea. This charming town was a favourite of Dalí. *The Last Fisherwoman of Cadaques (La ultima pescadora de Cadaques)*, 2013 (fig 6) was made rapidly and narrates a friendship Gossage struck up with an elderly fisherwoman from Cadaqués. At the time, the fisherwoman told Gossage her life story, which included selling her catch at the village marketplace as well as door to door, and walking many miles each day. She reminded Gossage of her kuia (female elders) back in Pakiri, itself a coastal village. *The Last Fisherwoman of Cadaques* includes Christian iconography – the Virgin Mary, a starfish which represents Christ's cross, and Adam and Eve hold a place of prominence in the painting.

On returning to Pakiri from Spain in 2003, Gossage found that she was pregnant. The artist's external and internal worlds immediately changed, requiring a new awareness of and focus on both her emotional life and the direction of her career. With a changed life purpose she needed to be 'present', a shift reflected in a 2004 artist statement:

Eight months ago I had a baby. Her name is Grace. When she sleeps I paint. These paintings are rare blocks of time... Metaphoric in nature, they are symbolic of certain states of mind.

Painting her daughter was a means to manage aspects of her life while at the same time introducing the presence of new subjects. Her painted figures, and especially the treatment of their eyes, became less piercing yet more emotionally charged. Gossage has taken Grace on several pilgrimages to meet her relatives in Spain. Many of the artist's works from this time focused on Spain through homage to Lorca's poetry and to a life far away. *Under a Frond of Stars*, 2006, a mother and child portrait, is one such painting and its title is taken from a line in Lorca's poem 'Variación/Variations'.

A portrait of Lorca appears in *Mi Amigo Lorca y Yo*, 2006 and his influence is also seen in the artwork *I saw myself in your eyes*, 2006 a double portrait intended as a remembrance for children who do not make it to birth or adulthood. This type of transition between internal and external worlds resonates deeply in Gossage's paintings.

Between 2007 and 2009 Gossage travelled to Rarotonga and Australia seeking both a fresh direction and a better understanding of colour. She achieved this by observing people in the natural environment, as well as by investigating the relationships that indigenous peoples have with the land and with the spirit world.

The paintings from this period are infused with strong reds and yellows and show Gossage's blue-skinned people which, since then, have become part of her personal iconography. Her portraits are deliberately non-traditional in a 'formal painted portrait' sense; rather, they are naive with figures that often appear distorted, damaged or disfigured. The face of *Woman with Veil*, 2006 (fig 7) has almost disappeared, as has the bouquet of flowers she is holding. A keen and accomplished gardener, Gossage is clear that she does not study flowers as a still-life painter might; she instead paints the flowers of her imagination inspired by what she sees in her garden.

The artist's most recent paintings show yet another shift in style, including imagery from childhood which is rendered metaphorically. Gossage feels fortunate that her whatumanawa Māori (place of affection for being Māori) is beautiful and wants to reveal the gentler side of things Māori, the everyday, the things not talked about. This excerpt from a poem she wrote in 1995 is reminiscent of that sharing and simple beauty:

My Māori mother named me Kōwhai because just before  
 I made it to earth  
 She had a dream of a child running around and around a  
 kōwhai tree laughing

The natural arrangement of the land around Pakiri provides Gossage with all she needs to flourish and it is there that her purpose is most powerfully felt. Pakiri is her tūrangawaewae (a place to stand) and its many histories, accrued over time, work to shape, encircle and nurture all its inhabitants. How fortunate the skylark.



Figure 1  
 Wai Tangi 1990  
 lithograph  
 Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
 purchased with funds provided by the  
 New Zealand Lottery Grants Board, 1991

# ROBYN KAHUKIWI

## PAINTING RESISTANCE

Jonathan Mane-Wheoki

Ever since Robyn Kahukiwi, as a housebound mother of young children in Greymouth, took up painting in the late 1960s, the content of her work has been exclusively Māori.<sup>1</sup> This perspective has largely been shaped by her personal and domestic circumstances. For the greater part of her career, the largely self-taught, Sydney-born artist, through a process of research, trial and error, has investigated and claimed her identity as Māori through paintings of Māori life, custom, culture and cosmology. Her art has signposted the stages of her identity formation and journey through her adult life as homemaker, from early motherhood, the adolescent years of her children – bringing a maternal empathy and tenderness to the young, culturally displaced Māori and Pacific teenagers she taught at Mana College, Porirua, from 1972 to 1982 – through to their adulthood, and her current status as a grandmother, kuia (elder) and widow. Continuity of the female line across the generations, from 'women of Māori myth' to the present day, is a constant thread in her artworks. In a career spanning more than three decades she had become, by the dawn of the new millennium, one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most nationally and internationally renowned contemporary indigenous women artists.

### Painting Politics

Kahukiwi's art has long resonated with the politics of Māori nationalism. 'How can you paint about Māori and not paint about political issues? How can you separate the two?' she recently asked.<sup>2</sup> In 2004, however, the politics were ratcheted up several notches as her art took on the character of overt political activism. Since then in an average of three 'masterwork' paintings a year (as well as smaller scale works and illustrations for children's books and posters) she has fervently asserted Māori rights of tino rangatiratanga (sovereignty). As far as Kahukiwi is concerned, sovereignty has never been yielded: Māori are the indigenous people of Aotearoa and they are the owners of the land and of their own intellectual and cultural property.

In an exhibition entitled *New Zealand Natives* held at the Warwick Henderson Gallery in Parnell, Auckland towards the end of 2004, she presented a series of six medium-scaled works which argued that tangata whenua (people of the land) are, as Kahukiwi put it, 'native of this country and are part of this land, as are the birds and the trees'.<sup>3</sup> The group of paintings constituted

a riposte to two political addresses that had been presented earlier in 2004. The first, a speech on nationhood delivered at the Orewa Rotary Club on 27 January 2004 by Don Brash,<sup>4</sup> the leader of the National Party in opposition, unleashed a torrent of anti-Māori sentiment among Pākehā that spooked the Labour-led government to make haste with a bill to prevent Māori, in seeming contravention of Article Two of the Treaty of Waitangi, from claiming title to the coastline.<sup>5</sup> On 28 July Trevor Mallard, Coordinating Minister for Race Relations, presented a speech on the topic 'We are all New Zealanders now',<sup>6</sup> in which he displays remarkable insensitivity and caused great offence among Māori in appearing to play down the importance of the Treaty at a time when the government's Foreshore and Seabed Bill was making its way through parliamentary process to be passed into law in 2005.

The most important work in the *Natives* exhibition was the large canvas *Hikoī*, 2004 (fig 2). This depicts a 'sea' of 14 stylised busts of men, women and children representing the tens of thousands of Māori who, having marched from departure points throughout New Zealand, converged on Parliament in Wellington on 5 May to express their furious opposition to the government's proposal to enact the Foreshore and Seabed Bill.

The entire field of this large painting comprises the Tino Rangatiratanga flag, and the heads of the tangata whenua are superimposed on that field. In speech balloons issuing from their mouths, in emphatic capital letters, is a chorus of 'NO's that resonates with historical text from Wi Tako Ngatata of Te Āti Awa:

I ask you Pakeha what did the Queen tell you? Did she say to you 'Go to New Zealand and fraudulently take away the land of the NATIVES'? You say no. Then WHY DO YOU ENCROACH UPON LANDS that have not been FAIRLY PURCHASED? (September 1844)

On the right-hand side of the painting, Kahukiwi quotes Resolution One of the Paeroa Declaration of 2003:

THE FORESHORE AND SEABED BELONG TO THE HAPU AND IWI UNDER OUR TINO RANGATIRATANGA.<sup>7</sup>



Figure 2  
*Hikoi* 2004  
 oil, alkyd oil and oil stick on loose canvas  
 Private Collection, New Plymouth



Figure 3  
*Power to Define* 2009  
 oil and alkyd oil on canvas  
 courtesy of Tairāwhiti Museum

A kaitaka-cloaked child flourishes the 1834 flag of the United Tribes of New Zealand, a flag which, Kahukiwa asserts, 'has never been rescinded'.

Tariana Turia, a junior minister in the Labour-led government, resolved to vote against the bill at its first reading, which left her with no alternative but to resign from the Labour Party and contest a by-election in her Te Tai Hauāuru electorate under the banner of a new party: the Māori Party. She won this election convincingly on 10 July 2004. Hone Harawira was among those who were elected in 2005 as Members of Parliament for the new party. In 2011, however, Harawira, a long-time hardline activist for whom the more pragmatic and accommodating Māori Party had become, in effect, the lapdogs of the John Key-led government, walked away in protest and formed the Mana Party.

These developments were watched with burning interest by Robyn Kahukiwa. For her, 'Taria is my hero for doing what she did.'<sup>18</sup> From creating an impressive body of work in celebration of Māori culture, history and values, during the three decades up to 2004, it was a logical next step for her to wholly embrace the essentialist political idealism of the Māori Party and the uncompromising staunchness of the Mana Party and to express unwavering solidarity with both through her art.

'Has your message shifted as political concerns have shifted?' she was recently asked. 'Not really,' was her response. 'It's all about the Treaty... underpinning it all is the Treaty. The Foreshore and Seabed issue has been a huge event in Maori history because it's the biggest land confiscation in modern times; it's had a huge effect on me and my work, but it just comes back to the Treaty.'<sup>19</sup> In all of her work since at least 1990 the Treaty has been

either implied or directly referenced. Other frequently recurring elements in her mural-like allegories include: the United Tribes and Tino Rangatiratanga flags. Both appear in the monumental *Nga tipuna ki mua, ko tatau kei muri*, 1996, where, for the first time, 'she represented a comprehensive history of Māori people in one work'.<sup>10</sup> In *Environmental Product*, 2011 (Counties Manukau Pacific Trust collection) the flags are flourished by a Māori woman with arms outstretched behind a family seated on a promontory of bare earth and rocks and separated by cyclone wire and razor wire from their rightful inheritance of land, foreshore and sea. The skull smothered in the sacred red ochre *kōkōwai* in the foreground, a common motif in Kahukiwa's activist paintings, represents the ancestor.

Skulls are present in her two seminal works of 2009 – *Power to Define* (fig 3) and *Resistance, Te Tohenga* (fig 4) – and the compositions are peopled by a range of characters representing conflicting indigenous and Pākehā world views. On the right-hand side of *Power to Define* a business-suited non-Māori man symbolises the ruthless greed of both the corporate sector and politicians. Right of centre a teenage Māori girl is momentarily distracted by the authority over Māori as the dead culture (symbolised by the *mokomokai* (tattooed head) held up as a trophy and the textbook *Māori Analysed*) that Pākehā academics, researchers and politicians suppose it to be while police, under the authority of the government represented by an image of the Beehive, assert an oppressive force over young urban Māori. On the left-hand side Māori identity, knowledge and culture are related to a customary context represented by the *whare* (house) in the background where the Tino Rangatiratanga and United Tribes flags flutter on the foreshore. The 'Supa Hero', Hina, a Māori Wonderwoman, supports a mother who has just given birth. A *kererū* and a spray of *kōwhai* flowers rest on the shoulder of a warrior who is about to receive a heart transplant.

In *Resistance, Te Tohenga* (fig 4) Hina and her male counterpart, the 'Supa Hero' Māui (who flourishes the Tino Rangatiratanga flag) are staunch in their defence of Māori values while a Māori lawyer confronts the Pākehā perpetrator of indignities against Māori, pointing to rights enshrined in the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975. Resistance is the only way to ensure the integrity of the culture whose continuity across the ages is represented by the carved ancestral figure, the mother giving birth, and the *koro* (elder) lying in state at his *tangi* (funeral).

Kahukiwa's husband, Dooley, died suddenly in 2005 and she painted a series of three cathartic works on this occasion, including *Whakapapa Birth & Death*, 2005 (p 16). While one might question the propriety of placing in the secular public domain of the Western art market images of a *tūpāpaku* (deceased person) lying in his coffin, for Kahukiwa the personal has always been political and the death of her husband provided her with an opportunity to honour him by locating his *tangi* in the larger cosmological context, within the natural and supernatural cycle of birth, life, death and regeneration. It is a profound statement on Māori identity and sovereignty.

### Art as Political Activism

The artistic genre to which Kahukiwa's activist works belong has a long and noble history in Western art culture. The French

artist Jacques Callot produced *Les Grandes Misères de la Guerre* (The Great Miseries of War), a series of 18 etchings, published in 1633 and commonly regarded as his masterpiece. Produced about halfway through the Thirty Years' War (1618 to 1648) in Central Europe, the work highlights the brutality, savagery, pitilessness and futility of that long, drawn-out conflict; and is regarded as the first anti-war statement in European art. The Spanish artist Francisco Goya is said to have owned a set of Callot's etchings. His own series of 82 prints, *Los Desastres de la Guerra* (The Disasters of War), produced over a 10-year period from 1810, also deals with the human cost of war in a country that had been invaded and was occupied by France. Goya's two most famous political works related to the occupation (both in the Prado, Madrid and created in 1814) are *The Second of May 1808*, which depicts fierce fighting in Madrid during one of the people's uprisings against the French regime, and the *Third of May 1808*, in which the defeated compatriots face execution by a robotic firing squad. So potent is this brutal and pitiable image, with its central figure in a glowing white shirt thrusting up his arms in a gesture of heroic defiance at the moment of his political martyrdom, that it has been revisited by later generations of artists in order to make political points. The French painter, Édouard Manet produced a series of paintings, *The Execution of the Emperor Maximilian*, between 1867 and 1869 depicting the emperor's death by firing squad, which reworks Goya's composition in more matter-of-fact Realist terms. In 1951 Pablo Picasso reworked Goya's composition in the political protest painting *Massacre in Korea* (Musée National Picasso, Paris).

The most celebrated anti-war statement in painting is Picasso's *Guernica*, 1937 (fig 5). Commissioned by the Spanish Republican government to adorn the Spanish Pavilion at the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris, this monumental work commemorates the bombing of the Republican loyalist stronghold of Guernica, a Basque town in northern Spain, by German and Italian warplanes on 26 April 1937 at the behest of the Nationalist forces of General Franco during the Spanish Civil War. The painting depicts a tumultuous scene of terror, death and destruction. Although Picasso discouraged a reading of the work in symbolic terms, the painting is iconographically complex. In the centre of the composition a wounded horse shrieks and staggers in agony; a fallen warrior occupies the left foreground while on the right a wounded civilian leaps up in terror. A woman holding a lamp floats across a doorway bringing light to what is otherwise a darkened room. The lamp contrasts with the cruelly naked light bulb above. Another woman rushes towards the light. On the left-hand side, in a reversal of the Madonna and Child imagery of traditional Catholic painting, a mother grieves over the body of the child she is holding. Above her a bull stands stoic and still. In the shadows behind the bull a startled dove holding an olive branch rises up. The work has come to be regarded as a universal statement on the brutality and tragedy of war and the suffering of the innocent, particularly mothers and children.

With the rise of the indigenous rights movement, artists are interrogating the historical circumstances that gave rise to their people's oppression and subjugation, and the sequestration of their lands and properties. In Aotearoa the resurgence of



Figure 4  
*Resistance, Te Tohenga* 2009  
oil, alkyd oil on canvas  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
gift of the artist, 2012



Figure 5  
Pablo Ruiz Picasso  
*Guernica* 1937  
oil on canvas  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

Māori nationalism and culture which gathered momentum in the aftermath of the Hiko (Land March) and the enactment of the Treaty of Waitangi Bill, both in 1975, politicised contemporary Māori art. The Treaty has been a constant theme: land rights, property rights, cultural rights – rights upheld by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in September 2007, to which the New Zealand government is a signatory. Emily Karaka, Robert Jahnke, Diane Prince and Tame Iti are among the contemporary Māori artists who have made powerful political statements against the colonised condition of Māori in their art. When asked if she considered herself to be a warrior of sorts, Kahukiwa replied, 'Yes, a late warrior.'<sup>11</sup> It may be noted here that in her iconic series of works painted under the title *Wahine Toa: Women of Maori Myth*<sup>12</sup> the word 'toa' means 'warrior'.

### A Warrior and Activist

As a Māori, a woman and a grandmother, Robyn Kahukiwa has become particularly anguished about child poverty and abuse in the Māori community. In an essay in the catalogue for Kahukiwa's 2001 touring exhibition, *Robyn Kahukiwa: Mauri Ora*, prominent lawyer and activist Moana Jackson had noted that the 'spate of Māori children being abused and dying is tragic'.<sup>13</sup> In 2006 the artist completed a pen and ink drawing, *Haehae mo nga pepi Kahui*, to mark the infanticide of twins Chris and Cru Kahui. The word 'haehae' refers to the tradition of self-laceration of the body by a mourner.<sup>14</sup> A work from 1984 which responds to the whakataukī (proverb) 'He aha te mea nui o te ao?' (What is the greatest thing in the world?) depicts an unborn child floating in its placenta. For Kahukiwa, a child is the most precious being in the world; for her, as the title of one of her most tender images expresses it, *He mokopuna he taonga*, 1993, a grandchild is a treasure. In these her latter years Kahukiwa is focused on both her art and her grandchildren.

When Hone Harawira, in May 2012, railed against what he called the 'corporate takeover of New Zealand' and condemned the government's plans to partially privatise four state-owned energy companies, he declared: 'We're in a war for our children's future.'<sup>15</sup>



Figure 6  
*War* 2012  
acrylic and oil on canvas  
private collection, Auckland



Figure 7  
*Bloodscent* 2004  
 oil on canvas  
 Private collection, Wellington

This war-cry inspired a mural-scale painting called *War*, 2012 (fig 6). The overall composition is adapted from Picasso's *Guernica* but Māorified in the process to address concerns about 'shocking health issues involving poverty, drugs, and alcohol abuse etc.'<sup>16</sup> On the left of the composition, Kahukiwa has retained the anguished mother holding the limp body of her 'dead or abused'<sup>17</sup> child. As with Picasso, it references images of the Madonna and Child which Kahukiwa has utilised from the very beginning of her career. At school, the artist recalls, 'We had those holy pictures, beautiful Renaissance artists, Raphael, Michelangelo and the Madonnas, I just loved the Madonnas.'<sup>18</sup> The broken sword in the right hand of Picasso's fallen warrior becomes, in *War*, a druggie's syringe.

The only element that is retained unaltered is the oppressive light bulb. The room is transformed into a 'prison of colonisation' with a barred window, through which the stars of the Southern Cross are visible. The horse has become a taniwha (water dragon). Representing iwi (tribes), it bears the design of the Tino Rangatiratanga flag on its body, and clasps in its tail the flag of the United Tribes. This is a reworking of *Taniwha wounded but not dead* (originally painted for the front of the 1990 Haeata Collective's 'womanhouse' *Hineteiwaiwa* at City Gallery Wellington's *Mana Tiriti* exhibition) where it represents Pākehā attacking Māori. (In the Neo-Expressionist *Bloodscent*, 2004 (fig 7) it is white dogs that are doing the attacking.) The lamp has become a dagger with which a personage symbolising the Crown stabs the taniwha. On the right a tattooed warrior gestures upwards to a poster bearing the words 'Te Tiriti o Waitangi'. The dove is transmogrified into a beautiful kererū perched on a rolled-up manuscript labelled 'WAI 262 claim'.<sup>19</sup> Kōkōwai-dripping skulls of ancestors lie on the floor. On the right a mother, holding a page inscribed 'We are in a war for the future of our children', shepherds her child. According to the artist, the mother is 'fighting back in this war we are in'.<sup>20</sup>

The artist is not only fighting back through her art but has taken practical steps to address the problems of child poverty and abuse. In 2011, with the singer Hinewehi Mohi, she started Kai4kids, making artworks to sell in order to raise funds for breakfasts and lunches in low-decile schools. *War* was auctioned on Trade Me as a fundraising initiative. Through social media she has found a means of developing and networking with her primary audience – Māori, an audience she simply could not reach in the Pākehā domains of art gallery exhibitions and art books. She has found a legion of fans, friends and supporters on Facebook and receives new commissions from this source. When Hone Harawira's Feed the Kids Bill came up for debate in Parliament on 13 November 2013, Kai4kids supported the Mana Party's initiative. As long ago as 1964 US President Lyndon B Johnson launched in his own country a War on Poverty. In present-day Aotearoa New Zealand the war continues.

## Notes

- 1 D Nicholas, Keri Kaa, *Seven Maori Artists*, VR Ward, Government Printer, Wellington, 1986, p 35.
- 2 H Clayton, 'Trusting Intuition: A Conversation with Robyn Kahukiwa', *Art New Zealand*, 140/Summer 2011–12, p 36.
- 3 G Bailey, 'Warrior for Maori Rights and Identity', [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=6&objectid=3610870](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=3610870), accessed 17 February 2014.
- 4 D Brash, 'Nationhood – Don Brash Speech Orewa Rotary Club', <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0401/S00220.htm>, accessed 17 February 2014.
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- 19 The WAI 262 claim, asserting Māori ownership of intellectual and cultural property rights, particularly in relation to indigenous flora and fauna, was lodged with the Waitangi Tribunal in 2011.
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Figure 1  
*Te Ipu Kura a Maki* 2007  
oil on canvas  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased 2008

# EMILY KARAKA

## PAINTING WITHOUT CONSTRAINT

Ngahiraka Mason

### Kia Ngawari

Emily Anne Karaka was born on 14 February 1952 in Auckland. Her mother, Margaret Rose, supported her children's activities and was a driving force in establishing a Māori arts centre, Te Whare Tapere, in Kingsland, Auckland. Her father, John Mita Karaka, held strong political views, helped advance Māori causes and advocated for Māori wharf workers on the Auckland waterfront. He was also a musician and this influenced Karaka's brother Dilworth, whose band Herbs is a creative and political touchstone for the Karaka whānau (family), Māori, and Aotearoa New Zealand music. Karaka's whānau is tight knit and spirited, and the phrase *kia ngawari* (be flexible) is a principle that guides the artist in her life and career.

### Urban Diaspora

Growing up in Auckland in the 1950s and 60s Karaka experienced the social and political changes that took place after World War II. Māori were encouraged to move from their rural homes to cities at this time to help grow a burgeoning economy and support wealth production for the nation. A Māori community centre was created in central Auckland to support migration and provide a meeting place for new arrivals and local people. Repurposed from a war depot, the building was located on the corner of Fanshawe and Halsey Streets. The venue quickly became a popular gathering place for Māori: regular dances were held at which show bands played. Careers were launched at the centre including those of the Maori Volcanics, the High Fives, the Quin Tikis and greats such as Prince Tui Teke and Billy T James. This period also saw the establishment of Maori Affairs housing and Housing New Zealand developments in the Auckland suburbs of Glen Innes, Orakei, Mangere and in West Auckland.

The Karaka family's old homestead at the top of the hill at Whatapaka marae at Papakura was a meeting place for the whānau, and the Karaka home at Maungarei (Mt Wellington) eventually became their urban *tūrangawaewae* (place to stand). The pulse of Māori life in Auckland shaped the beginning of Karaka's politics, which she would later powerfully represent in her art practice. As Karaka's views matured they fuelled her appetite for ferocious imagery and sociopolitical commentary.

### In the Mix

Karaka was exposed to a diversity of New Zealand painters and sculptors and art educators during her formative teenage years. These included Greer Twiss, Trixie Illingworth, Elizabeth Ellis (Mountain) and Colin McCahon. She took every opportunity to observe and refine her approach to painting and experimented with painting techniques and content. Marriage to Phillip Pace at age 16, the birth of their three children and the pursuit of owning a dream house in Glen Eden disrupted her early connections with art and artists.

After the death of her father in 1973 Karaka threw herself into painting; her first step was moving her whānau back to Glen Innes to live near her mother. With her children at school and the challenge of a complicated marriage, Karaka started drawing and re-examining her life's purpose. Part-time employment sharpened her awareness of life as a cycle and showed her that she could change situations by making discerning decisions. Emotionally, Karaka was grief stricken at the loss of her beloved father and the dissolution of the way things had been. This had the effect of catapulting her into finding out more about her Māori ancestry, inherited from both her parents; and this coincided with the resurgence or renaissance of Māori culture and language.

In the 1970s the aspirations of many Māori had shifted dramatically from being blue-collar workers to university graduates with professional careers. Indeed, a generation of Māori had risen to leadership roles in communities, replacing traditional models for leadership based on *whakapapa* (genealogy) and kinship ties. Change was happening and even more change looked imminent. Karaka's generation became engaged in wider political concerns, such as protest marches to raise awareness of political structures and redressing the historic taking of Māori land. Inspired by worldwide indigenous movements, groups such as *Ngā Tamatoa* became a formidable force seeking changes to attitudes at all levels of New Zealand's governance systems as well as those experienced by Māori in the academy and in social and public spaces.

Karaka committed to confronting racism, fighting inequities in housing and employment, and righting the wrongs her people had experienced since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. The 1975 Land March was still raw in the memories of Māori,



Figure 2  
*In the Mixing Bowl* 1977  
 mixed media on hardboard  
 Chandra Family Trust, Auckland

and the University of Auckland Haka Party incident, in which a group of Māori students confronted and tried to stop engineering students who were engaged in a mock haka (posture dance), polarised Aucklanders and New Zealanders. Takaparawha (Bastion Point) and the 1977 forced removal of Ngāti Whatua and their hundreds of supporters from the site was an unforgettable day in the history of Aotearoa New Zealand. The New Zealand Army demolished any sign of occupation and protest to accommodate plans to subdivide and develop this land.

At the height of Ngā Tamatoa activities in Auckland, Karaka produced the seminal painting *In the Mixing Bowl*, 1979 (fig 2), a poignant telling of the lack of control she felt in the personal, cultural and political spheres of her life. A red hand points and hovers over a group of figures who represent Karaka's whānau. One figure is Karaka's father, a strong authoritative figure in her life, and the colour red symbolises the deep loss the artist felt after his death. The larger figure in the picture plane represents the breakdown of the nation's society and the will of Māori to effect social and political change. The upper right portion of the painting references the influences of Christianity on contemporary Māori life. *In the Mixing Bowl* was first exhibited at Pakuranga Arts Society's 1979 exhibition *12 Contemporary New Zealand Painters*. Karaka displayed the painting in her first solo exhibition in 1980 at the Outreach & Auckland City Cultural Centre on Ponsonby Road, and it was after this that Colin McCahon claimed she had a future in painting. This work set the scene for more paintings, both in its style and content, and shows the artist giving permission to herself to visually document her life.

This approach was not unique to Karaka. Contemporary New Zealand art practice in the late 1970s was diverse at this time and artists such as Philip Clairmont and Tony Fomison had established an expressionistic practice that was individual and intertwined with a lifestyle which made a deep impression on Karaka. Clairmont and Fomison operated outside the social norms and expectations of the country's art scene. Karaka was a quick convert to constructing personal responses to issues. Under the mentorship of these two leading painters of the 1970s and 1980s Karaka made artwork with vibrant colours using strong gestural brushstrokes, sometimes splattering and dripping paint on her canvases. She commented on intensely felt issues in stronger and bigger paintings which incorporated collage and texturing of surfaces.

### Transformation, Uprising and Coming Through

In the 1980s Karaka's art practice enjoyed huge support but also experienced challenges. Her inner circle of artist friends and mentors increased, her marriage collapsed, Clairmont died and her friendship with Fomison soured. Despite her circumstances, Karaka entered a period of healing, evident in the painting *Coming through*, 1983. A lone figure dominates the picture plane, composed in part of heart motifs. Extended red hands make another appearance, invoking her father assisting Karaka to address an experience of gender bias against women in the New Zealand justice system. Statistics at the time for violent assaults and rape showed the difficult situation for many women despite efforts to educate and transform attitudes about emotional



and physical violence against women. Karaka presents her 'coming through' as a transformational moment, as expressed by this statement from 1984:

I have always had a deep sense of loss and loneliness, through having my soul voice repressed; a cry, quieted...

At this time Karaka had reached a new level of maturation in her thinking which translated into her painting practice. She used techniques learned from her mentors to convey troubling issues in her cultural life and communicated the shifting politics and the relationships between Māori and Pākehā. In 1986 Meremere Penfold commissioned a work for the recently opened Māori Studies Department at the University of Auckland from Karaka. The painting, *Waste the Man, Maumau Whenua, Maumau Tangata, Wasteland, Wasteman*, is a response to the Auckland Wasteland Act of 1858 which extinguished native title to land deemed 'wastelands'. The University of Auckland sits on part of 3000 parcels of Māori land acquired from Ngāti Whatua.

New Zealand was in a recession and Karaka became involved in the Project Employment Programme (PEP), which provided a living wage and studios for artists to produce work in the community. The scheme started in 1982 and catered for all art forms. The only prerequisite for selection was that applicants had to prove they were professional or semi-professional artists with a history of recent employment or training in the arts. In 1983, Karaka's PEP project was to make a painting that would be installed in the patients recreation area at Carrington Psychiatric Hospital located in Point Chevalier, Auckland. Karaka created an eight metre-wide triptych with the title *Planting, Searching, Rising: Taupiri is the Mountain, Waikato is the River*, 1983 (fig 5). After the painting was installed hospital staff requested the work to be removed because Māori patients were talking to it. In the Māori worldview this was considered a positive function of the painting;

Figure 3 (opposite page)  
*Whenua Whawhai* 1987  
exhibition poster  
E H McCormick Research Library  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
gift of Juliet Batten, 2008

Figure 4  
*Local Government Tea Party* 1997  
acrylic on hessian on board  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased 2013



however, it was removed and hung at the Ponsonby Community Centre, from where it was later stolen. Karaka's partner at the time, Norman Te Whata, retrieved the painting and Karaka delivered it to Auckland City Art Gallery, where it has been ever since. *Planting, Searching, Rising* is a literal response to Karaka's search for a deeper understanding of her whakapapa connections to Tainui and the legacy left by her grandparents and their connections to Princess Te Puea, an influential leader in Waikato Tainui, and to Te Rata Mahuta, the fourth leader of the Māori King Movement or Kingitanga. Mita Karaka was the secretary to Te Rata. The gestural marks are energised, bright and textured, and this is one of few paintings by Karaka where the colour white is dominant. Anthropomorphic figures sway across the river and land, and these mark the beginnings of a visual language that Karaka developed to reference the interconnectedness between people, the spirit and natural worlds.

Karaka's political alliances and interests, together with the choices she has made, have also shaped her art production over the past two decades. Her friends include activists, conservationists, politicians, iwi leaders, musicians, patrons and people from the business world. She has accrued respect from communities and benefited from these relationships. Karaka's protest involvements have included Maungawhau (Mt Eden), Te Maungarei a Potaka (Mt Wellington), Takaparawha (Bastion Point), two hīkoi (land marches), the 1981 Springbok Tour, Artists Against Apartheid and the Waitangi Action Group. She is a founding trustee on the Motutapu Island Restoration Trust, which instigated a large revegetation and cultural restoration project.

Karaka also has an international profile. She exhibited in South Africa at the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale in 1997, sharing this experience with Selwyn Muru, John Pule and Mark Adams. Their collective representation was titled *Tautoko*. The overriding theme of the exhibition was international relations, histories and geographies. Nigerian-born curator Okwui Enwezor was the

exhibition's artistic director and curators Tim Walker and John Walsh facilitated New Zealand's participation. Karaka's painting, *Painted Dream Garden*, 1991, was a work on paper. *Tautoko* as a whole represented the artists' support for South Africa's oppressed people. The fact that the biennial occurred was itself a small miracle; apartheid had only recently ended, and South Africa was straining to come to grips with its history. Politically, Aotearoa New Zealand was stumbling with its own response and understanding of race relations between Māori and Pākehā.

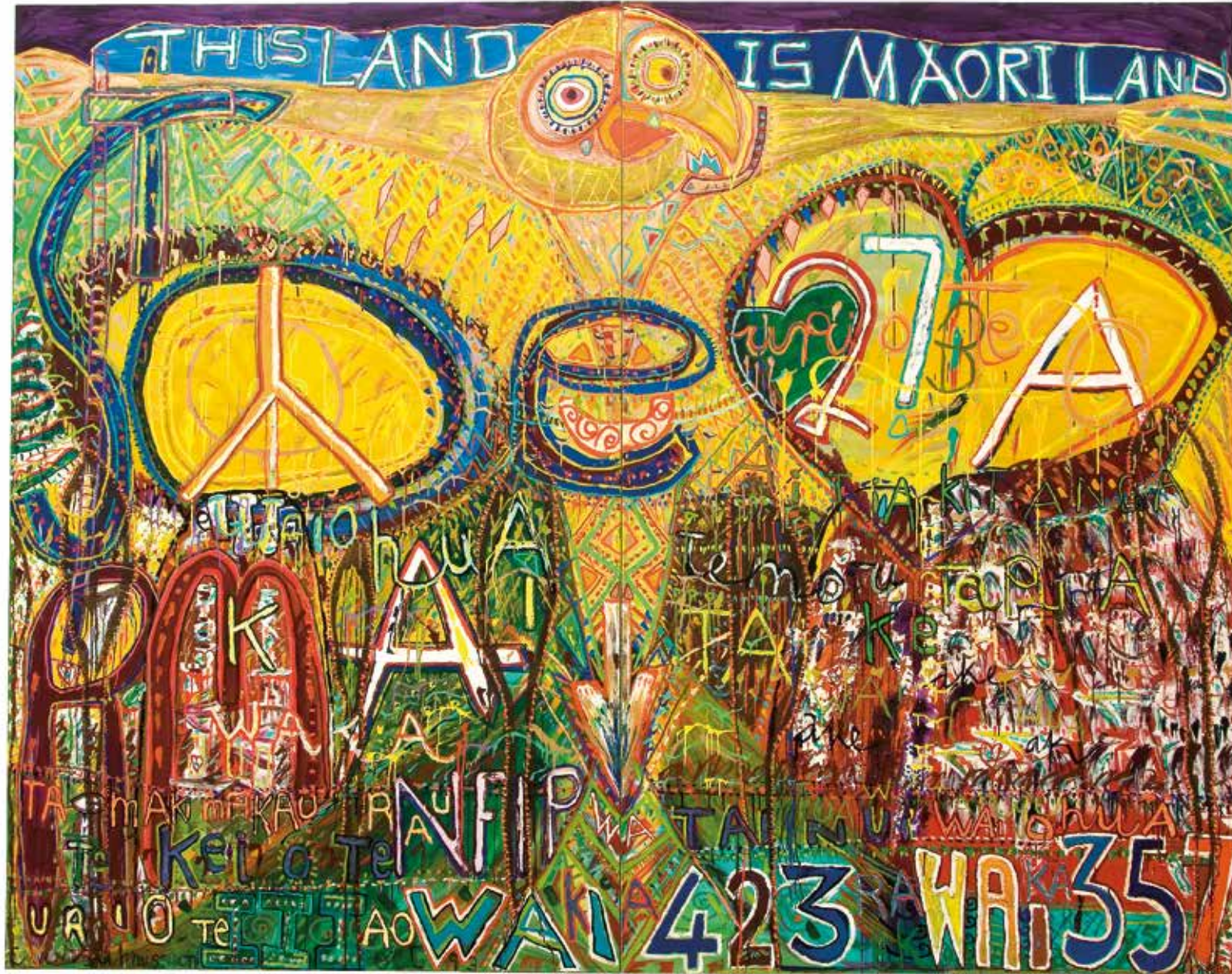
The biennial raised awareness in the international art scene about third-world peoples and was a paradigm shift at a difficult time. While this did not directly impact Karaka and her painting practice, it is interesting to plot this history in the light of where the artist next took her art. It must also be read in relation to the rise of indigenous artists on the world art scene and their contributions to contemporary art discourse.

### Te Tiriti o Waitangi

For the last two decades, Karaka's art making has focused on Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) claims. Created in 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi is the founding document of Aotearoa and acts as a binding agreement between Māori and the British Crown. In reality, the Treaty exists in two different versions – one in te reo Māori, the other in English. The documents outline principles that founded a nation state. Today, the right to determine the meaning of the Treaty rests with the Waitangi Tribunal, a permanent commission of inquiry created in 1975 to investigate breaches of the Treaty by the Crown. The political framework of Treaty of Waitangi claims is unique to New Zealand, and is one of this country's most contentious political developments. About her work related to the Treaty, Karaka stated in 1993:

My work has been centred around the Treaty of Waitangi as the founding document, as the base of legislation

Figure 5  
*Planting, Searching, Rising: Taupiri Is the Mountain, Waikato Is the River*  
oil on canvas  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
gift of the Auckland City Council  
Employment Department, 1985



and government in this country... It's to do with tino rangatiratanga [Sovereignty], our atua [gods], our taonga [treasures], land rights, living rights, arts and cultural rights guaranteed in that foundation document.

There is nothing subtle about Karaka's Treaty paintings. They possess a directness that is both jagged and enveloping. *Te Uri o Te Ao*, 1995 (fig 6) features a huge ruru or owl which hovers high on the canvas. The bird is regarded as a predictive messenger foreshadowing the as yet unknowable. Here, its wings are spread to reveal a cacophony of painted cries, and it looks out of the painting, weeping. Painted at a time when the New Zealand government privatised and sold off numerous publicly owned assets, Karaka criticises both past and present governments with the message painted across the top of the painting 'This land is Maori land'. At the time, writer Witi Ihimaera described Karaka's art as a frontal attack on the Treaty of Waitangi, and noted that her paintings highlight social and political issues affecting all Māori. Karaka's painting up to the present day laments the failures and legacy of the Treaty but is also part of a process of finding her way to forgiveness going forward, for the benefit of her mokopuna (grandchildren) and the future of Aotearoa New Zealand.

#### Without Constraint

Karaka produces art from a passionately emotional place. Her approaches are those of an artist with years of experience rather than an artist working to a career plan. Māori philosophies and cultural terms such as *kia ngawari* (be flexible), *wairua* (presence) or *hinengaro* (thought) are part of Māori life, and when you practise these things in public you are also releasing *mauri* (life principle) done knowingly and without expecting something in return. Karaka could never have been taught to paint in the way she paints and she has achieved the ultimate: the freedom to paint without constraint.

Figure 6  
*Te Uri o Te Ao* 1995  
 oil on canvas  
 Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
 purchased with the assistance of Reader's Digest  
 New Zealand Limited, 1997



Figure 1  
 Whakarongo ki te Karanga 2014 (detail)  
 fabric, acrylic paint, paintbrushes, steel pins  
 courtesy of the artist

# SAFFRONN TE RATANA

TIKANGA TOI

Anna-Marie White

Saffronn Te Ratana was encouraged to make art from a young age. Her grandmother, Janet Hutchings, was a painter and her father, Donn Ratana, is an artist and academic who specialises in Māori art education. He taught her to be a prolific painter – confident and uninhibited – and instilled the idea that Te Ratana was a Tūhoe painter, rather than a contemporary Māori artist. As such, her work engages with national and international art discourse from a specific tribal paradigm.

Te Ratana was accepted to study at the University of Auckland Elam School of Fine Arts. After the second year, she followed her Elam lecturer Kura Te Waru Rewiri to the newly established Toi Oho ki Āpiti Māori Visual Arts Programme at Te Pūtahi-a-Toi, School of Māori Studies at Massey University in Palmerston North. This programme was led by Robert Jahnke, Te Waru Rewiri and Shane Cotton. Te Ratana was part of a small community of students that included Huhana Smith (the first graduate of this course), Hemi Macgregor, Nigel Borell, Charlotte Graham and Ngataiharuru Taepa, who became her artistic collaborator and life partner. Te Pūtahi-a-Toi academics such as Sir Mason Durie, Pare Richardson and Professor Taiarahia Black guided Te Ratana in cultural, social and political matters and gave her confidence to explore Māoritanga (Māori culture, Māori perspective) through contemporary art.

The Toi Oho ki Āpiti programme is grounded in Māori art history and focused on post-contact forms of Māori art. This includes art forms associated with 19th-century Māori resistance and prophetic movements such as Pai Mārire and Ringatū. Artists taking this approach recognise the history of innovation in Māori art and work in the unbroken continuum of Māori art history.

Toi Oho ki Āpiti artists participate in and contribute to a broader art and cultural movement. This movement involves an interdisciplinary, intergenerational and international network of artists who maintain customary indigenous arts. Their involvement in Te Atinga, the contemporary Māori art branch of the Māori arts organisation, Toi Māori Aotearoa, has led to Te Ratana and Taepa participating in indigenous artist gatherings in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through the leadership of inaugural Te Atinga chairman, Sandy Adsett, they have travelled internationally to participate in reciprocal pan-indigenous artist gatherings and festivals. These meetings provide an important opportunity to

work and discuss ideas within an indigenous context. One topic of discussion has been integrity; that is, how to maintain integrity as an indigenous artist working within the Western idiom of contemporary art. For Te Ratana and other Māori artists, integrity is based on the observance of tikanga (Māori cultural lore). Tikanga is a fundamental structure of Māori knowledge; knowing how to behave in the correct way and for the right reasons. Developments in Te Ratana's artwork may, then, be considered as a document of her personal search for integrity as a contemporary Māori artist.

In recent years Te Ratana's artwork has taken a radically experimental course, and these innovations are related to a deeper education in Tūhoetanga (Tūhoe culture and language). Cultural immersion has ingrained a sense of tikanga and a greater feeling of responsibility as a Tūhoe painter. A higher level of knowledge has also raised her confidence to experiment with tikanga and test the boundaries of Māori art; a process that is charted here.

## *Tūhoetanga*

The *Tūhoetanga* series was inspired by one of Robert Jahnke's Masters level papers at Toi Oho ki Āpiti. The paper focused on the subject of narrative, which Jahnke considers to be an essential quality of customary Māori art. Students were required to research the documented oral histories of one narrative and produce artworks in response. Through this project Te Ratana learned how to engage with tribal narratives at a conceptual level.

Te Ratana chose Hine-nui-te-pō, the daughter of Tāne, god of the forest and Hine-ahu-one, the first woman who was sculpted from the earth. This choice was partly out of respect to Robyn Kahukiwa, whose portrait of Hine-nui-te-pō had made a major impression on Te Ratana as a high-school art student. Te Ratana was also drawn to the transformation of Hine-tītama (the goddess of light) to Hine-nui-te-pō (the goddess of darkness), a process she likened to the changing state of paint from wet to dry.

The resulting series explored the physical properties of paint. She used a syringe to make lumps that symbolised physical features associated with sexuality and reproduction – hills to represent the shapely figure of Papatūānuku (the earth mother), nipples and navels. Te Ratana describes these paintings as constructing a physical space based on a mana wahine conceptual framework. Mana wahine, which is central to tikanga in Te Ratana's practice,



Figure 2  
New Mahi 2007 (detail)  
paintbrushes, paper, glue, wood,  
cardboard, acrylic paint

may be simply translated as a Māori woman's worldview<sup>1</sup> and is an important topic of analysis for Māori women academics and exemplified by Kura Te Waru Rewiri at Toi Oho Ki Āpiti.

This research project was the embryonic phase of Te Ratana's current work. Intrigued by the natural characteristics of paint she began to make three-dimensional structures that were covered in paint. Te Ratana conceived of this process as an extension of the mana wahine kaupapa: 'I liked the idea of protection and the concept of feminine liquid, body liquid, the brain and water.'<sup>2</sup>

After the completion of her Masters degree in 2006 Te Ratana enrolled in a year-long course at Te Pū Wānanga o Anamata at Whakatane. Anamata 'was created to serve the language, cultural and whakapapa aspirations of Tūhoe... by producing practitioners of Te Reo; cultural leaders who will determine their tribal future and who are conscious of their responsibility for representing their iwi.'<sup>3</sup> Te Ratana described her experiences at Anamata as 'grounding' and they translated into a major shift in her artwork as demonstrated by the exhibition *New Mahi* at Thermostat Gallery in Palmerston North.<sup>4</sup>

*New Mahi*, 2007 (fig 2) was a series of small three-dimensional paintings that featured tree and star forms affixed to oval frames. These were doused in peppermint green paint (a colour that features in the painted whare whakairo or decorated meeting house in the Tūhoe region). The paintings described the legend of Ranginui, the sky father, who copulated with stars to make trees.

The one deviation from the framed paintings was that of a streaking comet. The comet is typically associated with Rua Kenana, the Tūhoe leader who established a successful separatist Māori community at Maungapōhatu at the end of the 19th century.<sup>5</sup> Kenana identified himself as a prophet, an intermediary between the divine and humankind. By making these references Te Ratana reiterated those stories that were important to her cultural learning.

The following year Te Ratana presented her first installation, *Nga Hanga Whakaaro*, 2008 (fig 3), again at Thermostat Gallery. 'Nga Hanga Whakaaro' may be translated as a 'physically illustrated narrative' and again explored Tūhoe origin stories. The installation comprised painted cardboard and acetate forms: stars, trees and abbreviated kōwhaiwhai or geometric painted designs. These designs are called kape kohu, which Te Ratana invented to symbolise Hine-pūkōhu-rangi, the goddess of the mist and mother of Tūhoe. These shapes were lashed together with black tape; some suspended from the ceiling and with the tape intersecting the gallery space. Te Ratana identified the tape as a literal reference to karakia (prayer chant); incantations that bind together the sacred and secular worlds, focus behaviour and guide activities.

Te Ratana's move to installation was influenced by a visit to the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007) in support of her peers, Rachael Rakena and Brett Graham, who exhibited there. Te Ratana was taken by the transformation of spaces at Venice: 'Artists weren't worried about the boundaries of the room, here is a wall, here is a floor. Everything became a space and I began to understand how to create new spaces with different levels and emotions.' This idea was extended in Te Ratana's major solo exhibition, *Pēpeha*, 2009 at The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū in Nelson. Where her previous work had been focused on whakapapa or themes



Figure 3  
Nga Hanga Whakaaro 2008  
(installation view)  
cardboard, paintbrushes, glue,  
electrical tape, acrylic paint



Figure 4  
*Pēpeha*, 2009 (installation view)  
customboard, paper, glue, paintbrushes,  
varnish, acrylic paint, carved paint

associated with reproduction, the installation *Pēpeha* rejoiced in the birth of her child, Maungapōhatu. The exhibition was based on their pēpeha (proverb), which traces their whakapapa (ancestry).

*Pēpeha* (figs 4 & 5) realised that whakapapa in three dimensions. The installation was based on a forest of freestanding trees constructed from paint brushes. These represented the bush and were populated with tiny hand-carved kererū, the bird synonymous with Tūhoe. Currents of energy, made from rods of cardboard, shot out of the gallery walls, from the ceiling and through the trees. This stream of energy was a personification of Hine-pūkōhu-rangi, who copulated with the mountain, Maungapōhatu, to create the original Tūhoe ancestor. This process was indicated by the striped acrylic discs that sat like droplets atop the tree forms. Te Ratana also described the flow of energy like the connection of synapses within her baby's brain. In this respect, *Pēpeha* illustrated the fundamental importance of tribal matrices – the mountains, rivers, marae and ancestors – in the formation of cultural identity. In particular, this exhibition addressed the challenge of teaching cultural identity to children when living away from the tribal rohe (area).

Since *Pēpeha*, Te Ratana has become involved in a total immersion Māori language community associated with Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Mana Tamariki in Palmerston North. This is a progressive school that teaches children from preschool to senior high school. As a condition of enrolment at least one member of the family must be a fluent Māori speaker and able to participate in school activities. With Taepa working as a lecturer at Te Pūtahi-a-Toi,



Figure 5  
*Pēpeha*, 2009 (installation detail)  
customboard, paper, glue, paintbrushes,  
varnish, acrylic paint, carved paint

Te Ratana has taken up that role. She also began to collaborate artistically with Taepa and Hemi Macgregor (Ngāi Tūhoe). The group was inspired by the strength of Rakena and Graham's collaboration at Venice and regard collaboration as a Māori way of working. By taking this approach they advanced their common project to act consciously and responsibly as Māori artists.

Their first exhibition, *Tu Te Manu Ora I Te Rangī* (2008) also involved the Tūhoe academic, Dr Rangī Mataamua, a specialist in Māori astronomy. This exhibition was presented at Thermostat Gallery and explored the deity Rehua, who is recognised by astronomers as the star Antares. Their second exhibition, *Ka Kata Te Po*, 2011 at Te Manawa Museum of Art in Palmerston North, was a response to the police raids on Tūhoe communities who were spuriously accused of terrorist acts. This artwork was revised in a larger form for the 5th Auckland Triennial *If you were to live here...* at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki in 2013 (fig 6).

More recently, Te Ratana has returned to her individual practice, spurred by a commission from Tūhoe Te Uru Taumata for the new tribal headquarters, Te Wharehou o Tūhoe at Taneatua. Te Wharehou o Tūhoe is a significant assertion of tribal power in the post-Treaty phase.<sup>6</sup> This building complex is intended to operate as a centralised site for Tūhoe iwi operations and makes an important statement about Tūhoe values more broadly. Te Wharehou o Tūhoe will be the most advanced sustainable 'living' building in New Zealand, providing an unprecedented opportunity to trial new construction methods and materials according to the highest international standards.

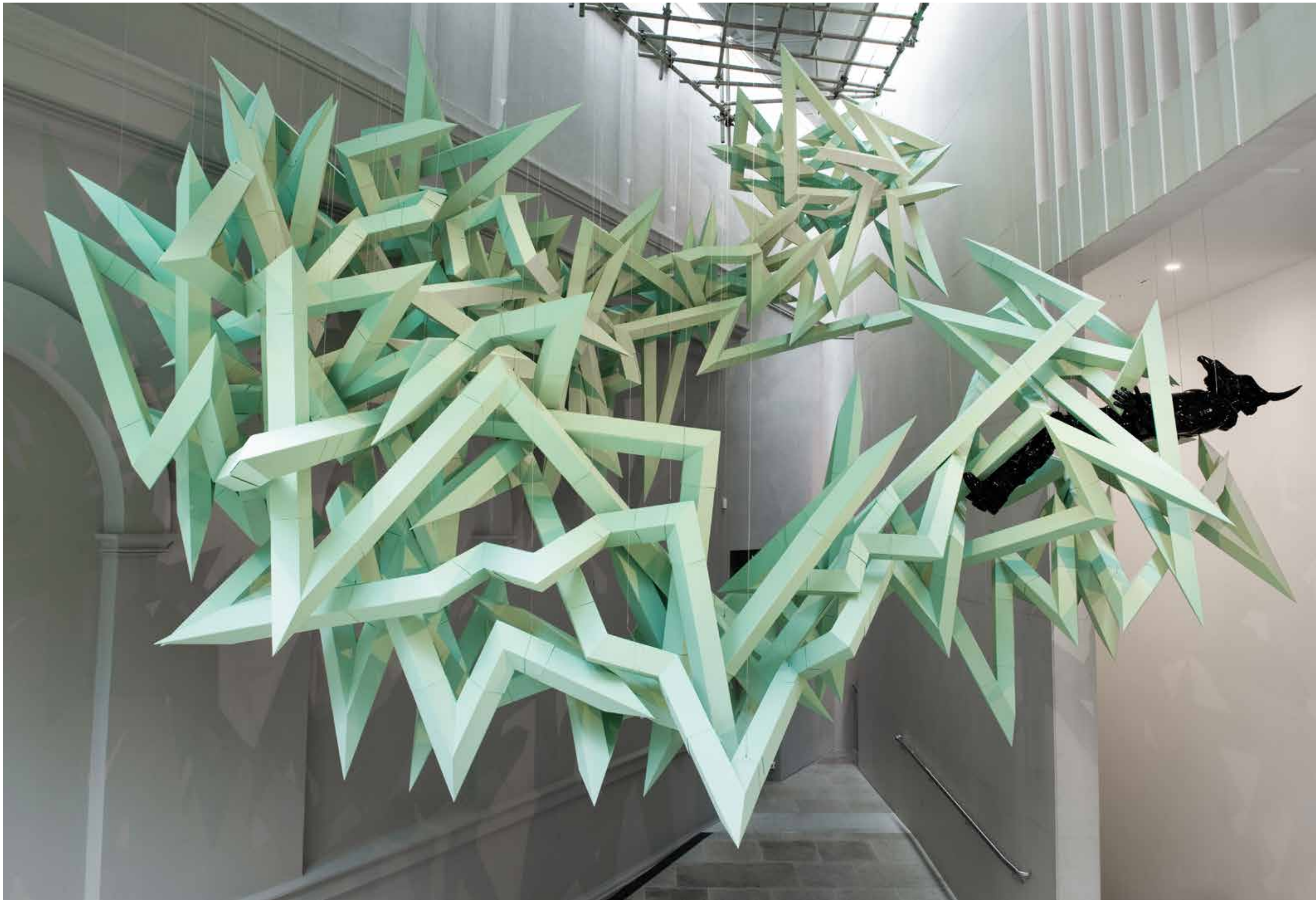


Figure 6  
*Ka Kata Te Po* 2013 (installation view)  
cardboard, acrylic paint, fibreglass  
courtesy of the artist



Figure 7  
 Whakarongo ki te Karanga 2014  
 fabric, acrylic paint, paintbrushes, steel pins  
 courtesy of the artist

Initially, Te Ratana was reserved about this commission. Her previous exhibitions had attempted to recreate the bush in an urban environment – an expression of her longing for Te Urewera. Te Ratana was concerned about the implications of making a ‘city tree’ for the bush; how her art work represented the Tūhoe diaspora, the response of Tūhoe audiences to her interpretation of tribal narratives and innovation of tribal imagery. Not to mention the fact that her choice of materials (paint, cardboard, hot glue and foam) are inconsistent with the environmental aspirations of the building. In spite of her trepidation, this commission offered the opportunity for Te Ratana to test her work in a Māori context and align her artistic practice and cultural immersion.

*Whakarongo ki te Karanga*, 2014 (figs 1 & 7) is a sibling to the Tūhoe artwork but made for Auckland Art Gallery. The artworks examine the same ideas but are delivered in different cultural sites. These are ideal conditions for Te Ratana to observe the influence of context on the reception of her artworks. Both artworks comprise human-scale tree forms with letters and kererū perched in their branches. These are references to painted imagery in Te Whai-a-te-Motu, the premier Tūhoe whare whakairo built at Ruatahuna in 1888.<sup>7</sup> The paintings feature on the heke (interior rafters) and depict trees and bird hunting techniques. Some paintings are inscribed with the name of the tree in Gothic-style lettering and the images operate as teaching aids, preserving important lessons about bush tikanga.

*Whakarongo ki te Karanga* grows from an undulating mattress form; a reference to the figure of Papatūānuku, the parental bed and the basic structure of kape (arch-shaped) kōwhaiwhai designs. This shape may also be described as a swelling or ascendancy, which acknowledges the significance of the Treaty of Waitangi settlement process as a moment in Tūhoe history. By recalling Te Whai-a-te-Motu, a precursor to Te Wharehou o Tūhoe, Te Ratana maintains Tūhoe art history and restates the collective strength of Tūhoe iwi.

In Te Ratana’s quest to find integrity as a contemporary Māori artist, her work has become increasingly specific to Tūhoe. In fact, it should be said that her artwork has become a by-product of her cultural immersion. This shift in priority is significant and demonstrates the lessons of tikanga: that is, Māori art is an intrinsic part of Māori culture. In order to make Māori art with integrity, the artist must be strong in Māoritanga. In this respect Te Ratana’s artwork is cerebral and contributes first and foremost to the vitality of Tūhoe iwi. In a gallery context, however, her work shifts and becomes expressive – enigmatic and evocative – making a singular contribution to New Zealand painting.

## Notes

- 1 Leonie Pihama, ‘Tihei Mauriora. Honouring Our Voices. Mana Wahine as a Kaupapa Māori Theoretical Framework’ (PhD diss, University of Auckland, 2001). [http://www.kaupapaMāori.com/assets/tiheimauri\\_ora.pdf](http://www.kaupapaMāori.com/assets/tiheimauri_ora.pdf), accessed 30 November 2013.
- 2 S Te Ratana, personal communication, 29 November 2013.
- 3 <http://www.anamata.ac.nz/About+Us.html>, accessed 6 December 2013.
- 4 Thermostat was a dealer gallery in Palmerston North City, operated by Catherine Russ and Simon Francis from 2001–12. The gallery was very supportive of Toi Oho ki Āpiti and encouraged experimental artworks and alternative exhibition formats.
- 5 <http://muse.aucklandmuseum.com/databases/librarycatalogue/33171>, accessed 10 January 2014.
- 6 For an introduction to recent Tūhoe histories see Kennedy Warne, ‘Who are Tūhoe?’, *New Zealand Geographic*, no 119, 2013, pp 40–79.
- 7 See R Neich, *Painted Histories*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1994, pp 280–1.



Figure 1  
 Whenua/Wahine/Whenua (Land/  
 Woman/Land) 1989  
 acrylic and kanuka on hardboard  
 Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
 purchased 1989

# KURA TE WARU REWIRI

NGĀ MOMO WHAKAARO

Nigel Borell

Kura Irirangi Te Waru-Rewiri<sup>1</sup> is the maataamua (eldest) of Hamiora and Geneva Rewiri's nine children. Her tribal affiliations are to Ngāti Kahu and Ngāti Rangi in the Far North, and she also shares a whakapapa (genealogy) connection to Ngāti Kauwhata in Feilding. In the small settlement of Kaeo in Whangaroa, where the artist was born, the home marae of Mangaiti was the centre of family life during her early childhood. The family moved to Waitangi and later Kawakawa in search of employment. Te Waru Rewiri often acknowledges the roles that her grandmothers Ida Wetera Renata and Miriama Mita played in shaping her sense of self, and she draws on this as part of how she negotiates adversity.

In 1970 Te Waru Rewiri made the move from Northland to study at University of Canterbury Ilam School of Fine Arts in Christchurch. It was her first time on an aeroplane and her first trip out of the North Island.<sup>2</sup> At Ilam the budding artist found her own voice as a painter and scholar. She became an active member of the Christchurch chapter of Ngā Tamatoa, the Māori student-led activist group mobilised in the early 1970s to address Māori land and cultural rights and the lack of recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi.<sup>3</sup> In her Honours year, Te Waru Rewiri had the opportunity to study under Lithuanian painter Rudolf Gopas. It was during this time that a broader passion for the craft of painting was made apparent and she developed a greater knowledge of Expressionism and the abstract.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most significant strides Te Waru Rewiri made during her Honours year was the way in which she started to challenge the parameters of monocultural knowledge. Similar to other Māori scholars of the time, Te Waru Rewiri was interested in bringing forth Māori art histories within the Western academic framework. This would ignite her scholastic development, making epistemological space to give effect to a Māori paradigm in that learning environment. The topic of her Honours thesis was pre-European Māori woodcarving. Politically, this was about giving visibility to Māori representation; culturally, it was about challenging some of the customary ideas about representations of Māori art present within Māori circles. The art of whakairo (woodcarving) is predominantly understood as being the domain of men; restriction is placed on women's participation and this is customarily mediated through a consideration of tapu (sacred, with restriction) and noa (without restriction).<sup>5</sup> However, as a young Māori woman Te Waru

Rewiri was keen to explore these limitations and push for new perceptions of whakairo. This essay primarily looks at the rise of the figurative form and the importance of this in Te Waru Rewiri's work.

## Ways of Seeing and Knowing

Kura Te Waru Rewiri's painting practice and subject matter are diverse and explorative. The artist has revisited several key themes throughout her painting career: the importance of the ancestral figure and the figurative form as an expression of identity; expressionist painting history; and the exploration of the abstract as a form of creative expression which she has come to define as the concept of *wāhi ngaro* (unseen or lost spaces).

It was about examining our relationship to these rules and challenging them, challenging oneself, and giving oneself permission to explore it, to allow this to be okay.<sup>6</sup>

This powerful statement tells us that by examining our relationships to set boundaries we can strategically push to make 'space' for new responses, interpretations and readings. Her study of whakairo focused on tribal styles and mainly looked at early carved examples in South Island museum collections. The simplicity of the forms and the balance of carved form and pattern resonated with the artist. The practice of looking and observing was one of Te Waru Rewiri's core research methods. This approach is not concerned with quantifying information in a conventional sense but rather with the practice of sitting with the objects, observing them and 'letting them speak'.<sup>7</sup>

## Ahau: This Is Me

After obtaining a Diploma in Fine Arts (Honours) in 1973 Te Waru Rewiri attended Christchurch College of Education then embarked on a teaching career for the next nine years. It was not until 1984, while teaching at Tangaroa College in Otago, that Te Waru Rewiri decided to recommence full-time painting in the garage of her Otago home.

In 1985 Te Waru Rewiri returned to the figurative form and the carved subject; and many of these carvings are in the Auckland War Memorial Museum collection. In these works the carved figures are presented boldly, in colourful combinations.



Figure 2 (opposite page)  
*Te Ripeka (Crucifix)* 1985  
acrylic on canvas  
Collection of Waikato Museum Te Whare  
Taonga o Waikato



Figure 3  
*Ngā Pou o Tutangimamae*, image  
Auckland War Memorial Museum Tamaki  
Paenga Hira [AM6206] and [AM6394]

Te Waru Rewiri wanted to reflect the contemporary life and challenges of living in Otara. There, the struggles of being a mother and her aspirations for a better deal for Māori are but some of the subjects she expressed in this work. The painting *Rārangi (The Line)*, 1985 depicts an orderly row of carved figures – full of facial expression – which reference the ‘dole day’ queues of people lining up at banks waiting to collect their weekly benefit payments. Another work, *Te Whaea raua ko ana Tamariki (Mother with Children)*, 1985, portrays a crouching mother cradling two youngsters, nurturing and protecting the young – a depiction that could be read autobiographically. *Whakatara (Defiance)*, 1985 has a cluster of carved tiki forms starkly peering out at the viewer. The bold, forthright view of the tiki faces echoes that community and their resilience.

*Te Rīpeka (Crucifix)*, 1985 (fig 2) is one of Te Waru Rewiri’s most compelling pieces. This striking painting has two central carved forms in strident colour combinations of pink, blue, green and orange. It portrays two figures presented in the sinuous carved style of Te Tai Tokerau (Northland).<sup>8</sup> The figures sit ominously upon a crucifix motif. The carved patterning of unaunahi (fish scale) and whakarare (interlocking chevron and ridge band), the visual language of these patterns, indicate a northern lineage. The carved poupou (pillars) are from the meeting house Tutangimamae which resides in the Auckland War Memorial Museum collection (fig 3). The impact of colonisation more generally and Christianity specifically on Te Tai Tokerau carving traditions is both lamented and protested boldly in this piece.

These acrylic paintings would form the decisive statements comprising Te Waru Rewiri’s first solo exhibition entitled *Ahau: This Is Me* in 1985 at Gallery Pacific in Auckland. The figurative and human form are expressions of the artist’s psyche. They show a profound desire to reconnect us to the whenua (land) and reiterate a sense of continuity with it. Furthermore, they are a statement about identity that situates Māori as tangata whenua (descendants of the land). They were also statements of tino rangatiratanga (sovereignty).

### *Te Maori: Te Hokinga Mai*

In 1986, Te Waru Rewiri was seconded to the Department of Education in the role of education officer for the exhibition *Te Maori* upon its New Zealand return to Auckland.<sup>9</sup> Te Waru Rewiri worked over the exhibition’s 11-week run at Auckland City Art Gallery in 1987 co-ordinating kaiarahi or Māori gallery guides to conduct public tours. This experience provided an even deeper regard for the carved form. Large tribal groups visited the exhibition to specifically connect with their particular taonga (treasures) and this reinforced the taha wairua (spiritual dimension) and the mauri (life force) relationship that Māori share with their taonga.

Te Waru Rewiri’s figurative paintings produced after *Te Maori* show a new maturity and fluency with the carved form. Gone are the energetic colour fields that characterised earlier works and now we see the carved form pared back in simple yet powerful arrangements. Her unique command of colour and its application have been intuitively negotiated. For the artist, colour is a ‘sound’ that resonates in her paintings; it is the karanga (call) of her ancestors; kōrerorero (discussion) is created when colours meet,

overlap or contrast one another. The technique of layering colour is knowledge she credits to observing Buck Nin, her art teacher at Bay of Islands College.

Te Waru Rewiri felt the weight of painting these carvings and the need to depict and honour them as accurately as possible. There is a desire to communicate a sense of the metaphysical, to offer the viewer a way into another realm, another dimension. The work *la ra, la po (In Te Po there are many beginnings)*, 1994 (fig 4) is a potent example of these developments in Te Waru Rewiri’s practice. This triptych references the esteemed carving Tangonge, a mesmerising example of early Māori carving originally found in Lake Tangonge, Kaitaia in the Far North in 1920 (fig 5). This carving is unique as it is carved on both sides, and unlike a conventional pare (door lintel) it is intended to be viewed from both sides. This has added to the thinking that it is a gateway carving which was created to facilitate the moving from one realm to another.<sup>10</sup> In Te Waru Rewiri’s painting the carving hovers above in a sky of moody blue and purple shades, encapsulated in a warm yellow glow full of energy. The painting is grounded by an indistinct central image of a waka kōiwi (burial chest) outlined in a thin line of blue which sits quietly in a large field of dark brown. Together, these elements seem to conceptually indicate a location and this ‘place’ can be viewed as a conversational space; a two-way process of reveal and conceal, of disclosure and secrets kept close. We experience the encoded and esoteric versus the literal rendering of information. Both light and darkness are presented in her practice as gateways to new realms and experiences. They are used as metaphor to depict our relationship to concepts of rebirth, reverence and wāhi ngaro or the lost spaces.<sup>11</sup> Kura would often discuss her ideas and concepts with her father Hamiora and he termed much of the explorative abstraction as wāhi ngaro, an exploration into the lost and unseen spaces. Here ‘space’ is also filled with the potential for new ideas and new knowledge.

I felt that when I talked to my dad about my ideas and what I wanted to work with, he was a kaitiaki [guardian] for me. A lot of the ideas I wanted to work with he discussed as ‘wāhi ngaro’ or working with lost spaces.

Kura Te Waru Rewiri’s paintings of the carved form caught the attention of tohunga whakairo (master carver) Pākariki Harrison. He understood the underlying politics of her message and described the painter as a ‘frustrated carver’.<sup>12</sup> Harrison was acknowledging the creative merits of tohunga (expert status) that the painter was exploring in her work. He was a progressive thinker, well versed in the politics surrounding women and carving; and he was outspoken in his own critique of the redundant customs and practices perpetuated by male carvers claiming carving as a purely male domain. This acknowledgement from Harrison can be appreciated as an endorsement to let new readings take shape in relation to the art form.

### Whaka Iro

Pakariki Harrison believed the term ‘whaka iro’ or whakairo is to be engaged in the pursuit of knowledge.<sup>13</sup> The question *Kei a koe te iro? – Do you have the understanding?* refers to the way in which



Figure 4  
*Ia ra, ia po* (In Te Po there are many beginnings) 1994  
 acrylic and tempera on canvas  
 Private Collection, Wellington



Figure 5  
*Tangonge*, image Auckland War Memorial  
 Museum Tamaki Paenga Hira [AM6341].  
 Currently on loan to Te Rūnanga o Te  
 Rarawa and Far North Regional Museum  
 Trust for display at Te Ahu Heritage  
 Centre, Kaitiāia



Figure 6  
*Tenei au, tenei au (This is me, this is me)* 2006  
 acrylic on cotton duck  
 Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
 gift of the artist, 2013

the word *iro* is used. While Pahi was specifically referencing the art of carving one could apply this analysis much more broadly. At its core it espouses the idea that, irrespective of medium, Māori visual language conveys meaning and continuity. Te Waru Rewiri's paintings are engaged in a similar conversation around the importance of knowledge associated with her own visual language.

Wisdom is the amalgamation of knowledge and intuition working in equal parts; knowledge on its own cannot be activated without engaging the intuitive mind.<sup>14</sup> To this, I would also include the practice of humility regarding Te Waru Rewiri.

Kura Te Waru Rewiri's painting practice has forged new ways to understand and appreciate the scope of contemporary painting informed by Māori realities, beliefs and paradigms. The artist challenges the status quo and has a unique way of testing conventions to philosophically construct new empowering outcomes. We see examples of this throughout her career: her Honours thesis study; the carved forms referenced in her first solo show; realigning the abstract to *wāhi ngaro*; re-examining and questioning the practice of contemporary *kōwhaiwhai* (rafter painting). Her paintings both challenge and liberate our thinking beyond what is regarded as acceptable and customary, broadening the epistemological framing that reflects realities of this point in time. Te Waru Rewiri is not requesting validation from Western academia or Māoridom, but rather seeking permission only of the self. Permission to take another path, and the courage to explore another avenue. In this way Te Waru Rewiri is the architect of her own thinking and a courageous paradigm pioneer.<sup>15</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Born on 30 December 1950 and given the name Cora Doreen Davis (after her aunt, Cora), at the age of 21 she changed her name by deed poll to Kura Irirangi Te Waru-Rewiri.
- 2 Attending Ilam was an opportunity initially organised by Buck Nin, her art teacher and early mentor while a student at Bay of Islands College.
- 3 N Borell (ed), 'Ata Haere: Go Slowly into the World', in *Kura: Story of a Māori Woman Artist*, Auckland Council, Toi o Manukau, Manukau City, 2011.
- 4 Rudolf Gopas' legacy as a teacher is seen in the work of some of New Zealand's important painters from this period: Tony Fomison, Philip Clairmont, Philippa Blair, Philip Trusttum and Kura Te Waru Rewiri were among the many painters to be influenced by his particular expressionist-abstract style.
- 5 For further reading on the nature of *tapu* and *noa* relating to whakairo see P Harrison, *St Stephen's School: Te Poho o Tipene*, St Stephen's School, Manukau City, 1983; or P Harrison, *Tane-nui-a-rangi*, University of Auckland, Auckland, 1988.
- 6 K Te Waru Rewiri, personal communication, 27 November 2013.
- 7 As above.
- 8 This includes all Northland tribes. This carving style is characterised by the combination of sinuous body form and *unaunahi* (fish-scale) carved patterning.
- 9 Featuring over 170 significant Māori taonga from 30 iwi and hapu, *Te Maori* was and remains the greatest collective presentation Aotearoa New Zealand has offered regarding the legacy and place of Māori whakairo (carving). Furthermore, the exhibition was the first time these taonga had left Aotearoa. The exhibition travelled extensively to various institutions in America. *Te Maori* returned home in 1986 and travelled to: the National Museum and Art Gallery, Wellington; Otago Museum, Dunedin; Robert McDougal Art Gallery, Christchurch; and Auckland City Art Gallery. Entitled *Te Maori: Te Hokinga Mai*, the exhibition drew unprecedented attendance numbers at all the institutions on this return tour. Māori were left with an overwhelming sense of collective pride and a more conscious sense of place. After the exhibition closed, the taonga returned to the 12 museums from which they were borrowed.
- 10 Auckland Museum, Ethnography object records AM 6341.
- 11 N Borell, 2011.
- 12 K Te Waru Rewiri, personal communication, 7 November 2011.
- 13 Pākariki Harrison, personal communication, 15 April 1999.
- 14 I quote the statement made by Haare Williams at the launch of Roger Neich's *Tradition and Change in Māori and Pacific Art*, Auckland Museum, 17 December 2013.
- 15 A phrase used by Ngahiraka Mason in 2011 when discussing the artist's theoretical practice.

# USE OF KŌKŌWAI IN TRADITIONAL MĀORI SOCIETY

Louise Furey



Figure 1  
Kōkōwai from Oruarangi Pa, Hauraki  
[49709], Auckland War Memorial  
Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira

Figure 2  
Freshwater mussel (*Hyridella menziesii*)  
shells containing kōkōwai [AR6144],  
Waihora, Taupo. Image by Krzysztof  
Pfeiffer, Auckland War Memorial Museum  
Tāmaki Paenga Hira

For tens of thousands of years people have used red pigment derived from ochre to paint and draw symbols and figurative representations on cave walls. Archaeology has revealed that tools, shields and weapons were also painted red. A natural product derived from iron-rich clay or sandstone, ochre ranges in colour from yellow to red to brown. Māori called the prepared pigment kōkōwai, and the red colour in particular had symbolic associations although context was all important for interpreting meaning.

The term kōkōwai is generic for the red pigment applied to objects, but Māori had a number of terms for the types of material able to be manufactured into kōkōwai. Iron-rich clay (tākou) or sandstone could be burnt in a specially constructed fire to oxidise the iron and intensify the red colouration. The altered material was then ground to a powder and applied in that form, or mixed with water or oil from the liver of sharks, or oil-rich seeds such as tītoki, before being applied. Another source of the pigment was iron-rich sediment present in some streams. Fern fronds laid in the water trapped the thick mineral iron deposit (hōrū), which could then be dried, moulded into balls and roasted to make the finest quality of pigment. The powdered kōkōwai was stored in containers – including pumice pots, shells such as pāua, scallop and freshwater mussel (fig 2), and gourds – as was the liquid form or oil emulsion.

Other colours were also used. Black pigment was obtained by burning kauri gum or resinous wood and grinding to a fine powder, white was derived from white clay and prepared in a similar manner to kōkōwai, and blue pigment was prepared from some forms of clay.<sup>1</sup> All colours were used to paint faces; and timbers and carvings could be painted with red, black and white, or just red.<sup>2</sup>

Red (kura) symbolises the mythological origin of the world when Ranginui (sky father) and Papatūānuku (earth mother) were intertwined. As their children tried to separate them, the blood of Ranginui was spilt and soaked into Papatūānuku, manifested as kōkōwai. The symbolism associated with the colour red is common throughout Polynesia, but the meaning varies according to circumstances. Generally speaking kōkōwai was associated with rituals of tapu (sacredness), and with status derived from age and rank which also linked to a relationship with gods. It was not the kōkōwai material itself that had the power, but the colour red.

Red is ritually associated with certain gods, and provides protection by or from those gods for the person or object coated

with pigment. The colour red also signifies tapu, so that a person, object, post, or even a place could be painted with kōkōwai to indicate a state of tapu. Missionary Richard Taylor described god sticks (wooden personification of certain gods) as being in a tapu state only when covered in kōkōwai, 'dressed' with a girdle of red feathers (from kākā), and having a sacred cord wrapped around the figure.<sup>3</sup> The treatment of god images in Aotearoa New Zealand mirrors that carried out in the Cook Islands.<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere in eastern Polynesia red and yellow feathers were also used to identify tapu and the rank of individuals. The best known examples are the chiefly Hawaiian cloaks and helmets made of red and yellow feathers, or red feathered girdles.<sup>5</sup>

Full coating of the body with kōkōwai, with or without oil, was described in accounts from Captain James Cook's voyages.<sup>6</sup> Both men and women could be painted, but not all people encountered were. Hair could also be coated in kōkōwai mixed with oil; and French captain Jean-François Marie de Surville in 1769 described an individual from Doubtless Bay with yellow painted hair.<sup>7</sup> Faces of adults and children of both sexes were painted on occasion. Red was the predominant colour, but yellow, white and blue were also used. Accounts describe pigment being used on chins, cheeks and nose, and red strips over the eyebrows, or sometimes diagonally from forehead across the eye to the cheek.<sup>8</sup> Some of these face paintings were for decoration or amusement (particularly for younger people), but on older individuals kōkōwai may have been used to emphasise tattoo patterns or status.<sup>9</sup>

European observers in the 19th century noted house carvings and palisade posts stained red. Several of the images by George French Angas show painted structures and house carvings, and tapu areas associated with the dead. After death, the places where a corpse was rested prior to burial were dabbed with kōkōwai to signify a tapu state, and in the case of secondary burial when the bones were prepared for interment, they were often coated with kōkōwai (fig 3).

Many of the ritual uses of kōkōwai belong to the past and evidence of their significance is confined to historic accounts. Archaeology, however, deals with the tangible surviving evidence left behind by people in the past. Interpreting ritual and symbolism is more difficult but the presence of powdered kōkōwai and the tools



Figure 3  
George French Angas, J W Giles  
*Weeping Over a Deceased Chief*  
hand-coloured lithograph  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased 1965

used to grind the pigment are concrete evidence around which the more intangible aspects of society can be reconstructed. Kōkōwai staining of bone and stone tools and ornaments, derived either through contact with painted flesh or through direct application to the object, is less common but not unknown.

The kōkōwai and associated objects in the exhibition *Five Māori Painters* are from the pā and settlement site of Oruarangi on the Waihou River, 10 kilometres upstream from Thames. Oruarangi was one of the largest pā in Hauraki, occupied by several iwi (tribes) over several hundred years and probably last occupied in the 1830s. Fossickers were very active on the site in the early 1930s, and many thousands of artefacts were found.<sup>10</sup> A large number of these are now in Auckland Museum, having been gifted, or purchased from various individuals who dug there. Fossickers were interested only in artefacts, and not the context of those artefacts in relation to one another or to their placement within the site. The items in the Oruarangi collection, therefore, have no associated story from which the lives of the people living there can be reconstructed. For instance, it is not known whether the flat grinding stones were found with the cobblestones (autoru) used to grind the kōkōwai to a powder, and whether this activity took place inside a house, outside it, or in a specially reserved place. The uncontrolled digging was far removed from techniques and accurate recording used in modern archaeological excavations, which uncovers more subtle details which might include rotting timbers of houses or storage structures, or tiny specks of kōkōwai mixed in with the soil. The objects from Oruarangi with kōkōwai staining include pendants, bone toggles, heru (bone combs), pūtātara (shell trumpets) and pumice pots (fig 4). Some of the grinding slabs are large and heavy, up to 60 × 40 centimetres, with a heavy pigment coating on one surface.

Other sites excavated more carefully by archaeological methods have revealed more about the use of kōkōwai. We now know that its use was widespread, although few sites of the first hundred or so years after Polynesian arrival (from about 1300 AD) have kōkōwai or kōkōwai-stained items. This suggests that although the symbolic use of red is Polynesian in origin, the uses to which it was put in Māori culture became more common over time. Artefacts can have traces of pigment embedded into the surface of the bone or stone, or the tools used to grind the pigment are present. However, many of the paintings in rock shelters, which date to the first few hundred years after Polynesian arrival, have paintings executed in red paint, as well as black and white (fig 5). In sites of more recent age the better examples of kōkōwai are preserved in caves, or in wet sites where the water creates anaerobic conditions which slow down decay of organic materials including wood and vegetable matter. From the 17th-century pā of Kohika<sup>11</sup> near Whakatane in the eastern Bay of Plenty there is additional information for context. Excavations between 2004 and 2008 revealed a large house with remnants of dressed timbers, with one of the central posts having traces of red pigment;<sup>12</sup> and at Raupa, a large 19th-century pā near Paeroa, the largest quantity of kōkōwai and staining of the soil was in the vicinity of a large house almost certainly, like the one at Kohika, the residence of the chief.<sup>13</sup> In another example, a swamp below a pā at Kauri Point in the western Bay of Plenty



Figure 4  
Pumice pot coated in kōkōwai [19630],  
Oruarangi, Hauraki. Image by Krzysztof  
Pfeiffer, Auckland War Memorial Museum  
Tamaki Paenga Hira



Figure 5 (opposite page)  
Koru painted in kōkōwai on rock face,  
Kawakawa Bay, Taupo. Image by Tim  
Mackrell, Auckland. Ngāti Te Kohera  
gave permission for photograph to  
be published

contained numerous small wooden hair combs and other wooden artefacts in an enclosure. The deposits surrounding the artefacts were stained red from the fine particles of kōkōwai, and lumps of kōkōwai were found in gourd containers and wrapped in flax wallets.<sup>14</sup> The combs were stained red and had thick deposits of kōkōwai remaining between the teeth, probably from being in hair that was coated with kōkōwai and oil. Many of the combs appeared to have been deliberately broken, perhaps to remove the state of tapu before being placed in the swamp.

While the symbolism and ritual use of the colour red is less apparent in modern times, reference to it can still be found in wharenui (meeting houses) around the country where carvings inside and outside are painted red. Its past use also lives on in museums, a legacy of the early 20th century when red paint was applied to carvings, sometimes over the original multicoloured painting, in a misguided view that by doing so the museum was reconstructing and holding on to the traditional culture which was perceived to be rapidly disappearing.

## Notes

- 1 P Walsh, 'On the Maori Method of Preparing and Using Kokowai', *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* 36, 1903, pp 4–10.
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- 4 S Hooper, *Pacific Encounters. Art & Divinity in Polynesia 1760–1860*, The British Museum Press, London, 2006.
- 5 A Kaeppler, *The Pacific Arts of Polynesia and Micronesia*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, pp 119–23.
- 6 A Salmond, *Two Worlds: First Meetings Between Maori and Europeans 1642–1772*, Viking, Auckland, 1991, p 210.
- 7 As above, p 348.
- 8 A Hamilton, *The Art Workmanship of the Maori Race in New Zealand*, NZ Institute, Wellington, 1896, p 301.
- 9 H Petrie, 'Decoding the Colours of Rank in Maori Society: What Might They Tell Us About Perceptions of War Captives', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 120 (3), 2011, pp 211–40; Salmond, 1991, p 146.
- 10 L Furey, 'Oruarangi: The Archaeology and Material Culture of a Hauraki Pa', *Bulletin of the Auckland Institute and Museum* 17, 1996.
- 11 G Irwin (ed), *Kohika: The Archaeology of a Late Maori Lake Village in the Ngati Awa Rohe Bay of Plenty New Zealand*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2004.
- 12 G Irwin, personal communication, 2013.
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- 14 W Shawcross, 'Kauri Point Swamp: the Ethnographic Interpretation of a Prehistoric Site' in G de G Sieveking, I H Longworth & K E Wilson (eds), *Problems in Economic and Social Archaeology*, Duckworth, London, 1976, pp 277–305.



Figure 1  
Strong linear quality in detail from  
*Resistance, Te Tohenga*, 2009 by  
Robyn Kahukiwa



Figure 2  
Indistinct edging of forms in detail from  
*Arohanui*, 2006 by Kura Te Waru Rewiri

## THE PAINT IN PAINTING

Sarah Hillary

When considering the work of the artists in *Five Māori Painters*, does the paint they use or its application have any significance in their work? This essay suggests that the artist's choice of materials and painting techniques contribute to more than just the aesthetic properties of the finished artworks.

Robyn Kahukiwa's paintings in the exhibition are painted in artist-quality oil and/or alkyd oil on canvas. Alkyd contains a resinous component that makes it glossy and more likely to level out or flatten like housepaint, unlike traditional oil paints which are thick and buttery and can be built up into an impasto. Kahukiwa has chosen these media because of their versatility, which enables her to represent traditional Māori imagery in a new context. She works from preliminary sketches which are transferred by charcoal onto the canvas before dilute oil paint is used to fill in the drawing. Kahukiwa states:

When it is dry I begin to build up different areas, sometimes wet on wet, others painting over dry areas. I also use rubbing back. No varnish these days, although I did use it in the very early works. My painting often changes quite a lot as I go through the process, not so much the bones [the basic composition] but the way it comes together. For instance, a face and its expression will change.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the application of paint to create modelling and a sense of a three-dimensional space, the paintings retain a very strong linear quality, possibly reflecting Kahukiwa's background in commercial art and ongoing interest in drawing (fig 1). In her painting, the original sketch remains visible and is reinforced with black, a practice similar to that of New Zealand modernist Rita Angus, who frequently used Prussian blue underpaint later highlighted by brush. Kahukiwa's figures in the landscape have a demanding presence – they appear to crowd forward to the edge of the picture plane, which is reinforced by the dramatic but limited colour palette. The brushwork in the modelling is clearly visible, unlike her earlier works with their smooth transitions. In recent paintings, glazes in the darker areas are used to create depth and textures, such as the pinstripes on the man's trouser legs in *Resistance, Te Tohenga*, 2009 (p 39). The formal qualities of the paintings, including their careful construction, are in stark contrast to the disturbing imagery within the works.

Kura Te Waru Rewiri started as a figurative painter, but became more focused on the spatial qualities in her work over time, using a versatile approach to the paint application.<sup>2</sup> She found that she had an allergy to oil paints, so changed to acrylic as well as powder tempera paints with acrylic medium. Although the painting process itself can occur rapidly, Te Waru Rewiri takes time over the preparation of the support and application of ground layers. She usually maps out the composition in a charcoal sketch before commencing painting, and may work on a number of paintings at a time to maintain consistency in a series. The pastel colours of her tūrangawaewae (place to stand/home) – the Rātana whareniui (meeting house) and their symbolic attributions hold a particular attraction to the artist.<sup>3</sup> These are opaque and provide a striking contrast to transparent glazed areas. Acrylic varnish is sometimes applied to the finished surface to modify the surface gloss.

Te Waru Rewiri learnt about glazing techniques when she attended art classes taught by Buck Nin at Bay of Islands College, Kawakawa. She was amazed by how the work was transformed by the process. Nin encouraged her to attend Ilam School of Fine Arts in Christchurch where she was taught by Rudolph (Rudi) Gopas. An influential teacher, Gopas used numerous thin transparent layers in his painting. Te Waru Rewiri describes that in Gopas's work 'oceans and ideas formed without consciously being produced'.<sup>4</sup> Traditional glazing was done using oil paint and sometimes resinous additions, but Gopas encouraged the use of modern materials such as PVA and acrylic for this purpose. These water-based emulsions dry much more quickly, are less prone to cracking, and for Gopas, experimentation and innovation were connected.

As well as glazing, Te Waru Rewiri has created patterns with the build-up of paint from regular cross-hatching in *Whenua/Wahine/Whenua (Land/Woman/Land)*, 1989 (p 64), and from taping edges to create an overlapping grid pattern in *Front*, 2003. In *Te Tohu Tuatahi*, 1991, Te Waru Rewiri has diluted the paint with water to create drips down the surface. She allows them to dry between coats and works from light to dark. Although the kōwhaiwhai (geometric painted design works) appear sharp from a distance, when examined closely, the edges are purposefully irregular and indistinct, which gives them a floating quality similar to the aging of their historical sources (fig 2).



Figure 3  
Dynamic brushwork in detail from  
*Local Government Tea Party*, 1997  
by Emily Karaka

Figure 4  
Star Gossage's palette, Pakiri, 2013

Emily Karaka's work is very much focused on the surface of the painting. Vigorous paintwork is applied by brush with thick impasto, drips and splatters in vibrant colours. Text, recognisable forms and symbols are all combined with abstract workings. Karaka attended a weekly painting class taught by Gretchen Albrecht in 1974, who encouraged her use of colour. Jamie Ross took over the classes in 1976 and introduced Karaka to Colin McCahon. Karaka also became friendly with young New Zealand expressionists Philip Clairmont and Allen Maddox. She particularly admired Maddox's fast and ferocious approach. Having no fear and taking advantage of the unexpected and accidental are approaches she has favoured in her own work.<sup>5</sup>

Karaka's use of colour and paint application has changed during her career. She has also introduced collage elements from time to time. The work *Planting, Searching, Rising: Taupiri is the Mountain, Waikato is the River*, 1983 (p 50) is an early triptych on unstretched canvas. The colours are vibrant but there is a greater proportion of primary colours and the brushwork is much broader than later paintings. In *Local Government Tea Party*, 1997 (p 49) a large stretched triptych, the artist has first applied acrylic to the hessian canvas with broad brushstrokes, before spraying, splashing, dripping and brushing a variety of paint media over the top including oil, alkyd, acrylic, varnish and poster paint (fig 3). Highly textured and coloured lines form a network over the surface in *Te Ipu Kura a Maki* from 2007. As with most artists, cost is an important factor when choosing materials and Karaka is happy to use mixed media in both commercial and artist qualities, stating, 'As long as the paint sticks!'<sup>6</sup> Karaka's choice and use of materials is as non-conformist as her imagery.

Star Gossage attended the Otago Polytechnic School of Art but considers herself a largely self-taught painter, as she specialised in computer art, film and theatre production. Beginning to paint at a time when she had very little money, Gossage scavenged for materials and used anything she could find – bits of wood, blinds and sheets, mis-tinted household paint that was to be thrown out, glues, tar, as well as natural pigments sourced locally. The local clays came in a variety of beautiful colours and Gossage mixed them up with dilute PVA glue in big buckets. The idea of making up the paints using materials from her environment really appealed, and connected her with early practices of painting using *kōkōwai* (red ochre).<sup>7</sup> Her experiments with paint media had unexpected consequences, including cracking and repelling, which she was able to use to her advantage.<sup>8</sup>

Gossage's more recent work is predominantly on plywood panels which are prepared with a commercial acrylic housepaint. Preferring to work from memory and her emotional responses, Gossage does not use preparatory drawings or paint in front of the subject. The forms are loosely mapped in dilute oil paint before working up the image in more detail. Gossage paints very quickly, applying layer after layer mostly wet on wet. She makes numerous changes, rubbing the paint back with turps before reapplying, as seen in a detail from *Small Bird*, 2006 (fig 5). Gossage comments that a painting may be completely reconfigured during the painting process.<sup>9</sup>

Over time, Gossage has varied her palette from the early black and white, to muddy browns and blues, and more recently a wider

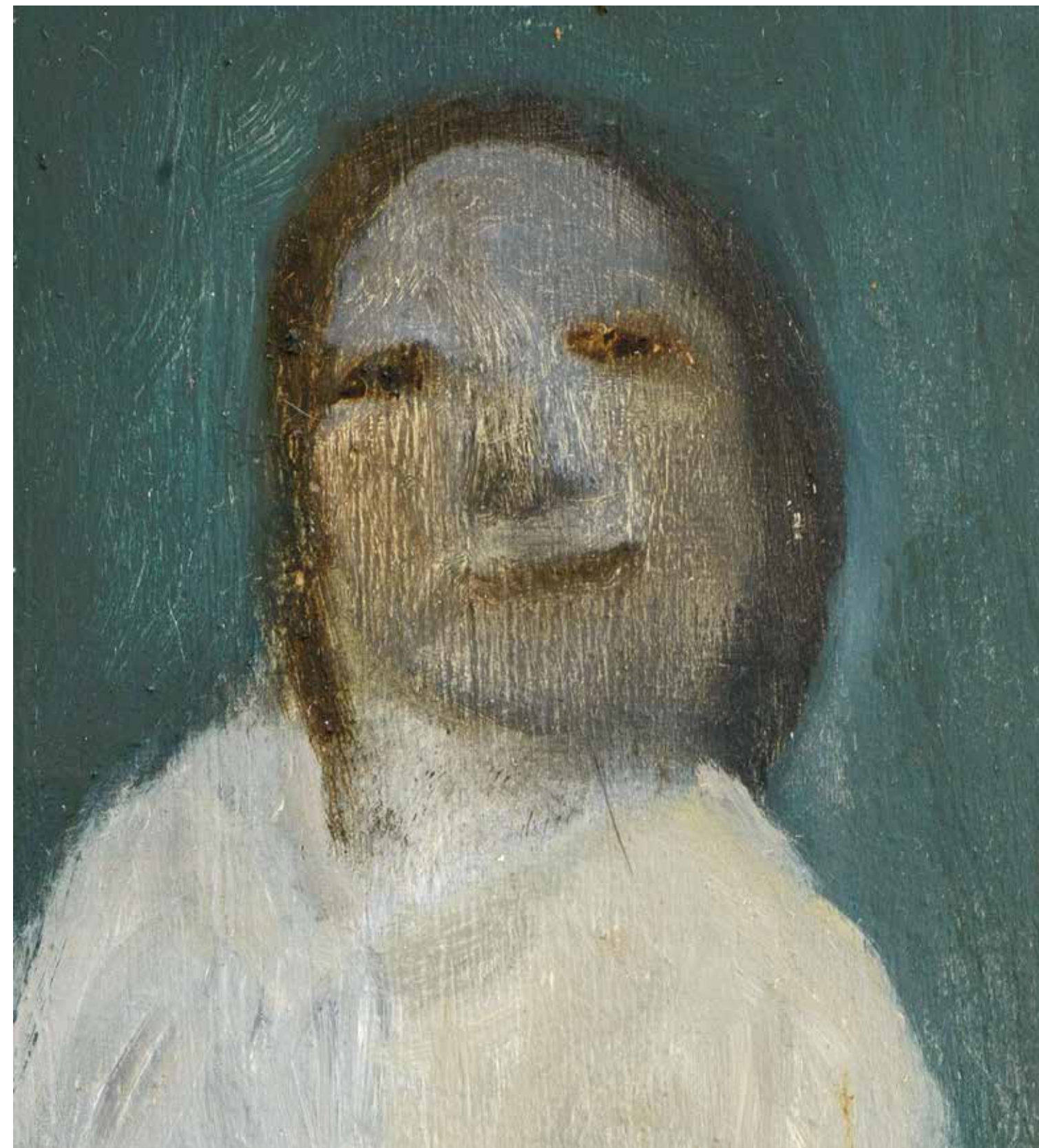


Figure 5  
Rubbing back in detail from *Small Bird*,  
2006, by Star Gossage



Figure 6  
Tiny korerū carved from acrylic paint  
during the making of *Whakarongo ki te  
Karanga*, 2014 by Saffron Te Ratana

range of muted shades with the occasional bright breakout (fig 5). The haziness and blurring of the portraits gives them a haunting but penetrating quality, as the artist looks to capture 'the essence of things'.<sup>10</sup> Gossage has referenced traditional Māori practice by using natural pigments in her paint, but her painterly techniques are much more contemporary in their approach.

An interest in how paint can be used and transformed is behind the work of Saffron Te Ratana. While completing her Masters in Māori Visual Arts at Massey University, Te Ratana made a series of works that were intended as a representation of the many interactions that conceptualise the Māori world view. The artist built up paint in many layers to allow for drawing over or scratching back and to relate them to concepts of self-identity.<sup>11</sup> Te Ratana's work in *Five Māori Painters*, which she calls 'painted histories', references the Ngāi Tūhoe practice of narrative painting in their *whare rūnanga* (meeting houses) from the time of the Māori leader, Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki (c1832–1893).<sup>12</sup> She says that paint is 'special' as it is an easy way to share ideas, and she is interested in the historic practices but also wishes to maintain them.<sup>13</sup> Te Ratana has used paint to make sculptural forms that reference the trees and korerū painted on the walls of her father's marae at Waimana in the Urewera area.

Like the original marae paintings from the 1880s, Te Ratana's trees are painted by hand using housepaints. However, today the most common paint for the purpose is acrylic rather than oil-based. The trees, with trunks made from paintbrushes, are painted yellow, which is the colour of the Te Kooti diamond and symbolises knowledge. The birds are also acrylic, but in this case, they have been carved out of a solid block (fig 6). Te Ratana tops up test pots with paint of the appropriate colour, and leaves them to dry for about six weeks with their lids off. Once hard, the paint is carved into the bird shapes, and she makes their forms faceted, like diamonds, rather than smooth. The paint material itself is transformed into sculptural form.

The artists in this exhibition show how paint is not necessarily just the medium for the image, but that it can contribute to the concept behind the artwork. This has been achieved by using material to demonstrate an idea, or to provide a connection with early Māori imagery or painting practices. As Te Ratana says, paint is special – and these artists use it powerfully, each in their own unique ways.

## Notes

- 1 R Kahukiwa, personal communication, 27 November 2013.
- 2 K Te Waru Rewiri, audio recording of interview with Ngahiraka Mason, 6 December 2013.
- 3 As above.
- 4 As above.
- 5 E Karaka, interview with Ngahiraka Mason and Sarah Hillary, 4 December 2013.
- 6 As above.
- 7 S Gossage, personal communication, 6 January 2014.
- 8 S Gossage, interview with Ngahiraka Mason and Sarah Hillary, 2 December 2013.
- 9 As above.
- 10 D Skinner, *AO(Light)*, essay for PAULNACHE Gallery, Gisborne, 2010.
- 11 H Smith (ed), *Taiāwhio: Conversations with Contemporary Māori Artists*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, 2002.
- 12 S Te Ratana, interview with Ngahiraka Mason, 20 January 2014.
- 13 S Te Ratana, interview with Sarah Hillary, 13 December 2013.

## Glossary

**Hāhi Rātana** Rātana religion  
**Hāhi Ringatū** Ringatū religion  
**haka** posture dance  
**hapū** clan or subtribe; pregnant  
**heke** rafter  
**hīkoi** land march  
**hinengaro** thought, emotions  
**hoe** paddle  
  
**iwi** tribe  
  
**kaitiakitanga** stewardship  
**kānuka** tea tree, *Kunzea ericoides*  
**kape** crescent pattern  
**karakia** incantation, blessing  
**karanga** call, welcome, summon  
**kaupapa** foundation idea, strategy  
**kererū** native woodpigeon  
**kōkōwai** ochre; red ochre pigment  
**kōrerorero** discussion  
**koro** elder, elderly man  
**koru** spiral elaborated  
**kōwhaiwhai** abstract curvilinear pattern, rafter painting  
**kuia** elder, elderly woman  
  
**Māoritanga** pertaining to Māori  
**mana** power, prestige, authority  
**mihi** greeting  
**mokomokai** dried tattooed head

**mokopuna** grandchild  
**ngawari** flexible  
  
**Pākehā** person of European descent  
**Papatūānuku** earth mother  
**pare** carved lintel  
**pēpeha** proverb  
**pītau** curved stalk with bulb  
  
**Ranginui** sky father  
**rākau** stick  
**reo Māori** Māori language  
**rohe** region, area  
  
**tā moko** permanent marking of the skin, tattoo  
**taha wairua** spiritual element  
**tangata** person, people, human being  
**tangata whenua** people of the land  
**tangi, tangihanga** death, mourning process, funeral ceremony  
**taniwha** water dragon, mythical creature  
**taonga** highly prized treasure, possession, property,  
**tapu** sacred, with restriction  
**te ao tūroa** natural world  
**tikanga** cultural lore  
**tiki** carved form  
**tino rangatiratanga** sovereignty

**Tiriti o Waitangi** Treaty of Waitangi  
**toa** warrior  
**tohu mana** powerful sign, good omen  
**tohunga** expert, specialist  
**tohunga whakairo** master carver  
**toi pīwari** beautiful art  
**Tūhoetanga** pertaining to Tūhoe  
**tūrangawaewae** place to stand, home  
  
**unaunahi** fish-scale carving pattern  
**uri** relatives

**wāhi ngaro** unseen space, infinite space  
**wāhi tapu** sacred place  
**wahine** woman  
**wairua** spirit; spiritual connectedness, essence  
**waka** canoe  
**waka kōiwi** burial chest  
**waka tūpāpaku** burial chest  
**wānanga** discussion, gathering

**whakairo** ornamentation, patterns, carving  
**whakapapa** genealogy, line of descent  
**whakarare** carving pattern  
**whānau** family, extended family  
**whare** house

**whare whakairo** carved meeting house  
**wharenui** meeting house, big house  
**whenua** land, placenta

## Further Reading

N Borell (ed), *Kura: Story of a Māori Woman Artist*, Mangere Arts Centre, Auckland, 2012  
G Docking, M Dunn and E Hanfling, *Two Hundred and Forty Years of New Zealand Painting*, David Bateman Ltd, Auckland, 2012  
L Furey, *Oruarangi: The Archaeology and Material Culture of a Hauraki Pa*, Auckland, Auckland Institute and Museum, 1996  
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N Mason, *Robyn Kahukiwa, Art Toi: New Zealand Art at Auckland Art Gallery*, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2011, pp 297–9  
N Mason, 'Changing the Paradigm: The Art of Kura Te Waru Rewiri', *Art New Zealand*, no 142, 2012, pp 38–41  
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D Nicholas and K Kaa, *Seven Maori Artists*, V R Ward, Government Printer, Wellington, 1986  
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E G Schwimmer, *The Maori People in the Nineteen-Sixties: A Symposium*, B & J Paul, Auckland, 1969  
H Smith, 'Saffronn Te Ratana, Ngataiharuru Taepa, Hemi Macgregor', *If you were to live here...*, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2013, pp 64–7  
L T Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*, Otago University Press, Dunedin, 1999

List of Works in *Five Māori Painters***Robyn Kahukiwa**

*Wai Tangi* 1990  
lithograph  
705 × 500 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased with funds provided by  
the New Zealand Lottery Grants  
Board, 1991

*Bloodscent* 2004  
oil on canvas  
1217 × 1520 mm  
Private collection, Wellington

*Whakapapa Birth & Death* 2005  
oil on canvas  
2010 × 3060 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased 2008

*Resistance, Te Tohenga* 2009  
oil and alkyd oil on canvas  
2000 × 3000 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
gift of the artist, 2012

*Power to Define* 2009  
oil and alkyd oil on canvas  
2000 × 3000 mm  
courtesy of Tairāwhiti Museum

*War* 2012  
acrylic and oil on canvas  
2130 × 1210 mm  
Private collection, Auckland

**Emily Karaka**

*In the Mixing Bowl* 1977  
mixed media on hardboard  
1200 × 2000 mm  
Chandra Family Trust, Auckland

*Planting, Searching, Rising:  
Taupiri Is the Mountain, Waikato  
Is the River* 1983  
oil on canvas  
1830 × 8300 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
gift of the Auckland City Council  
Employment Department, 1985

*Te Uri o Te Ao* 1995  
oil on canvas  
3000 × 3800 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased with the assistance  
of Reader's Digest New Zealand  
Limited, 1997

*Local Government Tea Party*  
1997  
acrylic on hessian on board  
1800 × 3600 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased 2013

*Vision Hauraki* 1997  
acrylic and oil on canvas  
1822 × 1667 mm  
Collection of John Hood and Anne  
Hood, on loan to the University of  
Auckland

**Star Gossage**

*Pakiri Pa* 2000  
oil and clay pigments on ply  
550 × 1650 mm  
Private collection, Auckland

*Fortrose Ruru* 2002  
oil on board  
750 × 610 mm  
Private collection, Auckland

*Two Tiki and the World Is Your  
Oyster* 2002  
oil on board  
425 × 300 mm  
Brian Wood Collection, Auckland

*Out of the Gate* 2002  
enamel on board  
610 × 950 mm  
Private collection, Auckland

*Early Spring* 2004  
oil on hardboard  
1200 × 1200 mm  
Chandra Family Trust, Auckland

*Woman with Veil* 2006  
oil on board  
600 × 600 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased 2013

*Small Bird* 2006  
oil on board  
620 × 465 mm  
courtesy of the artist and  
Tim Melville Gallery, Auckland

*Whai* 2011  
oil on board  
845 × 620 mm  
Private collection, Auckland

**Saffron Te Ratana**

*Untitled II* 2000  
pencil  
190 × 140 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased with the assistance of  
Jean Horsley, 2000

*Whakarongo ki te Karanga*  
2014  
fabric, acrylic paint, paintbrushes,  
steel pins  
2445 × 1205 × 3550 mm  
courtesy of the artist

**Kura Te Waru Rewiri**

*Whenua/Wahine/Whenua  
(Land/Woman/Land)* 1989  
acrylic and kākūka on hardboard  
2000 × 2400 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased 1989

*Whakapapa* 1989  
lithograph  
690 × 495 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased with funds provided by  
the New Zealand Lottery Grants  
Board, 1991

*Front* 2003  
acrylic on canvas  
1050 × 1560 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased 2012

*Arohanui* 2006  
acrylic on canvas  
1500 × 1000 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased 2012

*Tenei au, tenei au (This is me,  
this is me)* 2006  
acrylic on cotton duck  
2000 × 1500 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
gift of the artist, 2013

**Alfred Burton**

*Wharepuni at Koroniti, Wanganui River* c1898–93  
gelatin silver print  
142 × 197 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
The Ilene and Laurence Dakin  
Bequest, purchased 1999

*Our Canoe and Crew, Ranana, Wanganui River* 1885–93  
gelatin silver print, sepia toned  
144 × 204 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased 1999

**Tony Fomison**

*Rock Drawings Exploratory Survey Field Book, Book 3*  
1960  
paper, pencil  
208 × 255 × 8 mm  
E H McCormick Research Library  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
gift of Mary Fomison, 2009

**J W Giles****George French Angas**

*Te Henheu's [sic] Old Pah of Waitahanui, at Taupo Lake*  
hand-coloured lithograph  
232 × 305 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased 1964

*Rangihaeata's Celebrated House on the Island of Mana, Called 'Kai-Tangata'* 1844  
hand-coloured lithograph  
245 × 338 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased with funds from the  
M A Serra Trust, 1987

*Weeping Over a Deceased Chief*  
date unknown  
hand-coloured lithograph  
251 × 355 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki,  
purchased 1965

*Tomb of Huriwhenua, a Late Chief of the Nga Ti Toa Tribe, Queen Charlotte Sound* 1844  
hand-coloured lithograph  
214 × 515 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased with funds from the  
M A Serra Trust, 1987

*A Tiki, at Raroera Pah* 1844,  
hand-coloured lithograph in tints  
329 × 235 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased with funds from the  
M A Serra Trust, 1987

**Riwai Pakerau**

*Heke* date unknown  
wood, paint  
rafter from the meeting house  
Mauitikitikataranga  
Pewhairangi Whanau Collection,  
Hikuwai, Tokomaru Bay  
courtesy of Auckland War Memorial  
Museum Tamaki Paenga Hira

**Thomas Ryan**

*Interior of a Whare* c1891  
watercolour on paper  
225 × 285 mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
purchased 2004

**Unknown Artist**

*Hoe; Canoe Paddle*  
19th century  
wood, sealing wax  
2025 × 580 × 45mm  
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
on long-term deposit Auckland  
War Memorial Museum Tamaki  
Paenga Hira  
gift of Sir George Grey, 1887

**Unknown Artist**

*Toki* date unknown  
Poll and mid body of adze. Blade  
and bevel missing with transverse  
fracture. Ground all over. Kōkōwai  
(ochre) front and back. Edges  
sharply defined, rectangular section.  
collection of Auckland War Memorial  
Museum, Tamaki Paenga Hira  
[31976]

**Unknown Artist**

*Grindstone* date unknown  
Flat slab. Red kōkōwai staining  
on one side. From Oruarangi Pa,  
Hauraki  
collection of Auckland War  
Memorial Museum Tamaki  
Paenga Hira

**Unknown Artist**

*Atoru* date unknown  
Grindstone slab with kōkōwai  
From Oruarangi Pa, Hauraki  
collection of Auckland War  
Memorial Museum Tamaki  
Paenga Hira

**Kōkōwai**

2 × tins containing samples of  
kōkōwai (ochre) pigment. From  
Oruarangi Pa, Hauraki  
collection of Auckland War Memorial  
Museum Tamaki Paenga Hira

**Kōkōwai**

2 × tins of yellow brown ochre.  
Larger pieces have concretions  
enclosed within the softer finer  
textured ochre pieces. Collected  
1936 from Oruarangi Pa, Hauraki  
collection of Auckland War Memorial  
Museum Tamaki Paenga Hira

**Kōkōwai**

Natural aggregate with some outer  
surface intact. Red and yellow  
deposits present.  
collection of Auckland War Memorial  
Museum Tamaki Paenga Hira

## Artist Biographies

### Kura Te Waru Rewiri

*Ngāti Kahu, Ngāti Rangī, Ngāti Kauwhata, New Zealand  
born 1950 in Kaeo*

Kura Te Waru Rewiri is the eldest of nine children born to Sam and Geneva Davis. Schooled at Northland College she caught the attention of Selwyn Wilson and Buck Nin. The latter arranged for her enrolment at the University of Canterbury Ilam School of Arts, where Kura obtained her Diploma in Fine Arts (Honours) and submitted a thesis on Māori stone tool carving.

Te Waru Rewiri studied under Lithuanian painter Rudi Gopas, and acquired her mentor's expressionistic techniques. She experimented with methods for overlaying glazes in her paintings, which she also observed in Nin and Gopas' paintings. Her first solo exhibition was *Ahau-Me* in 1985 at Gallery Pacific, Auckland. She achieved national recognition in the exhibition *Three Maori Women Artists* at the National Art Gallery's Shed 11, Wellington in 1986, alongside Robyn Kahukiwa and Emily Karaka. Te Waru Rewiri's work was termed Mana Wahine Māori, or the representation of a gendered worldview, which she situated in the political discourse of the time. This imagery referenced female ancestors, their actions, land and spirituality as it pertains to Māori. Today, Te Waru Rewiri's recent works deconstruct kōwhaiwhai (rafter painting) patterns by isolating the substructures of the designs, allowing appreciation of the original beauty and powerful meaning of the forms. Her most recent solo exhibition was *Kura: Story of a Māori Woman Artist*, Mangere Arts Centre (2011).

### Emily Karaka

*Waikato, Ngāpuhi, New Zealand  
born 1952 in Auckland*

Emily Karaka was raised in a politically informed family environment by her parents John Mita and Margaret Rose Karaka. Her art springs from a concern for people and land, and the politics and reality of being Māori. Karaka is a self-taught artist whose expressionistic painting is recognised in contemporary art for its strong imagery and political commentary. She cites artists Colin McCahon, Philip Clairmont, Allen Maddox, Ralph Hotere, Arnold Manaaki Wilson, Elizabeth Ellis (Mountain), Greer Twiss and Tony Fomison among her mentors. The first public display of her artwork was in Pakuranga Arts Society's 1979 exhibition *12 Contemporary New Zealand Painters*. Karaka's art making of the past two decades has focused on Treaty of Waitangi claims. Karaka's large paintings offer a visual expression of the background of Treaty claims, and function as part of a venture to raise awareness of New Zealand's legal system. Her paintings are vibrant and powerful reminders of the value of understanding living history. Her most recent group exhibition was *Local Revolutionaries: Art and Change 1965–1986*, Auckland Art Gallery (2011).

### Robyn Kahukiwa

*Ngāti Porou, Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti, Ngāti Konohi, Te Whānau a Ruataupare, New Zealand  
born 1938 in Australia*

Robyn Kahukiwa returned to New Zealand in 1958 after living in Australia for the first 19 years of her life. Her painting practice coincided with her school teaching career and her first exhibition in 1971 indicated the subject of her art practice, the people in her multiple communities and the fact of being Māori. Kahukiwa's paintings were and still are a journey of understanding the diversity of Māori communities and her personal search for cultural identity through ancestral figures. Establishing her credentials as a painter took time, but Kahukiwa earned recognition through a series of works created for the 1983 *Wahine Toa: Women of Maori Myth* exhibition, which toured New Zealand. Kahukiwa's painting practice coalesces customary and contemporary figurative forms which when combined produce strong social commentary on the effects of historic and recent events on contemporary life. Today, Kahukiwa continues her critical focus with paintings which convey the political observations that have shaped her understanding of the world, her role as an artist and the place of art in society. In September 2011, Robyn Kahukiwa received the Te Tohu Toi Ke award from Te Waka Toi, the Māori division of Creative New Zealand, acknowledging the significance of her contribution to New Zealand contemporary art practice. Her most recent exhibition was *Maumahara, Remember*, Mahara Gallery, Waikanae (2012).

### Star Gossage

*Ngāti Wai, Ngāti Manuhiri, Ngāti Ruahine, New Zealand  
born 1973 in Auckland*

Star Gossage obtained her Diploma of Fine Arts majoring in computer art and film from Otago Polytechnic School of Art in 1995. During this time, she took a year off to explore film and theatre production, and studied playwriting at the University of Otago. In 2000 she made her acting debut in Barry Barclay's *The Feathers of Peace*, and the following year she held her first solo exhibition, *Ora*, at Oedipus Rex Gallery, Auckland. Gossage's short film writing projects began in 1993 with the film *Under the Ngaio Tree*. In 1995 she produced *DUST* a seven-minute experimental video. Gossage took several years to settle on a style that is recognisably hers, and her imagery is at once autobiographical and seemingly universal. Her painting is shaped by the geography of the family land at Pakiri, northeast of Auckland, where she lives. After a period of using manufactured paint, Gossage has returned to painting with clays that she collects from different locations surrounding her home, making a connection with the use of natural pigments in her early career. The characters in Gossage's artwork, some of whom are otherworldly, fragile figures, exist in harmony with each other. By affirming a shared whakapapa (genealogy) the paintings document relationships and experiences shared between people, land and history, and the mystical world. Her most recent solo exhibition was *Marae*, Tim Melville Gallery, Auckland (2013).

### Saffron Te Ratana

*Ngāi Tūhoe, New Zealand  
born 1975 in Oamaru*

Saffron Te Ratana began her fine arts training at the University of Auckland Elam School of Fine Arts in 1994 and obtained a Bachelor of Māori Visual Arts from Massey University in 2000. Her work was first shown internationally that same year at the Noumea Biennale, New Caledonia, and her first public gallery solo exhibition *Pepeha* was held in 2009 at The Suter Art Gallery, Nelson.

Te Ratana's approach to painting took shape when she was a teenager under the encouragement of her artist parents. The technique she developed after leaving art school involved wet-on-wet mark making. The style of scratching through multiple layers of paint allowed Te Ratana to suggest abstracted figurative Māori forms that appeared to slide down the surface of the painting. In the mid-2000s Te Ratana began using abstracted Māori symbols that extended her interest in semiotics or the philosophical theory of signs and symbols. She explored making painted paper cubes and applying these in grid formations to extend the conventions of painting.

Since 2008 Te Ratana has collaborated artistically with Ngataiharuru Taepa and Hemi Macgregor. As an unnamed collective they have produced two major projects *Tu Te Manu Ora I Te Rangī* (2008) and *Ka Kata Te Po* (2011), which was revised in a larger form for the 5th Auckland Triennial *If you were to live here...* at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (2013).

## Contributors

**Ngahiraka Mason** (Ngāi Tūhoe, Te Arawa and Ngāti Pango) is Indigenous Curator, Māori Art at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. Her curatorial interests strongly relate to old knowledge and new understandings within indigenous sites of knowledge to generate awareness of the value of culture. A trained fine artist, curator, writer and cultural historian, she has a Masters of Māori Visual Art (First Class Honours) from Massey University.

**Jonathan Mane-Wheoki** (Ngāpuhi, Te Aupōuri, Ngāti Kuri) is Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland, and part-time Head of Arts & Visual Culture, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Mane-Wheoki is one of Aotearoa New Zealand's leading writers on modern and contemporary Māori art, and has published important articles on Robyn Kahukiwa.

**Anna-Marie White** (Te Ātiawa) is Curator at The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū, Nelson, and a freelance writer specialising in contemporary Māori art and identity politics in Aotearoa New Zealand. She has a Masters of Museum Studies (First Class Honours) from Massey University.

**Nigel Borell** (Pirirākau, Ngāi Te Rangi, Ngāti Ranginui, Te Whakatōhea) has a Māori visual arts background that includes writing and commentary for both print media and independent publications. He also has a growing curatorial practice which began in 2005. Borell is currently Associate Curator, Māori at the Auckland War Memorial Museum Tamaki Paenga Hira.

**Sarah Hillary** is Principal Conservator at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. She graduated with a Masters in Applied Science in the Conservation of Paintings from the University of Canberra. She has specialised in the technical examination of paintings and has published work on the techniques of New Zealand artists Colin McCahon, Rita Angus, Frances Hodgkins and Gottfried Lindauer.

**Louise Furey** is Curator, Archaeology at Auckland War Memorial Museum Tamaki Paenga Hira. She has a Doctor of Science degree and Masters in anthropology from the University of Auckland. Her specialist area is Māori material culture from the perspective of archaeology and stylistic development.

