

# B. *221*



Christchurch Art Gallery  
Te Puna o Waiwhetū

*Bulletin* Issue no.221  
Spring 2025



# B.

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Our thanks to Leon White Design and  
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ISSN 1176-0540 (print)

ISSN 1179-6715 (online)

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Cover: Kahurangiariki Smith *Ride or Die* (still)  
2024. Digital animation. Courtesy of the artist

Left: Francine Spencer, detail of work in progress.  
Photo: Kirsty Dunn



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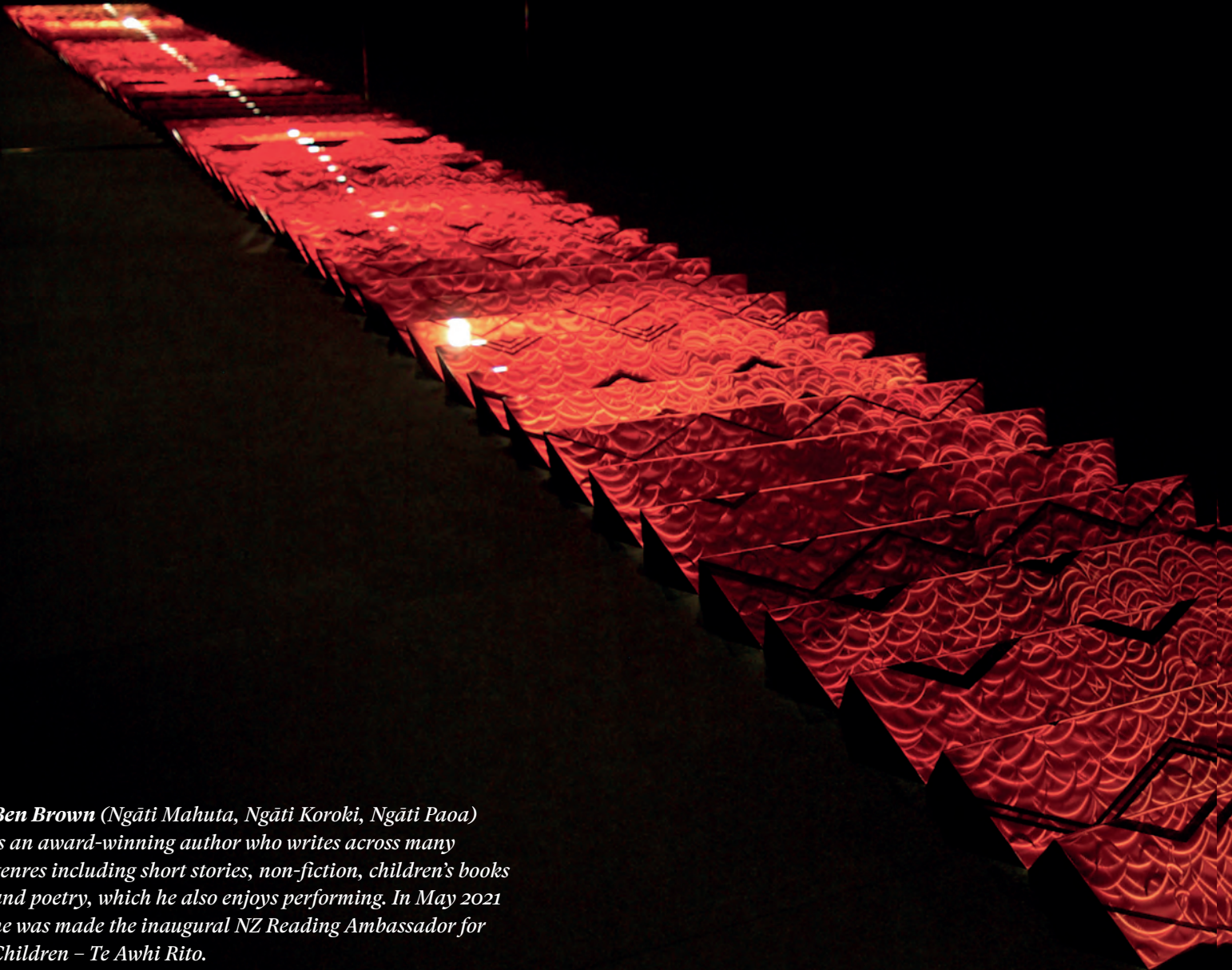
What's on at the  
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Left: Louie Zalk-Neale *He Whai  
Tea—Skeleton* (detail) 2024.  
Digital photograph. Courtesy  
of the artist

Right: Lisa Reihana *Marakihau*  
2001. Colour photograph  
(dye, photographic gelatin,  
resin-coated paper, aluminium).  
Collection of Museum of  
New Zealand Te Papa  
Tongarewa, purchased 2002

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**Ben Brown** (Ngāti Mahuta, Ngāti Koroki, Ngāti Paoa) is an award-winning author who writes across many genres including short stories, non-fiction, children's books and poetry, which he also enjoys performing. In May 2021 he was made the inaugural NZ Reading Ambassador for Children – Te Awhi Rito.

Tangaroa Birch Ara-i-te-Uru (detail) 2011. Lacquer on stainless steel. Exhibition curated by Reuben Friend at City Gallery Te Whare Toi, 26 November 2011 – 2 December 2012. Courtesy of the artist and Page Blackie Gallery. Collection of Te Manawa Museums Trust. Photo: Andrew Beck



# TANIWHA

*Ben Brown*

There is a taniwha in my river

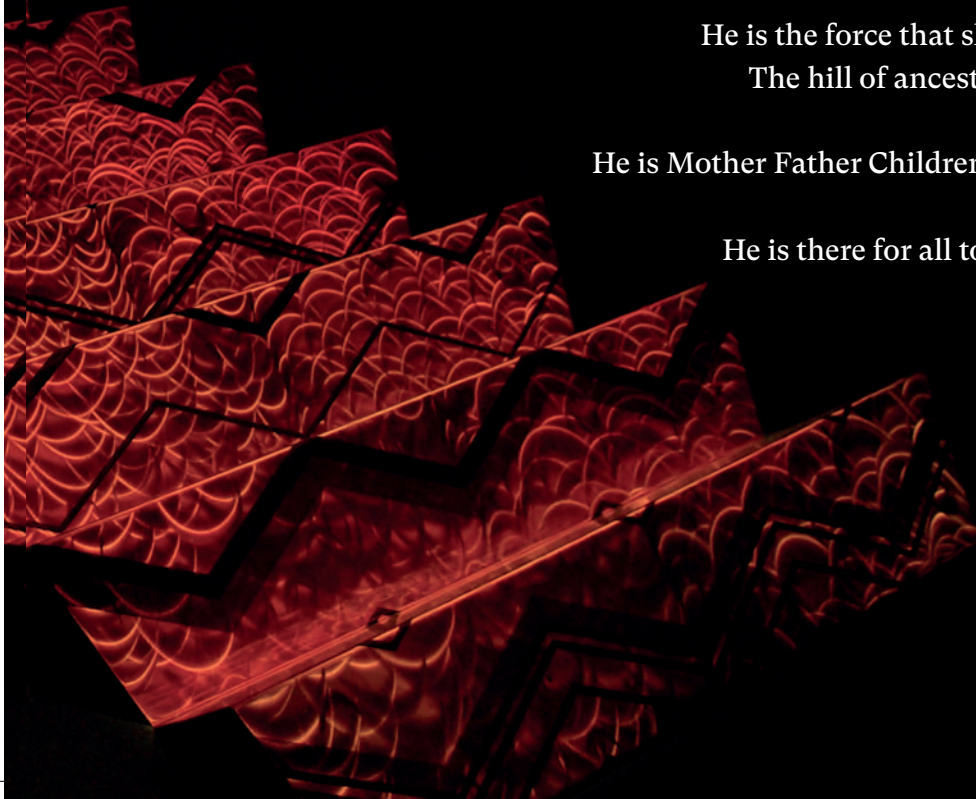
Mock me if you will but I believe  
As you believe in God  
Or economic principles  
Or bullshit on the Internet

He is neither myth nor monster  
He is the ripple of the water  
The soft breath of its journey  
The fury of the flood  
The tepidness of drought  
The dirtiness of foreign fish  
The suffering of the shit  
Exuding from a thousand pipes  
Along its course  
He is the dam and the bridge  
And the power station sucking him dry

He is the force that shaped  
The hill of ancestry

He is Mother Father Children to my people

He is there for all to see



# Kupu Whakataki Foreword

**KIRSTY DUNN**

Guest editor

August 2025

Tēnei te mihi ki te māreikura kua whetūrangihia i tēnei tau.  
Nā tāna mahi, nā tāna āwhina, nā tōna kaha, ka puāwai te  
kākano o tēnei kaupapa. Moe mai rā, Whaea Robyn.

Haere, haere, haere atu rā, he taniwha hikuroa.

Starting points are always difficult to reckon with. Inspired by Indigenous artists, academics, activists and storytellers, I've written previously about the traps so-called 'beginnings' set for us, have lectured students about the importance of asking "but what about before that?", have revelled in the way my favourite artists draw our attention to what lies beneath these points, these moments in time. I begin here because I don't quite know how to start this introduction and don't really know how to talk about the exhibition's origins in the right way. I start here because I see the exhibition *Whāia te Taniwha* and this accompanying edition of *Bulletin* as part of a longer, ongoing kōrero not only about taniwha and what they mean to us, but about the power and potentiality of the stories, knowledge, activism and artworks of takata whenua. These artworks and texts are all those things and more at the same time. A bit like taniwha, eh? In defiance of easy categorisation. Multiple things at once.

Here is a possible starting point. I met Chloe Cull in a reo Māori class almost four years ago. I had recently found out that my colleague Madi Williams and I were successful (much to our surprise) in receiving a Marsden Fast Start Grant from the Royal Society Te Apārangi (Fast Start—another beginning) to work on a research project about taniwha: to kōrero with people around Aotearoa, delve into the archives, and look at representations of our whanau in art, literature, the media and court evidence amongst other sources. I was trying my best to relay all this to Chloe in te reo, my sentences full of hapa... and it was there that our collective dreaming toward a taniwha exhibition began. And now, with the help of so many artists, storytellers, reo champions, technicians, editors and administrators, after lots of kōrero, email exchanges, admin, angst, laughs, freak-outs, existential crises, challenges,



beautiful accidents, tohu and tribulation (and everything in between)—kei konei tātou: we get to be part of this celebration of knowledge and mystery, which has the strength of ancestral narrative and relationships and the knowledge of takata whenua at its heart.

Whaea Robyn Kahukiwa's pukapuka *Taniwha* is perhaps where all this really begins for me; many of us were introduced to taniwha whanauka through the journey depicted within the pages of this taoka and many of us have grown to see the conflicting worldviews present in that story continually reflected in Aotearoa society. (That Government-led Marsden grant I mentioned earlier is no longer available for those of us working in humanities, within which Māori and Indigenous studies, history, literature and art history sit—make of that what you will.) This edition of *Bulletin*, this exhibition, doesn't exist without Whaea Robyn. *Taniwha* and her wider body of work continue to inspire and drive this kaupapa in multiple ways and multiple directions. It is my hope that the exhibition honours the ara she has paved for us.

The opportunity to be guest editor of this magazine was another starting point (and another big learning curve)—but if you are going to dip one big toe into the curation pool I reckon you may as well put the other one in the editing deep end. This has been a chance to ask just some of the storytellers I love for their take on taniwha and, despite my ambiguous request and rather wide parameters, the tūhono within the mahi gathered here and the works in the exhibition are evident: personal reflections, divergences and intersections, whakapapa, tūpuna narratives, sass, sustenance, questioning, challenge, exchange, community, resistance, reckoning. Above all, the permanence of taniwha is affirmed, and they are portrayed as vibrant sources of guidance and inspiration. My sincerest thanks to the writers, artists and writer-artists who have contributed to this edition, to their whānau and hapori too.

Conclusions are maybe just as difficult as starting points. The exhibition may be open now and the magazine in print, but it's really neither the beginning nor the end of anything. Our

research kaupapa goes on and so too do the challenges and changes. As we continue the haereka though, we draw strength and inspiration from the narratives we've been privileged to spend so much time with, and we'll attempt to navigate kā piki me kā heke with the vibrant whetū and whakaaro our tūpuna and our storytellers have so generously provided us with.

E rere ana taku mihi ki a koutou katoa.

**Kirsty Dunn** (*Te Aupōuri, Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi*) is a lecturer at Aotahi: the School of Māori and Indigenous Studies, Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha University of Canterbury. Her art writing has appeared in publications by Te Puna o Waiwhetū Christchurch Art Gallery, The Physics Room, Blue Oyster Gallery and the Corban Estate Arts Centre amongst others.

Whāia te *Taniwha* is on display until 15 February 2026. It is curated by Chloe Cull (*Ngāi Tahu*), Dr Kirsty Dunn (*Te Aupōuri, Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi*) and Dr Madi Williams (*Ngāti Kuia, Ngāti Koata, Ngāti Apa ki te Rā Tō*).





# TANIWHA TE HOKIKA MAI

Juanita Hepi

“TANIWHA ARE GUARDIANS  
OF WATERFALLS, WARNINGS  
TO INTREPID TRAVELLERS,  
TALL TALES AROUND  
WARMING FIRES, WHAKAPAPA  
REPRESENTATIVES,  
CARETAKERS, FEELINGS,  
PLANTS...”





Taniwha narratives invoked in small rooms on warm nights of a Hokianga summer, or in big rooms with dirt floors by a Te Reinga river. Hine Kōrako, Poutini, Ngārara Huarau, Whatipū, Ngake and Whātaimai, names repeated and tethered to history from the mouths of generations of sovereign peoples. We wanted more, my tiny cousins and I, we believed in daydreaming and night-flying, viscous trails and portals underground.

But Indigenous temporal loss happened alongside colonial time constructions.<sup>1</sup> I began to grow into my scrawny body and, because we'd all internalised colonisation, the distance between sovereign narratives and sovereign peoples' mouths grew. I no longer dreamed in Māori philosophy or story-weaving,<sup>2</sup> instead (conforming to mediocrity) I renamed those taniwha narratives 'myth' and 'legend' like their childish descriptions, condemning them to a kind of quagmire of "epistemic wilderness".<sup>3</sup>

As a teen, the overwhelming darkness took over. I retreated to where my body felt wanted: into the accepted 'norms' of Euro-American culture where the stories appeared intelligent and sexy and they wore smoky eyes and heavy mascara. I became inspired by post-war movements like dadaism, the theatre of cruelty, absurdity, postmodernism and surrealism. Enticing creative movements used succulent language such as Breton's "pure psychic automatism".<sup>4</sup> They included rave culture and impaired alternate realities in the 2000s and I chased them like I was running towards and away from... But there was something familiar sitting in the unsaid and no matter how far I strayed, taniwha narratives lurked in

the background. Waiting, I guess, to be recalled. So what do we return to, when we recall taniwha?

Before I explore further, I should explain my present reality. I'm staring at a copy of *Taniwha* by Robyn Kahukiwa, she has just passed away, passed on, passed over, moved towards or away from. Her absence generates a palpable grief across the country. It's hard to focus because when you have so few living role models, it is so much harder to let one go.

#### *He Taniwha Hiku Roa*<sup>5</sup>

I stare harder and longer at the taniwha book; memories arrive in waves. I've had to rewind and reset. What started out as a kind of ode to te taiao or the natural world, an informative essay on plants and their whakapapa, has shifted and morphed. I acknowledge the multiple ways taniwha have manifested in my own lived experience: as ecological custodians, epistemic conduit, digital hybrids, physical beings, states of being, intergenerational stories, the descriptor people use to name their alcoholism, emotional haunt. Taniwha are guardians of waterfalls, warnings to intrepid travellers, tall tales around warming fires, whakapapa representatives, caretakers, feelings, plants... And they can be all these things at the same time. The things we return to when we recall taniwha are the things we so often need: a way to be in relation with the world around and within us, not just to make sense of it but to be present within it.





Ngahua Harrison *Te Kiri o Te Tohoraha* 2025. Inkjet-printed digital photograph.  
Courtesy of the artist







# “ONE PLANT, ONE TANIWHA, ONE STEP AT A TIME.”

In the plant world, perhaps ironically, most taniwha narratives have gone underground. A few known plants still hold taniwha in their names; parataniwha, poataniwha and taniwhaniwha / papataniwhaniwha. Among harakeke cultivars, some variations carry taniwha-inflected names such as poi-taniwha, matawai-taniwha, and pari-taniwha. All of these plants are rooted in the specific geographies and communities they serve, yet publicly accessible information remains scarce.

This is the first challenge for plant people who are also whakapapa people: our responsibility to research the personal. It requires returning to Māori homes, communities, whānau, hapū and iwi to recover the underground narratives, oral histories, recorded stories and intergenerational records that can help us fill in the missing parts. One plant, one taniwha, one step at a time.

I'm lucky to be living in a moment of powerful Māori scholarship. Unlike some early anthropologists and ethnographers who extracted knowledge without relational accountability, we now move with nuance, with ethics and, importantly, with adherence to the tikaka of the communities from whom taniwha and native plant narratives originate. Furthermore it was those early Māori scholars, institutional or “observant”,<sup>6</sup> who created space for my peers and me to continue the intergenerational truth-telling traditions of our ancestors for today. They reminded us that in te ao Māori, te ao hurihuri, te ao kikokiko, we are living in a relational world. Everything is connected. So while academic literature on the specific relationships between taniwha and our native plant species may be limited, there is

no shortage of taniwha narratives within the broader matrix of te taiao. In weaving these worlds together, certain themes emerge again and again; ecological sustainability, epistemic integrity, cultural hybridity and a return to our relationship with te taiao, the natural world.

Return(ing) is an important concept—we'll cycle back at the end.

Parataniwha (*Elatostema rugosum*) translates into English as ‘home of the taniwha’,<sup>7</sup> and it thrives in the shadows, damp and dark, under bridges, beside rivers and beneath waterfalls. Never fully in the sun, its leaves are red, bronze, purple and saw edged. This connection between environment and form reinforces the understanding of taniwha as ecological beings, made manifest as both story and physical space. Their presence lurks in the textures, locations and behaviours of native plants. These plants are taniwha.

Tōtara, too, carry intergenerational narratives. Ngamahanga Te Ruahuihui (the tohunga of Te Rotoiti) tells a story of the taniwha Te Upoko o Huraki Tai who cruised through the waters of Lake Rotoiti, embodied by a rākau tupua,<sup>8</sup> and sometimes breached in a place called Tapuwaeharuru at the eastern end of the lake. When this happened,

*[The] tohunga accompanied by the people would recite prayer to propitiate the spirit of the medium and would also gather items of significance to adorn their guardian as if Te Upoko o Huraki Tai were a living person.*

In the northern Wairoa River, a taniwha named Rangiriri,<sup>9</sup> also known as a rākau tupua, defied river currents



Photo: Kirsty Dunn

and drifted against the flow. If a kawau pū / black shag was seen perched upon the back of Rangiriri, this was viewed as a harbinger of death to an important person. Importantly, “one must be a descendant of the right tupuna to see and recognise these tohu.”

Another narrative that positions trees as living agents within taniwha whakapapa traces the origin of creeping plants to the taniwha Tunaroa. In a Kāi Tahu version,<sup>10</sup> Tunaroa attempts to kidnap Hine-a-te-repo (woman of the swamp), but she outwits him. Her husband, Māui, takes revenge, capturing Tunaroa and carving him to pieces. His head became the conger eel, his body transformed into kareao (supplejack vine, *Ripogonum scandens*), his blood stained the trees and birds red, and his tail became the river eels. Here the forest is not exclusively a site of biodiversity, but a domain of taniwha transformation, an embodied, living archive that is compositional, anatomical and consistently reproducing.

This relational ontology speaks to taniwha asserting relational sovereignty. Scholar Justine Kingsbury argues for a serious engagement with taniwha narratives, noting how they encode environmental warnings and risk awareness into place-based story.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, geologist and mātauraka Māori scholar Daniel Hikuroa identifies taniwha pūrākau as repositories of geomorphological data: rivers behave like taniwha, shifting, unpredictable and alive with memory.<sup>12</sup> These stories call us back to a relational ethic, to heed the rivers and the taniwha within them.

Within the scope of taniwha as multiplicitous and manifold, taniwha cruise the edges of what is possible so that in digital and artistic spaces, taniwha are reasserting themselves. Warren Williams’s concept of the “Digital Taniwha” envisions data guardians—spiritual kaitiaki in virtual domains.<sup>13</sup> Through animation, coding and visual storytelling, rangatahi continue taniwha genealogies in realms of design and digital sovereignty. This is not reinvention but re-emergence. As Alice Te Punga Somerville writes,<sup>14</sup> Indigenous futurities unfold in the continuum of ancestral presence and creative insurgency. Today’s taniwha inhabit server farms and syntax, reminding us that protection and warning adapt form but not function. In researching, and being challenged by taniwha, there appears to be no conceptual space or framework from which taniwha are excluded. They are ubiquitous, manifest and evolving.

Ultimately, however, all taniwha return to te taiao. They emerge from and dissolve into whenua. The body, too, is

reclaimed, cleansed by rain, consumed by maggots, reborn as soil. Taniwha are cycles, decomposers and regenerators. Hine Korako remains at my marae, steadfast kaitiaki taniwha of Te Reinga. She is a protector, and she too was betrayed.

So again, what do we return to when we recall taniwha?

We return to metabolising grief through ecology. We return to kāhere and te taiao, the natural world to which we have come, belong, are remembered by and will end our cycles. We return to sovereignty, to dignity, to play and curiosity, we return to joy.

We return to ourselves.

**Juanita Hepi** (*Kāi Tahu, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngātiwai, Ngāpuhi*) is an activist, haututū and multi-disciplinary storyteller. She holds a Masters of Māori and Indigenous Leadership, a Graduate Diploma of Teaching and Learning and a Bachelor of Arts from Toi Whakaari. Juanita is māmā to three.

1 Indigenous temporality inspired by “spiralic temporality” as coined by Laura Maria De Vos, ‘Spiralic Time and Cultural Continuity for Indigenous Sovereignty: Idle No More and The Marrow Thieves’, *Transmotion*, vol.6, no.2, 2020, University of Kent, pp. 1–42.

2 Georgina Tuari Stewart, *Māori Philosophy: Indigenous Thinking from Aotearoa*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020.

3 Garrick Cooper, ‘Kaupapa Māori Research: Epistemic Wilderness as Freedom?’, *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, vol.47, no.2, 2012, pp. 64–73.

4 Andre Breton, *Manifesto do Surrealismo*, 2001.

5 Hirini Moko Mead and Neil Grove, *Ngā Pēpeha a Ngā Tipuna: The Sayings of the Ancestors*, Victoria University Press, 2004, p. 122. A monster with a long tail, since taniwha is also taken to mean a chief. The expression is a metaphor for a chief with many followers of much influence.

6 I use the word ‘observant’ here to describe Indigenous leaders whose knowledge comes from outside the Institution and more than likely from observations of the world around them, this could be observing both the natural world and knowledge holders.

7 “[W]riting about mana wāhine or wāhine Māori or any other mātauraka concept in English only half uncovers truths”, Juanita Hepi, Uhu, *Correspondence* 3.2, The Physics Room. <https://physicsroom.org.nz/publications/correspondence-32>.

8 George Graham et al., ‘Each tribe, subtribe and indeed family group had its familiar taniwha or tupua of some kind’. ‘Some Taniwha and Tupua’, *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol.55, no.1, 1946, pp. 26–39.

9 Na Gary Hooker, “‘Ko Rangiriri te rākau e ngāu i te ngaru.’ Rangiriri”. <https://www.terorora.iwi.nz/post/rangiriri>.

10 *Tunaroa, a traditional legend retold for tamariki / mokopuna*, retold by Bubba Thompson and Paulette Tamati Elliffe. Illustrations by Remy, designs by Ariki Creative. Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, November 2023. <https://ngaitahu.iwi.nz/assets/Documents/Tunaroa-TSM-1.pdf>.

11 Justine Kingsbury, ‘Taking Taniwha Seriously’, *Asian Journal of Philosophy*, 2022. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/365291940\\_Taking\\_taniwha\\_seriously](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/365291940_Taking_taniwha_seriously).

12 Daniel Hikuroa, ‘Mātauranga Māori – the Epistemology’, *MAI Journal*, vol.6, no.1, 2017, pp. 61–6.

13 Warren Williams, ‘Digital Taniwha: Māori Leadership in the Age of Data Sovereignty’, Doctoral thesis, University of Waikato, (2021).

14 Alice Te Punga Somerville, *Two Hundred and Fifty Ways to Start an Essay about Captain Cook*, Bridget Williams Books, 2020.

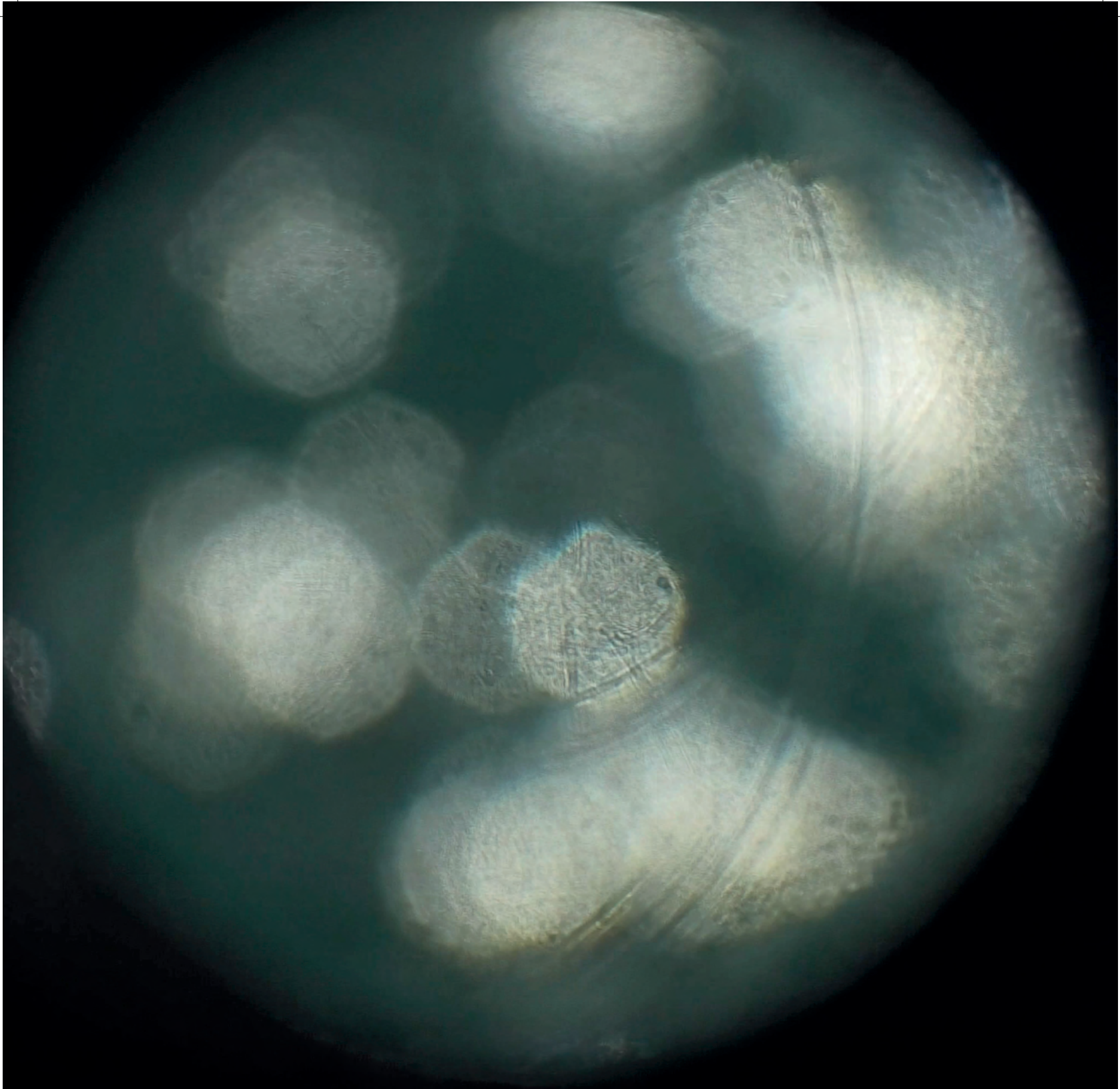




Photo: Kirsty Dunn



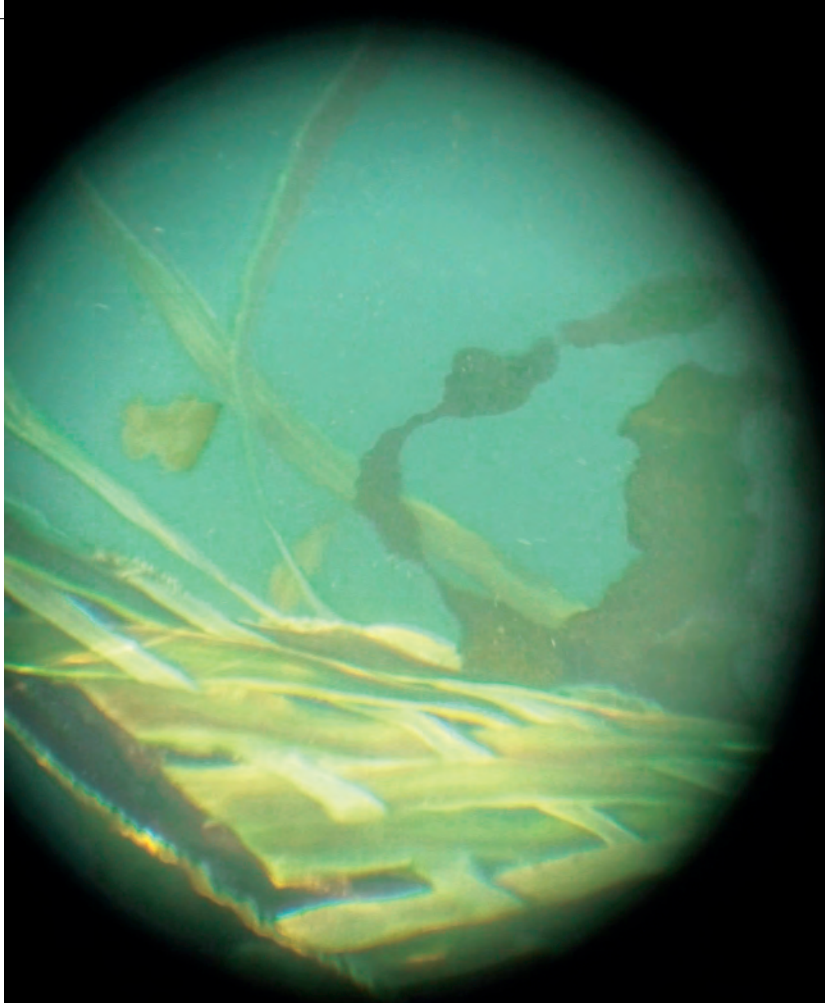




Louie Zalk-Neale *Mana tīpua tuku iho—Trancestor* (still) 2021. Digital video. Courtesy of the artist

# The problem with your neck

Talia Marshall



First he sent me a photo of a rainbow dolphin, which made me laugh because it's the exact opposite of my personality and he knew that. Then I found a GIF of Dick Van Dyke in double denim riding a dolphin, bouncing on it in automated joy and when I sent it back, it made him laugh. I love that dolphin he said. But maybe both of us are sharks.

Dick Van Dyke was saved by dolphins. I mean of course he was, a man who would never make a movie his children couldn't watch, bopping along with dolphins in *Mary Poppins* when dolphins can't dance on land. Or save anyone. The truth is Dick, some dolphins are rapists and get cracked out playing underwater volleyball with a pufferfish.

The truth is my taniwha would  
never hurt anyone. Well...

After my grandfather died and  
turned into a dolphin, my hoa—  
the he in this—sent me Real Life's  
'Send Me an Angel'. He knew my  
grandfather was a dolphin now.

Right now  
Right now  
Right now

This is how you talk to a taniwha:

You say the right prayers,  
you hold on to the fin  
You kill an octopus because it has  
arms and you don't  
You laugh at nothing

The thing is he could always make  
me laugh. Even the way he said  
potato and Nana made me laugh.  
The terrible things he knew  
about me made me laugh. I even  
laughed at the terrible things  
he said about women.

My taniwha has no sex.  
It was birthed by a dream.  
My taniwha listens to Grace Jones  
and grinds pearls into dust.

Who cares more about revenge?  
Reptiles or mammals? I was  
the mad woman expecting my  
taniwha to do my bidding but it  
is not shaped like vengeance.  
My taniwha is shaped like fun.  
I dream about him. Because we  
were like season one of *Remington  
Steele*. Because he was charming  
as Pierce Brosnan. Hair is very  
important here.  
In this dream of the sea.  
Our hair  
Our kuri  
Our cry  
The tuatara crawling out my  
mouth needs a leash.

And still our taniwha.  
And princesses with hair made  
for riding them, don't snort,  
you wish.



I wish I had been more curious.  
I wish I had known when it  
wasn't funny. I wish we hadn't  
stayed up longer than our hair  
trying to understand the wrong  
of you. But it was too late.  
I know there is another place.  
And I know my taniwha  
And its heart is the kererū  
Diving into the dusk  
In my dreams it's softer and  
sweeter than it ever was between  
us in real life.  
You were disappointed when I  
became broken, when I talked  
about myself too much and didn't  
ask about your business.  
A Virgo to the end.  
But the end of what exactly?  
Me and you  
There is none of that  
There is Hinepoupou carving up  
the water like a roast

It is the dogs she turns to stone  
It is the dolphins who laugh  
And point true south  
Away from the truth  
It is Grace Jones  
Shucking oysters  
Saying fuck u motherfucker fuck u  
I thought you were my friend  
Because after I posted the  
Farnsworth House on Facebook  
The white plane of its pavilion  
You sent me a message saying  
Hangi if we end up alone  
Let's be together in that whare  
Like Mies van der Rohe could  
gloss over the monochromatic  
Void in you. How you knew  
My life was falling apart and  
paid me too much to clean  
your house

And the clothes horse  
And your black running pants  
Strung over the thin skeleton  
Of its aluminium  
Like a clue for the man  
Seen in the bush  
The banal beauty of Ted Bundy's  
sentences  
Running through the Utah  
of my mind  
I still dream that you are my  
brother and we share a bed  
Innocent as rain  
Where the dolphin is laughing  
And no one is touching  
Because all our fingers have eyes

***Talia Marshall** (Ngāti Kuia,  
Rangitāne o Wairau,  
Ngāti Rārua, Ngāti Takihiku)  
is an Ōtepoti based writer.  
She has had work published  
in Poetry, Landfall, Sport,  
North & South and The  
Spinoff amongst others  
and her memoir Whaea Blue  
was published in 2024.*



# Whaka

Kā Taniwha Uira ō Francine Spencer  
Tessa Boraston



# hikohiko







Detail from Francine Spencer's *whare*, 2025. Photo: Kirsty Dunn

“While the glints of metal are what catch my eye first in Fran’s home, what I notice next are the many forms of mahi toi: between clusters of family photos and mementos, paintings cover the walls, whakairo and raraka rest on shelves...”

On stepping into Francine Spencer’s home, what I notice first are the small, glittering points of light, scattered around the room like tiny, flickering whetū. But these aren’t gifts from Rakinui—these starlike specks are made of copper, Fran’s choice of material for her work in the upcoming exhibition *Whāia te Taniwha*. A gift from Papatūānuku, then, as Fran points out. Curved around poi, twisted into kete, they wink at us, appearing and then retreating from sight as the sun moves across the room. Why did you choose copper? I ask. Fran grins, and in a flash, replies “I think it chose me.”

Fran (Taranaki, Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe, Rapuwai, Kāi Tahu) has been a working multimedia artist for many years. Born in Ōtautahi, she studied Māori Visual Art at Toihoukura in Gisborne, under the guidance of Tā Derek Lardelli, graduating with a degree in Fine Arts. Now living on her hau kāika in Te Umu Kaha (Temuka), Fran works primarily with copper, and as we talk, I note she shares similar qualities with the element. While the glints of metal are what catch my eye first in Fran’s home, what I notice next are the many forms of mahi toi: between clusters of family photos and mementos, paintings cover the walls, whakairo and raraka rest on shelves and clay sculptures stand tall in corners. I mistakenly assume that most, if not all, of the work is Fran’s, but when I point out a particular painting, she tells me it was done by a member of her whānau; that one over there is from a friend, as is this kete, and that uku nearest me is by a fellow artist.

Fran is quick to praise others: she lights up like twinkling copper, beaming as she talks about her best friend or

compliments the work of another artist. But when it comes to her own work, she is less effusive and more elusive. On the marae, she tells us, she prefers to be in the kitchen—“I don’t like the front”—and this humility shows in her home, too. Not much of her own mahi is on display, and I think that’s the way she likes it. Fran’s hesitation to talk about herself at length comes, not from any sort of lack of self-belief, or timidity (she is not the shy and retiring type!) but rather a strong conviction that her work is of her people, and for her people. She is generous, giving many of her pieces to whānau and friends, and recently gifting her artwork for use in a local community playground. When I ask her about the process of starting a new work, her answer is characteristically modest: “I wait”, she explains. “I wait to hear from my tīpuna, and I let them guide me.”

Her tīpuna know what they’re doing, then, in choosing to guide Fran: when we do get to her work, it is to an already stunning installation she is making for *Whāia te Taniwha*. I say making, but it is more precisely a work of weaving. Strands of twisted copper are coiled and curled, laced and looped—whatu with whetū, perhaps? And let’s be clear, though guided by her tīpuna, Fran’s skill and artistry are at the fore here. “I’ve got the best twist”, she says of her copper work with a smile (I can confirm, she does). On the day we visit, several months before the exhibition opens, Fran shows us an intricately woven hīnaki, where fine, delicate copper filaments are interlaced with thicker, bracing threads; inside are two sleek, silver tuna. There is a feeling of movement about it, even at this early stage—perhaps it is the









“they’re our guides, they welcome us, they look after us. But I think we lost our understanding of them along the way. Taniwha are about what’s happening underneath.”

shimmer of the copper in light, or the undulating lines of the tuna—but I get the sense of a current in motion, of taniwha slipping through the wai. “I’m all about movement”, says Fran, demonstrating for us how, eventually, these taniwha will glide above our heads, with her work suspended from the ceiling of Te Puna o Waiwhetū (a fitting place for this work, then). She plans to accentuate that sense of rise and fall by lighting the work in a way that will ripple through the hinaki to create a wave-like effect, echoing both the wai and the movement of tuna as they propel their bodies forward.

It strikes me that copper is a fitting material for the theme of the exhibition, too. Like those mysterious glimmers of light that first caught my eye, taniwha (who are often depicted as tuna, or simply are tuna) are secretive, enigmatic, slippery. They are seen when they want to be seen, or perhaps more accurately, when they need to be seen. I ask Fran what taniwha mean to her: “I love taniwha”, she answers, “I saw one this morning in our awa.” Her tīpuna created rock art that depicts taniwha. Taniwha, for Fran and Arowhenua, are kaitiaki—like her copper hinaki, they protect by keeping out, or letting in. They are tohu, she says, “they’re our guides, they welcome us, they look after us. But I think we lost our understanding of them along the way. Taniwha are about what’s happening underneath.” And it is what lies beneath that concerns Fran. The health, the mauri, of our awa, and what affects it—drought, erosion, flooding—these are issues Fran wants to bring up out of the wai and into the light, and taniwha can do that. I ask her what she thinks of descriptions of taniwha as monsters, as

malevolent, destructive beings. “Nothing can bring the destruction of ourselves”, she replies, “but us.”

There is a second reason I think Fran’s use of copper is uniquely appropriate for this exhibition. Earlier in our visit, she showed me a poi made by a friend, around which she had woven those glittering copper threads. “Since I started using copper”, she explained, “my hands have healed. They used to get stiff when I was weaving, but I don’t have that problem anymore.” Healing copper, healing taniwha—Fran’s work is a call to remember the restorative power and shared connections that constitute te taiao, and our responsibility to honour and care for it.

**Tessa Boraston** (*Ngāti Wai, Te Rarawa*) is a writer and post-graduate student based in Ōhinehou Lyttelton.






Copper poi. Photo: Kirsty Dunn





Piri Cowie *Te Wheke* — Aro Hā Series 2024. Bronze on karā (basalt). Courtesy of the artist





# WHAT TANIWHA MIGHT BE TELLING US

A Conversation  
with Garrick Cooper  
and Carl Mika

Carl Mika (Tuhourangi, Ngāti Whanaunga) is a professor and head of school at Aotahi: Māori and Indigenous Studies, Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha University of Canterbury. His colleague Garrick Cooper (Ngāti Whanaunga, Ngāti Ranginui) is an associate professor at Aotahi.

What follows is Kirsty Dunn's attempt to *kōrero* with her esteemed colleagues about references to *taniwha* in their *mahi*. This is a truncated version of an hour-long conversation in which they delve into *Te Pō* and talk about (or perhaps around?) *taniwha* a while...

**KIRSTY DUNN:** Carl, you were asked to respond to some recent writing that sought to help *Pākehā* come to terms with the idea of *taniwha* or to “take *taniwha* seriously”. I'm interested in how you moved the focus of that *kōrero* from a discussion about whether or not *taniwha* are real, to one that asks what the implications are of dismissing the realm of mystery, of the unknown.

**CARL MIKA:** For me, that particular discussion exemplified the way that some are trying so hard to come to terms with a method, as well as an outcome, to agree with the fact that *taniwha* might exist in some form, even if as a metaphor. My response was to not speak to that because it's not important for us to discuss whether they exist or not. Instead, I would ask: taking as a given that *taniwha* exist, what is the nature of the interconnection between that thing and everything else? In what ways does it interconnect and in what ways does it hide itself? What is the importance of its hiddenness? What is the importance of it revealing itself? Those are some of the things that occur to me now that might be more important to us as Māori, not whether the *taniwha* exists or not. Or if anything exists for that matter.

**DUNN:** We enter dangerous or unhelpful territory if we go down that road, don't we?

**MIKA:** I think so. In deciding that it's an important thing to discuss we become complicit in an ontological discussion that is not of our making. So I do think it's dangerous.

**GARRICK COOPER:** Because even in attempts to recognise their existence, there's always a reconciliation required and it's back into the existing logic, right? Unless others can see its material effects in the world, then they can't reconcile it. So it always has to come back to the material, the substance. By reconfiguring it to fit their worldview they actually hollow it right out... Carl, I remember you writing recently about the fear of an academic around the divine or the supernatural and how that's one thing many would run a hundred miles from, which in itself suggests that there is something there, right?

**MIKA:** Yeah, well, that's an interesting one, isn't it? So the *taniwha* has a substance, even the imagination of the coloniser does. And that's fascinating because for us, that is substance. That is materiality.

**COOPER:** Well, if you base your actions on responding to something—which you may or may not be able to see as material—it is material because you're responding to it. It has a material effect.

**MIKA:** So it exists.

**COOPER:** And this maps on to a bundle of different things, including the fetishisation of the visible and the denial of the hidden. There's this drive to make everything visible and a real difficulty with the existence of the hidden. Whereas I think we have the capacity and inclination to leave the hidden hidden or acknowledge its existence even in its hiddenness.

**DUNN:** I wanted to ask you, Garrick about references to *taniwha* in your writing. In one piece about intellectual freedom you opened your *kōrero* with a line from a lament for *Te Haupa* by *Puakitawhiti*: “Unuhia noatia te *taniwha* i te rua”. Here, you referred to this idea of the *taniwha* emerging or revealing itself as a response to something, a challenge perhaps, and I was thinking about how this contrasted with the ways in which *taniwha* are sometimes referred to as though they are the challenge, rather than the ones responding to it.

**COOPER:** So often that line, which appears a lot in *waiata*,



**“Taniwha are signalling a set of forces at play;  
the taniwha is telling you something about something else  
— there’s always something behind.”**

is translated as “the taniwha left the den”, but I think a more accurate translation is “the taniwha has been drawn from the den”. This automatically signals a relationship with a particular phenomenon—it’s attracted to something, as opposed to being the something. So really, taniwha are signalling a set of forces at play; the taniwha is telling you something about something else—there’s always something behind. The collapsing of the messenger with the message is a particularly non-Māori way of reading that. This maps on to Carl’s idea of the visible versus the invisible or the hidden. For us, there’s always something behind the physical and the physical is not necessarily the most important thing. That reading of taniwha opens up a whole new conversation around metaphysics and how the old people understood their world.

For us, arguably, the metaphysical is a form of substance. That’s the way in which I would understand our world, things like mana, tapu, mauri. These are all deemed to be supernatural beliefs and immaterial, but for us they’re completely material and have affect in the world. They have an impact and influence and we’re always constantly aware of that.

It’s helpful I think to read people as representing a force or a message, as opposed to them *being* the message. Then we can start to get past “I don’t like that person”, “I despise them” or even “I like that person” because actually in many ways it’s irrelevant. It’s the interaction itself and what we are able to discern from that that is more fruitful. How are they speaking to us without speaking to us? I think we have the same relationship with taniwha.

**MIKA:** Do you think in some ways though the message could be inseparable? Through our own notion of materiality, do you think that there is no difference between whatever thing we’re talking about in the message but they form one materiality? If we referred back to traditional metaphysics, is it possible that we would have said there’s absolutely no difference between those things?

**COOPER:** Yeah, I wouldn’t disagree with that. I think there’s a different sense of engagement. So we understand

that we might see things, but that same thing may also need to be heard or sensed or felt. And so whenever the seen thing doesn’t reveal the wholeness of that thing, there’s other aspects to it which can’t be engaged or identified through sight or through light. So it’s not that they’re not separate things. They’re all part of the same thing but have to be engaged differently.

**MIKA:** Do you think we have to recalibrate ourselves in order to engage with it?

**COOPER:** Yeah. Again, that’s the fetishisation of the tangible, the physical, the visible in the world and we’re complicit in that project. Interesting that a pīwakawaka has just popped in to visit us...

**DUNN:** Oh kia ora.

**MIKA:** Well, this is a part of this school of thought. [To our visitor] You’re welcome to participate in the interview...

*At this point the taniwha invites us along a different ara. We discuss tohu and Te Pō and once more revisit both the difficulties with, and potentiality of, language. I ask if we can discuss the all-at-onceness-and-oneness of things and where taniwha fit within this?*

**DUNN:** It’s really hard to articulate a lot of this thinking because language is a trap, and because of the ways that taniwha defy or trouble some of these claims and categories. Do you think that they help us to think through the oneness of things because of their unknowability, their slipperiness...

**MIKA:** Yeah. So what we end up doing then is hopefully, as Garrick says, leaving some gap between what we imagine it to be and what it actually is.

**COOPER:** I like the way you described the defiance of the taniwha, the way they refuse to be locked into any particular logic or set of descriptions.

**DUNN:** For me, that’s the heart of this kaupapa; I understand that I may make mistakes in my attempt to get to that by showing that there are so many ways of relating to and thinking about taniwha. If you can’t be defined or





Piri Cowie *Te Wheke* — Aro Hā Series (detail) 2024. Bronze on karā (basalt).  
Courtesy of the artist

categorised or fully known, how can anyone have power over you? I am drawn to that mystery, not because I have any desire to find the answer, but because of the potential that lives in there. There is so much in the *kōrero* that surround taniwha. But by talking about them, asking questions, am I undoing that? I'm not trying to mess with what's hidden. Or do any kind of illuminating, ew. [Laughter.] I'm trying to celebrate it. It's hard and scary this thing but I guess I still want to try.

**MIKA:** You won't be able to avoid that, I don't think. [Laughter.]

**DUNN:** I'm not trying to provide any definitive answers. There's no conclusion. No one truth. Not one story. It's everything at once. Does that make sense?

**MIKA:** Yeah, it does.

**COOPER:** So just slightly antithetical to the academic project, right. [Laughter.]

**MIKA:** Yeah, you're operating in two worlds. There's no doubt about it. To go back to what I was saying initially, we need to determine what the features are of our worldview that enable us to decide generally what isn't appropriate to talk about and we have to do that quite consciously and systematically now. I don't know whether that's something along the lines of some guidelines like "Does our discussion about the thing encourage a connection between the self and the thing being talked about and is that demonstrable through the way it's discussed?" And so when we write or talk about, say, the taniwha, I think it's probably important to do it in ways other than academic language. And there might be another one which is more negative—does it make the thing too visible when we're discussing it?"

**DUNN:** This is what I'm concerned about.

**MIKA:** What is that ontological pillar? How is that being adhered to; that we make things hidden as well when we discuss them. That's a collective project because it has profound implications for how we talk about anything. We're talking about replacing one deeply embedded set of logics for another. That's more fundamental than any discussion about science or anything like that. So for example, I think if we had come together and decided that we needed to think about things differently, we might not be answering

questions in the same way that we are now. Without this idea of correctness when we respond to each other our answers would be more like "What you say reminds me of this..." And that would be quite deliberate. We would refer back consciously to the logic that had developed in order to undo that need for correspondence and correctness that we've bought into or become used to. You know what I'm saying?

**DUNN:** Yes. But also no.

**MIKA:** And that's very much an old people thing. You know what I mean by that? Garrick and I have talked about this often, but the old people would often not respond directly to your questions.

**DUNN:** It's like what you were doing in the writing in the piece I asked you about at the start isn't it. That's the same kind of thing that you're doing because you're not responding directly to that?

**MIKA:** Yeah.

**DUNN:** If you come with a question, the response is "Your question should have been this..."

**MIKA:** Yeah, that can happen as well because that is important. That is important for our worldview, that question. That one over there is not.

**COOPER:** Get your questions right.

[No pressure for a newbie researcher]

*We follow another ara here: we discuss Te Pō and paradox and power amongst other things. Which somehow leads us here:*

**DUNN:** It's been interesting to hear people using this word 'taniwha' to describe things like climate change and COVID. Of the coalition government as a "three-headed taniwha". Artificial intelligence has been referred to as a taniwha too. I wondered what you both think about this kupu being applied in these ways.

**MIKA:** Well, I'd say you have to be careful when you do it because you don't want to give just anyone the mana of taniwha do you.

**COOPER:** I do think there is a fear component to it. It's about how you conceive of fear and the value you ascribe to it, to dread. I know what you mean about the mana of the taniwha because these are iconic in our thought traditions.

One different example that I think is completely appropriate was the discussion of Apirana Ngata in that way.

**DUNN:** You talked about Ranginui Walker, too. And I have heard Whina Cooper described in this way. Some people have said that “he taniwha hiku roa” refers to a leader, the tail as being many followers, but also that as the taniwha moves it changes the landscape; this idea that you’ve left something, a legacy.

**COOPER:** If we’re following along the same line and thinking around what a taniwha is, there’s a sort of physical manifestation of it, but then there’s something else, the sets of forces that it signals. For the three-headed taniwha, is it the endurance of these conservative forces? Influences from overseas? That’s what that idea of the taniwha conveys, there’s something else beyond.

**MIKA:** There are three-headed monsters in the West and they might be a more appropriate way of describing it.

**DUNN:** Do you think the word has been used for ‘monster’ or ‘dragon’ as is sometimes the case in certain translations?

**MIKA:** So make it explicit, that pathway?

**COOPER:** That’s the whakapapa of that use of taniwha.

**MIKA:** Yes; that makes it clear that it’s coined for that reason, but it isn’t necessarily that thing. That’s just how we’re choosing to describe it at that point.

**COOPER:** So we don’t imbue it with a particular mana.

**MIKA:** Yes.

**COOPER:** But even mana itself is—there’s a healthy respect for forces in Māori thought and how those forces might manifest. So whilst there might not be the same genealogy with those conservative, political, radical, right-wing forces, we certainly respect its power.

**MIKA:** It forms a sort of mystery for us, doesn’t it?

**COOPER:** Yeah. It’s not about whether you like or dislike that. It’s a respect for its power.

**MIKA:** It’s like, if you retained science as another fundamental appearance of a metaphysics, which is vastly different from our own, then you would be in awe of it. That’s as far as you can collaborate with it—you can be in awe of it. And in a similar way, I guess, to what you were saying,

Garrick, it does have a certain mana because of that awe you feel. That doesn’t mean you agree with it.

**COOPER:** I was reading your last couple of questions about mātauranga Māori and both of our healthy dose of scepticism towards it. Matau conveys a sense of locking things in place, a development of an expertise that again shuts down possibilities. That is to say, there is nothing more to be known.

**CARL MIKA:** Or you’ve developed the foundations and you don’t need to revisit anything.

**MIKA:** It’s no different. It’s no different from knowledge. It’s simply a translation of knowledge.

**DUNN:** So am I right in understanding that part of the critique is that, if you don’t have mystery and spaces for the not knowing within this realm...

**MIKA:** Yes, that’s my view, as inconvenient as it is. If you’re going to cite te ao Māori as a basis for mātauranga Māori, bring that in.

**COOPER:** Complexities, unanswered questions, unanswered questions.

**DUNN:** The ability to hold two things that seem in direct opposition together at the same time?

**MIKA:** That kind of paradox, yeah.

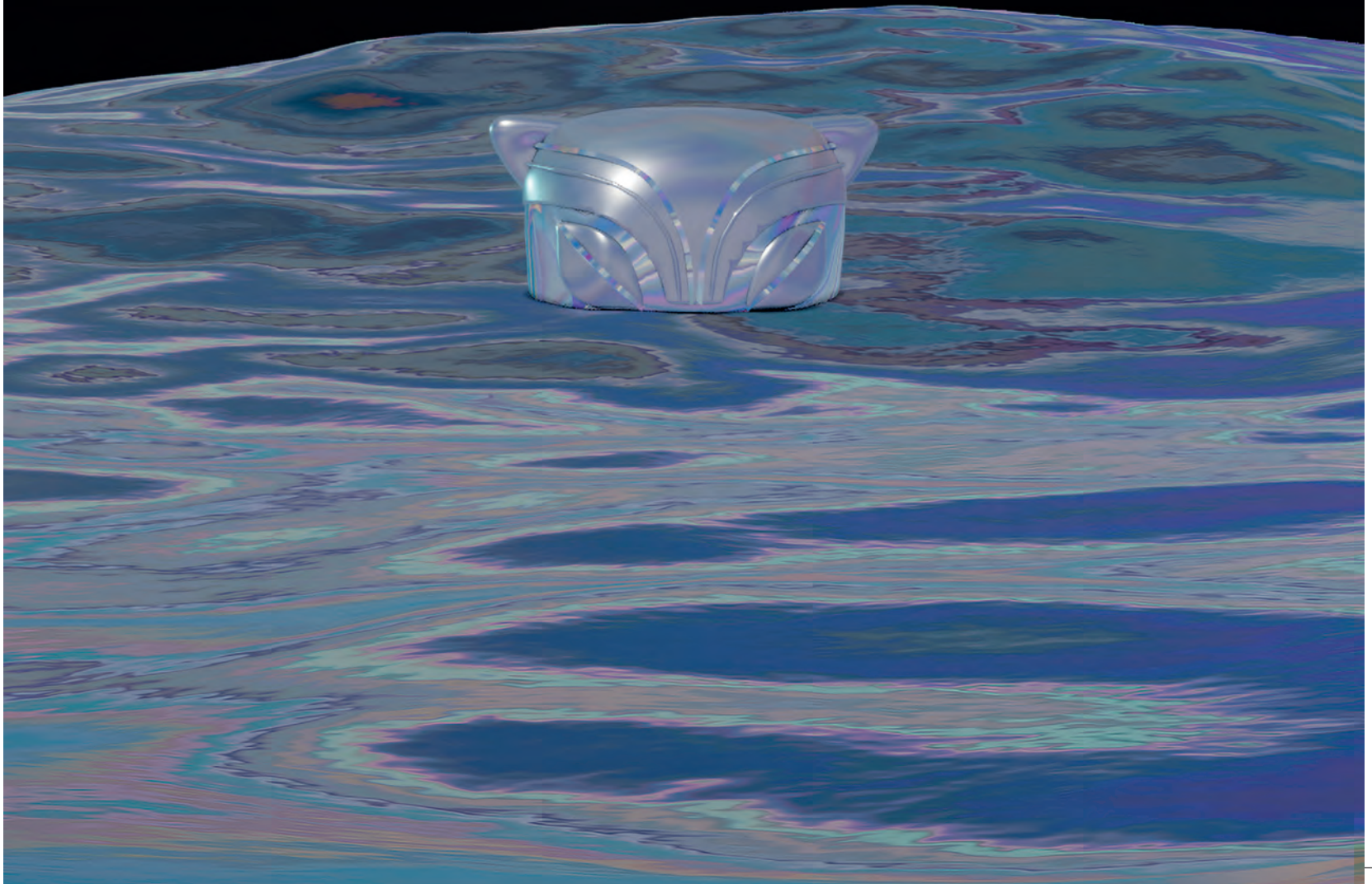
**DUNN:** That’s something that I think about probably on a daily basis since I first heard you say it, Garrick. I find that’s really generative for me, that paradox. It can be messy and a bit chaotic, but also inspiring. Productive...

*Kirsty Dunn talked with Carl Mika and Garrick Cooper in March 2025.*

1. Carl Mika, ‘The Problem of the Spiritual Thing’, *Asian Journal of Philosophy*, vol.2, no.2, 2023, pp. 1–6.
2. Garrick Cooper, ‘What is Intellectual Freedom Today: An Indigenous Reflection’, *Continental Thought and Theory*, vol.1, no.1, 2016, pp. 93–5.



Kahurangiariki Smith *Ride or Die* (still) 2024.  
Digital animation. Courtesy of the artist





# Artist in Residence: Maungarongo Te Kawa

In December 2024, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū had the privilege of hosting Maungarongo Te Kawa (Ngāti Porou) in Ōtautahi for three weeks as he began the development of his spectacular new work for *Whāia te Taniwha*. Matua Ron was staying at Sutton Heritage House and Garden, where the studio was big enough to host stacks of fabric, beads and sequins, a sewing machine, a posse of helpers and endless visitors. Not to mention the work in progress—an enormous waka taua adorned with layers of joyful colour, texture and sparkles. Our photographer, John Collie, visited Matua Ron while he was staying at Sutton House.



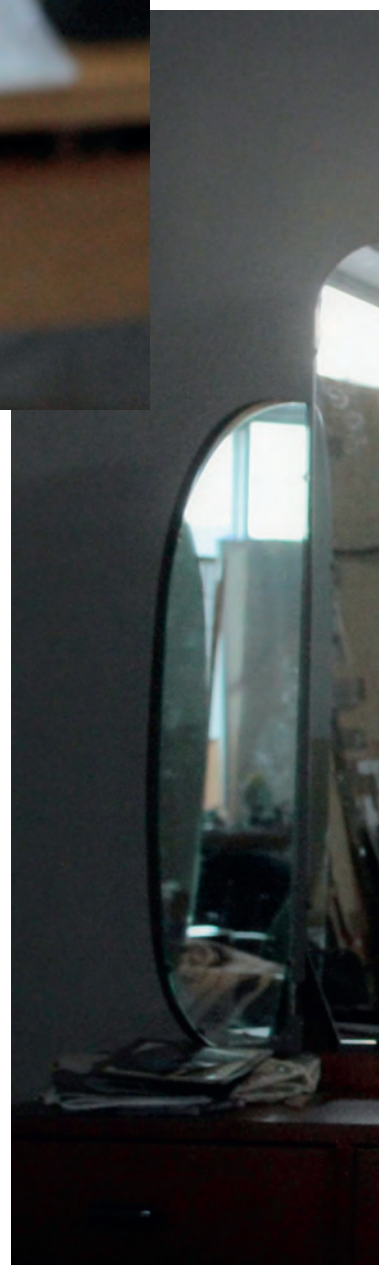


Maungarongo Te Kawa 2025. Photos: John Collie





# He Kuru Pounamu: Jennifer Rendall





Jennifer Rendall in her studio, 2025. Photos: Kirsty Dunn.







**“Jen’s work prompts us to recognise and contemplate the journeys and expertise of tūpuna, and to reflect on the importance of placenames that record their feats and experiences too.”**

Jen Rendall (Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Māmoe) has explored ancestral narratives and the entwinements of plant life, waterways and landscapes in her works for some time. As a member of Paemanu Ngāi Tahu Contemporary Visual Arts, she has participated in significant exhibitions which honour Kāi Tahu relationships to whenua, including *Tauraka Toi: A Landing Place* at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in 2021. More recently, her work was included in *Kia Ora Whaea*—an exploration of Māori motherhood and Indigenous perspectives and experiences of maternity shown at the Corban Estate Arts Centre in Tāmaki Makarau, which also included work by fellow Kāi Tahu contemporaries Turumeke Harrington and Alix Ashworth.

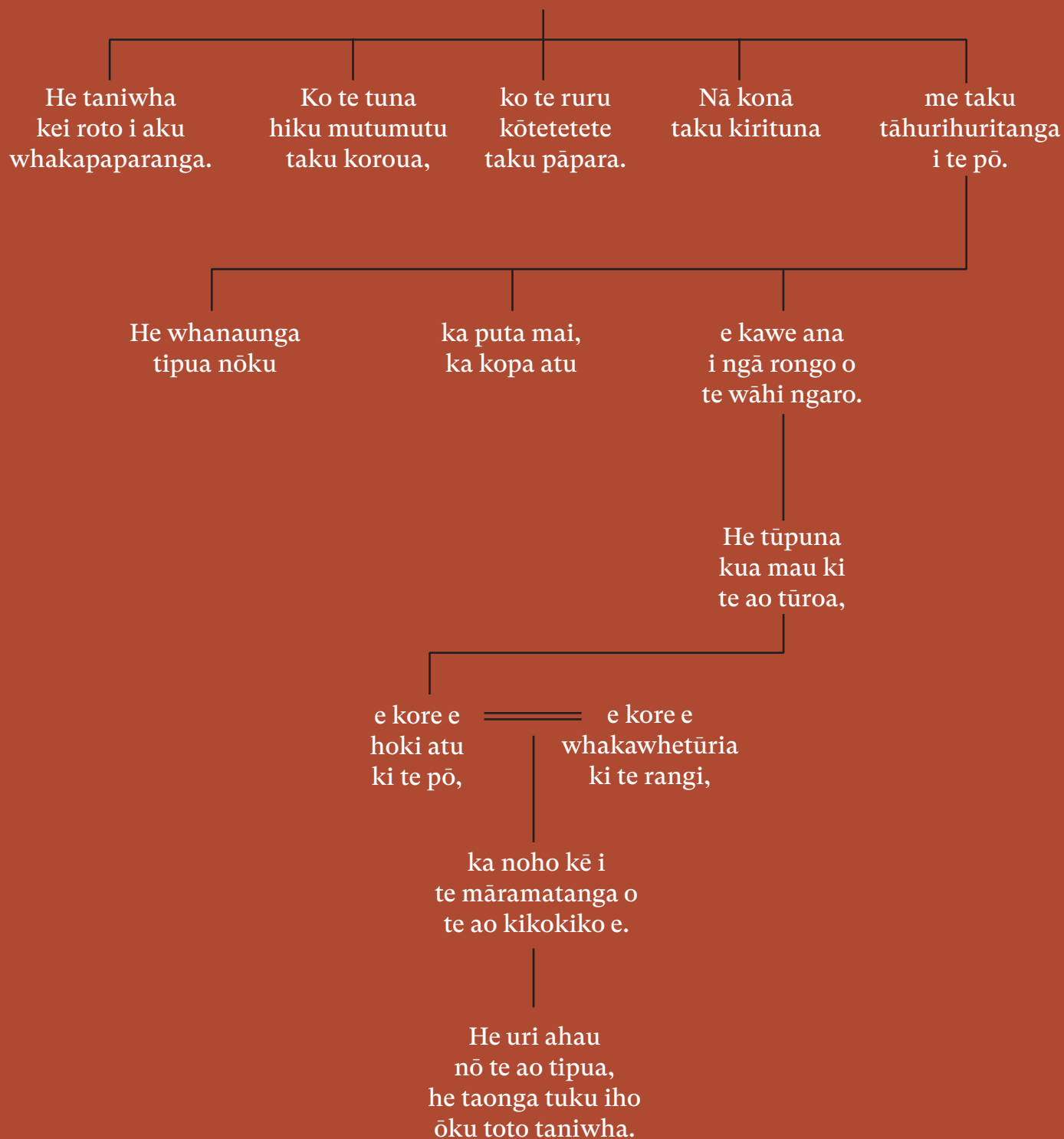
Jen continues her exploration of Kāi Tahu narratives and relationships to whenua in her moving and delicate contribution to *Whāia te Taniwha*. Entitled *Noti Raureka: Niho Taniwha* the work draws inspiration from the navigational prowess and strength of Kāti Wairaki wahine Raureka, who carried pounamu as she traversed Kā Tiritiri-o-te-Moana Southern Alps. While delicate flowers of the alpine cushion plant invite a close engagement with the work, the mountain forms reminiscent of niho taniwha also ask us to step back to gain a different perspective and appreciate the ways in which ancestral stories are held and recorded in the landscape. Jen’s work prompts us to recognise and contemplate the journeys and expertise of tūpuna, and to reflect on the importance of place names that record their feats and experiences too.

This work also demonstrates Jen’s preferred style of working on heavy furnishing fabric and exhibiting her paintings unstretched and attached directly to the wall. Allowing her works, both large and smaller scale, to fall freely rather than be confined by the more rigid structure of the traditionally framed painting creates a different kind of kōrero between the work and the site that holds it. In addition, pieces of pounamu that Jen has collected during her many visits to Te Tai Poutini and her walks along the awa are shown here as part of the whakapapa of the work and as another reminder of the way in which narratives pertaining to place are held, maintained, stored and shared.

Jen is one of several Kāi Tahu artists commissioned to create new works for *Whāia te Taniwha* and this is the first time her work has been included in an exhibition at the Gallery.

**Kirsty Dunn**

## Taniwha in my whakapapa





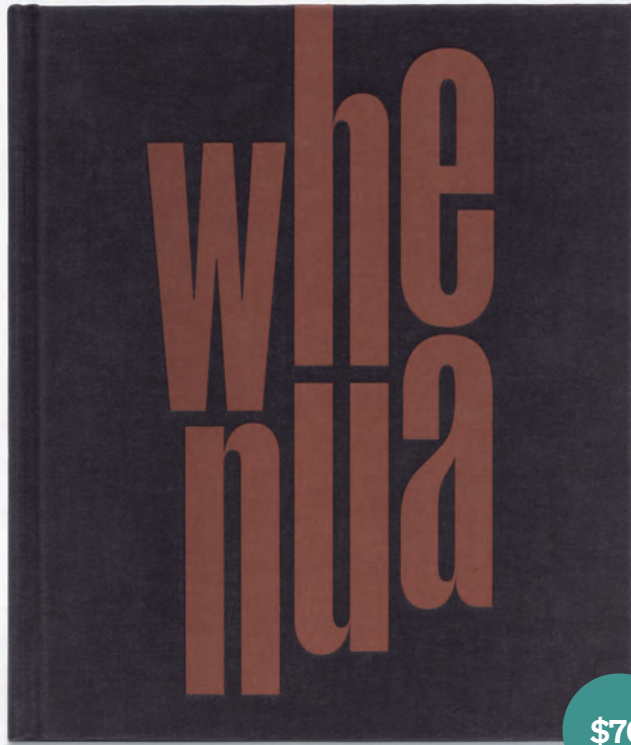
# Koropatu

Kia  
tāmoea  
te hinengaro  
Māori, kia mimiti  
tana wehi ki te ao tūroa.  
Kia aukatia rehurehu  
te hononga ki ai te autaiā o te  
te wāhi ngaro e, ki ao wairua, kia mutu  
te ao kāore e kitea ana | te mīharo ki te ao Māori.  
Kia kataina kia patua te  
te mana o te niwaniwa taniwha, kia  
ira tipua kia horo te tonu te kaha me noho hei paki noa,  
tōnga o te rā ki a rātou | tākina ai e te whakaaro-iti | whakaeo i te ngārara e  
kia memeha Kia are mai kia ki te  
tonu tana ihi, ngā taringa e! tāwhitia pohewa  
tana mauri, me te Koinei te koropatu, rā tēnei mea te tangata, ki ngā  
aweawe i te ira tangata | te kanga a te ringa tāmi | ki te whārangi pukapuka, | Haumi e, hui e, tāiki e!

*This is the koropatu of the coloniser.*

**Hāwea Apiata** (Ngāti Kura, Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Toarangatira) is a Waikato-based writer and curator. His storytelling practices are guided and inspired by his commitment to land, language and lineage. He completed an MA in Māori-language literature at the University of Waikato and his writing has been published in a range of journals and anthologies both in Aotearoa and overseas.

# He Pukapuka Hou



\$70

## Whenua

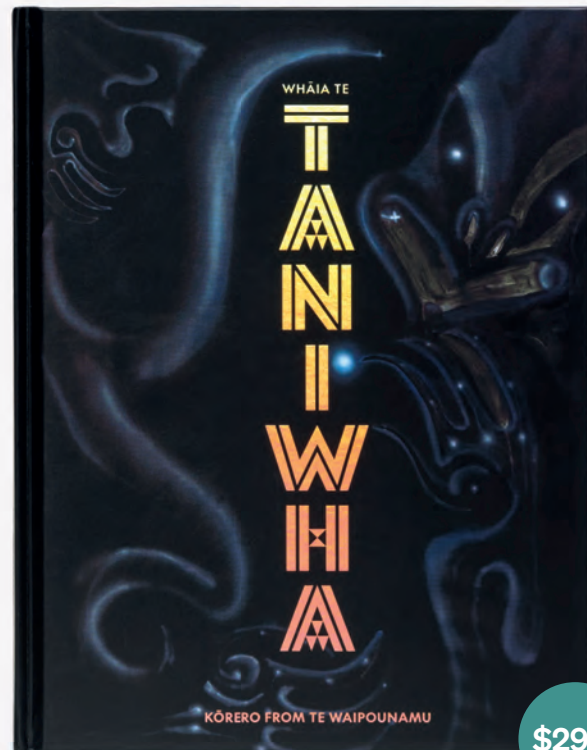
The relationship between tākata and whenua—people and land—is a long thread that weaves through the art history of Aotearoa New Zealand. This major new book explores themes of identity and belonging, colonisation, land use and migration through more than 170 paintings, sculptures, weaving, carving, ceramics, photography and moving image artworks. Includes artist interviews and engaging texts by some of the country's leading art writers.

392 pages with cloth hardcover and marker ribbons. Contributors: Mark Adams, Su Ballard, Emalani Case, Chloe Cull, Kirsty Dunn, Chloe Geoghegan, Ken Hall, Madison Kelly, Cosmo Kentish-Barnes, Maire Kipa, Lily Lee, Felicity Milburn, Melanie Oliver, Hana O'Regan, Bridget Reweti, Rebecca Rice, Jacinta Ruru, Huhana Smith, Rachel Solomon, Paora Tapsell, Peter Vangioni, Matariki Williams—and many more.

## Whāia te Taniwha: Kōrero from Te Waipounamu

Let the twelve Kāi Tahu artists and writers in this new book for rakatahi take you on a journey around Te Waipounamu as we follow the tales of taniwha, both ancient and new. Weaving together te reo Māori and English, they explore how we can learn from taniwha—and what they can teach us about ourselves and our ever-changing world.

Hardcover, 84 pages. Contributors: Justice-Manawanui Arahanga-Pryor, Leisa Aumua, Conor Clarke, Lucy Denham, A. J. Manaaki Hope, Meriana Johnsen, Moewai Rauputi Marsh, Waiariki Parata-Taiapa, Andrea Read, Jayda Janet Siyakurima, Ruby Solly, Paris Tainui



\$29.90

Available from the Design Store [christchurchartgallery.org.nz/shop](https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/shop) @chchartgallerystore



# New Acquisition

*Aratohu* is an extraordinary new film by artist Lisa Reihana (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine, Ngāi Tūteauru, Ngāi Tūpoto). A surrealist fable told over the course of a single evening, *Aratohu* explores destructive influences and the potential for healing. For lead character Wairangi, a fun night out turns into a journey of self-discovery, as reality and hallucination blur and overlap. Following an encounter with Stealer, a sinister figure representing risk and temptation, Wairangi meets Aratohu, an ancestral being offering an alternative pathway, underpinned by renewed strength in her Māori identity.

Made in response to the worldwide opioid epidemic that is increasingly impacting communities in Aotearoa, *Aratohu* is a timeless moral tale that showcases Reihana's expert interweaving of puppetry, animation, costuming and compelling storytelling. It is cinematic in scale and production, and a spectacular new addition to the Gallery's collection.

*Aratohu* adds to a whakapapa of works by Reihana that whakamana atua and pūrākau Māori. It is one of three works by the artist included in *Whāia te Taniwha*, alongside *A Māori Dragon Story* (1995) and *Marakihau* (2001), all exploring the kaupapa of taniwha in different ways. The first acquisition from the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū Foundation's Together endowment for collection development, *Aratohu* was commissioned in response to an invitation from the exhibition's curators.

## **Curator**

*Chloe Cull*







Lisa Reihana *Aratohu* (still) 2025. UHD 2-channel video, sound, colour. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, commissioned by Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū Foundation, 2025

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# Alix Ashworth

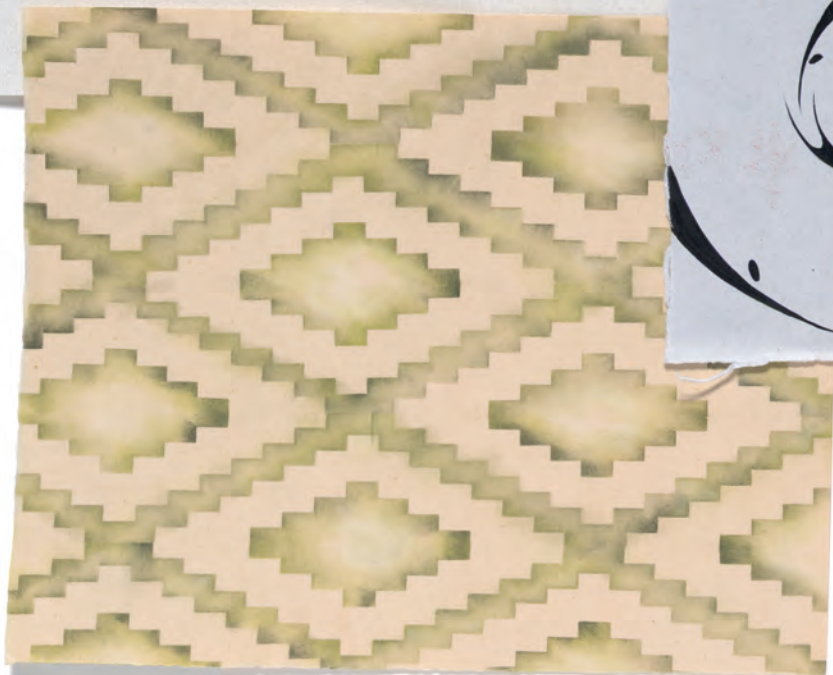
## *one day a taniwha...*

Ōtautahi-based rikatoi Alix Ashworth (Kāi Tahu, Kāti Mamoe, Waitaha) draws inspiration from pūrākau, earth pigments, and notions of duality and reflection in these works; here, the taniwha that live within and around us are quietly yet powerfully depicted. As they sweep and curl their stories into our own, they remind us not only of our shared whakapapa but of our obligations to our more-than-human relatives too.

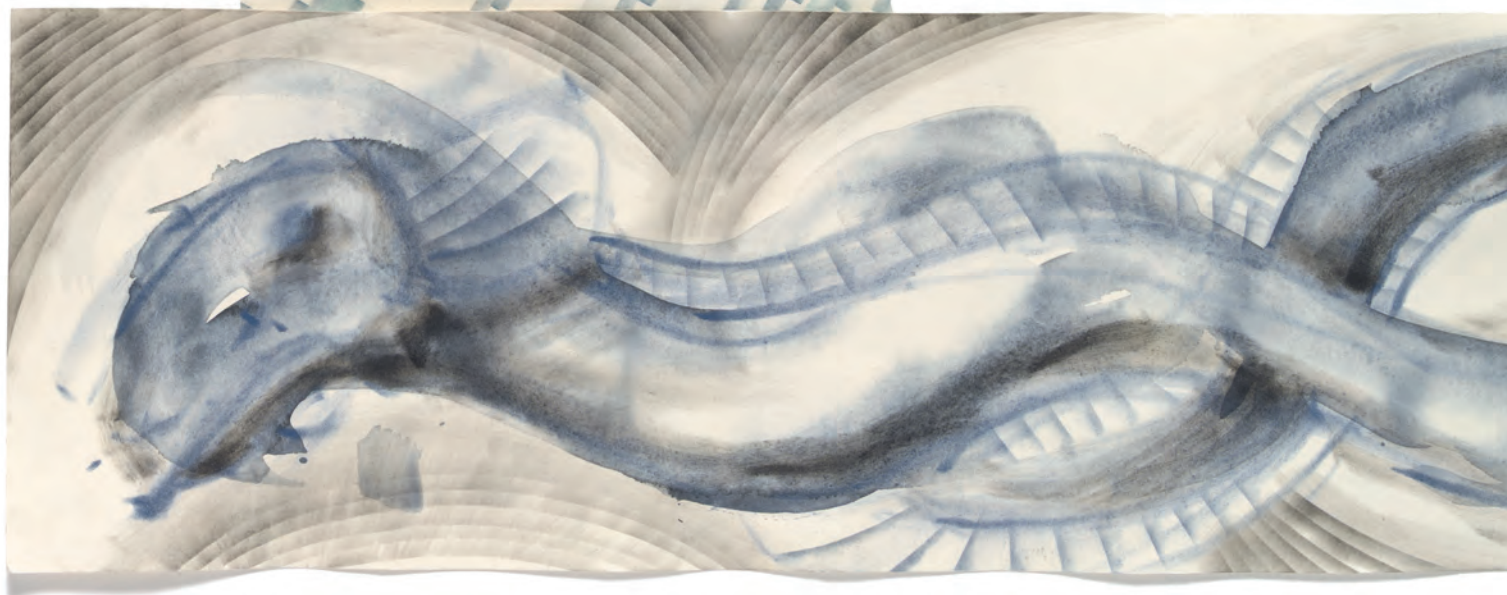
Alix has a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Canterbury, a Diploma in Ceramic Arts from Otago Polytechnic and took part in the Whakakai Mentorship Programme at Toi Māori led by Rangi Kipa. Their illustrations were recently exhibited in the Gallery forecourt as part of Matariki-Puaka celebration Tīrama Mai.

**Kirsty Dunn**

*This is pagework number 67 in an ongoing series. Each quarter the Gallery commissions an artist to create a new work of art especially for Bulletin. It's about actively supporting the generation of new work.*









## Opening this Quarter

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**Whāia te Taniwha**

20 September 2025 – 15 February 2026

Māori artists consider the enduring relevance of taniwha in Aotearoa.

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**Gilded: Van der Velden's The Dutch Funeral**

11 – 16 October 2025

See one of Ōtautahi Christchurch's most cherished paintings resplendent in its newly regilded frame.

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**Raymond McIntyre: A Modernist View**

25 October 2025 – 8 March 2026

Dynamic and progressive artworks from one of Aotearoa New Zealand's foremost modernists.

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**Living Archives**

25 October 2025 – 8 March 2026

Archives that tell stories about artists and history in Aotearoa.

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**Areta Wilkinson: Te Mauri o Te Puna**

From 8 November 2025

The mauri of this puna bubbles with life, creativity and wellbeing.

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**Kā Whakatauraki: The Promises**

14 November 2025 – 7 March 2027

A landmark exhibition bringing together the Ngāi Tahu land sale purchase deeds.

## Closing this Quarter

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**Fred Graham: Toi Whakaata / Reflections**

Until 5 October 2025

Significant sculptures by esteemed artist Fred Graham, revealing his close observations of nature.

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**Wendelien Bakker: Catching a Grid of Rain**

Until 27 October 2025

The Gallery's bunker as a sculptural surface.

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**Hye Rim Lee: Swan Lake**

Until 23 November 2025

A dreamlike digital reinvention of the Tchaikovsky ballet classic.

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**Peter Robinson: Charcoal Drawing**

Until 23 November 2025

A roomful of industrial-scale beams folded into unexpected and compelling new forms.

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## Coming Soon

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**Unutai e! Unutai e! Kāi Tahu and Anne Noble**

13 December 2025 – 19 April 2026

Shedding light on the deteriorating state of fresh water across the Ngāi Tahu takiwā.

# Exhib

## Ongoing

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### **Archives Lounge: Spiral Collectives**

*Until 7 December 2025*

A closer look at the publications of the influential women's group Spiral Collectives.

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### **Yona Lee: Fountain in Transit**

Yona Lee's lively, restorative under-stairs sculpture for Te Puna o Waiwhetū.

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### **He Kapuka Oneone—A Handful of Soil**

Tākata and whenua, people and land, considered through Aotearoa New Zealand's art history.

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### **Shona Rapira Davies: Ko te Kihikihi Taku Ingoa**

Remembering the peaceful resistance shown by the children of Waitara and Parihaka.

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### **Lonnie Hutchinson: Hoa Kōhine (Girlfriend)**

An intricately cut-out billboard celebrating supportive friendships between women.

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### **Martin Creed: Everything is Going to be Alright**

A completely unequivocal, but also pretty darn ambiguous, work for Ōtautahi Christchurch.

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### **Reuben Paterson: The End**

A sparkling elevator installation providing an unexpected space for contemplation and connection.

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### **Séraphine Pick: Untitled (Bathers)**

Pick's lush watercolour offers a utopian vision in the carpark elevator.

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### **Tomorrow Still Comes: Natalia Saegusa**

A fragmented, poetic wall painting by Natalia Saegusa.

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### **Kelcy Taratoa: Te Tāhū o ngā Maunga Tūmatakahuki**

A vast painting about how we are bound together.

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See the Gallery website and What's On guide for our events listings.

# itions



# Kuputaka Glossary

*The Gallery uses Kāi Tahu dialect where appropriate. We have elected not to provide English translations for te reo Māori used in articles throughout this magazine, but the glossary below will support your understanding. Many of these kupu have additional meanings not represented in this glossary. Some words or concepts can't be translated into English, we have chosen to omit these. We also recommend Te Aka Māori Dictionary (<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/>) or H. W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Māori Language* (Wellington, New Zealand Government Printer, 1971).*

**ara** – way, path, route

**awa** – river

**haereka / haerenga** – journey

**hapa** – mistakes

**haporī** – family, society, community

**hapū** – subtribes

**harakeke** – New Zealand flax,  
*Phormium tenax*

**hau kāika** – home, true home, local  
people of a marae

**hīnaki** – eel trap

**iwi** – tribes

**kāhere** – bush, forest

**Kāi Tahu** – tribal group of much of  
Te Waipounamu South Island

**kaitiaki** – guardian

**kā piki me kā heke** – the ups and the downs

**Kāti Wairaki** – tribe that, prior to the  
Kāi Tahu migration to Te Waipounamu  
South Island, held tribal authority over  
Te Tai Poutini West Coast

**kaupapa** – topic, plan, purpose

**kei konei tātou** – here we are

**kete** – basket

**kōrero** – narrative, account, information

**kupu** – word, vocabulary

**mahi** – work

**mahi toi** – artwork

**mana** – prestige, respect, authority

**marae** – the open area in front of the  
wharenui, where formal greetings  
and discussions take place

**mātauraka** – knowledge

**mātauranga Māori** – Māori knowledge

**mauri** – life essence

**niho taniwha** – saw-edged pattern,  
taniwha teeth

**Papatūānuku** – earth, earth mother

**pīwakawaka** – fantail

**poi** – a light ball on a string of varying  
length which is swung rhythmically  
to sung accompaniment

**pounamu** – greenstone

**pukapuka** – book

**pūrākau** – ancestral narrative

**Rakinui** – Sky Father

**rangatahi** – younger generation, youth

**raraka** – weaving

**rikatoi** – artist

**takata whenua** – Indigenous people,  
in this case Māori

**taoka / taonga** – something treasured

**tapu** – be sacred, prohibited, restricted,  
under atua protection

**te ao hurihuri** – the ever-changing world

**te ao kōkōkiko** – physical realm

**te ao Māori** – the Māori world

**Te Pō** – place of departed spirits,  
darkness, night

**Te Tai Poutini** – the West Coast of  
Te Waipounamu South Island

**te taiao** – the environment

**tikaka** – custom, convention, protocol

**tīpuna** – ancestors

**tohu** – sign, symbol, landmark, message

**tohunga** – skilled person, expert,  
priest, healer

**tōtara** – large forest tree, *Podocarpus totara*

**tūhono** – connections

**tuna** – eel

**tupuna / tūpuna** – ancestor / ancestors

**uira** – to flash, gleam

**uku** – ceramic

**wahine** – woman

**wai** – water

**waiata** – songs, chants

**whaea** – term of respect for a female  
meaning 'aunty' or 'mother'

**whāia te taniwha** – follow the taniwha

**whakaaro** – thoughts, ideas

**whakahikohiko** – to electrify, inspire,  
make something glimmer

**whakairo** – carving

**whakamana** – to give authority to,  
give effect to, give prestige to, empower

**whakapapa** – genealogy, ancestry, lineage,  
origins, relationships, layer-making

**whānau** – extended family

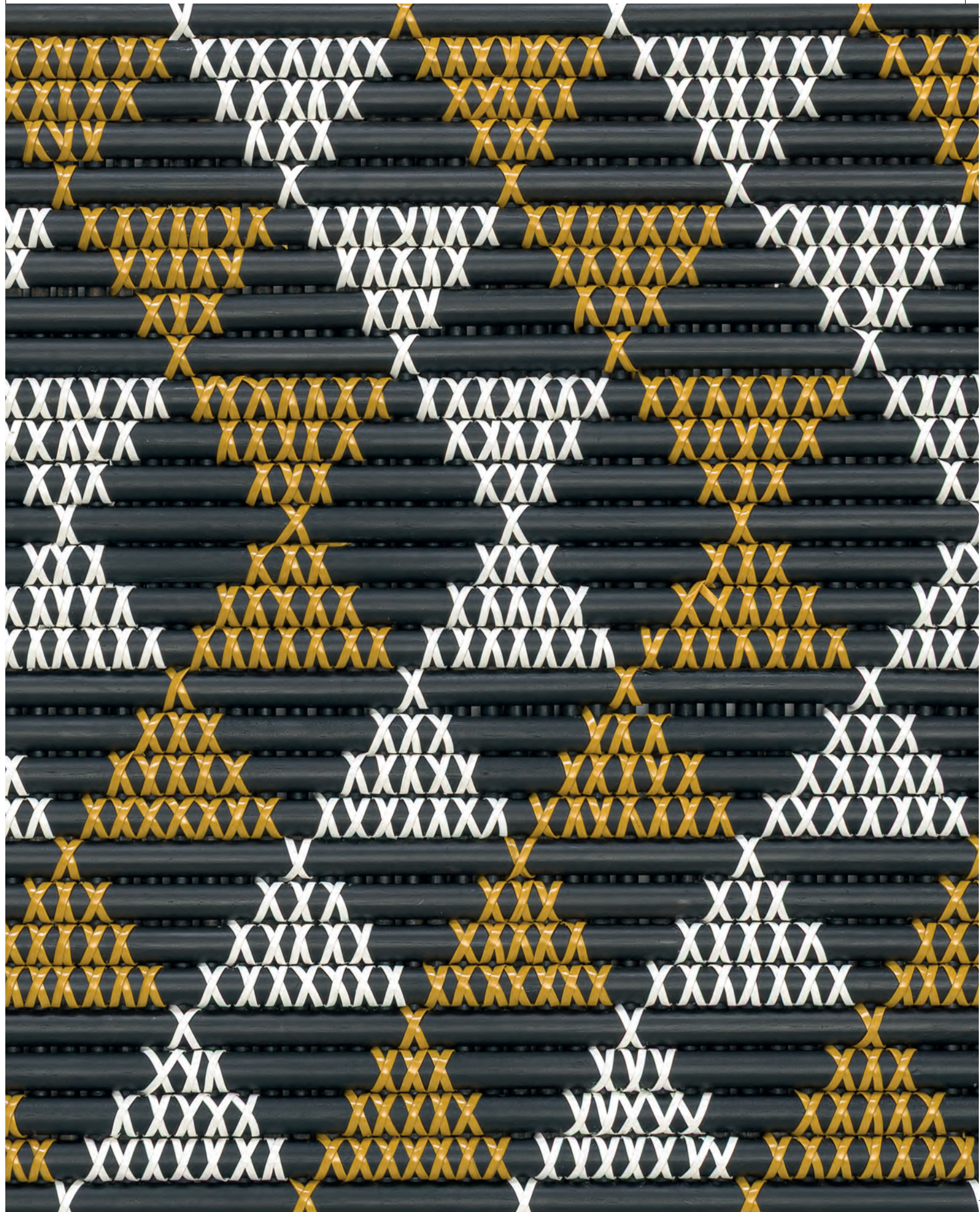
**whanauka / whanaunga** – relations, kin

**whatu** – finger weaving

**whenua** – land

**whetū** – stars







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If you would like to discuss partnership opportunities, contact Jacq Mehrstens on (+64) 21 404042 or [jacq@christchurchartgallery.org.nz](mailto:jacq@christchurchartgallery.org.nz)

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