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*PROPOSAL FOR AN EXPEDITION*



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of a Masters in Fine Art thesis.*

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## *Abstract*

In Proposal for an Expedition I reflect on the social representation of environmental stewardship values in New Zealand. Equal parts historic fable and contemporary narrative, my project addresses the archive, the museum, and the wildlife reserve as sites of knowledge production. The work exists as a collection of objects, actions, stories and ideas that combine to re-imagine a wildlife sanctuary not as a static 'reserve' but as a dynamic and multi-layered space evoking multiple simultaneous ecological, historical and socio-political resonances.

Proposal for an Expedition consists of a researched archive of found material related to an island's unique history, which draws it into a contextual relationship with the broader narrative of environmental history in New Zealand. By inviting one to closely scrutinize the context, Proposal for an Expedition subtly asks the viewer to engage with its documents to consider the impacts of human activity on a highly altered New Zealand landscape. The project examines how archival material represents our understanding a crucial, yet often misconstrued site of intervention – our changing understanding of ecology in a post-colonial landscape. Yet somewhere in the project, another process is at large: the true nature of the site must and will, inevitably remain hidden.

## *Preface*

*I was born in Zimbabwe in 1990. My parents both had careers as science researchers and educators there until 2006 when our family emigrated to New Zealand. Some of my earliest memories are of my parents conducting research in the field. Collecting moths and insects, measuring leaf density, bird watching accompanied by a spree of entries into pocket notes - a lot of bird watching.*

*Occasionally we looked for pre-historic San art: ochre rock paintings of people and animals. A family friend, Elspeth, who was an anthropologist, drew intricate pointillist facsimiles of the paintings. We still have a few of them framed at my parents' home. I think I developed an interest in environmentalism and anthropology by virtue of these early experiences. My naïve observations of behavior gave me a formative appreciation for scientific practices and ecology. What it gave me was both a 'natural' understanding of general principles or scientific conventions and an intrigue for the mysteriousness of being immersed in a natural space.*

*These early experiences with anthropology and biology have also helped shape my formative appreciation of art forms and cultural expression. As I matured and became a maker in my own right, including as a graphic designer, these initial impressions have stayed very dear to me and remain inspirational for my arts practice. While studying a Masters in Fine Art, my creative practice has been an opportunity to acquire further knowledge and I picture my research as being an interdisciplinary continuation of these personal interests.*



*1. Maud Island, c.1970*