Māori Curatorship
at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki 1998-2001

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Abstract

This thesis documents the experience of Ngāhiraka Mason, the first appointee to the Māori curatorial position at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. It examines the development of her curatorial practice with specific focus on contemporary Māori art. The purpose of the thesis is to describe the conditions and relationships which influence Ngāhiraka's practice as a Māori curator.

The thesis identifies the Māori curatorial position as an important development in the Gallery's relationship with Māori. In order to understand its significance, a history of Māori representation at the Gallery is constructed. Based on acquisition, exhibition and archival data, recurring patterns of racial prejudice and discrimination against Māori are revealed. The thesis then investigates the events which gave rise to the position in order to understand the Gallery's motives and present the complex environment in which the Māori curator practises.

Ngāhiraka's personal narrative is at the heart of the thesis, a narrative that chronicles the cultural and educational experiences that brought her to the Gallery. Ngāhiraka then describes the conditions and expectations she encountered and the conflict between Curator and Kaitiaki as models of practice. The development of her first Māori art exhibition *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* (2001) is analysed to provide evidence of her agency within the site. The exhibition is then deconstructed as an expression of Māori identity and its impact is evaluated from several perspectives.

The thesis contends that the Gallery exerts a level of influence that compromises Ngāhiraka's ability to effectively represent Māori. It is argued that the art museum is threatened by the practice of Māori values. The Māori curator then, carries a different kaupapa (framework) which inevitably challenges the balance of power at the Gallery. There is however, a level of intransigence in the art museum that cannot be affected by the incursions of a single Māori employee. The thesis concludes that Ngāhiraka's practice primarily advantages the Gallery and is of limited benefit to Māori. Despite this, Ngāhiraka takes what opportunity is afforded to her and issues a wero (challenge) to contemporary Māori artists. She postulates a new criterion upon which they should be judged which involves making a positive contribution to the viability of Māori at a social level. In doing so, Ngāhiraka engages her practice with Māori-self-determination and becomes an activist against institutional racism.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my main research participant Ngāhiraka Mason for her contribution to this project. Her story is personal and she has been very generous.

Many thanks to Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki Director, Chris Saines and Haerewa Chair, Elizabeth Ellis who made time in their busy schedules to participate. I wish to commend the exemplary services provided to me by Catherine Hammond and Caroline McBride in the E.H. McCormack Research Library. Thanks also to everyone at the Security Desk who warmly welcomed me to the Gallery on my numerous research trips.

I would like to acknowledge my supervisor and mentor Susan Abasa. Susan has never faltered in her support and belief in this project. For this, I am truly grateful. To Professor Robert Jahnke who took on this project despite carrying a grueling load – kia ora. Dr David Butts has always cheerfully accommodated my visits to his office. Thank you for your patience, assistance and friendship. Thanks also to Dr Huia Jahnke for guiding me toward a topic that I could be comfortable with and providing encouragement right at the end.

I am honoured to have been granted a Te Māori Fellowship from the Manaaki Taonga Trust. I also thankfully received financial assistance from the Massey University Post-Graduate Research Fund.

As always, I continue to be inspired by Dalvanius Prime who sent me off on this path before he departed. I would especially like to acknowledge my whānau to whom I am greatly indebted. This extends to all those wonderful people who have supported me in ways that I will never forget and will hope to repay.

Finally, this work is dedicated to my mother Margaret who taught us to be brave, to always do our best and to never give up.

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Readers' guide to the thesis

This project complies with the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and has been reviewed by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC): Palmerston North Protocol 04/59.

Māori terms and concepts have been used extensively in this thesis without italics or translation. A fold-out glossary is provided on page 174 to assist readers.

The use of macrons in referenced material and proper names follows the form of the original at the time of publication.

The Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki has carried several names throughout its history (see Appendix A). When reference has been made to the Gallery within an historic context, the name of the institution during that period is used.

The main research participant, Ngāhiraka Mason is referred to in the text by her Christian name. This follows Māori conventions, primarily the adoption of surnames post-contact.

All images are courtesy of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki unless stated otherwise.

Whakarongo mai e te iwi nei
Whakarongo mai e te motu nei
Ahakoa whakapiri koe ki a tauiwi
E kore e taka te ingoa Māori i runga i a koe
He mangumangu taipō nei hoki tātou pakia!
Te kupu a Tohu ki ngā iwi e rua
"E kore e piri te uku ki te rino
Ka whitingia e te rā ka ngahoro."

Hearken to me, ye tribes
Hearken to me, ye land
Whether or not you align yourself with non-Māori
The name 'Māori' will not fall from you
For we are indeed dark ghost-like creatures!
Tohu had this to say to the two peoples,
"Clay will not adhere to iron
For as soon as the sun shines on it, it will fall."

INTRODUCTION

The Māori curator represents at any one time; their whanau, hapū and iwi, artists and the curatorial profession while continually "confronting the reality" of the institutions that they work within (Curiger in *Vade Mecum* 2001:48). The nature of the art museum and its collections however, adds another layer of complexity to Māori curatorial practice that has been little recognized in previous surveys of Māori museum workers (O'Regan 1997). The Māori curator in the art museum operates on the periphery of the ancestral Māori world and at the forefront of contemporary Māori culture. Māori curatorship is a political act that defines Māori identity to a global audience yet operates beyond the tribal structures and customary protocols of the culture it represents. This terrain is lonely, difficult and without customary precedent.

This thesis documents the experience of one Māori woman curator and the development of her curatorial practice within the context of a New Zealand art museum. The purpose of the research is to identify the cultural factors which influence the practice of that curator. The research describes the conditions of practice with specific focus on the exhibition of contemporary Māori art. It then evaluates the impact of these conditions on the representation of Māori within the site.

The primary research objective is to examine the nature of Māori curatorship at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. The project constructs a history of Māori representation at the Gallery and examines the development of the Māori curatorial position. The main research participant, Ngāhiraka Mason (Ngāi Tūhoe, Te Arawa, Ngāiterangi) narrates her experience as Assistant Curator, Kaitiaki Māori and describes how she has incorporated Māori values into her curatorial practice. The exhibition development process for the contemporary Māori art exhibition *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* (2001) is then charted. The exhibition is analysed as evidence of Ngāhiraka's practice and deconstructed as an expression of Māori identity. The outcomes, successes and limitations of this practice are evaluated and the nature of Māori curatorship within the site is examined.

Conceptual framework

> Museums are western constructs which may contradict Maori ways (Legget 1995:22 as cited in Solomon 1996:20).

The goal of the thesis is to evaluate the agency of the Māori curator at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. It relies on extensive first person narrative, interviews with other key players and archival sources. The research scrutinises the history and practice of the Gallery in order to identify the imperatives for the development of this position. The analysis then assesses the impact that institutional motivations have had on the development of Māori curatorship and the ability of the curator to effectively represent Māori. From these findings, the thesis proposes that the practises and conventions of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki are intrinsically hegemonic and fundamentally contradict Māori ways.

Methodology

The research has been conducted by a Māori woman researcher (Te Ātiawa) according to a Māori-centred paradigm (Powick 2002:11) which "deliberately places Māori people and Māori experience at the centre of the research activity" (Durie 1996:2 as cited in Davidson and Tolich 1999[a]:44).[1] It is concerned with "the struggle for autonomy over our own cultural well being" (Smith 1990 as cited in Smith 1999:185) and contributes to the wider project of Māori self-determination[2] by:

> [Analysing] the ways in which dominant groups construct concepts ... for the maintenance of inequalities and the continued oppression of Māori people (Pihama as cited in Smith 1999:185-6).

The research is primarily concerned with the representation of an inclusive Māori identity within a western cultural framework. The critique however, is framed upon

[1] Although this project carries the same aspirations as Kaupapa Māori research projects – such as operationalising the self-determination of the research participants and recognizing the ongoing effects of racism in New Zealand society (Bishop 1999:2-3, Powick 2002:12-13) - it has not followed Kaupapa Māori research methodologies (see Powick 2002:14-20).

[2] As opposed to research on Māori for the purpose of social control (Spoonley as cited in Davidson and Tolich 1999 [a]:55).

tribal Māori ideologies. This project aligns itself with Māori scholars who advocate customary kin-based models of self-identification (whānau, hapū and iwi).[3] This model casts an inclusive "Māori" identity as a post-colonial Pākehā construct that is antithetical to Māori conceptions of identity (Durie 1997, Maaka and Fleras 1997). As Tūhoe leader John Rangihau expressed "[a]lthough these feelings are Maori, for me they are my Tuhoetanga rather than my Maoritanga" (Rangihau as cited in Durie 1998:55). [4]

By premising this study on tribal Māori ideologies, certain tensions arise within the analysis. The crux of this tension involves the politics of state-appointed Māori representation. According to tikanga Māori, the Māori curator is naturally a representative of their iwi through whakapapa. They are obligated to uphold the mana of that iwi and are personally liable to their kin-group. Moreover, the mātauranga that informs their practice is tribal and subject to strict protocol in its application (Durie 1997:78). The Māori curator however, is professionally accountable to represent the interests of all Māori according to the purposes of the art museum. Therefore, tribally owned intellectual property is capitalized upon for the discursive purposes of the art museum. What's more, the discourse of contemporary Māori art is qualified by tribally specific knowledge. Discrepancies such as these exacerbate tensions for the curator as Māori.

It is this potent discord which forces the Māori curator into a vulnerable position both culturally and professionally. Yet, paradoxically it has proved advantageous for Māori women. Given "the persistent myth that Māori women cannot fulfill leadership roles" (Whaanga 1999:1) or should manage collections of taonga Māori (Te Awekotuku 1999:3), the Eurocentric art museum and the secular nature of contemporary Māori art have enabled Māori women to emerge as prominent leaders in this field.

Originally it was the intention of this thesis to document this phenomenon more broadly. The project looked to examine three contemporary art exhibitions involving Māori women curators, which dominated the discourse on Māori art at the start of the new millennium. As the project developed along these lines, the gendered framework

[3] Tipene O'Regan as cited in Diamond 2003:25 offers a compelling example. See also Durie 1998, Jahnke 1999, Kawharu 1984, *Puao-te-ata-tu* 1988, Walker 2004.

[4] It is also argued that the usage of iwi gained currency after Pākehā settlement and that the hapū-whanau unit was the primary social unit in pre-contact Māori society (see Kawharu 1984). However, the project respects the self-identification of the Māori curator as Ngāi Tūhoe in the context of this study.

was displaced by the more apparent and fundamental difficulties that Māori curators were experiencing in the profession. It was also recognized that each exhibition was unique in its development and deeply affected by the nature of the institution in which it was held. In order to make a fair representation of Māori curatorship, the exhibition had to be contextualized within the institution and framed according to the objectives of the curator. The project brief was then refined through necessity to an intensive case study approach focusing on one site, one exhibition and one curator within a very specific and limited timeframe.

While single case design is generally regarded as less compelling than multiple cases of investigation, this thesis investigates a recently developed phenomenon that is recognized as complex, understudied and therefore suited to a single case design (Davidson and Tolich 1999:220). The project conducts a deep inquiry into the case, analysing the "multifarious phenomena that constitute the unit" (Cohen 1989:125) and seeks explanations for the nature of Māori curatorship within the site of practice. While this single case analysis cannot represent or define a wider body of practice,[5] the study does contribute to a better understanding of the subject as a whole.

Semi-structured interviews

Qualitative research and analysis was drawn from a series of semi-structured interviews with a practicing Māori curator. The semi-structured interviews were informed by social science methods (Tolich and Davidson 1999 [a] [b]) that were compatible with the tribal Māori research paradigm. The interviews were designed to evoke a strong sense of the participant's voice, in order to "reinforce the oral disposition of Māori" (Smith 1997:47). Most importantly, the format acknowledged the rangatiratanga inherent in the Māori curator's position as a representative of Māori in a public forum.[6] Unlike the marae however, the participant exercised full editorial control over her interview data but tellingly, and in the spirit of oral tradition, no changes were made to any of the transcripts.

[5] This is contrary to the case study methodology advocated by Cohen who states that case study design proceeds with the intention of "establishing generalizations about the wider population to which that unit belongs" (Cohen 1989:125).

[6] See Salmond 1975:147-152 and Kawharu 1984 for further discussion on the customary role and responsibility of the 'speaker'/ kin-group representative on the marae. See Durie 1997 for further discussion of the contemporary nature of Māori representation.

The Māori curator was empowered as an active participant in the research project (Te Awekotuku 1991, Teariki, Spoonley and Tomoana 1992) by acknowledging the central tenant of Māori epistemology - "the obligation to treasure and nurture information" (Marsden and Henare 1992 in Tolich and Davidson 1999 [b]:43). Informed and voluntary consent combined with the format of the interviews enabled the curator to exercise discretion over the disclosure of information and manage the sensitivities of a project that could not offer confidentiality or anonymity to its participants.

> Nā wai te ki? Nāku, nāku anake.
> Whose was the word? Mine, mine alone.
> (Chief Kai-rangatira in Brougham et al. 1993:121)

Contextual data

In order to contextualize the subjective narrative of the curator and bring depth to reality of her position, a history of Māori representation at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki was constructed. Preliminary research revealed that Māori only figure in operational documents after 1990 and in published documents after 1995 (Szekely 1996, Director and Curators 2001). In order to recover a history prior to 1990, the Gallery's representation of Māori was thoroughly investigated and largely relied on the collection and exhibition history of art depicting Māori or by Māori artists (hereafter referred to as the Māori art collection).[7] From this data, statements could be made about the Gallery's attitude to Māori and the position of Māori art and culture within the discourse produced by the Gallery.[8]

Additionally, the Director of the Gallery and the Chair of the Māori consultancy group Haerewa, were interviewed individually but according to identical schedules. These

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[7] The public interface of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki's collection database has been available online since 1999 (http://collection.aucklandartgallery.govt.nz/index). This has been used as a research tool to investigate the acquisition history of the 'Māori art' collection. The 'Māori art' collection, for the purposes of this project, has been defined by the ethnicity of the artist or works that list 'Māori' in the subject field. The public interface does not include ethnicity as a search field and the E.H. McCormack Librarian was requested to provide this data based on those artists who have a tribal affiliation listed against their artist record. The entire exhibition history of the Gallery is also available online (http://www.aucklandartgallery.govt.nz/research/tools/history.asp) and proved useful for comparing collecting and exhibition trends.

[8] Leonard Bell (1991;1999) has used this methodology to examine cultural attitudes in paintings of Maori by European artists. Bell's methodology however, is chronological and not limited to a single institution.

interviews provided a counterpoint to the main issues raised in the interview sessions with the curator.[9] Unlike the organic method practised with the main research participant, these interviews had an explicit agenda which examined the web of relationships that were responsible for, and continue to influence, the Māori curatorial position.

Exhibition data

In addition to the interview data regarding the exhibition development process, all literature pertaining to the exhibition *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* was reviewed and can be described in three categories. The first was the internal documentation derived primarily from the curator's personal files. These include early concept proposals, development documents, community consultation meeting minutes and grant applications. These documents chart the concept development from an internal and operational perspective. Secondly, the public exhibition and media files held in the E.H. McCormack library comprise marketing, public programming and media-related documents which demonstrate how the institution conceived of and "sold" the exhibition to its public. Lastly, peer review documents such as newspaper and journal articles provide a means of evaluating the way in which the professional community comprehended the narrative of the exhibition and how the exhibition contributed to the discourse on Māori art.

Limitations

It was beyond the scope of this thesis to document the history of Māori curatorship in New Zealand, a valuable project which would have contextualized this investigation within a broader Māori context. I take the opportunity here to acknowledge those incursions by predominantly Māori artists prior to the phenomenon of institutionalized Māori curators and recognise their hard-won achievements (see Jahnke 1999). There is also an international pan-indigenous context that was consulted but not incorporated into this study which demonstrates the common experience of indigenous peoples worldwide in the struggle for self-determination.[10]

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[9] These sessions were subject to the same ethical and methodological criteria as the main interview participant.

[10] *Curatorship: Indigenous Perspectives in Post-Colonial Societies* (1996) is the most comprehensive resource on this topic. See also McMaster (1998) and Angel (2003).

Additionally, gender politics were a central concern of this thesis. The main research participant however, did not specifically address gender in the interviews. Despite this, issues regarding the roles and responsibilities of Māori women are still embedded in the research. These relate to the expectations, protocols and relationships that are associated with leadership positions within tribal Maori society (see Te Awekotuku 1999, Mead 1996:219 cited in Powick 2002:16-17). By excluding gender in the analysis, this thesis focusses on the tension between the art museum and Māori. Including gender would have given greater prominence to the issues arising for the curator within Māori society.[11]

Although Māori are the central focus of this research, this thesis does not directly address a Māori audience. This contradicts Māori research ethics (Bishop 1999, Jahnke and Taiapa in Davidson and Tolich 1999[a], Powick 2002, Smith 1999, Te Ariki et al. 1992, Te Awekotuku 1991). This project however, seeks to be of benefit to Māori by deliberately addressing the professional community. It is primarily concerned with demonstrating in scrupulous detail, how the job for Māori curators was the "same but different" (Cubillo cited in Angel 2003:10). It does so to shed light on the complex issues that Māori curators face in the hope that this will dispel the infamous reputation of Māori curatorship as evidenced by the high drop-out rates of Māori museum professionals (O'Regan 1997; Tapsell 1998 and Whaanga 1999).

The observation of power in this thesis, owes much to the work of indigenous theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Spivak's 1985 collaboration with the Subaltern School of History provides a critical framework to analyse the efficacy of indigenous insurgency within a site of power (Landry and Maclean 1996:203-235). In particular, Spivak articulates the complicity the insurgent faces when working within a system to improve the status of a minority group. Although Spivak's theory of representation has had a pervasive influence, it has not been given its own voice. While this has limited the theoretical discourse of this thesis, it has enabled the project to maintain a Māori-specific focus.

Finally, it could be considered that the project is limited by its singular focus, restricted time frame and investigation of a newly constituted phenomenon. This subject would greatly benefit from longitudinal or comparative study analysis to give further impetus to the issues raised by the thesis.

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[11] An investigation of this type would be suited to a Kaupapa Māori research methodology.

Chapter summary

Chapter one describes the relationship between the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and Māori. The first part of the chapter charts the way in which Māori have been represented by the Gallery throughout its history. The history is not presented chronologically but according to dominant trends in the acquisition and exhibition of the Māori art collection. The purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate the types of attitudes that the Gallery has demonstrated about Māori. The second part of the chapter documents the increased participation of Māori in the Gallery after 1990. In particular, it identifies the factors which gave rise to the development of the Māori curatorial position. These include the impact of bi-cultural policy, the establishment of Haerewa and the lessons learnt from two significant exhibitions: *Korurangi* (1995) and *Goldie* (1997). The expectations placed on the Māori curatorial position are then examined from the perspective of the institution and Haerewa. This provides the foundation upon which the experience of the appointee can be compared.

Chapter two introduces Ngāhiraka Mason as the first appointee to the Māori curatorial position. It chronicles the cultural, educational and professional qualifications that provide the basis of her practice. The objectives of the curator regarding exhibition development and cultural advocacy are examined and the curator's focus for development is given in detail. Developments in the role from 1998 - 2001 are summarized and the impact of the position on the culture of the Gallery is evaluated. This includes the conflict between the role of Kaitiaki and the role of Curator as models of practice, the variant expectations of the position and the tense interplay of personal and professional liabilities.

Chapter three is an in-depth examination of the strategy, processes and outcome of Ngāhiraka's first contemporary Māori art exhibition *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* (2001). The key objectives of the exhibition are established and the evolution of the curatorial strategy is outlined. Ngāhiraka narrates her way through the exhibition describing how she employed Māori values in the format of the exhibition, revealing the cultural experience she attempted to create. The curator's intent for the exhibition is compared with the interpretations of professional art historians and reviewers. The achievements and successes of the exhibition are listed including the contribution the exhibition has made to the overall policy of the Gallery and to national discourse on Māori art. Ngāhiraka summarizes both the personal and professional impact of *Pūrangiaho:*

Seeing Clearly and what the exhibition revealed about the nature of Māori curatorship at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

The substantive issues raised are drawn together in chapter four and the central argument is given. The thesis contends that the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki exerts a high level of influence which negatively impacts on the ability of the curator to effectively represent Māori. Ngāhiraka's practice primarily advantages the Gallery and is of limited benefit to Māori *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* is evaluated as a ideological construct that perpetuates erroneous statements about contemporary Māori identity. The thesis concludes that by participating in the Gallery, Ngāhiraka becomes a complicit agent in the power structure of the site. This places the curator as Māori, in a position of irreducible compromise.

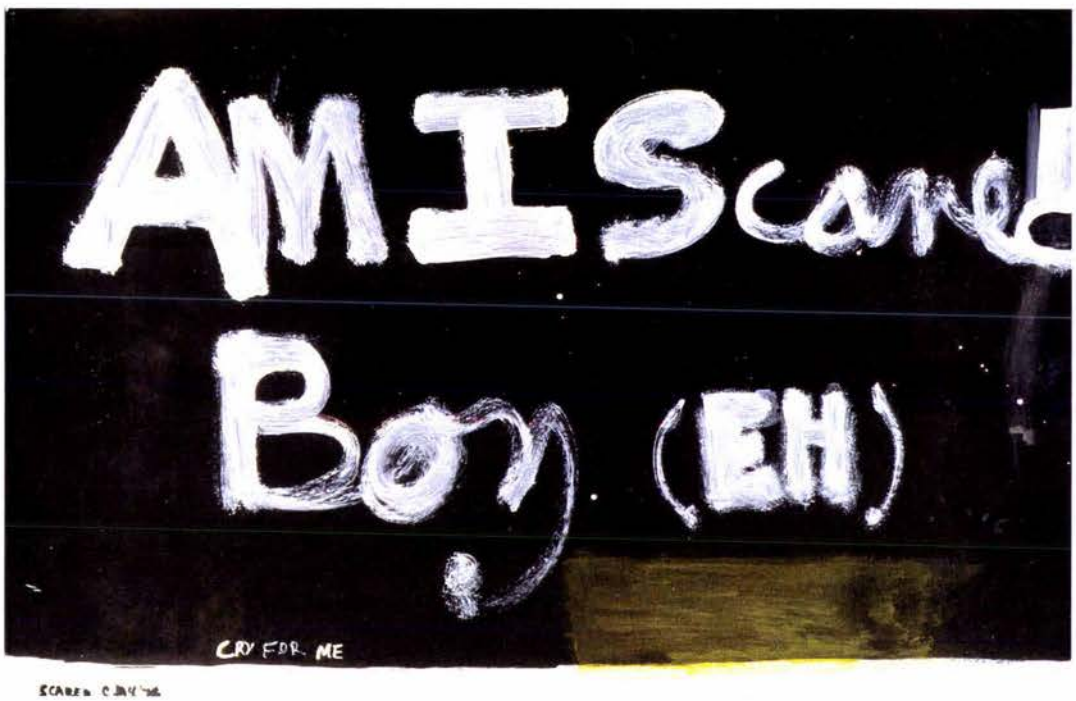

Figure 1. Colin McCahon, *Am I Scared* (1976). Collection Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth. Photographer: Bryan James. Courtesy of the Colin McCahon Research and Publication Trust.

As the story goes: it is the 1960s; two little Māori boys inadvertently stumbled into the Auckland City Art Gallery. Standing together in the solemn silence of the exhibition hall, one turned to the other and said "boy, am I scared eh?" (Brown 1984:171). This incident captured the imagination of New Zealand's leading modernist painter Colin McCahon, who was then employed at the Gallery as Keeper (1954-65) and later based a series of works on the statement (figure 1). This story also captured my imagination because I wonder if the environment of the art museum is any less bewildering to the majority of Māori today. This thesis examines why the art museum can be an unwelcoming environment to Māori, both from a historical perspective and from the contemporary perspective of the first Māori curator to be appointed at the Gallery. Most importantly, it questions whether the curator herself has felt bewildered by the environment in which she has found herself and documents her response, as Māori, to those surroundings.

CHAPTER ONE: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki: a history

Figure 2. Henry Winkelmann, Intersection of Queen and Wellesley Street with the Auckland Public Library and Art Gallery at centre (February 1903). Courtesy of Special Collections, Auckland City Libraries (N.Z.).

The modern art museum is a cultural construct whose purpose is to protect and maintain the European tradition of art (see Shiner 2001 for a cultural history of the concept of "art"). The method by which art museums arbitrate cultural distinction is the enterprise of art history which "has been constru(ct)ed as a universal empirical science, systematically discovering, classifying, analyzing, and interpreting specimens of what is thereby naturalized as a universal human phenomenon" (Preziosi 2003: 117). It is this association with an empirical methodology that imbues the practice of the art museum with authority and validity; committed only to distinguishing the highest forms of cultural expression for the enlightenment of society.

This chapter however, will argue that the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki maintains and protects a racially prejudiced discourse of art. By doing so, it establishes a hierarchical relationship between European and Māori culture that reflects and enforces the social order within New Zealand. The first part of this chapter describes and names recurring patterns of discrimination in the Gallery's representation of Māori: colonisation, assimilation and appropriation. The organisation of the evidence stresses that these attitudes are not isolated to a single period but persist throughout the Gallery's history and directly influence the nature of Māori curatorship. The second part of the chapter examines the wider context which saw Māori climb out of the frame and begin to participate in the operations of the Gallery. It focuses on the period after 1990 and the impact of bicultural policy on the Gallery's relationship with Māori. The purpose of this examination is to decolonize the history of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki in order to understand Māori grievances with the Gallery and amplify the challenges faced by the Māori curator in this context.

Colonisation

> colonialism, *n.* the political rule ... of one society, country or nation over another ... [I]n this century, colonialism has been associated with European, white, Christian, wealthy rulers who have attempted to impose cultural values over the ruled by either devaluing or attempting to eradicate the colonized groups' religions, languages, customary laws and economic activities (Jary and Jary 1991:93).

The Auckland Free Public Library and Art Gallery was established in 1887[12] at the end of New Zealand's colonial period: a mere six years after the storming of Parihaka pa[13] and when the indigenous Māori population had been reduced – through warfare, disease and dispossession – to a mere 6% of the population. Styled in the grand European architectural tradition, the Auckland Art Gallery was a symbol of colonial power built to celebrate imperial expansion to New Zealand. Consequently, the practices of the Gallery were structured on a colonial discourse and representations of Māori, subject to a colonial gaze.

The George Grey collection of taonga

The Gallery's founding donation was the personal collection of Colonial Governor, Sir George Grey. Grey was the leading protagonist of the colonial program during its most intensive and violent episodes; a reputation substantiated by the 33 million acres of land purchased from Māori during his first term (1845-53) and his second term (1860-68) which oversaw the duration of the New Zealand Wars. Grey's collection was principally international in focus with several old masters, strength in Victorian painting and a collection of taonga Māori numbering over 300 pieces. The collection of taonga was largely amassed in his second term when he invaded the Waikato[14] against the Māori King (1863) and confiscated 3 million acres of land from rebel Māori in 1864 (Sinclair 2003). Therefore the display of these "trophies of war" against the historicized narrative of European art (figure 3) established a hierarchical relationship between the colonizers and colonized; representing Māori as practitioners once worthy of producing masterpieces but latterly as a vanquished culture without momentum.

In the first decades of the Gallery's history the development of the collection was focused on amassing an encyclopaedic representation of the European history of art. It was believed that "by walking through this history of art, visitors would live the spiritual development of *civilisation*" (Duncan 1995:49, emphasis added). The arrangement of the works - hung in the Italian, German, Flemish, Dutch, Spanish, French and British schools - was initially made by the Hanging Committee led by

[12] The Art Gallery opened as a wing of the Library in a separate ceremony in 1888.
[13] Parihaka pa was a pan-tribal Māori community who passively resisted the confiscation of its lands by the Government. The village was sacked in 1881 by armed Colonial forces and its members detained without trial. It is increasingly regarded as the last event of the New Zealand Wars.
[14] Otherwise referred to as the King Country.

Figure 3. Taonga from the Grey collection on display in the upper hall. The entrance to the Free Public Library can be seen in the centre of the image. The entrance to the Art Gallery is to the left of the image.

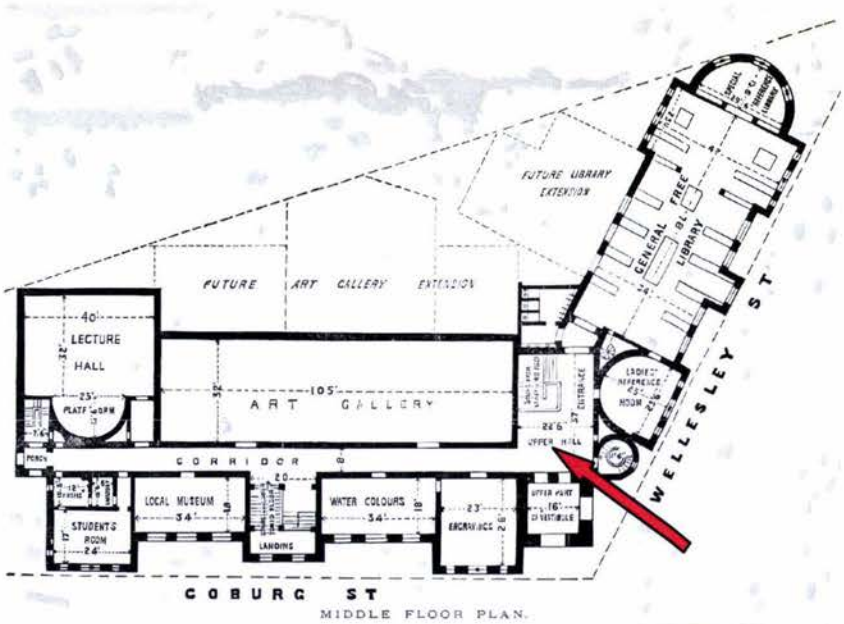

Figure 4. Middle floor plan of the Auckland Free Library and Art Gallery 1885, showing the proximity of the upper hall (figure 3) to the entrance of the Art Gallery. Courtesy of Special Collections, Auckland City Libraries (N.Z.).

Figure 5. Interior of the Auckland Art Gallery c.1897. Māori portraits by Charles F. Goldie and Gottfried Lindauer can be seen along the back wall at centre.

Figure 6. Charles F. Goldie, *Relic of a Noble Race* (1910). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of the Auckland Society of Arts 1911 (1911/1/2).

Figure 7. Louis John Steele, *Spoils to the Victors* (1908). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of the Auckland Picture Purchase Fund, 1912 (1912/7/1).

Figure 8. Louis Steele and Charles Goldie, *The Arrival of the Maoris in New Zealand* (1898). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of the late George and Helen Boyd (1899/2/2).

Figure 9. Gottfried Lindauer, *Maoris Plaiting Flax Baskets* (1903). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of Mr. H.E. Partridge, 1915 (1915/2/63).

the President of the Auckland Society of the Arts (Whitcombe 1888:12). For the first sixty years of the Gallery's history, Grey's collection of taonga represented the only examples of the Māori as a practitioner.

Māori history painting

From 1899-1930 the Māori art collection was built on gifts from the community in the history painting style. These documented the effects of colonisation on Māori or represented Māori subjects within a colonial discourse. The production of history painting was centered in Auckland (Bell 1992) and the Gallery came to acquire representative works by the major exponents of the style. These can be defined according to two categories: firstly the romantic portraits and genre scenes of "old-time" Māori by Charles F. Goldie (figure 6) and Gottfried Lindauer; secondly the narrative-driven history paintings by Walter Wright, Frank Wright, Kennett Watkins and Louis John Steele (figure 7). The enthusiasm within the community for these types of works is attributed by Docking (1990) and Bell (1992) to a growing sense of nationalism and identity among first generation settlers and indicates how Māori culture was "at last becoming part of the national ethos" (Docking 1990:82).

What all styles shared in common was the "objectification of their subject: representations of Maori people, culture, history, and legend functioned as European cultural items, as aesthetic and commercial commodities" (Bell 1992:257). Juxtaposed with the concomitant reality of social assimilation, the romantic vision of old-time Māori gained currency because it depicted New Zealand's rare and vanishing past. Therefore, the aestheticisation of Māori in history painting served not only the purpose of high art but stimulated the dominion of Pākehā New Zealanders over the culture, society and economy of the Māori (ibid:147).

The first Māori history painting to be acquired by the Gallery was *The Arrival of the Maoris to New Zealand* (1899) (figure 8) by Goldie and Steele and provides a fitting example of the subjugation of Māori via the colonial gaze. The painting depicts the migration by skilled Polynesian navigators as haphazard and unplanned: the crew is severely emaciated and the frayed sails and broken canoe prows suggest their technologies were insufficient to withstand the rigours of long distance voyaging. The painting is replete with ethnographic inaccuracies such as fourteenth century Polynesians using an eighteenth century canoe with a "sail form which probably never

existed" (Bell 1992:167). Despite the work making erroneous and discriminatory statements about Māori history, the painting was received to "extraordinary national interest" (ibid:171) which clearly demonstrates the acceptance of such views within New Zealand society.

Acquisitions of history paintings continued consistently through the first two decades of the 20th century (table B1). The Partridge collection of Gottfried Lindauer portraits and genre scenes, gifted in 1915,[15] established the Gallery's pre-eminent collection. This substantial collection numbered over 80 works and included portraits of Māori who rose to prominence through their involvement in the New Zealand Land Wars and ethnographic studies of traditional customs and technologies (figure 9). With this collection at its disposal, the Gallery deaccessioned the Grey collection of taonga to the Auckland Museum.[16] This had the effect of removing evidence of Māori as a practitioner and limiting representations of Māori to the ideological constructions of academy-trained artist.

Combined with the long-term loan of Goldie's private collection in 1920, the Gallery became saturated with romanticized visions of old-time Māori. This prompted a reconfigurement of the permanent displays to accommodate the Goldie and Lindauer collections in their entirety. These were exhibited in specially designated rooms and created an impressive sight, contributing to the Gallery's reputation as one of the star attractions of Auckland (Blackley 1997:31). It also established Māori as an essential symbol of the evolving cultural identity of New Zealand and the defining feature of the discourse generated by the Auckland Art Gallery.

While Māori were considered a rare and dying race, this remained the case. But as the population began to regenerate and grow, the Māori history paintings were interpreted differently. The effects of colonisation had eroded the social, cultural and economic sustenance of the largely rural based Māori population and Pākehā increasingly regarded early 20th century Māori as degenerate (King 2003:244). Against this social context, the significance of the Māori history painting changed from its ethnographic intent of salvaging the past to idealisation for the purpose of social discrimination.

[15] The gift was conditional on $10,000 being donated to the Belgian Relief Fund. This amount was raised by the Auckland community in a few weeks (Graham 1977:13).
[16] The Grey collection was exchanged for the Russell collection of plaster casts, which had been donated to the Auckland Museum in 1879 (Gamble 1984:5).

> The crucial factors in the monumentalisation of 'old-time' Maori were that they had passed into history and that they contrasted with the relative decadence of contemporary Maori existence, which could only be redeemed by complete assimilation into allegedly more progressive European culture and society (Bell 1992:206)

Therefore, the Māori history painting genre represented a form of colonisation; it collected and interpreted the intangible aspects of Māori culture within an imperial discourse. In the context of the Gallery, Māori were memorialised like trophies, captured within the frame and placed on prominent display by members of the settler community. The images romanticised the process of colonisation in New Zealand creating an ideological construction of New Zealand's past that was in stark contrast to the social reality of Māori. Subsequently, Māori were doubly discriminated against - for the impact that colonisation had on their livelihood and communities and their percieved inability to adapt to European standards of living. As the following example demonstrates, this perpetuation of dominance was not isolated to the assimilationist period of New Zealand's social history, but continued to persist well into the future.

The Maori portfolio

In 1976, the Gallery purchased Ans Westra's *The Maori Portfolio* (1964) with funding assistance from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council. The portfolio included images from the notorious *Washday at the Pa* series, a photo essay of a rural Māori family originally published as a School Bulletin. The publication was banned from distribution after the Māori Womens' Welfare League[17] heavily criticized the images for portraying Māori as economically and culturally impoverished people. One image in particular, *Child standing on stove* 1964 (figure 10) was condemned because it depicted a child warming her feet on a stove hot plate: the placing of feet on a food preparation area was perceived as being a breech of customary tikanga. While the subjects expressed wonderment at all the fuss, the artist herself was fully aware of the socio-political ramifications of the images.

[17] The Māori Women's Welfare League was established in 1951 to provide assistance to Māori affected by the post-war urban migration (see Rogers and Simpson 1993).

Figure 10. Ans Westra, *Child Standing on Stove* (1964). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased with assistance from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand, 1976 (1976/14/1).

> [T]here was this strong feeling that things were going to change, that here was something historical that needed recording. They were moving from the countryside and into the cities. There was this sort of falling apart of tribal life at the time and Maori were losing their identity a bit (Westra in Skinner 2001:99).

Westra's ethnographic sensibility positions her work alongside that of the Māori history painters by documenting the eradication of Māori cultural beliefs through the process of colonisation. Unlike Goldie and Lindauer whose work was produced for first generation New Zealanders, Westra's work was made in an entirely different social climate. The photo essay was taken at a time when the Government proposed assimilation schemes such as the pepper-potting of Māori in state housing developments as a step toward social integration (King 2003:483). Māori protest activity in the 1970s rose largely in resistance to such policies and drew attention to the negative effects of urbanization on the erosion of Māori culture. The purchase of these works by the Gallery however, undermines the protests of Māori by entering the works into the public record and assuring their enduring legacy.

...

In the late 19th and early 20th century, visitors to the Auckland Art Gallery would have encountered many references to Māori art and culture. The corridors were hung with taonga Māori; images of Māori painted in the academic style, were prominently displayed among the European schools of art (figure 5). At the time, Māori represented New Zealand's unique history and a basis upon which to structure a cultural identity for the colony. But in effect, the Gallery represented the capture of Māori culture, history, traditions and art as a process of colonisation. The presentation of Māori within this cultural framework devalued Māori traditions and history and memorialised the colonial program in New Zealand. Ironically, this presentation was underpinned with nostalgia: an ideology that sentimentalised the passing of the "noble savage" but distanced the dominant culture for its part in the eradication of the Māori race.

Assimilation

> assimilation, *n.* the process in which a minority group adopts the values and patterns of behaviour of a majority group ... ultimately becoming absorbed by the majority group (Jary and Jary 1992:31-32).

In the first decades of the 20th century, the Māori population largely retained their cultural *mores* and remained rural-based. Māori welfare initiatives in health and sanitation contributed to the stabilization of the Māori population. Cultural initiatives such as the opening of the Rotorua School of Māori Arts and Crafts (1926) and Apirana Ngāta's marae rebuilding scheme had, by the 1930s, created a fully-fledged cultural revival. Combined with increased contact between cultures via urbanization and intermarriage, Māori began to participate in the culture of Pākehā New Zealand as never before.

The reaction of the Auckland Art Gallery to this changing social context was to impose an assimilationist discourse on the representation of Māori at the Gallery. Māori were replaced with a narrative that endorsed the progressiveness of European culture and society. The Gallery increasingly aligned itself with international movements in art and adopted a modernist ethos which was based on the universal notion of art and a heightened appreciation of formal qualities.

Modernism

Consequently, the Māori history painting collection came to be regarded as "an embarrassing legacy of colonial times" (Blackley 1997:37). The Goldie and Lindauer rooms were deinstalled to accommodate temporary national and international loan exhibitions.[18] Additions to the Māori art collection dropped to an all-time low with only three works with Māori subjects acquired throughout the 1940s (see table B1). In 1947 Goldie's widow, "undoubtedly motivated by the Gallery's lack of enthusiasm for Goldie's work", withdrew the long-term loan of his personal collection and presented twenty portraits to the Auckland Museum in 1951 (Blackley 1997:37). In doing so, Olive Goldie "unwittingly assisted the modernist establishment in finally effecting Goldie's demotion from 'artist' to 'ethnologist' ... [and] with the collection

[18] Examples included Japanese Colour Prints (1934), Contemporary British Art (1937) and Contemporary Canadian Painting (1938).

Figure 11. Interior view of the Auckland Art Gallery c. 1940s. The Charles F. Goldie collection is hung around the outer walls.

Figure 12. Peter Webb, Colin McCahon and Frank Smith installing *The Museum Microcosm. Items from the Auckland War Memorial Museum* (1954). This was a fund-raising exhibition held on behalf of the Museum and showcased museum artefacts – including taonga Māori – that had been in long-term storage (*A Museum Microcosm at the Gallery* 1954).

Figure 13. Interior view of the Auckland Art Gallery c. 1950s featuring the Partridge collection of Gottfried Lindauer paintings. This image demonstrates the influence of modernist principles on the arrangement of works on display.

placed on regular display in the Museum's Māori Hall, the Art Gallery evidently felt it could dispense with its Goldie display" (ibid.).

In 1953 the first directorship was established at the Gallery. This ushered in a new era of professionalism and transformed the Gallery into "an active cultural centre rather than a passive repository of valuable and improving works of art" (*Director and Curators* 2001:8). Eric Westbrook (British) encouraged a national modernist discourse by holding the first exhibition of modernist art in New Zealand and curating shows of local abstraction and semi-abstraction (Brown 1999:220). He also employed emerging artist Colin McCahon, who was to become New Zealand's leading modernist painter. From 1956-65 McCahon served as Keeper and Deputy Director. McCahon had an interest in the aesthetic of Māori carving stimulated from earlier stints at the Otago Museum in the 1940s (Brown 1984:34). While this developed into a serious investigation of Māori concepts, demonstrated in works such as *The Lark's Song* 1969 and *Urewera Mural* 1976 (figure 39), there is no demonstrable effect of this interest on the representation of Māori by the Gallery during his employment. The reason behind this can be singularly attributed to the significant influence that Westbrook's successor, Peter Tomory (British) had on the direction of the Gallery and the discourse of New Zealand art.

Under Tomory's directorship (1956-65), Māori art and motifs had no place in the modernist discourse generated by the Auckland City Art Gallery. Tomory openly denigrated Lindauer as "no Gauguin ... [and] Goldie, on the other hand ... a second-rate Lindauer" (Tomory 1956:5 cited in Blackley 1997:37). He also criticized "the rather sorry attempt made by certain New Zealand artists in adapting the elements from ... indigenous cultures into European idioms" (Tomory 1958:167). Much to the chagrin of the public and in opposition to community petitions for their reinstatement, the Māori history painting collection remained largely in storage (Blackley 1997:38). In effect, Tomory wiped the slate clean in order to reconstruct the New Zealand art discourse on modernist aesthetics.

Despite Tomory's vehement rejection of primitivist influences on New Zealand art he did make the distinction that "the native cultures should not be left untouched, but it is rather the Pacific artists who might be expected to respond to the European impact" (Tomory 1958:168). At his time of writing, there were actually two examples of this in the Gallery collection. Selwyn Wilson's *Study of a head* (1948) and *Figure Study* (1950) had been purchased by the Gallery before Wilson became the first Māori to

graduate from the Elam School of Fine Arts in 1952 (Mane-Wheoki 2001:102). Modern in style, it is only the ethnicity of the subject in *Study of a head* (figure 14) that distinguishes the artist's cultural background.

Although Tomory endorsed Pacific artists he did little to encourage the work of Māori artists during his tenure,[19] despite the first contemporary Māori art exhibition being held in Auckland in 1958 (Mane-Wheoki 2001:103). This exhibition marked the emergence of the first generation of contemporary Māori artists who "found themselves largely marginalized and unsupported by New Zealand's Pakeha-dominated art establishment [and] denied access to 'mainstream' exhibition venues" (ibid.). The exceptions were those Māori artists, such as Ralph Hotere and Matt Pine, whose work wholly embraced a modernist aesthetic. This distinguished them from the emerging body of contemporary Māori artists and the Gallery's support of their approach, boldly signifies the principles upon which the Gallery established its collection of contemporary Māori art.

The Māori modernists

As an emerging artist, Ralph Hotere became a poster boy for ambiguity concerning the parameters of Māori art, showing "no influence whatsoever of a Maori background either in theme or execution" (Dansey 1966 cited in Mane-Wheoki 2001:103). In 1965 - the year of Tomory's resignation - Hotere became the second Māori artist to have work purchased for the collection[20] and was also included in the survey show *Contemporary New Zealand Painting* (1965). Work by Hotere was also exhibited in *Ten Years of New Zealand Painting* (1968), *Contemporary New Zealand Painting* (1976) (O'Brien 1997:130) and the Gallery has consistently purchased new work from 1970 to the present day. In 1976 Hotere famously pronounced that he did not want to be identified as a Māori artist but an artist who happened to be Māori

[19] The "rare exception" during Tomory's tenure was the inclusion of Paratene Matchitt's modernist styled painting *Au, Au, Aue Ha!* in the 1962 exhibition *Contemporary New Zealand Painting and Sculpture* (Brown 1999:115). In the following year, the Commonwealth Institution asked Tomory to curate an exhibition of contemporary New Zealand painting which was to reflect New Zealand identity. Tomory's selections did not include work featuring Māori motifs or work by Māori artists. It was later criticised for lacking "cultural distinctiveness" in both venues, Christchurch and London (McCredie 1999:37).

[20] The two purchases include an abstract colour field painting *Black Painting* 1965 (1965/24/2) (figure 15) and figure sketch *Woman no. 103* 1965 (1965/12).

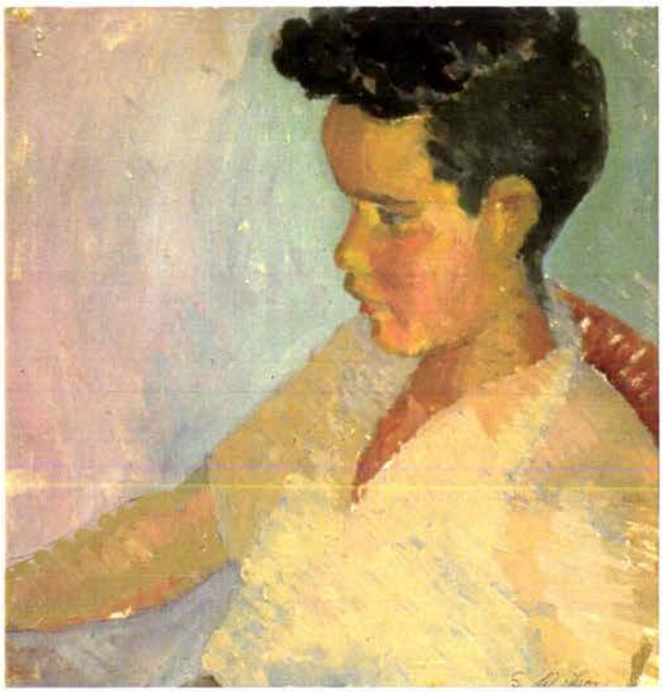

Figure 14. Selwyn Wilson, *Study of a head* (n.d.). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1948 (1948/4).

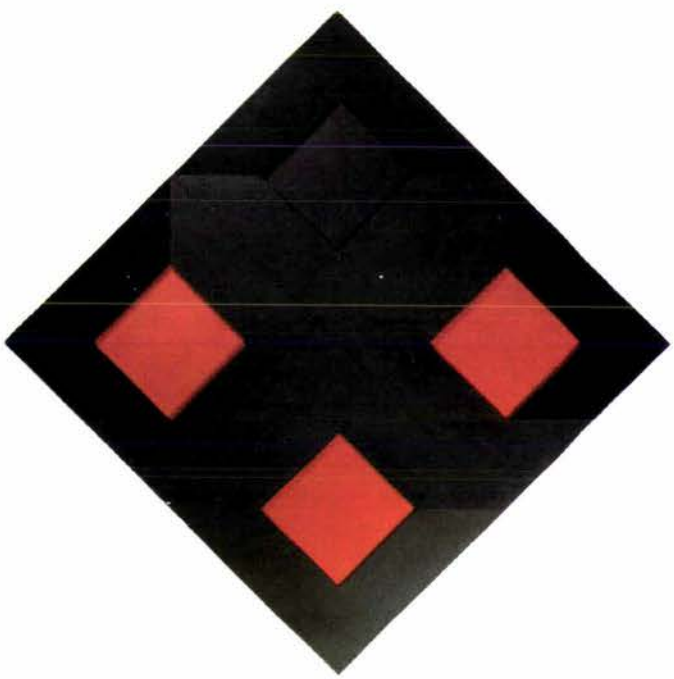

Figure 15. Ralph Hotere, *Black Painting* (1964). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1965 (1965/24/2).

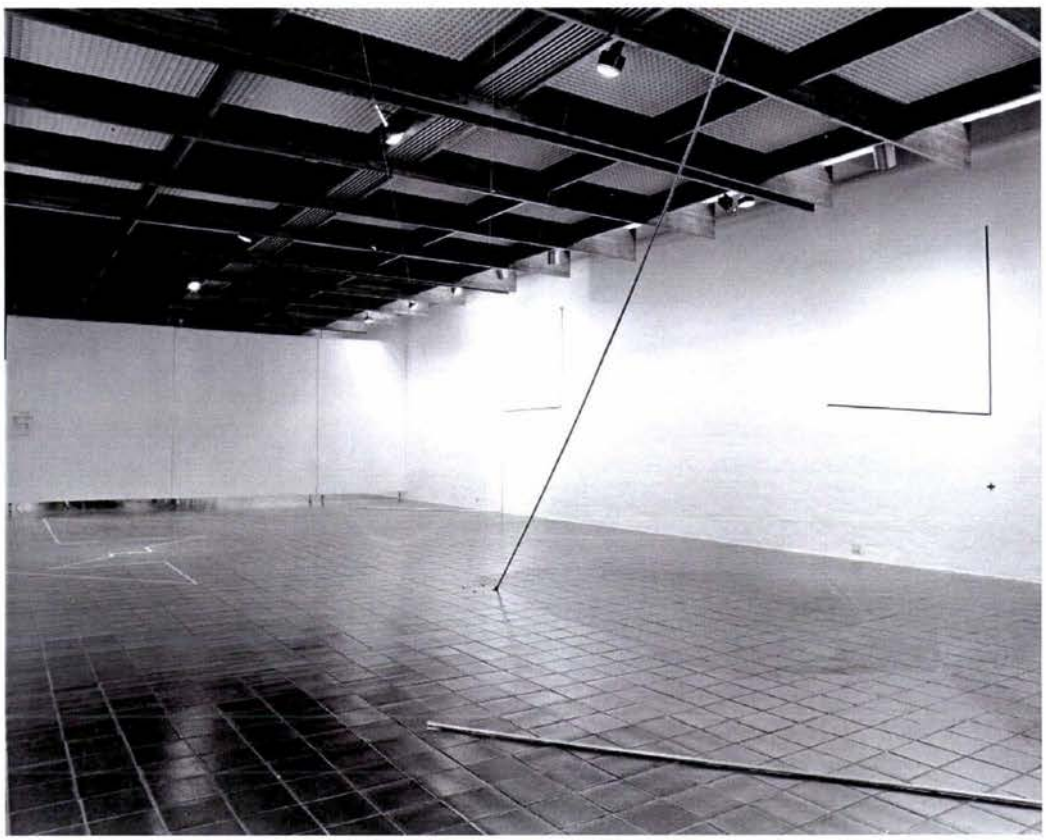

Figure 16. Matt Pine, *Placement Projects* (1978). Auckland City Art Gallery.

(Mane-Wheoki 2001:103). The Gallery's endorsement of these sentiments is evidenced by Hotere's oeuvre being represented by 36 works of various media and is the largest holding of a Māori artist in the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki collection.

Matt Pine was the first Māori artist to exhibit individually at the Gallery. *Placement Projects* (1978) (figure 16) was concerned with the "juxtaposition of objects and line in space in relations to the floor, walls and ceilings" (Matt Pine, artist file, E.H. McCormack Library). Labelled a "constructivist", Pine's work contains formal and conceptual Māori influences, however he "uses these forms ... with a sense of dignity and restraint, weaving them into the fabric of his sculpture, and not laying them out on the surface" (Schulz 1986). This fact was emphasised with *Maori Painting from the Permanent Collection* being shown alongside Pine's installation. The sublimation of Māori influence in Pine's work is a clear indication of the assimilation ideal upon which the Gallery evaluated contemporary Māori art. It also became the standard model upon which Māori involvement in the Gallery was structured, as demonstrated in the next example.

The Māori curator

The establishment of the Māori curatorial position in 1998 arose from a complex web of social, political and cultural circumstance for the purpose of improving Māori representation in the Gallery. While many people contributed to the foundation of the position, defining the roles and responsibilities of the position fell to the Gallery's newly appointed Manager Art and Access and the recently restructured curatorial team. Unlike the other collection-based positions such as Curator Contemporary Art or Curator International Art, the Māori curatorial position was the only ethnically defined role. The position was unprecedented in the Gallery's history and carried a unique responsibility to communicate and deliver services to a targeted ethnic audience.

Despite this, the role definition for Assistant Curator Kaitiaki Māori conformed to the standard collection-based curatorial model. The only variation specific to the position was the requirement for the appointee to have a sound knowledge of Māori language. Therefore, the wider cultural skill base of the Māori appointee was sublimated within the standardized model of curatorship. While the professed intentions of the position were for the benefit of Māori (*Enterprise Board Agenda* 19.10.94), the role was

structured upon an assimilationist ideal that, from the beginning, did not accommodate for Māori ways of doing things.

...

From the 1930s, the status of Māori as an image of cultural importance was demoted. Māori were seen as a relic of the past and a counterpoint to the modernist present. The Gallery looked to shed its colonial image and increasingly engaged with contemporary movements in art. Consequently the Māori history paintings, once the jewels of the collection, were censored and replaced with international touring exhibitions. International authorities were imported and this early professionalism and cultural expertise, established the reputation of the Gallery as the most influential institution in the country (Brown 1999, McCredie 1999, Taylor 1992/3). With all eyes at the Gallery fixed on international trends, the development of the Māori art collection slumped (table B3). Sporadic purchases of work that adhered to modernist principles punctuated this period.

Appropriation

> cultural appropriation: a term used to describe the taking over of creative or artistic forms, themes or practices by one cultural group over another. It is in general used to describe western appropriations of non-Western or non-white forms, and carries connotations of exploitation and dominance (Drabble 2005).

From the late 1950s, the Gallery built its reputation as the leading art gallery in the country (McCredie 1999:42). It took a national role in generating a New Zealand fine art discourse by producing important surveys on historic and modern New Zealand art, publishing catalogues and acquiring iconic works for the collection (ibid.). By the 1970s, the practice of the Auckland City Art Gallery was unparalleled and hugely influenced the nature of New Zealand's visual identity (Roberts:1992/3:72). Despite this reputation, its racially prejudiced practices continued to exclude Māori from this cultural identity. This situation was at odds during a decade of rising social consciousness among Pākehā New Zealanders and unprecedented achievements in the area of Māori civil rights.

As early as 1960 the Gallery had been criticized for its suppression of the Māori portrait collection – "if Auckland has no desire to show its Goldie collection, then surely Wellington will gladly do so" (Ramsden 1960 as cited in Blackley 1997:39). By the

1970s, other public galleries began to take the lead in the area of Māori art which jeopardised the Auckland City Art Gallery's reputation. In 1971, the Gallery hosted the national touring exhibition *Maori in Focus*, the first major survey of photographs depicting Māori, organized by the Manawatu Art Gallery. This exhibition heavily influenced the Auckland City Art Gallery's decision to establish a permanent collection of photography, and the curator of the exhibition, John W. Turner was contracted to draft the collection policy (Kirker 1972:8). Subsequently, the Gallery began to collect historic and contemporary photographs of Māori which corresponded with existing patterns in the collection; Māori portraits (figure 17) and ethnographic studies (figure 18).

Another exhibition of influence was *Face Value* (1974). It was organized and toured by the Dunedin Public Art Gallery but drew heavily from the Auckland City Art Gallery collection. The exhibition catalogue essay provided a history of Māori portraiture and demonstrated the breadth of the Gallery collection in respect of the subject (Dunedin Public Art Gallery 1974). Combined with the record prices that Goldie paintings were commanding at auction (Blackley 1997:41), the Gallery's perception of the collection began to change. For instance, in 1976, Gallery Director Ernest Smith (American) cited the Lindauer paintings as an "integral part of the painting collection" and proposed a specially designated room to be included in the proposed redevelopment of the Gallery (Graham 1977:17). His argument was based on the status of the works as fine art: "They are paintings, not scientific ethnographic records, and they belong in a paintings gallery, not in a museum" (ibid.) and in doing so, became the first Gallery Director to express support for the collection.

By the end of the 1970s, bi-culturalism became the preferred political ideology of the Government (King 2003:465) and the rights of Māori to be "Māori" resulted in a cultural phenomenon termed the "Māori renaissance" (Walker 2004:322). One facet of this renaissance was the establishment of Ngā Puna Waihanga (New Zealand Māori Artists and Writers Society) in 1973. The society held annual exhibitions and hui at different marae around the country in order to "evaluate the contemporary Maori artists' movements and taonga against the solid background of cultural tradition" (Te Awekotuku as cited in *Nga mahi o te aka o Tuwhenua* 1996:9). Although the Gallery's interest in historic imagery of Māori was on the rise, it did not encourage the activities of Ngā Puna Waihanga, either through acquisitions or exhibitions.

In 1981, Dr Rodney Wilson became the first and, to this date, the only New Zealander to be appointed to the position of Director. Wilson's appointment coincided with the confirmation of an exhibition of taonga Māori to travel to the United States. These two events increased the profile of Māori art at the Gallery and encouraged new developments within the collection. The first work by a Māori woman artist, Emily Karaka, was purchased.[21] Numerous photographs of taonga Māori were also collected (see figures 19-21), which demonstrated pre-emptive collecting by Wilson, due to his involvement as Exhibitions Co-ordinator for the international touring exhibition, *Te Maori.*

The Gallery's new found enthusiasm for all things Māori soon backfired. In 1983 Auckland Committee on Racism and Discrimination, a Pākehā organisation opposed to institutional racism, organised a display of culturally offensive souvenirs at the Outreach Gallery. This gallery was an Auckland City Council funded community arts centre operated by the Auckland City Art Gallery and ironically, managed by the first Māori employee at the Gallery.[22] The display sought to expose the "racist portrayal of Māori in the souvenir industry" (Walker 2003:279). While the "expose" raised these issues for debate, the response was negative and offence was taken: Māori complainants felt the attention given to the works "cheapened Māori art" and revealed a "lack of appreciation of biculturalism" (ibid:328).

Te Maori (1984)

Just one year later, the *Te Maori* exhibition opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The exhibition heralded an unprecedented level of national and international attention on Māori art and culture. *Te Maori* was significant because Māori were acknowledged as the spiritual owners and were consulted and included in many aspects of the exhibition (Butler 1996, Hanham 2000, Mead 1986). The exhibition also arranged taonga Māori into an historicised framework which enabled critical distinctions to be made about the works: intellectually, stylistically and

[21] *Coming Through* 1983 (1983/6).
[22] Don Solomon was appointed as the Outreach Manager in 1975 (*Auckland Art Gallery Quarterly* 60:20). He became the Outreach Manager/ Curator of Education in 1978 (*Auckland Art Gallery Quarterly* 66-67:40) and was the first Maori curator at the Gallery, although located off-site.

Figure 17. American Photo Company, *Maori Woman with Moko* (1869). Collection of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (1978/11).
Figure 18. Josiah Martin, *Cooking breakfast, Whakarewarewa* (19th century). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki purchased 1973 (1973/17/33).

Figure 19. John Kinder, *Waharoa, Maketu Pa* (1866). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1983 (1983/22/11).
Figure 20. John R. Morris, *Carved Maori Door Lintels II* (c.1895). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1984 (1984/53/24).

Figure 21. John R. Morris, *Maori Chief's Greenstone "Mere Mere's" II* (c.1895). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1984 (1984/53/22).

aesthetically. As the exhibition travelled throughout the United States, the arts and heritage community in New Zealand dedicated whole volumes of journals to debating the effect that the exhibition would have on the future of curatorial practice regarding taonga (see *AGMANZ Journal* 1984).[23]

Even within the context of evaluation and change expressed by museum professionals during this time, the proposition made by Dr Rodney Wilson, even today appears wildly uncharacteristic. In an article entitled 'A Case for the Re-Evaluation of Maori Art', Wilson posited that the "spiritual and transcendental objects produced by Māori culture" be rationalized to art museums where Māori art could be reassessed as "art in a universal and transcultural sense" (Wilson in *AGMANZ Journal* 1984:18).

> Sadly, it seems that art to the Victorian and Edwardian founders of our art galleries, was something that Pakehas' produced. Their Maori brothers and sisters, so it also seems, developed a culture that knew no art, that produced no objects that transcended the 'useful'. Nonsense of course. But potent nonsense when you think that the legacy we have inherited is a monocultural art gallery, and, by extension, and worse yet, the implication that art in New Zealand is something made by Pakeha's and that produced by Maori is not art at all (ibid.).

Despite the benevolent spirit of Wilson's argument, the reality of the Gallery's position suggested otherwise. While the Gallery advocated itself as an appropriate site to curate the most potent category of taonga Māori, its holdings of Māori artists in 1984 numbered sixteen works representing four artists; Rei Hamon (1), Ralph Hotere (12), Emily Karaka (1) and Selwyn Wilson (2). Rather than support contemporary Māori art, the Gallery broke rank in order to capitalise on the prestige of *Te Maori*; going as far as to purchase a basalt toki in 1986 (figure 27). Despite this reluctance *Te Maori* did raise the profile of Māori art in the community generally. This resulted in five artworks by contemporary Māori artists being gifted to the Gallery from large corporations.[24]

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[23] *AGMANZ Journal* 1986 and 1987 cover the return of *Te Maori* to New Zealand.

[24] In 1985, the Transfield Corporation gifted *Aramoana* 1982 by Ralph Hotere. Three works by Ralph Hotere and one work by Para Matchitt (all works on paper) were gifted by the NZI Corporation in 1986. This phenomenon could be attributed to the sharemarket boom of the 1980s which Roger Blackley recalls as a frustrating time to attempt to acquire works for a public collection (Blackley, pers.comm.14.11.04).

Wilson followed up his impassioned case by lobbying for the right of the Auckland City Art Gallery to host *Te Maori* on its return to New Zealand. Māori scholars were inevitably suspicious of this dramatic attitudinal change after decades of Māori being subordinated, excluded and marginalized by the practices of the Gallery.

> The adoption of Maori art by what some Maori see as 'the wine and cheese brigade' is seen by others as an overdue recognition of a rich and complex artistic legacy ... The great danger to Maori art from all the establishment attention it is currently enjoying is that it is beginning to be valued from the standpoints and judgments of western art values which ... to this writer at least, are riven with money values and investment considerations ... Maori people can relax and enjoy the spectacle of the Auckland Museum and Auckland Art Gallery fighting publicly over which should exhibit Te Maori when it returns home. Although it's nice to feel wanted Maoritanga should be cautious about accepting that it's finally wanted for its own sake. It may well be that it's just another Pakeha debate - art or artefact! More importantly though Maoris will be wondering not so much where the exhibition is to go but who will decide? (Tipene O'Regan in *AGMANZ Journal* 1984:17-18).

Te Maori: Te Hokinga Mai (1987)

In 1987, the Auckland City Art Gallery won the right to host *Te Maori: Te Hokinga Mai* while the Auckland Museum held *Maori Art Today*.[25] In doing so, the Gallery aligned its practice with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, one of the great art museums of the world. For three months Auckland's premier cultural institution was overtaken by Māori and Māori art (figure 23-24). The cultural protocol that had become standard procedure during the overseas tour, such as a continual Māori presence in the gallery, pōwhiri, koha and the use of Māori guides, became part of the *Te Maori* experience at the Auckland City Art Gallery (figure 25). Criticisms of *Te Maori* such as the lack of contemporary art and art by women were addressed by showcasing Māori artists from the permanent collection and loaning in two weaving collections (see Panoho 1988). This was supplemented with a complete hang of the Lindauer collection (see figure 24), a selection of Goldie's Māori portraits and the purchase of a De Sainson lithograph of taonga (figure 26).

[25] *Maori Art Today* was an exhibition of contemporary work by Māori artists which toured New Zealand with *Te Maori: Te Hokinga Mai* (see Brown 1987/88).

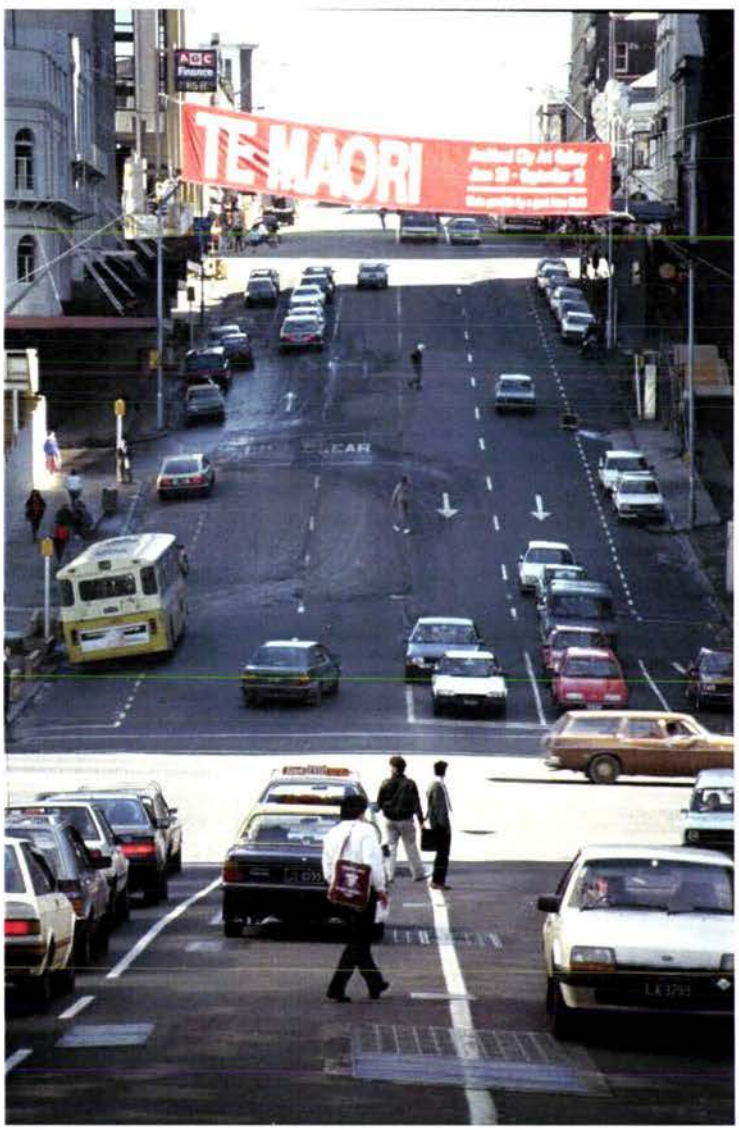

Figure 22. Promotional material for *Te Maori,* intersection of Queen and Wellesley Street, 1987.

Figure 23. The pōwhiri for *Te Maori: Te Hokinga Mai*, Auckland City Art Gallery 1987.

Figure 24. The pōwhiri for *Te Maori: Te Hokinga Mai*, Auckland City Art Gallery 1987.

Figure 25. A Māori guide leading tours of *Te Maori: Te Hokinga Mai*.

Figure 26. Coupe Lithographer and Louis de Sainson, *Nouvelle-Zelande (eight artifacts) (c.1827).* Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1987 (1987/12/1).
Figure 27. Ngāti Kahungunu, *Toki / Adze.* Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1986 (1986/33).

Te Maori: Te Hokinga Mai also had a significant internal effect on the curatorship of the Māori history painting collection. *Te Maori: Te Hokinga Mai* brought an unprecedented Māori audience to the Gallery who demonstrated great respect for the ancestors depicted in the Goldie and Lindauer portraits (Blackley 1997:2). This was in stark contrast to the denigration of the paintings "on the part of many 'politically correct' Pākehā" who continued to see the works as an "embarrassing legacy of colonial times" (ibid:37). This experience inspired Roger Blackley, Curator of Historic New Zealand Art to curate these works for an appreciative audience.[26] Increased Māori participation in the Gallery also had negative effects, both from a Māori and Pākehā perspective.

> The Auckland City Art Gallery is no stranger to mounting international displays ... But I don't think it has had much to do with Maoris ... I see conflict between the gallery's organized planners and the Maori meanderings to set up their involvement with Te Maori ... Some Maori show unbridled arrogance. There is a Pakeha put-down, a joy at putting Pakehas' on the back burner ... There is no bridge building and this saddens me (Tipene O'Regan in *AGMANZ Journal* 1986:28).

> During Te Maori's opening week, I was at times disappointed with some of the kaumatua on the paepae, and with some of the kuia. There was a lack of presence and homework. Kuia padded barefooted about the paepae gallery. Modern hymns replaced old waiata as complements to the whaikorero. Younger 'kaumatua' wore jeans. And who was the kaumatua who, in welcoming the hierarchy of the Lion Corporation, referred to them as 'the people from Watties?' And again, there was the arrogant insistence not to use English ... And the idea to involve te rangatahi, the young people as docents was well meaning. But I have shuddered in all four New Zealand venues as I've listened to the glib, parrot-like recitals learnt from the Te Maori catalogue (Henare Te Ua in *AGMANZ Journal* 1987:9).

Māori suspicions about the Gallery's motives were confirmed when Rodney Wilson was succeeded by Christopher Johnstone (Australian) in 1988. Johnstone immediately halted many of the radical inroads *Te Maori: Te Hokinga Mai* had made at the Gallery.

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[26] This was a belief further justified by the numerous requests by Māori to see the paintings and the "peculiar" rituals they conducted in the presence of the painting such as baptising children under the gaze of their ancestors (Blackley, pers.comm. 14.11.04).

The Collection Policy (1989) was redrafted and explicitly stated that the Gallery does not collect historical Māori art (*Collection Policy* 1989:9). This also included ethnographic studies of taonga Māori although historic photographic portraits of Maori continued to be purchased. Only three contemporary Māori artworks were collected in the three years after hosting *Te Maori: Te Hokinga Mai.*[27] One significant milestone did occur in 1989 when Māori artist Kura Te Waru Rewiri was invited to select work from the permanent collection for a small collection hang - the first Māori curatorial input at the Gallery.

Goldie (1997)

The full impact of *Te Maori: Te Hokinga Mai* on the Auckland City Art Gallery was not realized until one decade later. The *Goldie* exhibition was the culmination of Roger Blackley's research project sparked by the Māori audiences brought in by *Te Maori Te Hokinga Mai. Goldie* appropriated the *Te Maori* exhibition model for a fine art context and included iwi liaison, employing kaumātua to represent the Gallery and having bi-lingual kaiārahi to lead visitors around the show (Goldie exhibition report in *Enterprise Board Agenda* 14.11.1997). The Gallery also advanced the model by arranging the portraits according to whānau and iwi relationships and produced the first bi-lingual audio guide (figure 29). The kaiārahi were also responsible for mediating audience responses to Goldie's most infamous painting *The Arrival of the Maoris in New Zealand* and interpreted the work as historical "fiction as opposed to historical fact" (ibid:10). As predicted, Māori support for the Gallery was "at a level not seen since *Te Maori* 10 years ago" with 30% of all visitors being Māori, up from the average 3.5%; with 21% being first time visitors (ibid:4). Additionally, 99% of visitors rated the exhibition positively, critical response was "virtually unanimous in its praise" and it received considerable media coverage by both mainstream and specialist Māori providers (ibid:3).

As well as appropriating the *Te Maori* model, *Goldie* also appropriated Māori history for the purposes of nation building. The exhibition "argued a new and far less contested place for Charles F. Goldie in the history of New Zealand art" (ibid:3) by incorporating Māori perspectives into the interpretation of Goldie's work. By promoting the

[27] These were single acquisitions representing Robyn Kahukiwa, Ralph Hotere and Kura Te Waru Rewiri.

Figure 28. Visitors to the *Goldie* exhibition.

Figure 29. A visitor listens to the *Goldie* audio guide.

Figure 30. Robyn Kahukiwa, *Wai Tangi* (1990). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased with funds provided by the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board 1991 (1991/22/10).

Figure 31. Artist unknown, *Maori woman wearing blanket* (n.d.). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1990 (1990/14/41).

significance that the works held for Māori, the colonial "cringe" that was associated with the works was neutralized. Thus by seeking the endorsement of Māori, the exhibition rehabilitated the reputation of Goldie in the eyes of Pākehā New Zealanders. Within this context the paintings represented a *common* heritage that could be shared and appreciated by both Māori and Pākehā which could then be appropriated according to the rhetoric of the bi-cultural present.

The success of *Te Maori*: *Te Hokinga Mai* and *Goldie* established a model of practice from which further displays of Māori art were to be based. This included the appropriation of Māori ritual protocol as a necessary component for any display of Māori art. The Gallery however, was unable to resource those components themselves and had to contract those skills in on a project basis. The establishment of the Māori curatorial position in 1999 included facilitated these services for the purposes of the Gallery. This expectation was premised on an attitude of appropriation which the Māori appointee strenuously resisted. Instead, the Māori curator incorporated the ritual protocol into the operations of the Gallery. In doing so, the curator hoped to demonstrate the significance and meaning of the protocol as opposed to passively providing services on demand.

Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly (2001)

The first exclusively Māori art exhibition to be produced by the Māori curator was *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* (2001). It explored the legacy of tradition in contemporary Māori art and was structured according to Māori ritual protocol. This framework also organized contemporary Māori art practice into a historicized narrative which linked it with the continuum of Māori "art" generated for the *Te Maori* exhibition. The integration of Māori concepts within the exhibition structure however, did not conform to the extroverted cultural practices established by *Te Māori* and *Goldie*. Subsequently much of the cultural significance contained within the concept of the exhibition was lost to the Gallery, critics and the audience. This exposed the superficial understanding that majority culture had in identifying and understanding Māori ritual protocol and how the Gallery appropriated the cultural package, as instituted by *Te Maori,* with limited understanding of the culture from which it was extracted.

...

In summary, *Te Maori, Goldie* and *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* demonstrate how the exhibition is a medium of cultural appropriation. The conventions of the exhibition, namely the historicized framework, has enabled the Gallery to appropriate taonga Māori, the historic image of Māori and latterly, contemporary Māori art according to its purposes. The institutionalization of Māori ritual protocol demonstrates how the Gallery willfully appropriates aspects of Māori culture to fulfill its commitment to biculturalism but consistently demonstrates a limited understanding of their significance and applies them in a tokenistic fashion. Moreover, the appointment of a Māori curator to facilitate this process demonstrates a lack of willingness on the part of the Gallery to educate itself about Māori cultural practices or build its relationship with tangata whenua.

...

As these examples show, the practices of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki have consistently dominated and controlled the representation of Māori for ideological purposes. During a period when it was thought the Māori population faced extinction, the Auckland Art Gallery collected and exhibited images that monumentalized Māori or freely fictionalized Māori history and traditions according to prejudiced beliefs. When the population stabilized and began to grow, the Auckland City Art Gallery marginalised the historic image of Māori from its discourse of New Zealand art and supported socially assimilated Māori artists whose work was devoid of Māori references. And when it was no longer acceptable to discriminate against Māori, the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki simply appropriated aspects of Māori art and culture that it was comfortable with and could use to its political advantage.

The effect of these practices have consistently defined and cast Māori in difference to the predominantly European emigrant population of New Zealand. By preserving a Eurocentric bias at the heart of its practices, the Art Gallery has consistently asserted the superiority of the western tradition by denigrating that of Māori. This has worked to both legitimize the violent process of colonisation in New Zealand and ensure that the cultural identity of New Zealand is structured upon the European tradition. Given this history of maintaining Māori at arms length, it is of considerable interest why the Gallery developed the Māori curatorial position and to what purpose. The following section identifies and examines the external pressure and internal motives behind these developments and how this context came to shape the foundation of Māori curatorship within the site.

Biculturalism?

> biculturalism, *n.* a belief in or promotion of the equality of two cultures, especially (in New Zealand) Maori and Pakeha cultures, as based in the Treaty of Waitangi (Deverson 2004).

In 1990, the nation celebrated 150 years of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, the document which annexed New Zealand as a British colony. This was commemorated at the Gallery in several ways. For the first time, the Gallery held an exhibition in association with Ngā Puna Waihanga, entitled *Kōanga*. Two Māori women artists, Maureen Lander and Jacqueline Fraser were featured in the Window Work program. Eight artworks representing six contemporary Maori artists were purchased during 1990–91. Half of these acquisitions were funded by the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board (see figure 30). The Gallery also continued to collect historic photographs of Māori, although the majority of images were contrived studio portraits as opposed to ethnographic studies (figure 31).

Also, Emily Karaka was commissioned to create an installation to be opened in conjunction with *Painted Dream,* an exhibition of contemporary Aboriginal art. This invitation marked an ongoing investment in this Māori artist that was only surpassed by Ralph Hotere. The relationship turned sour however, when Karaka took up residency in the non-residential leased studio space that had provided by the Gallery as part of the commission. Tensions came to head toward the end of 1990 when Karaka expressed her desire to stay in her residency until *Painted Dream* opened despite having completed the installation.

> In Maori terms she wanted to maintain the link between her work and the exhibition, the pito or birthcord if you like, and not cut it prematurely. As the situation worsened, the Gallery began to bring forward the date that Karaka and [Norman] Te Whata should leave. They stayed on as a cultural -educative statement knowing full well that a professional verbal agreement had been given to that effect. Karaka was, after all, tangata whenua tuturu. She regarded it as an abuse that the Gallery should suddenly dismiss her. Her tribal time frame demanded acknowledgement of the rights of the tangata whenua. 'From the exhibition collective I am the Maori artist to appropriately welcome the work of the aboriginal artists here to Tamaki Makaurau. I will not leave until this is done' (Ihimaera 1991:80-81).

Karaka was eventually served with a trepass notice; she was not invited to the opening of *Painted Dream* (ibid.); and the commissioned work did not enter the collection.[28] While the Auckland City Art Gallery's appropriation of *Te Maori* created new opportunities for Māori, it also pushed the Gallery outside its comfort zone and left it prone to criticism. The Gallery's lack of follow through after *Te Maori* and its poor track record with contemporary Māori artists, demonstrate how it was unable to appropriate the *living* dimension of Māori art and culture.

...

Despite the negative experience of the Karaka affair, these efforts were considerable developments in the Gallery's relationship with Māori. They were insignificant however when compared with other institutions in respect of contemporary Māori art. *Kohia ko Taikaka Anake* 1990 (National Art Gallery) and *Mana Tiriti: the art of protest and partnership* 1990 (Wellington City Gallery) involved Maori at a curatorial level and brought a new level of recognition and exposure to the contemporary Māori art movement (MacDonald 1991). This was reinforced by dealer galleries throwing open their doors to contemporary Māori art (Taylor 1987) which extended to the establishment of the first Māori dealer gallery Te Taumata in central Auckland (est. 1991). The Gallery's non-committal attitude to the contemporary Māori art movement, particularly after its boisterous lobby for the right to host *Te Maori: Te Hokinga Mai* and its misunderstanding with Emily Karaka, inevitably left it prone to charges of cultural insensitivity and again, jeopardized its reputation as a leader in the field.

Political restructure (1991)

To compound matters, the local councils of the greater Auckland region were restructured into four cities, quadrupling their assets, income and debt (Roberts 1992/3:73). The Auckland City Art Gallery's funding was reduced, its operations were reviewed and pressure to generate income through deaccessioning and admission charges was applied by Council Management - "[u]nder the new regime 'nothing was sacrosanct' although the gallery thought that it was" (ibid.).

[28] Surprisingly, the Gallery retained Karaka's installation for display after *Painted Dream* which was complemented by an exhibition of Maori art from the collection entitled *Anei He Taonga: Works by Contemporary Maori Artists.*

In mid-1991 a newly constituted Auckland City Council commenced the development of a Strategic Plan. This included a review of the overall policy direction for the Gallery (*Enterprise Board agenda* 27.03.92:1). Heading the process was the Arts and Heritage Strategic Planning Group. This group included Māori adviser Pauline Kingi, whose appointment was at the request of the Auckland City Council's Māori Representatives Committee (ibid:7). The objective of the group was to "assess the options the Auckland City Council has to provide for the conservation of our heritage and the artistic expression of our resident's cultures" against the "severe constraints on both public and private spending" (ibid:6).

The group consulted the Auckland Art Gallery Enterprise Board, Gallery staff, affiliated organizations and interested individuals. The consultation process was based upon a 'Future Options' paper and invited submissions based on a variety of proposed changes to the Gallery (*Enterprise Board Agenda* 17.11.93). An overwhelming number of submissions drew attention to the Gallery's reluctance to engage with and reflect its multicultural community. John Leuthart observed that the Gallery had lagged behind its past reputation "as an innovative presenter of the visual arts in New Zealand" and urged the Gallery to take the lead role in the presentation and collection of the artistic practice of the wider Pacific region (*Enterprise Board Agenda* 27.03.1992:56). John Coley, Director of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery noted that the historical placement of Māori art in museums has left art galleries devoid of indigenous art forms. He suggested that the Gallery borrow taonga from the Auckland Museum for a permanent onsite display (ibid:74). Professor A.S.G. Green, Head of the Art History Department at Auckland University stated that "given that the city and New Zealand is not a monocultural cultural structure, the gallery should be seeking to serve the Maori population" (ibid:63). Green recommended that the Gallery purchase work by Māori artists from 1900 onward with attention to living artists (ibid.).

The Gallery docents based their submission on pragmatic "shop floor" observations and feedback from visitors. They cited the demand areas as being "representations of Maori in European art; Colonial period landscape works; contemporary work by both Maori and other New Zealand artists" (ibid:80). The submission from the Art Gallery Enterprise Board also recommended more emphasis on Māori and Polynesian art with the addition of art from Pacific Rim countries (ibid:6).

The Gallery's own submission took a more conservative position, assuring its commitment to Māori and Pacific art but citing the lack of non-western curatorial or education expertise as a drawback to committing scarce resource in this area.

> The artistic integrity of an art museum's collection lies in a balanced collection policy with a view to quality and range. A collection can only develop with integrity if it is planned and added to through appropriate expertise and sufficient resources ... [e]xpanded collections (and exhibitions) of art from the Pacific will require increased curatorial and education expertise including full-time specialists with Maori and Pacific Island background (ibid:98).
>
> [...]
>
> In broad terms the Gallery sees the status quo collection policy option (Europe/Western tradition) is being the preferred option given the current climate. However, the widest public benefit would be provided by the occasional judicious acquisition of works of art from other cultures such as those represented in the multi-cultural population of the city (ibid.).

The final report of the Arts and Heritage Group was released in 1991 and was amalgamated into the Auckland City vision document *Setting Sail: Strategies for Auckland City: Towards 2020* (1993). The opening statement of the vision document summarized the general trends it announced:

> Auckland will be the outstanding city of the South Pacific offering a superb environment merging sea and land, and fostering diverse lifestyles and cultures in a community with works together for all its residents, businesses and visitors (ibid:3).

The report recommended no change to the status quo of the Gallery. However, future funding allocations were to be decided on how cultural institutions demonstrated or advanced the Council's overall strategy or on the number or range of people who would benefit from its activities. Analysis conducted as part of the Arts and Heritage Planning Group revealed that the Gallery benefited approximately 3% of the Auckland City population but serviced many more users from outside the Council area. But of the 800,000 international visitors to Auckland, the Gallery only attracted 2.5%

compared to the 40% who visited the Auckland Museum (*Enterprise Board Agenda* 1.10.93:12).

These statistics demonstrated that the Art Gallery could not compete against other cultural organizations for audience numbers. In order to maintain its operational funding, it was forced to deliver according to other areas of the Council's strategy. The approach that the Gallery chose to take was to reflect the multi-cultural diversity of Auckland City. Its first step was to increase its relevance to Māori.

The Gallery initiated its own Strategic Planning Process and for the first time, Māori were invited to participate in every phase of the process. In 1993 the Art Gallery Enterprise Board convened a Steering Group which included Māori representative Pauline Kingi. A Search Conference was held in November to develop the draft strategic plan which was attended by Kura Te Waru Rewiri. Then in December 1993, Māori educator Elizabeth Ellis became the first Māori appointed to the Enterprise Board and became heavily involved in the review and refinement of the Plan.

In the same month the Gallery hosted the contemporary follow-up to *Te Maori, Taiarotia: Contemporary Maori Art from New Zealand. Taiarotia* did not command the attention of the Gallery like *Te Māori*, only gaining a passing mention in the Enterprise Board minutes. This was despite two of the artists in the exhibition, Selwyn Muru and Buck Nin, withdrawing their work from the Auckland venue in protest of the Gallery's "perceived bicultural insensitivity" (Jahnke in Szekely 1996:47). Also during this period, 21 works by contemporary Māori artists entered the collection via the long-term loan of the Chartwell Collection.[29] The Gallery also accepted a proposal from freelance Māori curator, George Hubbard for an exhibition of contemporary Māori artists (Johnston in Szekely 1996:7). This was originally scheduled for March 1994 but later rescheduled to March 1995 to coincide with the opening of the NEW contemporary art annex (ibid.).

By mid-1994, a draft Strategic Plan was submitted to the Enterprise Board for discussion. It proposed several strategies to encourage Māori participation in the Gallery. This included developing a consultation process with Māori, increasing Māori staffing levels, training all staff in bi-cultural awareness and introducing Māori language

[29] In 1994 Gallery accepted the Chartwell Collection on long term loan, a large private collection of New Zealand art with a substantial number of works by established and emerging Maori artists (see McAloon 1999). The Chartwell collection has an active acquisition policy and has been responsible for a large number of acquisitions to the Maori art collection. In addition, the Gallery acquired 33 works by Maori artists during the period 1991-1994.

into Gallery signage, exhibitions labels and publications. At the Art Gallery Enterprise Board meeting in July 1994, Elizabeth Ellis was asked to expand her perspective on strategies to realise "Goal One Objective 1.4: To encourage greater Maori involvement in the Gallery community on an ongoing basis". Her response to the Board - referred to as the 'Ellis report' - addressed and expanded upon the five clauses of Objective 1.4 and made two main recommendations. The first recommendation was the adoption of a Māori consultation group.

> I recommend that a group of Maori art consultants be formed comprising tribal representatives who also have knowledge about the arts of the Maori and indigenous peoples. Members will also have knowledge about western art traditions and contemporary art (Enterprise Board 19.10.94: appendix 1:1).

Secondly, Elizabeth observed that no Māori were currently employed at the Gallery[30] and recommended the development of an Equal Opportunities Plan of the type already used by the Auckland City Council.

> The documentation of the City Council and the Art Gallery Draft Plan identifies more Maori involvement as a milestone in the achievement of its vision and mission. Maori people will feel more comfortable and be inclined to visit the art gallery if the gallery reflects not only Maori in the protocols, language, signage and programmes but also if there are Maori people seen within the gallery (ibid.)

In the report's conclusion, Elizabeth congratulated the Gallery for involving Māori in the consultation and development process but warned against a retraction of sincerity.

> I can only assume they [Māori consultants] helped because they want the Art Gallery to be a place for all people. I am concerned that the board may consult and then act as gatekeepers who then place their own values on the decisions made, and reshape them, or at worst, discount and demean them.

[30] This was incorrect assertion. The Assistant Curator Education, Adrienne Pedder (c.1992-1997) was of Māori descent and in 1996 represented the Gallery at the Auckland City Council Māori Liaison Group (Enterprise Board 21.8.96).

> The Draft Strategic Plan ... states: 'The Gallery endorses the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. Its commitment to understanding the needs and expectations of the tangata whenua will be carried out through appropriate consultation and dialogue.' As a board we need to consider these statements. If they contradict the practices and actions, then perhaps they should be deleted (ibid:5)

Subsequently the Enterprise Board requested a response from the Director, Christopher Johnstone. Johnstone cited previous milestones such as the acquisition of Arnold Manaaki Wilson sculptures,[31] *Taiarotia*, Māori consultation for the Strategic Plan and the appointment of Elizabeth Ellis to the Enterprise Board as improvements to the Gallery's relationship with Māori. The Director did identify the need for a consultation group to liaise and better facilitate communication with tangata whenua but rejected the proposal of an EEO plan (Enterprise Board 19.10.94:3-4).

The Enterprise Board adopted Johnstone's recommendation on 19 October 1994 but the first meeting of the "Maori Consultants to the Auckland City Art Gallery" (later named Haerewa)[32] was not held until 13 May 1995. The inaugural group consisted of Auckland-based Māori artists, art historians and educators of different tribal affiliations.[33] The group met with Gallery representatives Christopher Johnstone and Alexa Johnston (Principal Curator) a mere four months before the exhibition curated by George Hubbard, was to open as the inaugural exhibition of the contemporary art annex.

Brownie Points

Brownie Points (as the exhibition was then titled) was the first contemporary Māori art exhibition to be produced by the Gallery and signalled to "Auckland's tangata whenua a commitment to biculturalism and inclusiveness" (Mane-Wheoki 1996:43-44). The exhibition was themed by the Gallery as "explor[ing] issues of tradition and identity, and the complexities of the bi-cultural present ... showing the dynamism and diversity of contemporary Māori art practice" (Enterprise Board 02.05.1996:35). It sought to bring

[31] *Mask* 1955 (1992/33/4), *Ringatu* 1958 (1992/33/3) and *Tane Mahuta* 1957 (1992/33/2) were purchased by the Gallery in 1992 and were received into the collection with a hare taonga ceremony.
[32] Haerewa is translated as the first cut (in moko), to chisel or to set in motion (Ellis in Szekely 1996:6).
[33] The founding members included Elizabeth Ellis (Chair), Fred Graham, Arnold Manaaki Wilson, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku and Kura Te Waru Rewiri.

back the first time visitors from the *Taiarotia* exhibition (ibid.) as well as address the long standing issues with the Māori arts community; particularly the Gallery's sporadic and inconsistent relationship with Māori artists.

Hubbard however, had a more complex agenda that kicked back against the prevailing notions of contemporary Māori art, particularly the influence of Ngā Puna Waihanga on the contemporary Māori arts scene. Where initially the Gallery had been attracted to Hubbard's irreverent curatorial style[34] – which gave voice to an "outcast, detribalized and dysfunctional" urban Māori identity (Hubbard in Szekely 1996:37) - they were unprepared for the "cultural collisions" that resulted from that approach (Johnston in Szekely 1996:9). This included the Gallery's complicity in the wero issued by George Hubbard to the established Māori art movement, of which the members of Haerewa were closely associated.

By the time of Haerewa's first meeting, the show had developed from an intentionally confrontational and avant-garde exhibition into a professionally unstable imbroglio. The exhibition had been delayed three times, the last of which had caused a substantial budget over-run for 1995 which was compounded by the pressures of meeting the NEW Gallery project budget and schedule. The exhibition had been retitled from *Brownie Points*[35] to *Niho Taniwha,* tensions between Hubbard and the Gallery were escalating, including the Gallery admitting problems with the catalogue essay prepared by the curator (Johnston in Szekely 1996:9). Despite these obvious problems, the Gallery felt it lacked the cultural authority to discriminate against the work of the Māori curator, particularly in regard to Māori issues.

The Gallery immediately sought advice from Haerewa on these issues (Haerewa meeting minutes 19.05.95). While Haerewa expressed support for the exhibition, they shared the concerns of the Gallery, particularly the aggressive and tapu nature of the revised exhibition title *Niho Taniwha*. Arnold Manaaki Wilson suggested *Korurangi,* "a Maori motif in which two spirals surround each other without meeting - a coexistence that recognizes difference" (Jahnke in Skezely 1996:40). Also on the advice of

[34] See Brundt 2004 for an analysis of Hubbard's earlier show *Choice!,* the exhibition which brought Hubbard to the attention of the Gallery.

[35] *Brownie Points* was described by the curator as "what Pakeha try to score by indulging Maori, and what Maori try and score by indulging Pakeha". (Johnston in Szekely 1996:7). The curator felt "that was what the Auckland Art Gallery was trying to score by employing me as guest curator - the first Maori curator that they'd ever had since the institution's inception" (Hubbard in ibid:38).

Haerewa, the curator's essay was rejected and another commissioned on short notice (Johnston in Szekely 1996:9). Lastly, the Gallery consulted on the appropriate protocols for the opening of both the new building and the exhibition. It was at this point that Arnold Manaaki Wilson (Ngāi Tūhoe) was nominated as the group representative for such issues (Haerewa minutes 19.05.95).

Notably, the first issue raised by Haerewa did not concern the exhibition at all. The group wanted a commitment from the Gallery to increase Māori staff and create "a programme of exhibitions, activities and events around Māori art and Māori audiences" (ibid.). The role that Haerewa played in its first months however, was focused on *Korurangi;* providing the cultural authority behind the Gallery to bring the exhibition into line. But despite their best efforts, they were unable to save the Gallery from the public crisis that *Korurangi* was to become.

Korurangi: New Māori Art was officially opened in October 1995 and the Gallery instituted all the ritual protocols that had become standard practice after *Te Maori.* The Gallery's management of the protocol however, was poor and caused much distress to all involved (Johnston in Szekely 1996:9). The dawn blessing was compromised because the catering did not turn up. An artwork in an adjoining gallery, which contained human excrement, had to be removed prior to the dawn blessing. And when the exhibition did open to the public, a complaint was laid to police about Diane Prince's *Flagging the Future: Te Kaitangata – The Last Palisade* (1995) (figure 33) which invited visitors to walk on the New Zealand flag. Faced with prosecution under the Flags, Emblems and Names Protection Act (1983), the Gallery removed the work from public display which resulted in a heated public debate through the media. As Johnston summarised in the exhibition catalogue "[t]here is no doubt that for some there was a numbed sense of relief when the show ended" (Johnston in Szekely 1996:11).

While the Gallery had been quick to respond to the changes to its charter, *Korurangi* demonstrated that the Gallery was operating outside its ability. As proof of this, the exhibition was dogged with controversy, the critics were hard on its overt political correctness (Keith 1995, Mane-Wheoki 1996, Stewart 1995) and the Gallery was condemned for high jacking Hubbard's curatorship "in search for cultural safety" (Craw 1996). It was an experience that saw the Gallery confront and acknowledge its weaknesses in a very public and candid way:

> It is clear that there is no substitute for Maori staff at all levels of an organization which seeks to be bicultural in New Zealand today. With *Korurangi* such staff could have provided advice and support to both Maori and Pakeha involved in the show, and possibly averted some of the distressing conflicts and misunderstandings which occurred ... It is vital that Maori material is part of our programme at all levels. Exhibitions like *Korurangi* should not be isolated events, carrying the weight of all the Gallery aspirations, but part of a continuing dialogue between and among the cultures of Aotearoa New Zealand (Johnson in Skezely 1995:11).[36]

The development of the Maori curatorial position

In 1995 Christopher Johnstone resigned as Director and in early 1996, Chris Saines (Australian) was appointed to the position. In his first meeting with Haerewa, the issue of Māori staffing was raised (*Haerewa meeting minutes* June 1996). Chris had been influential in the development of the first indigenous curatorial position at the Queensland Art Gallery and "didn't take a lot of encouraging to do something in this area" (Saines, pers.comm.).

> Chris Saines: I think we developed it because I saw a significant want for a position like that ... The collections, just simply, weren't going anywhere, not at least in what I thought was a good and cohesive way. And I felt that for really strong Māori collections to be developed in the building, we needed a strong Māori curator. We needed a Māori perspective basically (Saines, pers.comm).

As well as making significant inroads in terms of Māori participation in the Gallery, acquisitions to the Māori art collection skyrocketed (table B3). But these acquisitions followed familiar patterns of collecting. From 1990-98 the Gallery collected 155 historic images of Māori which represented 79% of the total acquisitions to the Maori art collection. Many were carte-de-visites, highly reproduced and inexpensive tourist souvenirs that typically depicted celebrity Māori who were involved in the New Zealand

[36] In a recently published article, Chris Saines wrongly claimed that it was *Korurangi* which "spurred the formation of the gallery's Maori advisory group, and this led in turn to the later establishment of a Maori curator's role" (Clifford 2005).

Figure 32. ***Korurangi: New Maori Art*** **(1995). NEW Gallery, Auckland City Art Gallery.**

Figure 33. Diane Prince, ***Flagging the Future: Te Kaitangata – The Last Palisade*** **(1995).**

Figure 34. William Collis, *Tamati Waka Nene* (n.d.). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1994 (1994/48/26).
Figure 35. Ross T. Smith, *Nikiora Hohepa, 13 March 1997, Te Mahurehure, Ngapuhi* (1998). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of Harriet Friedlander, 1998 (1998/34/21).

Figure 36. Ans Westra, *Gisborne, 1984* (1984). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1997 (1997/27/23).

Land Wars (figure 34). The remaining acquisitions included two series by contemporary photographers, one Pākehā (Ans Westra) and one Māori (Ross T. Smith). Although different in conception, there is a pervasive melancholy or nostalgia both in the gaze of Westra's documentary photography (figure 36) and Smith's monochromatic portraits of young Māori living in a rural Northland community (figure 35).

In 1996, the Gallery embarked on a two stage restructuring process, which included the first overhaul of the curatorial department in over twenty years. The second stage of the process would create the opportunity for a Māori curatorial position and was originally set for the end of 1996 (*Haerewa Meeting Minutes* 02.08.1996) but was later postponed to June 1997 (*Haerewa Meeting Minutes* 07.12.1996). In the interim, several other key developments were made. A Māori name for the Gallery - Toi o Tāmaki - was adopted[37] and signage that included the bilingual name was designed and installed. While these developments were positive, Haerewa maintained their pressure on the Gallery with member, Fred Graham, stating at one meeting that he was "more interested in the Gallery's actions in the bicultural area than its logo" (*Haerewa Meeting Minutes* 02.08.1996).

In 1997, the *Goldie* exhibition was heading into its last stages and issues stemming from the exhibition began to take precedence in the Haerewa meetings. Haerewa were consulted on matters of tikanga related both to the invitation of important Māori dignitaries and correct ritual procedure for the opening (*Haerewa Meeting Minutes* 07.12.1996). Despite these project-based pressures, Haerewa continued to ask for updates relating to the Māori curatorial position, seeing the increased involvement of Māori in the Gallery as the most important issue of their group's agenda (Ellis, pers.comm.).

The resounding success of the *Goldie* exhibition, in the eyes of many, redeemed the failings of the *Korurangi* exhibition and fulfilled many of the strategic objectives of the Gallery relating to Māori. This included demonstrating the Gallery's commitment to biculturalism, working with tangata whenua to create a project of relevance to Māori,

[37] Elizabeth Ellis consulted with the Māori Language Commission regarding a Māori name for the Gallery. Two suggestions were made: Te Whakaaritanga Toi o te Tāone nui o Tāmaki or Te Whakaaritanga Toi o Tāmaki (*Enterprise Board agenda* 28.04.1994). These suggestions were considered too unwielding for those unfamiliar with the Māori language and it was Elizabeth Ellis who suggested Toi o Tamāki (Ellis, pers.comm).

attracting a large Māori audience and ensuring cultural protocols were successfully managed (Goldie exhibition report, *Enterprise Board Agenda* 14.11.1997). The success of the exhibition also shaped the Director's vision for the type of experience the Māori curator could offer.

> CS: [T]he original vision was to make a Māori curator responsible for things produced by Māori and in terms of art practice and for things of interest to Māori in terms of things in our collection ... the Goldie, Lindauer works have a very specific relationship to Māori. I saw the interaction of Māori with those works with my own eyes and with my own ears and I saw the emotion those works' generated. So to me, it was important those works were introduced and mediated ... through a Māori lense, with Māori sensibility and Māori sensitivity and intelligence (Saines, pers.comm.).

It was not until April 1998 that the appropriate managerial positions had been secured to enable the establishment of a Māori curatorial position (ibid.). The position was drafted as "Assistant Curatorial Position - Kaitiaki Māori" who would report to the Senior Curator, Historical New Zealand and was managed overall by the Manager, Art and Access Programmes (*Enterprise Board Agenda* 08.06.1998). The required skill base included a tertiary qualification in art history or equivalent area, a sound knowledge of te reo Māori, a familiarity of tikanga Māori and some understanding of the professional curatorial practices of a major art museum (Assistant Curator – Kaitiaki Maori job description). Haerewa were consulted on the job specifications. They chose not to specifically request Māori applications but to signal "our interest in a Māori appointment by summarizing the position in te reo" (*Haerewa meeting minutes,* 18.04.98). The position was finally advertised in December 1998 with Elizabeth Ellis present on the interview panel. Ngāhiraka Mason, who had been employed at the Gallery as a Security Guard and Gallery Assistant since 1994, was appointed in early 1999.

This appointment was a major achievement for Haerewa. It represented a serious period of re-evaluation on the part of the Gallery and significantly contributed to the strategic goals of the Gallery. The position however, came at the expense of existing curatorial specialties. Consequently, the position was loaded with expectation, treated with suspicion and under the spotlight from the outset.

CS: At the beginning, I think that there were a couple of issues with particular staff who probably read the appointment as Māori specific. They might have said 'you don't have media specific position but you've got an ethnically specific position - what's that about?' And I think there was a little bit of early jostling around that area but I put that down to nothing more than 'new kid on the block'.

And then we had a couple of issues between one or two people in the outside community ... [and] it was a little bit unusual that I was getting challenged along the lines of 'but you're not Māori. You wouldn't know' or 'she's Tūhoe so how would she know' etc. etc. ... No one's ever come in here before and said 'your curator would see it that way because she's French.' You know?

[...]

[But] it just seems to me that we're going to create more opportunity for ourselves if you want to think of it tactically, by having a Māori curator than a non-Māori curator. There is a degree of trust which is more immediate ... there seems to be an integrity or continuity chain that works all the way out into the community, back through the artist with whom we interface, in through the collection and the works we represent and out again through exhibitions to that bigger public. And a Māori curator, being the key influencer and mediator within that kind of chain, seems to me to be better overall for the institution than a non-Māori curator.

You're bringing things into the role that otherwise can't be artificially imported into it simply through university education or whatever ... [but] you need to know a lot about contemporary Pākehā art schools to really understand a lot about Brett Graham and Lisa Reihana and Peter Robinson and all those guys. You need to know as much about what happens at a joint like Elam as you do to know about a lot about Māori. In Ngāhiraka, we get all that. She's art educated, she went to Elam, and she continues to be a practitioner. She's got the street cred from that perspective but she's also someone who is very passionate about and committed to her culture. And that's the only kind of person I think you should have in charge of that role (Saines, pers.comm.).

...

The Maori curatorial position was developed as part of a long-term strategy to re-establish the Gallery's credibility. The racially prejudiced beliefs upon which the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki had discriminated against Māori compromised its reputation as a site of cultural distinction. These beliefs prevented the Gallery from taking a leadership role as the national profile of Māori art and culture increased and subsequently, caused the Gallery to lag behind its contemporaries. It was not until esteemed colleagues confirmed its declining reputation and status that the Gallery seriously re-evaluated its attitude to, and relationship with, Māori.

When it became clear that there was a political advantage to be gained in recognising Māori the Gallery launched into a flurry of developments. These initiatives however, were largely outside of the Gallery's traditional expertise and became liabilities which publicly exposed the inadequacies of its practice in this area. This is evidenced by the exponential growth in the Māori art collection from 1990 (table B3); substantiated with media such as carte-de-visits (highly reproduced *souvenirs,* relatively inexpensive to obtain and outside of the Gallery's traditional taxonomic boundaries) and the public crisis caused by the *Korurangi* exhibition. While the aggressive approach of the freelance Māori curator was somewhat mitigated by the Māori consultancy group Haerewa, the lesson learnt from *Korurangi* was that the Gallery could no longer keep Māori at arms length.

Therefore, the development of the Māori curatorial position was largely the result of external pressure created by the heightened profile of contemporary Māori culture in the national consciousness. It was a response that arose from the threat to the Gallery's reputation and enabled it to compete for operational funding against other cultural institutions in Auckland. It also avoided recourse to an imposed quota system and allowed the institution to maintain some control over the type of representation that Māori were guaranteed to have through the City Council's bicultural policy. This control was expressed in the institution's expectations for the position; which on top of standard curatorial responsibilities required the curator to act as a Māori representative on staff who worked to the advantage of the Gallery, advised and educated on matters Māori and built the collection and extended the exhibitions programme in a culturally appropriate way.

As a result, the role of the Māori curator was largely remedial and required cultural leadership in a context that was fraught with uncertainty, tension and prejudice. As the

sole Māori representative on staff, Ngāhiraka entered an institution that had been forced through necessity to re-evaluate their cultural values, operate outside their zone of expertise and whose position came at the expense of existing curatorial specialties. She was tasked with investing a Eurocentric art museum and its racially prejudice collection with Māori cultural capital and upon this foundation, ensure positive representation for Māori. As the following chapter examines, this professional context had major ramifications on the potential development of Māori curatorship, notwithstanding a profound impact on the curator as a Māori.

CHAPTER TWO: Ngāhiraka Mason – customary responsibilities and the choice of freedoms

Figure 37. Ngāhiraka Mason, *Link Stop 1a* (2001). Courtesy of the artist.

> Like other indigenous people throughout the world, many Maori continue to operate in two worlds. One is the marae (the world of customary practice) while the other is the world promoted, through national icons, as New Zealand. The world of customary practice continues to affect the position of Maori within this other world. The ability to negotiate between each is often an onerous task as loyalties are tested through the affirmation of customary responsibilities and the choice of freedoms (real or imagined) promoted in the other world (Jahnke 1999:193)
>
> Contrary to popular preconception ... Maori do not live in one or both of 'two worlds' and probably never have; everyone lives in this world (Webster 1998:26).

Ngāhiraka is proud of her title as the "first Māori woman security guard" employed at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (Mason, pers.comm.1). It was a position that she took up while enrolled as an adult student in a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland University. Naturally inquisitive, she has lived a life of varied experience: a close family upbringing in a native speaking environment, overseas travel and tertiary education, including an incompleted Bachelor of Māori Studies at Auckland University. This experience she recollects, was not a positive one.

> I was made to feel unwelcomed and odd ... I found that the attitude to native speakers was not a very positive one ... I was told that I could expect to fail because they had a linguistic based programme and I wasn't going to do very well and I should give up before I started. And I thought, I'll have a go anyway [laughs] (14 May 2004).

This attitude towards what some might see as an ideal Māori student does not sit well, but it demonstrates the mercurial nature of prejudice and stereotype that continues to challenge Ngāhiraka, currently in the position of Indigenous Curator, Māori Art at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. Ngāhiraka's rise - from the first Māori woman Security Guard to the first and only Māori permanent full time professional position - has occurred during a period of considerable evaluation by both the Gallery and its community towards Māori art. In this nascent role, it has been her practice that has come to define Māori curatorship at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

This chapter turns from an external examination of how Māori have been represented by the Gallery to documenting the experience of a Māori representative working within the Gallery. It describes how the cultural values that are an important part of Ngāhiraka's personal identity become the basis of her professional practice. The focus is on how Ngāhiraka has responded to the cultural context of the art museum for the advantage of Māori and developed curatorial practice in ways that were not anticipated by the Gallery. The purpose of the analysis is to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural complexities that Ngāhiraka negotiates, in an attempt to describe the unique qualities of Māori curatorship.

"Ko au, ko koe, ko koe, ko au": I am you and you are me

> The job takes me into other worlds where I represent my community; places my community cannot go. I carry their trust, they trust in me - my community and the artists trust me to represent them (Mason, Massey University lecture, Palmerston North, 12 May 2004).

Ngāhiraka Mason was raised in a large Māori speaking whānau in the town of Ruatōki, surrounded by the dense bush and waterways that characterise the Urewera landscape.

> I have got eight other siblings and I sit near the bottom of that hierarchy ... we never went to town or went to the shop. We lived at the end of the road so what I was exposed to completely affirmed that I belonged somewhere and it was a community that was incredibly protective, nurturing and all my life skills that I still apply today, come from that upbringing that I was privileged to have.
>
> We would very rarely leave home, only on special occasions. Then the whole family went, we were never singled out to have individual experiences, we actually had those extended experiences as a family (13 May 2004).

Collectivity is a repeated theme in Ngāhiraka's recollection of her upbringing. This sense of shared consciousness is not limited to people, but extends to the landscape and to the traditions and customs of her tipuna.

I am a Tūhoe member of Māori society and then after that I am a member of other societies ... I am also a member of indigenous societies. So I wouldn't rate being a member of New Zealand society that high if you want to have a hierarchy of who I think I belong to. It has been my experience that I belong first and foremost to Māori society ... it's not a denial of the New Zealand label that we all wear but that label sits alongside all the other labels.

[...]

I have an interesting experience, childhood wise, where I did witness a lot of kuia moko. These were my kuia and what would be thought as old practices, I witnessed those, those events, women speaking on the marae. And people still debate as to why they should. Well they did, so what's to debate about! Hui were not formally held at marae. We would go and sit in people's backyard and hui. And just the exposure to tangihanga and watching eras change over.

[...]

And everyday survival, putting kai on the table, knowing how to get kai, knowing the boundaries of being a river person, how to be water safe, how to be resourceful. Big expeditions we would have up the river on eel fishing expeditions: ki te kohi kai; to share out. Basic whanaungatanga practises and enjoying stories, great story telling that would go on and incredible access to who you were, having that affirmed in every way, socially, politically in a whānau situation.

[...]

Without a doubt my biggest influence is childhood. The continued nurturing that I have by that community and moving out into the world and realising the world is quite a different place and there wasn't the goodwill outside of my community experience. The world was a mean and hard place and living off, surviving off the memories of the good things and the genuineness of people. And realising that there is this other way people can be and circumstances and history force you to be a different way. That's part of life.

So all those experiences I draw on are very rich experiences. They are simple and basic experiences but they make this experience that I am having now, real (13 May 2004).

The strong whānau upbringing that Ngāhiraka experienced as a child, also informs her recollection and values on education. She identifies social education - people, experience and opportunity - as the important influences on her development as opposed to "Pākehā school" (Mason, pers.comm.3). It was the values that society put on that formal training and qualification however, that set Ngāhiraka on the path that eventually led to the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

I did part of my secondary education at Palmerston North Girls' High. I think I was one of two Māori in that school and the other was the P.E. teacher. I'd never lived in a town before, a big town and I was way outside my scope of handling so many Pākehā people all at once. I had only seen a few at a time. So it wasn't a very good experience at all. I got in with the bad kids and used to wag school and go to town and smoke ... I cut short my education and thought, nah, I need to find out about that other place out there that I don't know anything about ... I didn't know what I wanted to do but I felt like I needed more life experience than formal education.

[...]

So my sister and I were put on a road services bus and came to Auckland ... and it was the most exciting place I had ever seen. Queen Street, K' Road, Ponsonby. Just buzzing and full of people. Lots of Māori people. Lots of Polynesian people. And I just had every experience that I could have ... A complete social engagement.

[...]

My education in art terms started in primary school. I always wanted to be an artist, I doodled and asked questions about why things look like that. I did practice being an artist. And then went through different phases of inventing

myself in different careers: kōhanga reo, travelling overseas doing bar work and being exposed to different people in that way and having great experiences.

In 1990, Ngā Puna Waihanga, I got involved in a very small way with the *Kōanga* festival yet stayed on the periphery of things. I didn't throw myself into Māori art as such. I made art and gave it to my family and then at some point I thought, what am I doing with my life? Where is it all going? I might consider picking up education again. And I thought well, okay ... maybe, it's a good time to go back and complete my education and applied to go to Elam and was accepted, much to my surprise ... I didn't see it as a way into curatorship at all. It was a vehicle for me to get a piece of paper that other people thought was important.

So I suppose for the recent part of my life, it has been about being in the right place at the right time and seeing windows of opportunity for myself and opportunities that I could create for other people (14 May 2002).

In 1994 Ngāhiraka joined the staff of the Auckland City Art Gallery as a Security Guard. A year later, Roger Blackley, Curator of New Zealand Historical Art, encouraged her to apply for a position as a Gallery Assistant in the NEW Gallery, the contemporary art annexe of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Roger was so generous ... you'd be standing in the gallery spaces and he'd stop and talk and would ask you about what you thought, your opinions, and would talk about what he was doing, took an interest in the fact that I was a mature student going back to Elam and he was the only curator who took the time to do that (14 May 2002).

From 1995 Ngāhiraka worked as a NEW Gallery Assistant while completing her Bachelor of Fine Art (Photography). Roger encouraged her interest in historic photography by showing her works in the collection and discussing new acquisitions. He also asked her to participate as a kaiārahi for the *Goldie* exhibition in 1997 which for Ngāhiraka, developed into a deeper involvement in the Gallery.

[O]f course, I was interested and also coming in and being able to open up iwi relationships for him as well. Giving him, well not giving him access but kind of

facilitating access, because we are all related to everybody in someway so ... (15 May 2004).

Basically I was front of house kaiārahi which meant, because I am bilingual, I could speak with descendants that came in, the elderly people. Mainly that was the area where there was a need; to be able to speak Māori to them ... [And] there ... were some very interesting issues that came out of that exhibition as it travelled from venue to venue. People wanted to treat the exhibition differently in terms of how it was presented, the merchandising they wanted to go with the exhibition, the marketing and promotional things that kind of got a little bit crazy, especially in Christchurch ... I formed a relationship with Roger as a sounding board for some ideas that he had about what should and couldn't be done because there was no one else on the ground that he could ask a question to (31 August 2004).

At the end of the *Goldie* show, with three year's front-of-house experience and a reputation as a reliable "touchstone", Ngāhiraka began to work more closely with Roger cataloguing new acquisitions for the Historic New Zealand collection. In December 1998, the Gallery advertised the newly created position, Assistant Curator, Kaitiaki Māori. Despite a lack of intention toward a career in curatorship, Ngāhiraka applied for the job.

I was encouraged internally to apply. I never honestly expected to get it ... Was I confident? I was confident that I was as good a candidate as anyone else that was applying ... Why do I think I got the job? I think I was the best person. I think I was best person for the institution. Others would bring a different set of networks and skills and I think the ones that I was offering were the ones that the institution thought they would most benefit from.

AW: What were those things?

I think primarily: native speaker; my ability to work across generations; I have a practising background as an artist whereas everyone else is coming from art history and I didn't have a profile in the Pākehā community so I wasn't a threat to anybody in that community. I'd be more of a curiosity than anything else ... I would have a particular style and it wouldn't be the Gallery's style and it

> wouldn't be a Māori style as such. It would just be a style that they could learn from. And I think that's what they got (22 September 2004).

Ngāhiraka's appointment signalled a major achievement for Haerewa and advantageously positioned the Gallery as a leader in the field of Māori art curatorship.[38] The poor experience of *Korurangi* and the success of *Goldie* had given the Gallery two models of Māori involvement to draw on - the external freelance curator or intensive Māori involvement on a project basis. The development of an in-house curatorial position seemed a natural progression with numerous benefits, but neither the Gallery, Haerewa nor Ngāhiraka herself knew what a Māori curatorial position would look like or exactly how it should operate - "the filing cabinet was empty" (Saines, pers.comm.). It was to be a unique set of circumstances, however, outside the control of the Gallery that inducted Ngāhiraka and the practice of Māori curatorship in a very public and high profile way.

Urewera Mural, Colin McCahon

In 1997, Tūhoe activitist Te Kaha Karaitiana removed Colin McCahon's *Urewera Mural* (1975) from the Āniwaniwa Visitors Centre, Lake Waikaremoana, to bring attention to unsettled Tūhoe land grievances. For fifteen months the whereabouts of the painting was were unknown until it was recovered under dramatic circumstance by art patron Jenny Gibbs and subsequently deposited in the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki for conservation treatment (Birch 1999, McNaught 1999, Rose 1997). Immediately afterward, the Gallery proposed an exhibition to explore the controversy and sensationalism associated with the painting. While still employed as a Gallery Assistant, Ngāhiraka was appointed to curate the show.

> I put my hand up and just said some reasons. Anyone else could've done the same thing. I thought I was the right person but I wasn't willing to do the haka for it because I thought if it's supposed to be me then it will be me (29 September 2004).

[38] Auckland Art Gallery was the second institution after the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa to create a Māori curatorial position to work exclusively with art.

Figure 38. Welcoming the Tūhoe delegation into the Gallery for the *Colin McCahon, Urewera Mural* pōwhiri.

Figure 39. Colin McCahon, *Urewera Mural* (1975). Collection of Department of Conservation, Āniwaniwa Visitors Centre, Lake Waikaremoana. Courtesy of the Colin McCahon Research and Publication Trust.

Ngāhiraka's identity as Ngāi Tūhoe presented an advantage that the Gallery had never had before. She offered the Gallery a level of security and confidence to explore the contentious history of the painting, particularly the long-standing issues that Tūhoe had with the painting (see Rose 1997). While it was unheard of for the Gallery to offer an exhibition and catalogue to an Assistant Curator, let alone a Gallery Assistant, it was a risk that was to pay off.

Ngāhiraka developed *Urewera Mural, Colin McCahon* as a one painting exhibition which positioned the work undisturbed for debate. The interpretive material for the exhibition was produced in two formats - an exhibition catalogue which privileged the written word of the western tradition (Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki 1999) and a CD compilation signifying the oral tradition of the Māori (Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and Mason 1999). The exhibition catalogue included short essays by three Pākehā and three Tūhoe contributors. The essays were arranged according to the speaking protocol of the marae with the mātāmua of Colin McCahon as the first "speaker". The Tūhoe representatives "spoke" after the respective Pākehā essayists, acknowledging their status as manuhiri both in the forum of the catalogue and in the space of the Gallery. This structure conveyed the different values that contributors placed on the painting, exposing the agendas that informed either their criticism or validation of the work and clearly demonstrated the points of conflict or misunderstanding. For Ngāhiraka, it was a natural format for conflict resolution drawn from her personal experience.

> [T]he kind of debates we saw as children growing up on the marae and in the family and extended family ... the way to resolve things is to have the kōrero first and then bring everyone's ideas together and then you collectively come up with a solution. But in today's world that's not how it functions, not how the world functions anymore. You make decisions and run with them ... without having the discussions, without having the consultation and calling for and accepting everyone's point of view (13 May 2004).

The CD included traditional and contemporary poetry, waiata, haka and oration that "presents a distinctly Tūhoe perspective on the history, cultural context, relevance and contemporary response to Colin McCahon's 1975 painting *Urewera Mural*" (Saines in *Urewera Mural* CD compilation sleeve notes, 1999). The CD played continuously on a

listening post within the exhibition and brought a level of interpretation never previously available to the Gallery.[39]

> What I wanted was to find a way for Tūhoe to have a voice and I knew it wasn't going to be possible through a publication as such. This would be a one-time opportunity for them to express their views in any way they wanted. And I wanted to protect them as well from the media which was feral at that time ... and the CD was a practical way to do it. I believed the Gallery would go for it because they'd never done it before and they would want to be doing something that another institution had never done (22 September 2004).

The CD and catalogue provided a way to explore opinions and beliefs while also acknowledging respective cultural frameworks. The interpretive material emphasized *exchange* and *dialogue* as opposed to the one way translation from Māori to English. This technique however, proved itself to be unequal in a very basic way: those contributors who did not speak Māori were marginalized by the protocol of the debate as opposed to those bi-lingual Māori essayists. There was no English translation of the Māori text in the catalogue or the CD, therefore the cultural inter-change demonstrated in practical terms, the proficiency of Māori to participate at the highest level of western culture, but the inability of Pākehā to reciprocate at the most basic communicative level. Although *Urewera Mural, Colin McCahon* presented the ideal circumstances for Ngāhiraka to express the principles of kaitiakitanga, it also exposed a gross imbalance in the forum of debate. In spite of this, the exhibition was positively received. And even though the material presented in Māori, was at times, aggressive and confronting, the Gallery did not intervene.

Despite lacking curatorial experience, the subject matter of the painting and the context of the exhibition enabled Ngāhiraka to make a sophisticated curatorial debut. She possessed the cultural expertise to represent the significance of the painting from multiple perspectives and had access and relationships to Māori communities that had previously been out of reach to the Gallery. In these respects, *Urewera Mural, Colin McCahon* was the perfect opportunity for Ngāhiraka to feel her way into the possibilities of Māori curatorship within the Gallery. While the interpretative material excluded sectors of the Gallery's community, particularly non-Māori speakers, the Director recognized the exclusive skill base that Ngāhiraka exercised was above the apprentice

[39] The exhibition also included interpretive labels and a chronology of the painting.

role of Assistant Curator and designated her title as "Curator" on the exhibition sleeve. But this ready promotion, intense media interest and high profile induction stirred professional resentments within the Gallery.

> [H]ow could someone who was a Curatorial Assistant and was going to be appointed the Kaitiaki Māori job, be called a Curator for this exhibition? ... So when it came to the acknowledgements, I didn't put my name forward, Chris [Saines] did. I thought ... I can't be denied the credits on the CD but I wasn't going to insist that I be on the catalogue. You can't look at that catalogue and writers and know that somebody had to auspice that relationship - and it wasn't the Gallery. So I wasn't going to get tangled about that (22 September 2004).

'Kaitiakitanga: Realities Within'

Despite being described as Curator and carrying the official job title Assistant Curator, Kaitiaki Māori, Ngāhiraka inducted herself into the role as Kaitiaki Māori and structuring her practice on the principles of kaitiakitanga. She soon realized however, that the customary definition of Kaitiaki was not widely understood and generally regarded as a convenient transliteration of Curator. Therefore, Ngāhiraka took the opportunity in her first published paper entitled 'Kaitiakitanga: Realities Within', to examine the customary roles and responsibilities of Kaitiaki as understood from a tribal Māori perspective.[40]

> Kaitiakitanga (guardianship) is for most Maori a serious business. It is a tradition, something that has been passed down through generations, and maintaining tradition is important ... Kaitiakitanga is the guardianship of knowledge ... [and] as an overall concept, kaitiakitanga works best when there are stable and respectful relationships between everyone and everything ... And while understanding (Maori) knowledge is complicated, representing knowledge and concepts by converting them into another's culture and language is even more complex ... For me as an uri whakaheke (descendant) of Te Urewera, the concept of kaitiakitanga was both a foundation and departure point for the Auckland exhibition *Urewera Mural- Colin McCahon* ... In developing the exhibition, I learned some valuable lessons that tested my self-knowledge ... It was also a humbling position where being Tuhoe worked both for me and against me (Mason 2001:169-170).

[40] The paper 'Kaitiakitanga: Realities Within' was delivered to the Art Association of New Zealand and Australia and later published in *Pre/dictions* 2001:168-171.

Urewera Mural – Colin McCahon was both a foundation and departure point because it demonstrated the possibilities and limitations of practising kaitiakitanga in the cultural context of the art museum. As a foundation, it informed Ngāhiraka's emerging style of curatorship which insisted on respect and balance between cultures. She refused to facilitate what she felt could be a one-way traffic of Māori input into the Gallery. Instead she sought to feedback into Māori communities by looking for the benefits and opportunities that the Gallery could offer Māori.

As a departure point, the exhibition presented exceptional conditions of practice that were unlikely to occur again; namely the involvement of Māori on a tribal basis, the relationship of the curator to that community and the high level of public, media and Māori interest in the controversy surrounding the painting (*Enterprise Board agenda* 29.07.99, McNaught 1999, 'Painting back on show' 1999). Ngāhiraka realised that the continued practice of kaitiakitanga in the context of the Gallery, particularly in terms of exhibitions, was extremely limited. The experience had demonstrated that the Gallery's relationship with Māori was not "stable and respectful" but hierarchical and unintelligent. Given the nature of the collection, Ngāhiraka's prospects of engaging Māori communities and Māori interest on a long-term basis were thin. She could not see long term benefits for Māori by rehabilitating the historic Māori collection as the *Goldie* exhibition had done and what the Gallery expected her to do.

Ngāhiraka's unique perspective allowed her to recognise that the two parts of her job title were potentially in conflict by meaning different things to different people. In all likelihood, the role would fail to meet the expectations of the respective parties involved. What was particularly worrying for Ngāhiraka, was failing to practice the values of kaitiakitanga despite accepting the role so named. Rather than "sell-out" Māori knowledge to profit the Gallery and its collections, Ngāhiraka developed an alternative style of practice that pivoted around opportunities and benefits for Māori within the system. So after her debut as Kaitiaki Māori, she settled into the Cinderella role of Assistant Curator and began to explore the possibilities of practice.

Māori curatorship

Ngāhiraka's exhibition practice from 1999-2001 is characterized as an apprenticeship in curatorial practice: gaining experience as a curator, maintaining a Māori perspective

at the forefront of her work and providing opportunities to Māori artists. *Out of the Ordinary* (1999) and *Toitū He Whenua Whatungārongaro He Tangata: Darkness in Light* (2000) were both co-curated exhibitions that focused on two major art genre: installation art and landscape painting respectively. Māori artists were exhibited in both shows but were curated within the context of contemporary art practice (Mason, Massey University Lecture, Palmerston North, 12.05.04).

In 2000, Ngāhiraka was one of five curators selected to participate in a curatorium for the Noumea Contemporary Art Biennale held as part of the 8th Pacific Arts Festival. It offered the opportunity to work exclusively with contemporary Māori art in a Polynesian context. Her contribution included a major essay that broached the sensitive issue of the responsibility that Maori artists carry as cultural advocates.

> Is it possible to make contemporary Māori art that expresses a perspective not clouded by allegiances to Western canons of high art, sponsorship support, government funding and international exposure? Certainly some of the answers are to be found in the market place. But if today's art is more about capitalising on heritage in order to satisfy the demand for such exploitations and less about contributing to indigenous visibility and survival, is this truly representative of the indigenous society that some scramble to align themselves with? Such questions are possibly emotive and off-putting. Nonetheless they are worth asking because the answers may reveal our present positions along with our future destinations (Mason 2000:19).

Layering on the Paint (2001) focussed on the acquisition of work by emerging Māori artist Saffronn Te Ratana[41] but took a formalist approach by hanging it with works that had influenced the artist. Alternatively, *He Kupu Noa Atu: Paintings by Colin McCahon* (2001) examined the use of Māori words and verse in the work of Colin McCahon. Ngāhiraka curated these exhibitions as a curator, but the practice of interpreting Māori and non-Māori works of art from a Māori perspective and using whakatauki and bi-lingual wall texts to examine and communicate Māori values were characteristics that defined her emerging practice as a Māori curator. The nature of this practice was not however, the expectation of the Gallery.

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[41] Saffronn Te Ratana, *Untitled* (2000) (2000/16/1-2) and *Untitled II* (2000) (2000/21), Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased with the assistance of Jean Horsley.

CS: [It] changed from a Kaitiaki position that was more generically designed to attend to things that were either Māori in origin or Māori in terms of their nature and the community they appealed to, into a role that is probably a lot more focussed on contemporary art and not necessarily Māori contemporary art ... she wanted to get an opportunity to be an art curator not just a Māori who works in a museum as a curator. No one has any difficulty with Ralph Hotere saying for thirty years "Don't stick me in the shows that are only Māori shows. Stick me in the art shows".

I think for Ngāhiraka there was a similar kind of impulse to operate outside that narrow envelope of her culture. She also has an insight and intelligence and a lot to say about all forms of contemporary art practice, so why not let her work in those spaces as well? ... [I]nitially there could have been a marginalisation of well, that's where the Māori curator goes. Well, you know, Ngāhiraka puts up non-Māori work with as much ease as her interest in that work motivates her to do. If she brings something to a meeting, the first question does not have to be, is the artist Māori? Well that's a good place to be it seems to me.

[....]

[S]he is someone who is increasingly moving more around different exhibition spaces in the Gallery and that's what I would hope to see increase over time otherwise I think there's a danger that a position like this can kind of limit and ghettoise a position - sit down and stand up when you've got a Māori show to give us. You know? ... She hasn't been here for five years and just done shows of Māori art. She's probably done more shows of non-Māori art than of Māori art and I think that's quite good. I like that ... So in a way, she's changed her own role from within, we didn't just sit down one day and say, I think you ought to do stuff other than Māori stuff. She done that since the beginning and she's now done more of it than she did at the beginning so it seems to me that she's setting her own course in this, not just the institution setting it for her and telling her to sit down and only bother us when she has a Māori show to present. That's not how it happens.

It's not that she's just chugging away at her own territory. I think the way she works with other colleagues enables her knowledge to be melded into and fit into other projects that we work on and not just her own. And that to me is a

cultural change ... for instance ... she supported the historical program in the Mackelvie Gallery when she publicly had her tā moko extended in the gallery space. Well, that was an unbelievable event and people were very deeply affected and moved by that event and it became a kind of joke around the building that my god, that's putting yourself on the line for the Art Gallery! Is there anything more you could do to demonstrate a commitment to the Gallery and the culture that it's trying to generate! (Saines, pers.comm.).

Despite her outward experiments with curatorship, internally Ngāhiraka continued to practice the principles of kaitiakitanga. Her role as Kaitiaki Māori required her to ensure the correct dissemination of mātauranga Māori against the customer service culture of local governmental organizations and in her relationship with staff members, professional colleagues and the public.

[M]useums and art galleries take only parts of our knowledge and experience and reinterpret them ... They believe they can get access all parts of our experiences but they only want the parts that they can use or are relevant to their experience. So I do see my role as looking after and protecting that information, asking questions about who they are and where their inquiry is going and what's at the end of this information (14 May 2004).

[L]ike students coming in and wanting your life story and your life research and just expecting it to be handed over to them because they are ignorant and they think it is right and they can do that. In part, that is the message they get at the front desk; that they can help themselves to anything.

AW: Who are these kinds of students?

Tertiary and always Pākehā. Māori students will at least do the courtesy of writing me an email and introducing themselves properly and saying who they are ... So it's cultural but also their conditioning that it's appropriate behaviour. Actually, I don't let Māori people get away with much either. I have had people bowl up to me at openings ... and launch into 'what's your iwi, what's your whakapapa' ... And I say 'that's a really rude way to say hello to me. You don't know me or my family and even my extended family doesn't do that to me, treat me that way. Why would you do that to a perfect stranger?' They generally

back off and they don't always come back and pick up that conversation again [laughs] (13 May 2004)

While Ngāhiraka felt that the institution tolerated her practice as Kaitiaki Māori, she was aware that she did not comply with the greater need within the organization relating to Māori issues. Although these demands were outside the curatorial domain, there was an expectation within the institution that Ngāhiraka should provide that service.

> Internally, I found that I was the token, and ... anything that had a hint of Māori to it, I got. [W]hen I started saying no to things that were being asked of me, the response was kind of ... 'why are you saying no?'
>
> AW: At what level did you start saying no?
>
> From the bottom up. I was advising mihi for openings, negotiating with Haerewa as to how procedures and protocols were being and should be applied for openings ... things should have been dealt with through that group.
>
> [...]
>
> I was asked to teach waiata and lead so the rest of the Gallery could stand up and waiata. At some point I said 'no actually, you people all go on Kete training[42] and be resourceful yourself.' I had to be their educators and it was not a priority for me and it was a process that I did not enjoy at all. I thought they needed to educate themselves. I needed to know what kind of support I actually had and asked was I going to be the 'dial a Māori' for all things. There was a support structure where they could go, and I didn't want to constantly make everyone else feel good that I was here (13 May 2004).

The situation that Ngāhiraka found herself has been a common experience of Māori within New Zealand museums generally (O'Regan 1997) and emphasised the diverse needs within the institution that was not easily satisfied with a single Māori employee. While Ngāhiraka carried a professional obligation to provide customer service internally and externally, the institution did not recognise the cultural imperatives that compelled her to be cautious and protective.

[42] Auckland City Council's bi-cultural training programme. Ngāhiraka was a consultant in the establishment of this programme.

My knowledge base comes from people. People activate the knowledge because once you share the knowledge, you pass it on. It's not my knowledge as such and I do feel obliged to pass it on. I do however expect that people who receive the knowledge pass it on. That's what we do and that's how we are ... The application of it is strengthening. It inspires and activates the community and goes on to have its own life.

AW: That's a very peculiar Māori way of thinking.

It's a very Māori way of thinking. Whereas in academia and the art profession, knowledge is the domain of the privileged and few (14 May 2004).

The unique skills Ngāhiraka brought to the institution had been culturally acquired from personal experience as Māori as opposed to being formally acquired through the public education system. Consequently she carried an obligation to the diverse Māori communities to whom she had and continued to recieved knowledge from - whānau, hapū, iwi, urban Māori communities, Māori artists and their families – to ensure that the knowledge was used for the benefit of Māori and not capitalised upon for professional or individual gain. The Gallery however, failed to acknowledge the wide cultural resource base that was fundamental to the success of the Māori curatorial position.

AW: What role does your family play in your work?

[T]hey play a huge role for they are able and willing to help me. There was a point when I stopped translating my own label copies and wall texts and they stepped in when I explained the situation to them ... The Gallery used to say 'will you translate this' and I did a couple of times and then I said 'actually I am not paid to be a translator I believe you should be paying somebody to do this.' Anyway, family were able to support me with this and also connect me to their networks so that broadens out my network. And they also tell me when I need to have time out and they're mindful also when I can't.

[But] there's this idea that we have, 'Māu tonu e whakakuhu atu i a koe ki roto e ngā haerenga ka pirangi e koe' which means you gather strength by rowing your own canoe. People are always there to support you and they can only support you on your way, to help you to get what you want or go where you want. So that's how I've always practised my goals and objectives. I test it

myself before I drag my family in! I think about my Māori colleagues and my whānau in other areas of my life where our whānau gets dragged around the country. I do it too but I've never really liked it.

AW: How often do you call on them to support you for pōwhiri?[43]

I don't do it for every exhibition. I always do it for major ones ... where I've been honoured by people coming in from out of town or international visitors so I always ask my whānau to return the honour to people who have given me their time, by being whānau, hanging out and practising whānaungatanga.

AW: Doesn't the Gallery have its own people to represent it?

Well here's the thing. Haerewa are as busy as I am but they're the group who should have a visible role.

AW: What about Ngāti Whātua?

Well ... Council has implemented their own sets of policies and procedures and you actually have to book in.

AW: You have to book Ngāti Whātua?

Yeah.

AW: I always found it interesting that this Gallery has operated outside the mana of Ngāti Whātua which is so strongly instituted at the [Auckland] museum.[44] Here, Haerewa operate like kaumatua.

They are the Gallery advisors and kaumātua and get up and waiata to manuhiri. Arnold [Manaaki Wilson] does the whaikōrero and welcomes distinguished guests and is occasionally forgotten off the invitation list for other Gallery events.

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[43] Reference is being made to the pōwhiri held at Auckland University marae Waipapa for the artists involved in the Auckland Triennial exhibition *Public/Private: Tūmatanui/Tūmataiti* 2004 (co-curated with Ewen McDonald).

[44] See Tapsell 1998 and Whaanga 1999 for extensive discussion.

AW: Is this your style or the institution's style?

It was my style and it was also the style that Haerewa wanted.

AW: This is a very particular resource that you had to pull on from your own...

Oh, I have to draw on my own resources and the Gallery's contribution ... [is] a fifty dollar koha, half a dozen packets of biscuits, tea and coffee (14 May 2005).

Ngāhiraka discovered that the reality of Māori curatorship was a constant traversal of personal and professional boundaries. In order to fulfil the Gallery's expectations, Ngāhiraka found herself taking on responsibilities outside of the curatorial area and drawing heavily on her personal resources as Ngāi Tūhoe. This placed her in a compromised and untenable position: while employed to the position based on her cultural expertise, the conditions of practice compromised the integrity and obligations associated with that knowledge. The Gallery did not understand the responsibilities that she carried as Kaitiaki Māori, nor could the system support her in this role. Ngāhiraka's reaction was to defend her position as a curator within the Gallery and to protect the integrity of mātauranga Māori. These were the key principles that structured the nature of her practice.

As a consequence, Māori curatorship developed reactively according to Ngāhiraka's perception of how the position could work effectively, given the cultural limitations of the Gallery. Māori curatorship at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki emerged as a hybridised style, crafted by expectation and resistance. Consumed in the struggle to maintain cultural integrity, Ngāhiraka has been unable to push against the system for changes that would enable the Gallery to be increasingly relevant to Māori. This is also due to the limited agency of the Māori curator to effect change to the power structure of the Gallery. As the next chapter demonstrates, the practice of Māori curatorship in fact, abets the perpetuation of negative representations of Māori identity despite Ngāhiraka's intention otherwise.

Figure 40. Promotional material for *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* featuring Lisa Reihana's *Hinepukohurangi* (2001).

Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly was Ngahiraka's first exhibition of Māori art at the Gallery. It was a culmination of the Gallery's re-evaluative period and presented Ngāhiraka with the opportunity to realize the potential of Māori curatorship. In terms of size and resource, it was an unprecedented opportunity offered to an Assistant Curatorial position. Consequently, the exhibition was heavily weighted with expectation: to reconcile the bad experiences left by the Gallery's earlier practices, to restore the Gallery's reputation and position the institution as a leader in its field. From a Māori perspective, the exhibition presented an opportunity for self-determination; for Māori to define their own identity and bring integrity to the position of Māori art within the New Zealand art tradition.

Given its importance, this chapter traces the development of *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* from its initial objectives to its final form. It describes the role of the curator in determining the strategy, direction and content of the exhibition. It also identifies how Ngāhiraka imported Māori cultural values into the exhibition to construct a statement about contemporary Māori identity. The intentions of the curator are then evaluated against the critical reception that the exhibition received. This indicates how the exhibition was interpreted by the professional arts community and perceived within the Gallery. The impact and issues raised by the exhibition are then discussed. The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate the agency of the curator in defining contemporary Māori identity in the context of the art museum and in relation to contemporary Māori art.

The 'Something Māori' show

Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly was always on the cards (Mason, pers.comm.4). The Gallery felt that it had lagged in its follow up to *Korurangi* (Saines, pers.comm) and that Ngāhiraka's term of apprenticeship was coming to an end.

> CS: The objective was [to] take stock of what was happening in contemporary Māori art as a sub-species of contemporary art ... a body of work that comes out of some practitioners and not others and I think we wanted to take the risk and make it a Māori show ... we could've called it something else and mixed in a whole lot of other things with it but it was very much Ngāhiraka's call that it be a Māori artist show (Saines, pers.comm).

NM: The Gallery wanted a 'something Māori' show and that's what I called it for the longest time. I actually thought at some point that it would be a good title for a show until we decided we would go with *Pūrangiaho* ... I think Chris might have used the words - they want something that followed on from *Te Maori.* They felt disappointed with what happened with *Korurangi* and they wanted something that would lift them but make sense for everybody (Mason, pers.comm.5).

The mandate for the exhibition was twofold: to remedy past experiences and to make a bold and confident statement about contemporary Māori art. Although this provided a foundation for the exhibition, the objective was very broad and the scope, subject to much debate.

NM: Well I guess the truth is ... there was no model. I had looked at *Korurangi.* I went through the files and ... tried to find a model but there wasn't one that leapt out ... I was working from a conceptual base on the expectation that both Haerewa and Chris had and what they could give me was 'we want something that's going to be 'WOW' like *Te Maori.'* And I'm going, well, that could be lots of things. That could mean we could start with the [Māori] Modernists or we could do a completely urban thing or we could just focus on media and have sculpture or just installation - basically all the models that have gone before. We could do anyone of those. Which one would you like it to be?

And they didn't come back and say 'what about this?' Actually, I think they did. They were heading down the Modernist track, Ngā Puna Waihanga, that sort of show. And I said 'no, no, no, no. That's a Ngā Puna Waihanga show. That's not a lead on from *Te Maori.'* So that's how I came up with the title. Maybe what I have to figure out is what this show has to do. And that's what *Pūrangiaho* became. It had to enable my institution and my consultancy group to see the bigger picture. *Te Maori* was the model that was inspiring everybody. So that's how I came up with *Pūrangiaho*[45] ... conceptually, it gave me freedom to play (Mason, pers.comm.4).

The spectre of *Korurangi* however, still figured strongly in the reputation of the Gallery. Ngahiraka believed that it needed to be confronted honestly before the new exhibition

[45] "*Pūrangiaho*: Seeing Clearly" (Williams 2001:312).

could move forward. This included redressing the lack of consultation with tangata whenua; identified as a key weakness in *Korurangi* and one of the major goals of the Gallery's *Strategic Focus: Towards 2020* (Strategic Plan 1996).[46]

> NM: The āwangawanga around realising *Korurangi* still needed to heal. People didn't have the real information about how *Korurangi* was put together and *Pūrangiaho* inherited its controversy. I think if we told everyone what happened with *Korurangi* there would have been much more support to the organisation and artists.
>
> AW: The story that did get told is pretty graphic in terms of making the institution look back ... I am astounded that it's worse than what was put out there.
>
> NM: Yeah, it is worse (Mason, pers.comm.3).
>
> [...]
>
> We sent out a letter inviting people to come to a hui and discuss what we wanted to do.[47] At that hui people were able to talk openly about what they liked and didn't like about *Korurangi.* The history between the Gallery and Māori was brought up and people were clear about why the community shouldn't trust the Gallery ... that Māori didn't have a positive relationship and the Gallery's attempts had been pretty bad ... They started talking about what could this [exhibition] could mean and what sort of relationship could we have. And I talked about what the shape of the exhibition could look like and together that generated interest as to where we would go to from there (Mason, pers.comm.5).

While the hui addressed historic grievances that Māori had with the Gallery, the discussion regarding exhibition development was limited by the selection of "tangata whenua" who were consulted. Tangata whenua literally translated means "people of

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[46] In order to reflect Auckland's cultural identity, the Gallery "endorses the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi ... its commitment to understanding the needs and expectations of the tangata whenua will be carried out through appropriate consultation and dialogue" (Strategic Plan 1996:4.1).

[47] The hui was held at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 11 December 2000.

the land" and its contemporary usage encompasses all Māori (Ryan 1995). But from a tribal Māori perspective however, tangata whenua means:

> [D]escendants of a specific Māori kin group, ancestrally organised according to a common ancestor, who have held exclusive customary authority over specifically defined estates since the time the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 (Tapsell 1998:101).

In the case of Auckland City, Ngāti Whātua o Orakei are the recognised tangata whenua. The *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* consultancy meeting however, was attended by Māori art and heritage professionals representing the major cultural institutions in Auckland: Auckland University (2), Auckland Museum (1) and the Auckland City Library (1). Only one of these representatives could whakapapa to Ngāti Whātua and of the thirteen attendees at the meeting, nine were Gallery staff or members of Haerewa.

The composition of the group weighed heavily on the possible directions that the exhibition could take. Early consideration was given to using the four stage Te Māori classification model as a way of examining contemporary Māori art practice (see Mead 1984). It was decided however, that the exhibition should focus on art and artists as opposed to theory. The defining statement of the meeting came from Fred Graham who proposed that "we ask the question: what is Māori Art? A question put by Pākehā historians. This time Māori are asking of it for themselves" (*Collated comments from Pūrangiaho consultation meeting* 2001). From this, two contradictory yet complementary starting points did emerge.

> Arnold Manaaki Wilson: There are many changes occurring all the time even regarding karakia. Changes are inevitable... [we] need to look at the changes and the relevance to what we are trying to do (ibid.).

> Ngāhiraka Mason: We are in the undefined period called 'contemporary Māori art'. We could articulate that with force by understanding what makes you who you are, by connecting with pre-history (ibid.).

From this basis, Ngāhiraka began to reconceptualise the history of "Māori art" by examining the gap between the Classical Māori period, Te Puāwaitanga (1500-1800)[48] and the contemporary Māori art movement c.1950. She looked toward museum collections for taonga that demonstrated innovation and cultural adaptation in the use of materials and ideas (Mason, pers.comm.5). During this process, Ngāhiraka was made aware of several projects in progress throughout the country also concerned with revising the history of contemporary Māori art.[49] The coup was that *Pūrangiaho* would "effectively launch this national effort" (*Creative New Zealand Te Waka Toi funding application* 2001).

By the end of December 2000, Ngāhiraka had drafted an exhibition analysis for the Gallery that tentatively sketched out several conceptual parameters.

> The development of contemporary Māori art is ... distinct, idiosyncratic, timeless and in a sense, still emerging and 'old' at the same time. Through exhibitions such as 'Te Māori', historical Māori art has informed audiences both here and overseas. *Pūrangiaho* will present works that are about today but reveal links to history (*Exhibition Analysis 'Pūrangiaho'* 2000).

The exhibition analysis also set the typology of the exhibition as large scale in terms of physical, financial and human resource (ibid.). Ngāhiraka soon recognised that this was an unprecedented opportunity offered to an Assistant Curator in an inaugural role and felt the high level of expectation (Mason, pers.comm.4). The idea of a curatorium was raised during the consultation hui so Ngāhiraka invited two Auckland based arts professionals to co-curate the show: Ngārino Ellis, Lecturer in Art History at Auckland University and Kahutoi Te Kanawa, Lecturer in Raranga at Auckland University of Technology (UNITEC).

> NM: I did think it would be a good idea to have other professionals involved in the exhibition because they would bring different strengths that I didn't have ... and I thought how I shaped this would be important later on down the track. The idea that three women could be involved in a project of this scale was a once in a lifetime opportunity. I just thought it was a good idea to involve the community and bring in those different perspectives ... and different

[48] 'Te Puāwaitanga' (1500-1800) was the last stage of the *Te Maori* classification model (see Mead 1984).
[49] These included *Techno-Maori* (2001) and *Taiāwhio* (2002).

backgrounds too ... so there were different tensions. I think tensions are good to have ... [and] provided a lot of tribal play with some of the selections.

[...]

People have said to me "there's a lot of Tūhoe in this show Ngāhiraka". And I'm looking at the line up and I have to be conscious, I have to be conscious of what kind of iwi spread I've got ... So I am aware that this is going to be a question mark that will hang over me and that's fine ... [but] soon after that Witi [Ihimaera], Ngārino [Ellis] and Katerina Mataira published the Ngāti Porou publication on Ngāti Porou artists[50] and the whole iwi-centric kōrero kicked in (Mason, pers.comm.4).

While there were parameters on artist selection from a tribal Māori perspective, the institution also imposed requirements.

NM: I got this from the get go [that] whatever the show ended up looking like, we were going to buy for the collection. So whatever was going to end up in the show had to work with the collection, had to enhance it and grow it in some way ... We put together the statistics as to what was actually in the collection and everyone agreed that it was looking pretty sad and needed updating, and also commit to back buying to fill in the gaps because they were huge.

AW: What were some of the gaps you identified?

NM: The early modernists.

AW: You didn't really buy any of those for *Pūrangiaho* did you?

NM: No, we didn't. But we made a commitment then that the next step was contemporary art and the modernists ... The rationalisation wasn't about artists ... It was based on the relationships and strengths that were already in the collection and making a call really on how the works functioned as objects and the way that art is trending (Mason, pers.comm.6).

[50] Ihimaera, W. and N. Ellis (2002) *Te Ata: Māori Art from the East Coast, New Zealand,* Auckland, Reed Books.

There was also a political and cultural agenda at work in Ngāhiraka's selection. Ngāhiraka looked for people "for whom whakapapa was important" (Mason, pers.comm.7). By this Ngāhiraka looked to support kaupapa Māori artists, artists whose Māori identity was an important and positive principle in their artistic practice. There was also a balance of gender.

> NM: One became aware of gender politics because previous shows were always so male oriented[51] ... I think also, the previous generation of artists, like those involved in Ngā Puna Waihanga, among them there were a lot of good Māori women artists but they were 'occasionally' profiled. I think what *Pūrangiaho* offered was the same starting point. There was advantage given and there was going to be disadvantages at some level. Some people could've been in but weren't. It just changed the starting line, moved the starting line a bit (Mason, pers.comm.6).

A proposed list of artists was submitted in January 2001 and comprised entirely of artists whom Ngāhiraka had worked with previously in *Noumea Pacifique*.[52] An expanded invitation list was sent out in February 2001 (*Report for meeting with Louise Pether and Ron Brownson,* 2001) which was expanded with mid-career artists and a lesser number of senior artists. This selection process positioned emerging artists at the core of the exhibition and Ngāhiraka's strong profiling of new artists was not a trait for which the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki was renowned (Brown 1999:4).

> CS: I think she took some risks with younger artists ... [for] a few of those artists ... it was their first showing in a public gallery. It was a pretty big step for them and ... you're alongside ... people like Brett Graham and John Walsh who are longer term names ... but the good thing was, I think there was an encouragement of new and emerging work that isn't always what we do but I think Ngāhiraka did that very, very well (Saines, pers.comm.).

As the exhibition began to take shape, difficulties with the reality of external co-curatorship began to emerge, which were manifested in a power play between the major participants in the exhibition.

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[51] See Brundt 2003:225-226 for further discussion.

[52] The proposed list included Isiaha Barlow, Brett Graham, Dion Hitchens, Emily Karaka, Melaina Newport-Karaitiana, Michael Parekowhai, Reuben Paterson, Lisa Reihana and Saffronn Te Ratana.

NM: [T]here came a crunch point where the organisation said 'we want this to be the Gallery's exhibition and not a co-curated exhibition ... they [Ngārino and Kahutoi] can be Associate Curators' ... which is fine, that is how the institution operates ... So I put that to Haerewa ... and they said 'no, we don't like that idea. Why can't the other two be called curators?' They acknowledged that I would be doing the work because it was impossible for them to walk into the structures here and know what to do.

[...]

[So] I came back to the Gallery and said this is how Haerewa want to do it ... Their response was 'we don't like it but okay' ... and then not long after that Kahu ... withdrew because of her work commitments. I retained her as co-curator because she would still be contributing in ways that I couldn't. Ngārino was having her first child and she wasn't going to be able to participate as fully as she would have otherwise.

[...]

So it was a co-curated show but the responsibility and the actuality of it fell on me. I enjoyed the process. Parts of the co-curation that I didn't enjoy was having to constantly explain the institutional processes. No matter how much you explain how your organisation works, inevitably there are questions that don't have easy answers.

And then I had a couple of indigenous interns and a trainee from the Tjibaou Cultural Centre[53] who came for a month before that exhibition opened. I shared my office with up to three or four people at a time (Mason, pers.comm.4).

As the exhibition developed so did Ngahiraka's role from Assistant Curator to a role more akin to Project Manager. One of her many tasks included sourcing external funding for the publication of the catalogue. The funding application to Creative New Zealand gives insight into the expanded scope of the exhibition and maturing curatorial

[53] In August 2001 the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki signed an Memorandum of Understanding with the Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre, Noumea, New Caledonia regarding an internship program (*Enterprise Board agenda* 14.08.02).

strategy. Ngāhiraka described *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* as a major contemporary Māori art survey with a reference selection of historic works "that make it possible to examine the changes in artistic practice and pinpoint when those transformations occurred and how they impact and influence art marking today" (*Funding application to Creative New Zealand Te Waka Toi* 2001). Inter-generational groupings of artists were organised by themes such as *Reclaiming Māori Art History, Nurturing Visions, Migrating Urban Identities* and *Global Interest in Māori Art* (ibid.). There was also a drive to present a socio-political context that used art to "plot a map to help us understand some of the incredible changes that our ancestors ... experienced" (ibid.). One of the ways the exhibition aimed to convey this was through an extensive and ambitious interpretive programme including a symposium, a series of floor talk series and art demonstrations.

Media and education releases from mid-2001 show that the focus of the exhibition was further refined with "tradition" replacing "change" as the focus of the exhibition. The major themes and socio-political agenda were pushed away from the centre to become sub-themes to describe and illustrate the practises of artists.

> *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* tells a story about cultural pride in both tradition and contemporary art. The contemporary works were selected for the way that they lead a discussion about the relationships between current practice, the legacy of tradition and some of the ways of thinking to be found in contemporary Māori art (*Draft for Gallery News* 2001).
>
> Selected historical works will be presented alongside contemporary works as markers, signifiers of influences and evidence of transformations and change, thus offering enormous potential to assist in freeing and seeing clearly a continuum of contemporary Māori art. All the works in the exhibition are exemplars of a tradition and as such, they act as powerful messengers (*Pūrangiaho media release* 2001).

The shuffling of the ideas continued right up until the very last possible minute (Mason, pers.comm.4) and concerned Ngahiraka's answer to Fred Graham's proposition: "What is Māori Art?" Ngahiraka's eventual conclusion was not a fancy new idea but it is important and revealing: whakapapa. When cast against the other themes that she considered: *Politically Motivated Art, Multiple Identities, Faith and Religion* and *Global Interest in Māori Art.* (*Personal exhibition file* 2001) whakapapa makes them seem

alien, topical and very art historical. As a concept it posits the Māori idiom at the centre and is demonstrative of the type of thinking that cannot be "artificially imported ... through university education" (Saines, pers.comm.).

With whakapapa as the central organising principle, the format of the exhibition became clear. Ngahiraka configured the exhibition upon the protocols of the hui - the most basic and fundamental social transaction in Māori society. By playing out the aspects of the ritual, Māori express their identity to other Māori (see Mead 2003 and Salmond 2004). Within this framework, artworks became participants or markers of marae protocols, conveying their message according to the customary modes of Māori representation. By evoking these cultural conventions, the exhibition constructed a kin-group identity for the group of artists which became a collective assertion of contemporary Māori identity. In doing so, the exhibition took on the style of earlier Māori curatorial incursions such as *Kohia ko Taikaka Anake* (1990), *Patua: Māori arts in action* (1996) and *Taiarotia* (1993) (see Jahnke 1999). Additionally, it severed the curatorial legacy of *Korurangi* which had "emphasised the estrangement and difference of the 'new Māori artists' from "'Māori' Māori" by restoring them to the "integrity of the cultural body" (Brundt 2004:235).

Te whare o whakapākoko - the house of whakapākoko

Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly was opened in September 2001 by Elizabeth Ellis, who became the first Māori woman to open an exhibition in the Gallery's history (Mason, pers.comm.7). Elizabeth's speech brought attention to the level of Māori involvement in the Gallery and their purpose in creating "a welcoming environment where Māori feel comfortable" (*Ellis speech notes* 2001). She also acknowledged how "Haerewa often grapples with the contradictions and tensions that arise in the debate about the definition and context of contemporary and traditional Māori art" and commended the artists involved in *Pūrangiaho* for their "courage, brilliance and creativity" (ibid.).

Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly was located in the temporary exhibitions gallery on the second floor of the main Gallery building. It was arranged according to the spatial demarcation of the marae and artworks were placed within that space according to the ritual of welcome. The exhibition began in the antechamber of the formal exhibition space with *KOHA* by Robert Jahnke (figure 41). *KOHA* was an arrangement of chocolate fish which spelt "koha": koha being a gift or contribution that is made to

express kinship and solidarity (see Mead 2003:187).[54] Visitors were encouraged to take a fish as a gesture of welcome before they entered the Gallery to their left.

The karanga, a call put out by a woman before a group proceeds onto the marae, was represented in two paintings by Saffronn Te Ratana. The paintings faced an unadorned arch - a waharoa[55] - which marked the entry to the marae ātea (figure 42 and 44). Contained on one side of the arch was a glass vitrine which held *Whakapākoko, Madonna and Child* (figure 43).[56] *Whakapākoko, Madonna and Child* was carved in 1845 by Patoromu Tamatea and intended as an altar piece for a Catholic Church. Rejected by the minister as pagan idolatry, she takes her place as the poutokomanawa[57] or founding ancestor of the tribe.

The religious intonation of *Whakapākoko, Madonna and Child* is carried through into the gallery by the works of Shane Cotton. The paintings hang in a procession-like format and are part of the *Taiamai* series that explored the impact of Christianity on the artist's iwi, Ngā Puhi (City Gallery Wellington 2004:17) (figure 44). The paintings work in direct dialogue with *Whakapākoko, Madonna and Child* to examine the long-term effect that Christianity had on Māori culture and to establish the post-colonial context of the exhibition.

> NM: So for me, I was activating karakia and paying respect by setting up a karanga situation if you like by positioning those works in that way ... I wanted to show what we've lived with and where we're at now with Christianity. Artists are talking about those impacts ... telling stories now about what happened (Mason, pers.comm.5).

The procession of Cotton paintings gave way to a free standing vitrine containing a variety of personal adornments dating from the 19th century to the present; described by one reviewer as "the quirkiest, most oddly modern-looking items" (Bywater 2001: 30) (figure 45- 46). Within the ritualistic context the adornments represent an inter-generational grouping of tangata whenua in the position to welcome visitors onto the

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[54] Art galleries and museums in New Zealand have adopted the concept of koha in relation to entry donations and a koha box can be found at the entrance to most institutions.
[55] Figure 9 depicts a 19th century image of a waharoa in situ on the marae.
[56] "*Whakapākoko* is a word we use for 'image' for instance Patoromu carved his '*Whakapākoko* Madonna and Child' ... in the image of Madonna and Child. *Whakapākoko* were also posts with carved tops and were used in incantations" (Mason, pers.comm.7).
[57] Poutokomanawa were located at the base of the post that held up the tahu (spine) of the house and depict the eponymous ancestors of the tribe.

marae. The prominence given to these items asserts the cultural value that Māori place on adornments, which typically get left behind in a fine art context (Mason, pers.comm.5). The case also spatially divides the long gallery into two areas: the marae ātea and the whare whakairo.

The whare whakairo is the most explicit and recognisable expression of Māori identity (see Neich 1993). Ngahiraka made reference to its architecture, in both formal and abstract ways (figure 47). Michael Parekowhai's *Bosom of Abraham* lightboxes (1999), decorated with kōwhaiwhai, ranged the walls of the space. The hanging is a derivation of heke and simulates the symmetry of the interior space of the whare whakairo. The *Saints* series by Isiaha Barlow (2000), which depict the first generation of Māori artists in the style of icons, hang on the back wall like carved pou. Ancestors typically represented on pou are those whose deeds determine the character and values of the greater kin group. This work then paid respect to the first generation of contemporary Māori artists such as Selwyn Muru *(St. Selwyn)* and Arnold Manaaki Wilson *(St. Arnold.)*

At the centre of the space was another Parekowhai work: *Story of a New Zealand River* (2001), which comprised a baby Steinway piano strewn with black arum lilies. The lilies make reference to the ritual of presenting flowers to the diva after an operatic performance. But in the context of *Pūrangiaho*, the work signifies the important role that waiata plays in the protocols of the marae.

> NM: I did want to recreate the whole feeling of the marae presence in there ... and I loved the formative aspect of that hang - hanging those three works in that way ... [F]or me some of the richest things that happen at a marae happen in the house, that's just been my experience. Other experiences happen on the marae ātea but a lot of learning occurs in the house. The wonderful thing that I like about being in the house is there's no right way and there's no wrong way to connect with that essential part of who you are. That continual reconnection you make with your ancestors and with ideas. Ideas that have been going around for such a long time that you're just a link in the chain of those ideas. That's exactly how I saw the question: who are contemporary Māori artists, what is contemporary Māori art; going into the marae, the wharenui space, the notion that everyone is on a continuum ... [and] those experiences that completely affirm who you are (Mason, pers.comm.5).

Figure 41. Robert Jahnke, *KOHA* (2001). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 2001 (2001/39).
Figure 42. Looking back through the waharoa to works by Saffronn Te Ratana.

Figure 43. Patoromu Tamatea (attributed), *Whakapākoko, Madonna and Child* (c.1845). Courtesy of the Auckland War Memorial Museum Te Papa Whakahiku.

Figure 44. The waharoa or gateway into *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly*, featuring *Whakāpakoko, Madonna and Child.*

Figure 45. *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* **installation view.**
Figure 46. **Vitrine containing post-contact adornments and contemporary jewelry.**

Figure 47. Installation view featuring works by Michael Parekowhai at centre and along the side walls. The *Saints* series by Isiaha Barlow hangs along the back wall.

Figure 48. Installation view featuring work by Te Hungā Wero generation artists: Robert Jahnke (foreground and back wall), Emily Karaka (left) and Kura Te Waru Rewiri (right).

Figure 49. *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* installation view.

Figure 50. Work by Te Tira Tūtuki generation artists: Peter Robinson (back wall), Brett Graham (foreground).

The total experience of the first gallery established a Māori space for the presentation of contemporary Māori art. The individual qualities of the artworks hang off the protocols of the marae, describing to the visitor who the tangata whenua are, where they come from and the values they regard. The space records the whakapapa of contemporary Māori art from the founding ancestor *Whakapākoko, Madonna and Child*, through to the founding fathers of the contemporary Māori art movement. As a curatorial strategy, the first gallery introduces visitors to contemporary Māori art according to the customary cultural frameworks within Māori culture.

Te Hungā Wero: Confronting Change

The remaining galleries emulated the delivery of whaikōrero on the marae. The prevailing convention for speaking on the marae is dictated by seniority and within the exhibition the artists were organized by generation: each generation was named and the artists were usually represented with more than one work. It was within these galleries that the socio-political concerns of the artists were given full expression.

> NM: There was a welcoming introduction and exchanges of kōrero ... that wasn't always polite ... it was mihi mihi space where you are allowed to express hurt, being pissed off, kōrero that you know needs much more time to talk about but you have to trust that you are going to open those discussions up. So that was the kind of feel that I wanted in that space.
>
> So that's the context, that's how I was thinking of Bob [Robert Jahnke] and Emily [Karaka] and Kura [Te Waru Rewiri] [Te Hungā Wero: Confronting Change] (figure 48). They had and still have important things to say but sometimes people aren't ready to hear it. At the opposite end is Peter Robinson and Fiona Pardington and Brett Graham [Te Tira Tutuki: The Young Guns] (figure 49-50) who in some ways were saying similar things but the way that they presented their arguments was slightly more subtle and slick, more beautiful to look at, using the western aesthetic of measuring beauty.
>
> This section also responded to issues of land confiscation, well basically human rights really, which weren't necessarily being absorbed into the everyday reality of people's understanding. It wasn't just about being angry; these were very

real life and death things. Yet there's ironic piss take going on with Peter Robinson's work with his percentage waka paintings[58]... [s]o there were lots of layers of discussions. Brett's big waka-shaped beautifully carved work[59] that alluded to navigation but didn't have a front or back so where was it was going!

So there were questions being asked and no answers being given but definitely a conversation (Mason, pers.comm.5).

The next phase of the exhibition settled into a more substantial expression of opinions and ideas by three artists, each belonging to a respective generation. The use of multiple works or installation substantiates the visitor's experience of the given artist, an interlude not usually found in thematic exhibitions or group show which typically privilege equality. This arrangement also demonstrated the etiquette of expression in a Māori space where everyone has the right to speak without interjection.

Lisa Reihana is of the Te Tira Tūtuki: Young Guns lineage, and her work was previously characterized by its commentary on colonization and cultural stereotypes. *Digital Marae* (2001) however, is an installation deeply entrenched in pre-contact Māori cosmology but realized through digital technology. The entrance to the door was lined with girls' shoes, indicating a marae space[60] where the inferred kōtiro faced oversized, hyper-real, digitally constructed portraits of mythological female ancestors (figure 51-52). The idea of a "marae within a marae" (Mason, pers.comm.5) suggested a private space within a public space, a discrete and didactic space where mana wahine was expressed between generations.

Following *Digital Marae* was a group of paintings by Kura Te Waru Rewiri which expressed her personal experience with the Rātana religious movement. The 2001 suite of works carries a fitting message in tune with the exhibition objectives by celebrating the strength of Māori to adapt and empower themselves during times of political upheaval (Mason and Kisler 2001:27; Smith 2002:189). The works also offer a complementary message to the earlier work by the artist in the exhibition, *Whenua, Wahine, Whenua* (1989) which explored the impact of colonisation from the perspective of Māori women.

[58] *Painting* 1993 is a commentary on the artist's percentage of Maori blood: 3.125%
[59] *Tu Pasifika* 1998.
[60] It is common practice to remove your shoes before entering a whare.

Figure 51. Lisa Reihana, *Digital Marae* (2001). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 2002 (2002/3).
Figure 52. Lisa Reihana, *Marakihau* (2001). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 2002 (2002/3/3).

Figure 53. Te Ringā Hou installation shot.
Figure 54. Reuben Paterson, *The kaiahuwhenua and his Three Sons* (2001). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 2001 (2001/36).

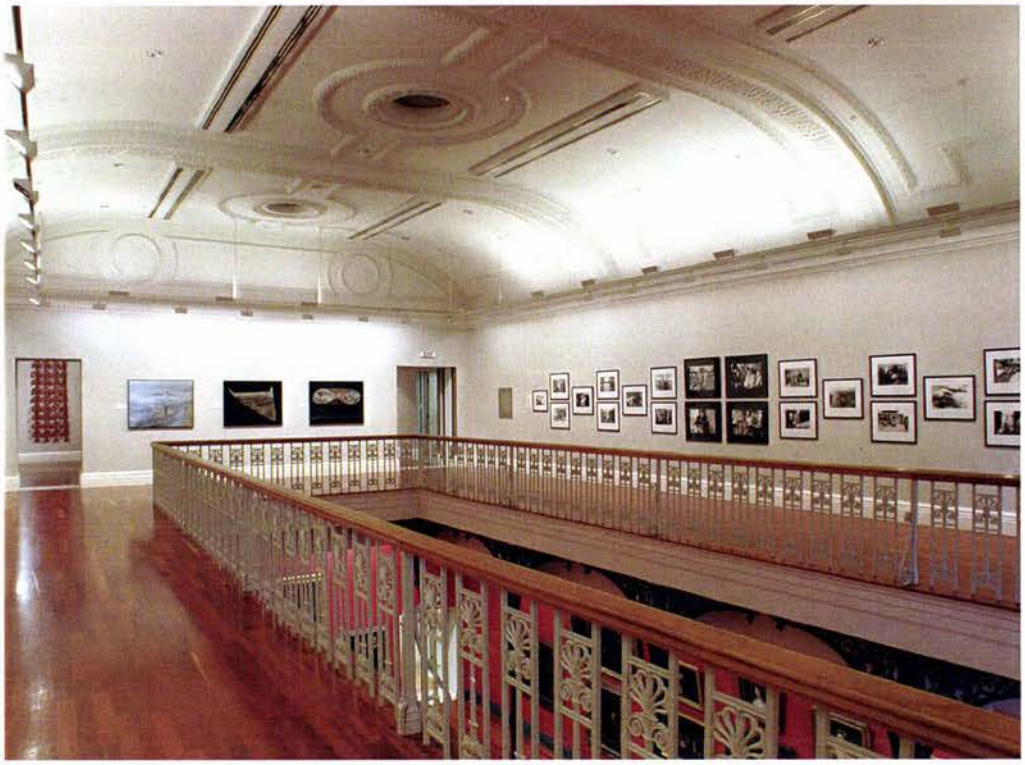

Figure 55. Installation view of the upper Wellesley mezzanine.

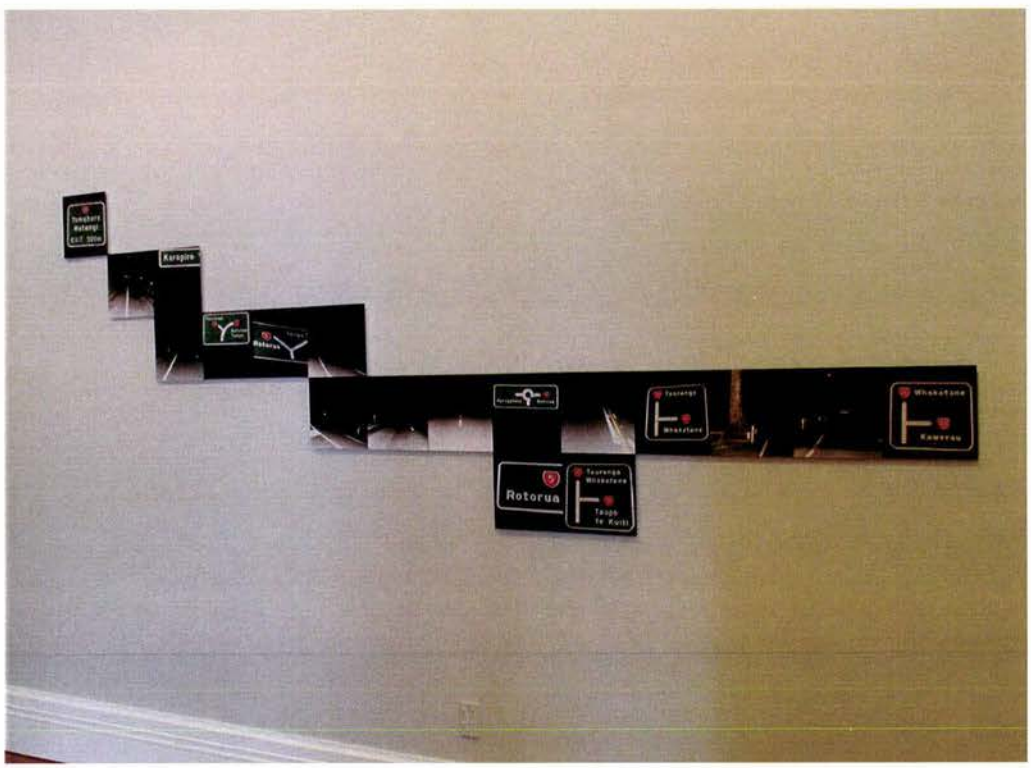

Figure 56. Natalie Robertson, *Kirikiriroa ki Kawerau (driving home)* (1999). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 2000 (2000/22/1-18).

The next gallery was an installation by Dion Hitchens "that was also another transition space where it can be one thing, it can be another thing" (Mason, pers.comm.5). The installation was a bringing together of two bodies of work: *Manaaki Patupaiarehe* (2001) and *Te Wao Nui o Tane* (1999). The work is as much about practice as the final form with the artist valuing the gathering of natural materials, occupying ancient natural environments and using his hands in the manners of his tipuna, as a way of stimulating a dialogue with his ancestors.

Te Ringā Hou – recent talent

The next phase of the exhibition introduced emerging talent - *Te Ringā Hou* - and the impact of their work on "creating new Māori art history" (*Exhibition wall text*). Within this space, the formality of the exhibition breaks down into an interval of semi-private conversations with lightning quick changes in tone, approach and scope (figure 53-54). The socio-political voice of earlier galleries shifts into a polemic "outwardly driven by identity politics but inwardly focussed on positions in history as well as physical location" (Mason and Kisler 2001:29)

> NM: [T]he ideas that they are working with are quite unapologetic. They are what they are. They are not pretending to be anything. They're not there to write books on Māori art history or tell the whole story ... The works were.completely embracing our forms and ideas and totally promoting things that we feel strongly about... language, designs and iconic forms. But they have their own way about them. There's that element in that room that is 'show-offy' but that's a part of who we are and I think that's an important part of who we are (Mason, pers.comm.5).

Pūrangiaho toku mata: Pūrangiaho seeing clearly

The final space of the exhibition was entitled "Pūrangiaho Tōku Mata - Pūrangiaho Seeing Clearly" and was the poroporoaki during which final statements and summations are made (figure 55). Photographic portraiture dominated this area and gives substance to the often quoted whakatauki: *He aha te mea nui? He tangata, he*

tangata, he tangata. What is the most important thing. It is people, people, people.[61] The first works in this gallery were Natalie Robertson's documentary series which featured everyday scenes from the community where the artist spent part of her childhood. This was complemented by another of Robertson's works *Kirikiriroa ki Kawerau (Driving home)* (1999) where the journey from the artist's urban home to her rural home is charted through road signs with Māori names (figure 56). The juxtaposition of the two series however, introduces an unsettling feeling of doubt that pervades the rest of the gallery.

> NM: The first work were of the Mangakino community and 'wow, there's so and so, isn't that so and so?' There was immediate recognition. 'I know these people, we've got a beach that looks like that, oh, we've been pig hunting, I know about that.' Then you go to this complete absence of people and its road signs pointing somewhere but geez, where are they all going? It's dark ... So there's a sense of I know who I am but where am I going?
>
> Further along were beautiful objects of Maureen Lander's, lace kete ... little kete 'scopes' with fake fur at the ends of them ... these telescope looking things and beautifully made purses with little domes on them and lace ... [F]urther around the corner were Ngātai's [Taepa] large concentric paintings - like really, what are these? ... Does it make sense?
>
> Melaina's [Karaitiana Newport] mural photographs of family members in a house, domestic scenes and once you got a close up look you could see Mongrel Mob tattoos and a beer can. The way that a young girl has been juxtaposed next to someone that doesn't look related to the girl but could be (figure 57). So there was a tension there.
>
> [Following] that was John Miller's photographs of Ngā Puna Waihanga ... Māori Artists and Writers hui. They look so comfortable together (figure 58 and 60). They know who they are, they know where they're going, they know what their future looks like ... There's confidence in there ... they can't wait for the future to happen. They have a vision for this place, and everyone looks like they're going. It kind of falls away just before you get to John's [Walsh] work. You

[61] This whakatauki was used by Elizabeth Ellis to open *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* and is also the premise of the Arnold Manaaki Wilson sculpture *He Tangata, He Tangata* 1956 (figure 62) (see Directors and Curators 2001:144).

Figure 57. Installation view featuring work by Melaina Karaitiana Newport.

Figure 58. Installation view of the John Miller series (right). Paintings by John Walsh hang on the end wall, centre right.

Figure 59. Installation view of John Walsh paintings.

Figure 60. John Miller, *Tutaki wharenui, Te Kaha-nui-a-tiki marae, Te Kaha. Kura Rewiri-Thorsen/Rewiri, Ngahuia Volkering/Te Awekotuku, Anne Iti and Tame Iti. June 1973* (2001). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 2001 (2001/29/10).

Figure 61. John Walsh, *Toku Whanau Ataahua* (2001).

don't get this sense that there is confidence; cultural confidence. There's an art culture confidence but there's no culture competency if you like.

And then it concludes with John Walsh's works which are surreal paintings (figure 59 and 61) ... and a couple of people said to me 'geez, I like it but I don't know?' And I liked that. While we like the competency we do have as practitioners engaging with western practice, borrowing Māori ideas and concepts, there is a lack of confidence there. Perhaps John's presenting an idea of what the future might look like. It looks pretty surreal to me!

And I think that was the right way to end that exhibition. We don't know what the future is, we don't know where it's all going. We know we can track history and play out the positive and negative things that we are good at doing but that vision just ain't there. John's work I think provides an option or another version: it could look like this if you wanted. We could be sailing off into space or down the river on those helix waka or surfing into the heavens and spinning out all over the place. If you go back to *Whakapākoko*, she was giving us some good direction and yet we get to the end of it and it is 'where to from here?' (Mason, pers.comm.5)

'Where to from here?'

Pūrangiaho was a resounding success and critically well received by both Māori and non-Māori reviewers alike. The exhibition was the subject of treatment by Māori art historian Deidre Brown (2001) writing in the leading journal of New Zealand art criticism *Art New Zealand.* It was also an *Art News* feature article (Were 2001). Jonathan Mane-Wheoki's sweeping history of the contemporary Māori art movement (2001) included a commentary on the show, as did Julie Paama-Pengelly (2002) who incorporated the exhibition into a discussion on 'The Great Māori Artist?' for Māori magazine 'Tu Mai'. Major newspapers and magazines also reviewed the exhibition (McNamara 2001; Morey 2001; Simpson 2001). The response was overwhelmingly positive, with numerous plaudits for the coming of age of contemporary Māori art and the contemporary Māori artist.

All reviewers conceptualized the exhibition in terms of the subtitle: *Casting light on the legacy of tradition in contemporary Māori art,* and acknowledged the "complex

negotiation between different art and cultural traditions as something which engages Māori artists of whatever era" (Simpson 2001). In startling contrast to the reactions elicited by *Korurangi* in 1995,[62] Hamish Keith (2002) revealed that "[m]y Pākehā sensibility was not shut out from an engagement with those of Māori - it was enhanced by it", a sentiment supported by Jon Bywater (2001) who felt the exhibition was "generally free from the political-campaign-come-gravy-train of the early '90s". Kellyana Morey (2001) however, summarised it best with her wry observation "This is the marae, Jim, but not as we know it".

Perhaps the most revealing aspect is the observations the reviewers didn't make. With the exception of Brown and Morey, the reviewers identified the legacy of tradition in visual terms such as the use of customary motifs or according to ethnographic cliques such as the ancestor reverence of Isiaha Barlow's much talked about *Saint* series. Brown identified several cultural values, customs and references that framed the art on display: the pivotal role of *Whakapākoko: Madonna and Child* to set the kaupapa of the exhibition and the principle of ahi kā, "to keep warm" in the inclusion of customary works with contemporary (Brown 2001:46). The overall structure of Brown's essay however, locates these values in the artworks themselves as opposed to the structure of the exhibition.

Most reviews conformed to the traditional review structure: beginning with an overall statement on the curatorial intent followed by an examination of individual stand out works. No reviewer identified the exhibition layout as orientated in a specifically Māori way except for Morey, and McNamara who noted that the first gallery "in some ways is like a meeting house" (2001). Even in the comprehensive essay by Peter Brundt (2004) which surveyed *Pūrangiaho* against three earlier Māori exhibitions,[63] there is no examination of the curatorial strategy; with the writer reading the exhibition according to the cultural and political messages of the art, the reputation of the artist and the context of production. So, despite the high level of coverage, there is no record of the experience of the exhibition or the cultural prompts that united the exhibition at a deeper level. The reviews focused extensively on the 'Māori-ness' of the art, but not about the exhibition as Māori.

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[62] The wide ranging comments that this exhibition generated – both from the Gallery's visitors' book, newspaper headlines and letters to the Editor – are printed on the endpages of the *Korurangi* catalogue (Szekely 1996).

[63] *Pūrangiaho* was analysed against *Choice! 1991, Kohia Ko Taikaka Anake* 1990 and *Korurangi* 1995.

What statements were made about the curatorial framework, by both the reviewers and the Gallery, are revealing:

> The curatorial team ... have wisely chosen to keep the 'story' simple and allow the art to provide the movement and the voices (Morey 2001:57)

> Pūrangiaho, on first appearance is less ambitious, [compared with *Techno-Māori*] but achieves perhaps more successful ends. There is a valid attempt to link customary and contemporary practice ... selecting a number of young emerging artists however, is always risky and the curator often has to rely on intuition ... and some of the younger artists lack the breadth of practical expression that allows a meaningful application of the whakapapa concept (Paama-Pengelly 2002:31).

> CS: It was a reasonably straight forward theme, it was not a rocket science theme ... lets look at the way that tradition and innovation has kind of woven their way through changes in material and changes in practice over the last hundred years ... that's not a genius theme ... It's a kind of a mix that I think puts a traditional context, lays down a traditional context or challenge for the artists who follow. In that way, it kind of lifts up the art that follows the art that comes before ... and to that extent, it was really very successful (Saines, pers.comm.).

Aside from the reception of the exhibition in the arts community, the exhibition also generated internal and operational successes for the Gallery.

> CS: I mean, if there was one outstanding thing about this show is things artists said about their involvement in it. It was fantastic. Every artist I spoke to ... they all said that it was a great experience to be involved in. Like their affection for the Gallery was absolutely enlarged by this experience and ... that's all I want us to keep on doing. If we can keep on doing that for every show that we create, we're going to build relationships that are going to lead to new project opportunities in the future that lead to the first cut at new acquisitions, a sense of loyalty gets built up between the artist and the institution that definitely benefits the institution ... But I think that's what that show did for us more than anything else was to plug us back in to the kumara vine (Saines, pers.comm.).

NM: It was a feel good exhibition in what it [the Gallery] thought it was achieving. Externally it got huge pats on the back from other museums, other professionals. Obviously it was reviewed really positively; education wise it was fantastic. It wasn't a block-buster in visitor terms but it had the same significance as a blockbuster in terms of the culture of the Gallery (Mason, pers.comm.5).

Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly was timely; it set the standard for a period of unprecedented national exposure for contemporary Māori art and positioned the Gallery at the forefront of such developments. The exhibition made a direct contribution to the strategic direction of the Auckland City Council[64] and was a positive culmination of the internal developments made by the Gallery. The exhibition process included a genuine commitment to community consultation that went some way to amending prior grievances and improved the credibility of the Gallery. Substantial purchasing from the show demonstrated a new level of commitment by the Gallery to contemporary Māori art (table B2)[65] and raised the commercial profile of the artists involved.

For Ngahiraka, *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* was a professional coming of age. The exhibition marked a promotion from Assistant Curator Kaitiaki Māori to a full curatorship. Ngāhiraka took this as an opportunity to evaluate the job title and negotiate the future direction of the position.

NM: When I was offered a full curatorship, I thought it was a good opportunity to discuss the job title. The title never sat well with me ... I talked to museum colleagues at the time because that was the title that museum staff ... aligned with and described their duties as Kaitiaki over taonga. So I drew on that to make the distinction between what I looked after and what I was responsible for in art terms as opposed to museum culture. And of course there was some confusion in the community and museum staff who thought that I did work with a taonga collection. They didn't really know that I didn't have taonga Māori to work with, although I do have one[66] ... So it was an argument that was

[64] The strategic direction of the Council looked to position Auckland as the "First City of the Pacific" and was guided by three principles: the Treaty of Waitangi; Democracy with Participation and Equity (*Auckland Vision 2020* 1999:14-16).
[65] *Pūrangiaho* took 80% of the acquisitions budget for 2001 (Mason, pers.comm.5).
[66] Ngāti Kahungunu, *Toki/Adze* (figure 22).

accepted. So when it came to discussing what this could be as a full curatorship title, I lobbied for Indigenous Curator.

I never saw myself sitting in here for the next 20 years but I also wanted to protect the position as an indigenous position because I looked at similar positions in Australia and the States where indigenous art collections were the domain of Pākehā curators and historians and I didn't want to be part of that history. So I argued for Indigenous Curator – that had to be the Gallery's commitment and the position would never be held by a Pākehā. So there was some agreement. There wasn't complete agreement and the compromise was with the 'Māori art' which I never wanted. I wanted Indigenous Curator. I was literally told that my position had to have Māori language in there. So the Gallery had to be seen as accountable in their terms and that was the compromise - to have 'Māori art' in there. So depending on how you looked at it, 'Māori Art' was going to be limiting. I also had the potential of limiting the scope of that position, which I didn't agree with (Mason, pers.comm.3).

CS: So ... with some urging from her, we changed that position around and made it Indigenous Curator - Māori Art, which ... wasn't a title I was initially comfortable with. There seemed something ethnically specific about it that I didn't think it needed to have. I think there are some very fine curators of Māori cultural material ... who are non-Māori and are deeply respected by the wider Māori community with whom they work. So I thought did it have to necessary have to be a Māori incumbent?

And of course, we'd appointed one anyway so it wasn't really an argument in the context of the current person but maybe the next person or the next person. But in the end, I decided that it needed absolutely to be Māori because we asked for competency in te reo as part of the key criteria, we asked for knowledge of Māori culture and history of a kind that really probably only a Māori person could possess ... [W]hen it all came down to it, it needed to be a Māori person and so why not state it in the title. Because when you say Indigenous Curator, you are specifying that it's not Curator of Indigenous Art, it's Indigenous Curator. A person who is tangata whenua being the curator of Māori art. You know? That's kind of when you spell it out.

> And originally my resistance was around that question of, did we want to be so ethnically specific? ... But I got over that because I recognised that in the space within which Ngāhiraka was working it was important that that statement be made. It didn't really matter in the New Zealand and Pacific context or the International context. What do you say for international? Citizen of the world - Curator of International Art? But it's not nonsense in this space because there are too few Māori curators working in public art galleries in New Zealand so why not be clear about it? Even if it falls away in a decades time ... so what? (Saines, pers.comm).

The exhibition also had a deep effect on Ngāhiraka personally.

> NM: Personally, it cost me a lot ... It brought me attention that I didn't like. I don't like fuss ... I'm not just that kind of person. I don't like being public and it put pressure on me ... I became more accessible, to not just more people but to quite aggressive people ... Actually, at time I felt like I was being grave robbed, it had a deep effect on me.
>
> I know that happens in a career but I didn't expect such levels of aggressiveness to come through ... Apparently I was a threat. Soon as the *Urewera Mural* exhibition went up, between that and after *Pūrangiaho*, a few people came up to me and said 'who the hell are you? People work years to get a curatorial job here. Who are you? What credentials do you have?' And I'm like 'what?'
>
> I wasn't trying to be ambitious trying to do a McCahon show, produce the first ever CD and get a publication. I wasn't being ambitious. I wanted the best thing for my people. And that's how it happened. But ... at that time other curators at the Gallery had not gotten a publication ... and I was getting two publications, first show and Assistant Curator and Kaitiaki Māori to boot! And no one else was getting that level of public attention for their first exhibition ever in the Gallery. So that's what I kicked in with.
>
> And there have been some nice people who have said "thanks very much for doing that. But most of all, I just wanted our people to get it, to enjoy *Pūrangiaho* and even though I got lot's of positive feedback from people ...

AW: They didn't get it.

Not really. But maybe ... I don't know. You can't go back and wish you'd done it differently ... We had Māori studies students come through and they got it but I guess I'm talking about our families, the audiences that aren't educated audiences. So Nanny and Koro, Auntie and Uncle. They did come but they were very few and far between because the artists brought them in when they were in town – 'what's this dear?' - and you can't read whānau something out of a catalogue. You just can't.

Ngāhiraka did not advertise the culturally defined curatorial sequence at work in the exhibition: not in the internal documents prepared as part of the exhibition development process, nor in the published writings or interviews.[67] That she didn't seek to qualify the exhibition or her position in his way - staying "mum" - can be interpreted in many ways. Was she testing her audience? Was she privileging Māori audiences by "saving" it for them? Was she practicing her own kaupapa of "te whaka iti ia koe": not putting yourself forward (Mason, pers.comm.5).

NM: There's an aspect to me that says don't waste information on them anyway and I know I'm not supposed to think that way but I think te moumou o ngā kōrero a ngā tipuna, nah, not going to give it to you. I want our people to get it but I'm idealistic. I want our people to get it but they're in that space in the upper Wellesley mezzanine (figure 55). It's fragmented conditioning. It's all over the place (Mason, pers.comm.5).

The reception that *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* received demonstrated to Ngāhiraka that the educative aspect of her curatorial practice wasn't limited to Pākehā. She discovered that Māori needed to be introduced to the context of the art museum and the nature of contemporary Māori art in much the same way. Additionally, *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* not only linked Māori art on a "contrived art historical notion" (Brown 2001:87) but literally introduced generations to each other. One of the outstanding successes for Ngāhiraka was that artists of the Ngā Puna Waihanga generation accepted the younger artists and wanted to know more about them (Mason,

[67] The internal guides were briefed on several of the key structural concepts of the exhibition including "Whakapapa, Symbols and Imagery, The Continuum, Materials/ Media/ Tools, Stories/Narratives, Issues" (*Concepts for kai ārahi tours* 2001).

pers.comm.5). The exhibition brought the Māori art community closer and instilled pride in being a contemporary Māori artist and practising Māori customs.

> NM: Some of them had never met each other before and they would say 'can you introduce me to ... ?' and I would say 'hey, this is a Māori show. Go and introduce yourself' ... And they would hongi each other and they had permission to practise some of the things they had not done in a public forum and in a public way. They would've just gone around the back and done it.
>
> They got to meet other parts of the Māori community like the people who came into support them, they met each others families ... for some, they met older people and they didn't have an experience of being around a lot of older people.
>
> AW: What?
>
> NM: A lot of them got to hear Māori being spoken, being performed ...
>
> AW: Are you joking?
>
> NM: No I am not joking. First time some of them had heard taonga pūoro being played. Bernard [Makaore][68] came in and did that.
>
> AW: What?
>
> NM: This is Auckland.
>
> AW: But it's Auckland!?
>
> NM: That's exactly right. It is Auckland. Not all people have these experiences.

Pūrangiaho: *Seeing Clearly* was a dynamic curatorial framework that did not exalt the individual works or style of the artist, but sought to place them within a customary context and historic timeline. The intended effect was to strengthen and legitimize the

[68] Current member of Haerewa.

work as Māori by emphasising the persistent markers of identity. In effect, *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* was not just an art exhibition; it configured a new Māori tribe who take their place on the historic continuum of Māori art, assuming the mantle of Māori artistic practice and becoming ambassadors of contemporary Māori identity to a global audience. In effect, Ngāhiraka responded to Fred Graham's challenge of "what is Māori art" by demonstrating what Māori art should be.

But the experience of the exhibition revealed that her practice was idealistic and imposed cultural concepts that were not extant in the works. Ngāhiraka discovered that the "school" of Māori art that has been indoctrinated by the fine arts infrastructure, by and large, did not measured up to her notion of Māori as collectively maintained by her iwi, Ngāi Tūhoe. *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* compensated for this by bringing the marae to the art museum in order to validate the art against an authentic cultural base. But in doing so, the art was culturally validated within the institutional context whilst further disenfranchised from its tribal foundation: the benefit of the exercise was primarily to the institution and Māori artists with little to no direct contribution to Māori who maintain their customary tribal identity within their tribal rohe. In particular, Ngāhiraka found that the exhibition had no effect on the cultural aspirations of the artists and their art other than to affirm their current practice and instil pride in their identity as urban Māori (Mason, pers.comm.6).

> NM: And its political pressure as well to be that way too - take the fisheries. When things become about assets and this place is an asset for artists as much as the seabed is for the fisheries ... and when your political influence is about defining yourself as an urban person, it gives you rights and it's a strange place to be.
>
> I live in an urban environment but I *so* don't think of myself as an urban Māori. I still identify with that little place down the road. For some of the artists that I work with, that little place down the road is history. It's their choice to go along with the political pressure to be, look and behave in a particular way. I don't think that there is really a lot of benefit in doing that. I don't think that works. I don't see how one can think that as an indigenous person of this country that ... your claim in life is being an urbanised Māori, I don't get that. I don't get that you derive more benefits from that than being the person where you come from.
>
> AW: But if urban is where you come from, aren't they being real?

NM: No, I don't think so. They have options. You can change that reality.

AW: Isn't that idealistic?

NM: No I think it's real. A couple of people recently said to me 'but how do they know where to go? How do people know where to find their iwi. You're alright you know who you are and where you come from.' And I said 'how did I know how to go to university. I'd never been to university before. I didn't know how to apply and how to get a degree. I had to learn that. Nobody took my hand and said go and read this book, go to this library, consult this book and that's how you find your iwi.' You have to start somewhere. Not starting is not an excuse ... I know that might sound harsh but the responsibility is theirs to take ... I think that whole idea of being Māori is such a huge construct and urbans' are a very big part of continually perpetuating the myth of what being Māori is.

[...]

I thought okay Ngāhiraka, what can you do? You can either sit down with these artists and you can say hey, this is what I think is happening. This is what is affecting me about what you are doing, how you are behaving, how you are representing Māori and how you are not representing. And I thought, no, I am not going to be the person who tells them how to become Māori (31 August 2004).

I am gonna come across as the whinging Tūhoe ... but this is not about them just right now. This is about their kids that they haven't even thought about having yet. This is what they choose to leave them. It's not the inheritance I believe our ancestors left us with (22 September).

Tūturu is a word that is being used with increased currency in predominately Māori analysis and discussions of identity. Hana O'Regan (1999:199) defines tūturu as a "criteria of authenticity" against which tribes or customs are measured; "[a] tūturu tribe is one that is perceived to be in touch with the old ways, the old knowledge, practices and histories" (ibid.). Tūhoe have long been considered as the most tūturu of all iwi, a reputation that was confirmed when Dominion Museum ethnologist, Elsdon Best began

his study of the iwi in 1904 on the tribe considered the least affected by European colonisation (Best 1925).

In her experience as a Māori curator, Ngāhiraka postulates that tūturu should be a standard of quality from which to evaluate contemporary Māori art. The Gallery however, has its own measure of tūturu upon which Māori artists have historically been judged and these values continue to take precedence in the art museum context. The power of the Māori curatorial role is the ability to discriminate within the pool of Māori artists and arbitrate a new canon of Māori art. The curator's choice however, is limited to those Māori who have access to tertiary art education, engage with the western tradition of art and participate in the national arts infrastructure. This inevitably portrays contemporary Māori identity as necessarily metropolitan, characteristically savvy, sometimes satirical and very consciously Māori (see Mane-Wheoki 1996:48). Therefore the paradox and resulting tension of Ngāhiraka's experience can be attributed to the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki employing a tūturu Māori curator to operate in a western cultural forum according to western cultural values.

Amid this struggle for power, Ngāhiraka is torn between advocating for what she believes is the true face of Māori art and culture against the construction of Māori art by the arts infrastructure. But this is the personal struggle of the curator as Māori because professionally, Ngāhiraka is contracted to fulfil the obligations of the art museum and practice according to its historic protocols. So despite Ngāhiraka's best intentions, her practice is inexorably compromised into perpetuating the historic practice of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki by discriminating among Māori artists according to western criteria.

CHAPTER FOUR: Discussion and Analysis

Figure 62. Arnold Manaaki Wilson, *He Tangata, He Tangata* (1956). Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1993 (1992/33/1).

> Maoritanga is not action songs or hakas, it is holding fast to the treasures of your ancestors - lands, marae, pa, the mountains - and returning in spirit to the minds of your forebears. It is not a light and easy thing, but a difficult treasure, and heavy to carry (Eruera Stirling, Māori Artists and Writers' Conference 1975 in Salmond and Stirling 1980: 247).

This study has documented the establishment of Māori curatorial practice in one New Zealand art museum. It has examined the process from three perspectives but maintained the experience of the curator at the heart of the project. This chapter draws together the substantive issues of the research to describe the facets of Māori curatorial practice. It does not seek to define Māori curatorship, but merely to present its complex nature. In particular, this analysis identifies the deficits between the expectations placed on the position and its reality. The chapter then confronts the tension and compromise that arises, both in terms of curatorial practice and Māori representation.

Confidence – disillusionment – reality

In her role as the first Māori "security guard", Ngāhiraka observed the Gallery go through a tumultuous period of re-evaluation. As a Gallery Assistant working on *Korurangi*, she witnessed the Gallery struggling to "do the right thing" - exhibiting contemporary Māori art, consulting with Māori and incorporating Māori protocols into its operations. She saw how the Gallery contracted in Māori services in order to achieve its goals and how this process often failed. She watched as the collection was filled out with historic photographs of Māori while the burgeoning contemporary Māori art scene was carefully picked over.

Increasingly, Ngāhiraka was drawn into this process. She was uniquely placed to assist the Gallery; her strong tribal upbringing and fine art education equipped her to provide valuable and relevant advice when needed. She opened up and facilitated consultation with Māori communities. As a bi-lingual kaiārahi for *Korurangi* and *Goldie*, she welcomed and toured Māori speaking visitors to the Gallery. She participated in the ritual protocols; even collaborating on the composition of a waiata to be sung with *Goldie* as it travelled around the country and overseas.

Amid this context of change, Ngāhiraka applied for the newly created Māori curatorial position. She had been an advisor and contributor to the Gallery's approach. She had been witness to the mistakes of *Korurangi* and contributed to the success of *Goldie*. From her position as observer, she could see how she would have done it and was confident that she could do the job. It was her experience that the Gallery wanted to be seen doing the right thing. Upon appointment, it then became her intention to do it in a distinctly Māori way.

Ngāhiraka started her curatorial career off with a bang. *Urewera Mural, Colin McCahon* presented a perfect opportunity to push out the boundaries of what had been done previously at the Gallery. Her identity as Tūhoe gave her a headstart: she was on "home-turf" and this gave her the confidence and authority to exercise a high level of cultural expertise. This cultural expertise was the practice of kaitiakitanga, which resulted in a complex, candid and multi-layered interpretation of the painting.

From a curatorial perspective, the interpretative techniques were innovative: it was a one-painting show; the catalogue incorporated Māori ritual protocol; and the CD was predominantly in Māori. From the Gallery's perspective, the exhibition sensitively mediated a controversial subject, gained considerable media attention and incorporated a level of Māori knowledge that was previously inaccessible. From a Māori tribal perspective, the exhibition ensured that Tūhoe was represented, that Tūhoe received benefits for their contribution and most importantly, amid a storm of controversy, the mana of Tūhoe was upheld.

Ngāhiraka's experience of the exhibition, however, was humbling. As recent graduate and a Māori woman,[69] Ngāhiraka had been granted an unprecedented opportunity and her performance was under intense scrutiny. The Gallery had placed itself in the centre of a highly charged and sensitive situation and positioned her at the helm. She found herself in a zone of conflict between major players, both in terms of the Gallery and within Tūhoe. Any mistake or transgression could have been costly.

She also knew that she had to offer the Gallery something unique, a product that only a person in her position was able to deliver. This involved taking a risk and she put herself on the line. She faced up to the controversy and brought Tūhoe's views to the table. In doing so, the purpose of the exhibition changed: it no longer documented the

[69] I highlight gender as an issue here to emphasis Ngāhiraka's status, given that she would be liaising with Tūhoe tribal leaders in the course of the exhibition.

controversy of the painting; it became a site of debate and reconciliation for all parties involved. The approach was a risk, but one that paid off ... for the Gallery. The experience for Ngāhiraka demonstrated how the Gallery was unable to support the expression of Māori values and threw up limitations in terms of her practice. The exhibition made it glaringly obvious how rudimentary the general understanding of Māori culture was at the Gallery. More importantly, she discovered that she would be unable to fulfil the obligations and responsibilities of kaitiakitanga, despite occupying a position so named.

For Ngāhiraka, this was a pressing issue. The position had pushed her into a leadership role. This was a contentious position. It is a condition of leadership within tribal Māori paradigms to *earn* that position from the people. To do that, was to be seen using her position to the benefit of Māori. After all, in her position as Kaitiaki Māori, Ngāhiraka would be drawing on the collective knowledge of Māori, in particular, that maintained by Tūhoe. But Ngāhiraka came to the realisation that the institution would always come before her responsibility to Māori, let alone to Tūhoe. She became disillusioned; she withdrew and went about doing what she thought she could: learning to be a curator.

While Ngāhiraka had struggled in her role as Kaitiaki Māori, she found that the Gallery did not necessarily recognise her as a curator either. The Gallery continued to use her as a "reliable touchstone", relaxed in the knowledge that they had an in-house consultant to deal with matters Māori. Ngāhiraka initially responded to these requests, as she had done in her role as a Gallery Assistant. But Ngāhiraka soon realized that she was perpetuating a one-way traffic in mātauranga Māori and the Gallery was opting out of their responsibilities to Māori. Ngāhiraka's position was slipping into a token role by solving all of the Gallery's Māori cultural needs. In response, she developed a more assertive stance and zealously defended her position as a curator. She refused to take on responsibilities that fell outside of her curatorial role, forcing the staff to engage with Māori and become educated in aspects of Māori culture.

As a consequence, Ngāhiraka's style of Māori curatorship developed as a negotiation of constraint, assumption and assertion. It was hybrid style that looked like curatorship, was structured upon Māori values and challenged the stereotypes of Māori museum workers. She had been expected to curate works of significance to Māori, particularly from the historic collection. Instead, Ngāhiraka's exhibition practice explored the world of art, particularly contemporary art, from a Māori perspective. She always included

Māori artists in these exhibitions, but ethnicity was never her focus. She also left the collection of Māori art open for other curators to work with and contributed a Māori perspective to their exhibitions and programmes. While the Gallery allowed her this autonomy, it still expected her to produce an ethnic-orientated show.

Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly was the result of this expectation. The something-Māori show could have been about Māori photographs or Māori history painting. But Ngāhiraka insisted that it be a Māori artists' show. Ngāhiraka knew that Māori artists would benefit the most from this opportunity, particularly by being validated within the art museum. From her experience, she realised that this approach created the most stable, balanced and reciprocal relationship that the Gallery could have with Māori. Ngāhiraka also assumed that through the artists, she could reach out to broader Māori communities.

But *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* was not just about curating Māori art; it was also about curating Māori identity. As Ngāi Tūhoe and as a woman, Ngāhiraka did not want to trample on the rangatiratanga, or right of Māori to represent themselves and their people. Therefore, Ngāhiraka used her cultural expertise to claim the gallery space as a marae and constructed a whare – a site of identity – within which Māori could represent themselves. She did however, try to present a specific kind of Māori identity by selecting artists, not only on the merit of their work, but on their commitment to Māori identity. In this respect, *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* became an ideological construct about the nature of contemporary Māori identity. This ideology was based on Ngāhiraka's personal identity as Tūhoe and strong tribal upbringing. It also is an example of how her connoisseurship of Māori art appealed for distinction not only in the arts, but also in terms of culture. But in doing so, Ngāhiraka discovered that her experience as Māori was not an experience shared by all.

> NM: I think Māori curatorship should be kaitiakitanga but it's hard. Also when artist's don't practise it, what's the point? So why talk about it? ... I think one of the things I might be guilty - no *might* be, *guilty* of - is imbuing their work and them with values, applying values where they're not necessarily practiced. I don't think that was very smart. But I didn't know! I firmly believed there was.
>
> When you are working with an iwi, you are dealing with a particular set of values that you both bring and you work that out. But you can't when you are

working with contemporary artists. I might practice the values but it's only meaningful if there's an understanding of what's being practised.

AW: But you've told me before that if you told it like it was, they wouldn't want to hear it.

NM: Well that's the sad part isn't it? (Mason, pers.comm.4).

In reality, Ngāhiraka's curatorial strategy imposed cultural values that were not extant in the works. So despite Ngāhiraka's best intentions within the best possible conditions, she found herself inexorably compromised. Her reaction was to petition for a change to her job title. In doing so, she not only absolved herself of the roles and responsibilities of kaitiakitanga, but also her explicit obligation to Māori.

NM: It's really hard to be in this institution. Hard because ... you do hold onto your values and beliefs. You have to accept that there are very few extensions of that out in the community, even the people that you would love to work with, are among those most likely to disappoint you when it comes to trying to uphold values that I believe in, and that I believed that other people believed in and then I find out that its not like that at all... [C]ontemporary artists don't actually need an indigenous curator. They just need a curator. They don't need an indigenous person that has a deep belief in who Māori ought to be. For that reason, they can have anybody. They can have someone from Finland, Austria or Texas. It doesn't matter.

AW: It seems to me that the more you get to know what this is about the more you remove from it.

NM: Mmmm. That's true. And where I have jeopardised the position...

AW: Have you jeopardised the position?

NM: I think there are elements of the position that I have jeopardised (Mason, pers.comm.6).

[...]

CS: Well I think we're still having internal debates about the way in which Ngāhiraka's position should work in the context or setting of all the curatorial positions here and I don't think that's any particular limitation of the role itself or Ngāhiraka being in the role ... I mean a role that's only four or five years old, as hers is, is still a new role. There have been people in the position that Ron Brownson [Curator, New Zealand and Pacific Art] occupies for about sixty years. So of course it's more logical and easier to figure out what the boundaries are ... but it's been harder and it's sometimes been tested because she is naturally ambitious for her role and for herself and I employ people that are because I think that you should be ...

[Y]ou could've had a person more shy or more humble or whatever and the role wouldn't have gone very far ... Ngāhiraka was never going to settle for that and I am really glad that that's the kind of curator that we got first up ... and I think that she has ... laid a terrific foundation for her successors in the future ... If you just kind of hold five, just kind of tread water, then you've actually done worse than that, you've moved backward ... Well, she's done the opposite of that. In fact if anything, she's kind of sprung it out ahead of itself a bit and the institutions loped and limped to catch up in a few different spaces (Saines, pers.comm.).

[...]

EE: Ngāhiraka has developed into a different kind of professional; a global professional. By doing so, you don't lose being Māori, you just become inclusive of other things. The shows that Ngāhiraka has curated appeal to everyone, not just Māori. However, Māori want to see Māori (Ellis, pers. comm.).

For Ngāhiraka, Māori curatorship meant the practice of kaitiakitanga in the context of the art museum. Of foremost importance to this practice is the obligation of the curator to Māori. This obligation ensures that the practice of the curator is beneficial to Māori. For Ngāhiraka, this responsibility was a very real and important aspect of her work. But she found that the conditions of practice within the Gallery jeopardised her ability to fulfil this obligation. Ngāhiraka realized that by participating in the site as a

representative of Māori, she became an accomplice to the power structure of the museum and its inherent subordination of Māori. The only recourse available to her was to operate within the site as a curator who happened to be Māori.

Conquer – dominate - appropriate

The Auckland Art Gallery was established as a symbol of colonial power. Its purpose was to educate the settler population in the European tradition of art. The Gallery also collected and displayed work produced in New Zealand which showed excellence in this tradition. Within this framework, Māori have been "collected" by the Gallery. The status of Māori art has fluctuated according to dominant political ideologies and according to the needs of the Gallery. But what has stayed constant, is the inferior status that Māori occupies in the hierarchy of cultures maintained by the Gallery – of which the western tradition is King.

Throughout the Gallery's history, its practice has devalued, dominated and discriminated against Māori. Given this complicit role in the colonial process, it is of little surprise that the art museum has not cultivated expertise in this area. Consequently, it carries no authority to make distinctions about Māori cultural practice. This was not a problem however, until social attitudes regarding the civil rights of Māori began to change.

At the time of *Te Maori,* the Gallery was the leading institution in its field. While the Gallery was willing to appropriate the success of *Te Maori,* it was reluctant to support the contemporary Māori art movement. This behaviour is a recurring historical pattern: the Gallery had long discriminated against contemporary Māori by monumentalising the past. By doing so, contemporary Māori culture is cast in a deteriorated state which had no place within a site of cultural distinction.[70] The impact of *Te Maori* however, was such that no institution in the country could ignore Māori culture, past or present.

The Gallery's persistent discrimination became an obvious weakness and was challenged, both by Māori and the professional community. With its status threatened, the Gallery saw a political advantage in developing its relationship with Māori. But its racist beliefs, based largely on ignorance, meant this relationship was inherently one-

[70] This is in itself racially discriminatory; within a modernist discourse, this is exulted and lauded as the 'avant-garde' (see Fyfe 2000 and Preziosi 2003).

sided. Such incursions increasingly brought the Gallery into disrepute and damaged its reputation. In fact, recent history demonstrates that Māori culture has been the Gallery's biggest threat and greatest challenge.

The Māori curatorial position was part of a long-term strategy by the Gallery to restore its reputation and credibility: a solution to the inadequacies within its system. The Gallery anticipated that the Māori curator would behave like other curators, that is, build collections and produce exhibitions based on their specialist field within the arts. The Māori curator differed from their colleagues by providing expertise in Māori culture. It was the Gallery's expectation that the curator's cultural expertise would be freely available across the institution. As a result, the Māori curator would provide the Gallery with security, authority and cultural confidence.

The position was named Assistant Curator, Kaitiaki Māori. The Gallery did not realise that Kaitiaki carried customary obligations and responsibilities. The Gallery just wanted a curator with Māori cultural expertise: someone on board that it could trust to deal with Māori issues and provide cultural leadership; a figure of authority who could articulate the significance that the collection held for Māori, produce exhibitions of repute and distinguish quality among work by Māori artists.

Ngāhiraka represented just that. She was art educated, she had experience in the Gallery and she was Ngāi Tūhoe, confident, competent and proficient in taha Māori. Ngāhiraka quickly proved her worth. After the success of *Urewera Mural, Colin McCahon*, the Gallery thought it could relax. It had appointed a Māori person to one of the most powerful and highly coveted positions within the Gallery. From the Gallery's perspective, this represented a significant commitment to its Māori community and one that it could report positively to the Enterprise Board, on behalf of the Auckland City Council. But Ngāhiraka did not perform according to preconceived expectations. She protected and guarded her knowledge. She did not fulfil all of the Gallery's needs.
The Gallery was careful not to react negatively; it was conscious of being seen to "ghettoise" the curator based on her ethnicity. The Gallery did not have another model of Māori curatorial practice for comparison – it looked to the curator for leadership. So the Gallery gave Ngāhiraka the autonomy to develop her style on small collection-based shows but kept the Māori-something exhibition on the horizon.

When it came to the Māori-something show, it maximised its opportunity. Ngāhiraka was provided with unprecedented freedoms, opportunities and resources for an

Assistant Curator. As a consequence, the Gallery was able to build its collections, repair relationships and contribute to the discourse on Māori art. Most importantly, the exhibition reclaimed the Gallery's status in a very public way, thrusting the institution into the limelight both in terms of contemporary Māori art and Māori curatorship.

> Hugely proud is how Chris Saines ... describes himself when he speaks of the exhibition Purangiaho - Seeing Clearly ... He is proud of the fact that such an energetic, considered, relevant and up-to-date exhibition is shown at the gallery ... He is proud of the way the gallery's own Kaitiaki Maori Curator, Ngahiraka Mason, has assembled the show and arranged it thematically. He is intensely proud of the way it throws light on the legacy of tradition in contemporary Maori art (McNamara 2001).

But how did the exhibition change curatorial practice at the Gallery?

> CS: I'm not sure that many shows have a lasting influence on the institution. We do about thirty a year. They tend to come and they tend to go ... I think we've built some relationships, we've gained some trust which I've no doubt, we'll gain other benefits from it in the future (Saines, pers.comm.).

By appointing a Māori curator, the Gallery was trying to do the right thing. The Gallery's relationship with Māori had been inconsistent and the position symbolized the Gallery's commitment to Māori. But in reality, the Gallery was following old habits of collecting and appropriating Māori according to its cultural framework. Within the current bicultural discourse, the Gallery has sought to acquire, not only the image and artistic production of Māori, but also Māori knowledge.

Māori curatorship represented the method by which the Gallery sought to acquire and appropriate this knowledge to its benefit. The success of *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* is testament to this achievement. Although the performance of the Māori curator has not conformed to expectations, the position has provided the Gallery with cultural confidence. With a Māori curator on board, the Gallery has stymied those weaknesses without instrumental changes to its system, secured its status and advanced its operations with assurance.

Personal – professional - political

I began this project with the assumption that Māori curatorship offered a new direction in curatorial practice in New Zealand. I anticipated that Māori curatorship would introduce qualitative, intellectual and aesthetic differences that would distinguish this practice from that by non-Māori. I expected Māori curatorship to be characterized by an "indigenisation" of conventional curatorial practices. I also assumed that Māori curators would use their position for the political advantage of Māori. In this respect, I had cast the Māori curator in the role of an activist and was looking for evidence of their activism.

But this research has proven my expectations to be misplaced. What I found was that Māori curatorship is a curatorial position occupied by a Māori person. Māori curatorship constructs statements about Māori culture and identity through the process of art history. On this basis, Māori curators are cultural leaders who carry an obligation to represent the collective interests of Māori. This obligation insists that the decisions made by the curator will privilege Māori and protect the integrity of mātauranga Māori. It is also the factor that defines the nature of Māori curatorship and distinguishes its practice.

This characteristic of Māori curatorship also places the curator in a position of inevitable conflict within the Gallery. This is due to the variant expectations and responsibilities placed on the position. The Gallery expected that the curator would mediate Māori knowledge according to the conventions of art history and to the needs of the art museum. In this role, the Māori curator becomes a conduit between two disparate and unequal knowledge systems: the epistemology of mātauranga Māori and the discipline of art history, a mode of classifying and organizing information. Within this process, the wider cultural framework that mātauranga Māori is structured upon, is subordinated within the system of the art museum. While this is not a new trend in the Gallery's practice, Māori curatorship shifts the responsibility for this action from the Gallery to the Māori curator.

It is the responsibility of the Māori curator however, to ensure that the integrity of mātauranga Māori is upheld within the context of the Gallery. Ngāhiraka has insisted that the Gallery respect the social processes and protocols in order to preserve the authority of Māori knowledge. But she has found that the art museum is an incompatible context for the practice of Māori values. In fact, the art museum is often

threatened by the practice of Māori values. The Māori curator then, carries a different kaupapa than non-Māori curators which challenges the balance of power at the Gallery. There is however, a level of intransigence in the art museum model that cannot be affected by the incursions of a single Māori employee.

> *"He aha mōu mō te kotahi? What can only one do?"*
>
> (Pomare 1934 in Mead 2001:63).

Although the Gallery has intended to adopt bicultural values, this is in reality, a fragile fiction. Its expertise lies in the western tradition of art. The Māori curatorial position has not addressed the lack of expertise within the Gallery about Māori. It has simply masked it. The Gallery continues to operate in a culturally insensitive and insulting way. But instead of publicly exposing its lack of expertise, it channels its insensitivity through its Māori curator. It is Ngāhiraka's professional obligation to filter this insensitivity and present the Gallery in a cultural competent light.

Ngāhiraka's practice therefore validates and enhances the reputation of the Gallery at the expense of her cultural integrity and obligation to Māori. Her disillusionment is the result of this reality. Ngāhiraka has been appointed to the position based on a western perception of Kaitiaki. The paradox of Māori curatorship lay in the barriers posed by the art museum that impact on the curator's ability to practice Māori values. As a result, the cultural confidence that Māori curatorship brings to the Gallery is a façade.

This is not limited to the Gallery: *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* is also an ideological construction. The exhibition interprets cultural values in contemporary Maori art that are not necessarily inherent in the work. From this perspective, *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* could be evaluated as poor curatorship. But, that evaluation is based on the curator's responsibility to the artist, institution and audience. As this project has demonstrated, the Māori curator's first obligation is to Māori. Although Ngāhiraka has struggled to fulfill this obligation, she used *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly* as an opportunity to represent Māori according to Māori values. In doing so, she has changed the nature of Māori representation at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki in significant ways.

Moreover, as chapter one reveals, the history of Māori representation at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, is a continual fabrication of Māori culture, history and

traditions. The distinguishing factor in the practice by the Māori curator is that for the first time, the ideological construction is based on Māori values and concepts of representation. The dissonance between the curator's practice and the reality of contemporary Māori art, is not in this case, bad curatorship but a conscious political strategy employed by the curator to advantage Māori. In the process of upholding these values, Ngāhiraka establishes a new criterion upon which contemporary Māori art should be judged. This involves the artists making a positive contribution to the viability of Māori on a social level. In doing so, Ngāhiraka attempts to re-engaged the contemporary Māori art movement as a project of Māori self-determination – mana motuhake Māori – if only at a theoretical level that is yet, to transpire into reality.

The intention of this thesis was to examine the nature of Māori curatorship. What the research has found is that Māori curatorship is a bridge between the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and Māori. But it is a one-way bridge between two unequal levels. Māori curatorship is a political role and position of leadership that not only defines contemporary Māori identity but redresses the injustice and prejudices of the past. While the Maori curator has been limited in their ability to practice kaitiakitanga within the institution, Ngāhiraka has taken the sliver of opportunity available to her to petition for change. By doing so, she seeks to empowers her position for the benefit of Māori irrespective of the restrictive conditions of practice.

CONCLUSION

My concern about Māori curatorship was first raised amid a crowd of Māori art historians, curators and artists at the symposium for *Pūrangiaho: Seeing Clearly.* The air of the symposium was jubilant - *Pūrangiaho* was the first of a successive wave of Māori art exhibitions which collectively sought to indoctrinate a new discourse on Māori art. Whakapapa toi hou: the continuum of Māori art struck at previous histories by streamlining the contemporary Māori art movement with customary Māori tradition; emphasising innovation in customary art practice and identifying the customary in the contemporary. However, there was a sense of anxiety amongst the Pākehā art professionals in attendance that sat halfway between glowing resentment and amused bewilderment at the seizure of their cultural domain by Māori. This defensiveness was revealed when a Māori speaker attacked the elitist and exclusive tradition of western art. Holding aloft the newly published collection catalogue *The Guide* (Director and Curators 2001) as evidence, the speaker pointed out that it wasn't until 1965 that the first Māori "artist" was included in the collection of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.[71] A lonely Pākehā arts professional stood to rebut her point by reminding the audience that the Sir George Grey collection of Māori artifacts were originally in the collection, but were transferred to the Auckland Museum early in the Gallery's history. While I was touched by the bravura of the professional's ready defence, I was deeply saddened that he had so clearly missed the point.

It was at that moment that I realized the enormous handicap that Māori arts professionals faced in an environment where most were more *au fait* with the Italian school of painting than the indigenous culture of their country. While this event was significant in the Gallery's relationship with Māori, it demonstrated to me the subordinate position that Māori continued to occupy in the hierarchy of cultures and the minds of the liberal elite. I began to question, on what terms, for whose benefit and *to what effect* had this invitation by the Gallery finally been extended? I left the symposium heavy of heart and overwhelmed with trepidation for those Māori curators who dared to lead in this uncertain terrain.

[71] The speaker was referring to Ralph Hotere and *Black Painting* (1964) (acquired 1965 [1965/24/12]) (Director and Curators 2001:146) when in fact, Selwyn Wilson was the first Māori artist to have work acquired by the Gallery in 1948 (figure 14).

In light of this experience, the intention of this thesis was to provide a map of this cultural minefield. It was to enable other Māori curators to navigate this territory with some degree of certainty and encourage a path of innovation and success. While the core question underlying this exercise regarded the nature of Māori curatorship, it inevitably questions whether the journey of the Māori curator is for the purpose of Māori or solely for the political advantage of the art museum. By mapping the art museum from a Māori perspective, marking the portals and pitfalls and plotting the journey that the Māori curator was expected to take, this thesis arrives at its conclusions.

This research revealed that like the whare whakairo, which is an embodiment of Maori identity, the art museum is a manifestation of Pākehā New Zealand identity drawn from the western tradition. While the marae has been the subject of ethnographic analysis, the culturally prescribed protocols of the art museum have only recently become the focus of western scholars (see Duncan 1995). To understand the nature of Māori curatorship, this project has reversed the ethnographic gaze and exoticised the art museum, revealing the cultural bias that is its imperialist tradition of the art museum. By critiquing the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki's relationship with Māori, the role of the art museum as an arbiter of cultural distinction has been found to be racially prejudiced - and thus rendered deficient. This thesis argues then, that the primary role of the Māori curator is to mask that deficiency. The practice of the Māori curator has been to restore credibility to the institution, without necessitating any formative changes to the power structure. As a consequence, Ngāhiraka has become implicated in the colonial legacy of the art museum and is precluded from using her professional position for the exclusive benefit of Māori.

At its broadest level, this thesis shows that the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki has persistently demonstrated derogatory cultural attitudes about Māori culture and was forced to include Māori in its operations only after external political pressure. It is from this isolated position that Māori curatorship is practiced and proof of the Māori curator's disempowerment within the site. The inconsistent practice of the art museum, demonstrated by offering the Māori curator high profile and unprecedented opportunities, substantiate the claim that Māori curatorship is a hegemonic political tool to domesticate Māori representation, perpetuate the subordinate status of Māori and maintain the status quo of the art museum.

The most important finding of this thesis is that Māori curatorship is not and cannot be equated with kaitiakitanga. Māori curatorship is a western cultural concept developed

to fulfill the political obligations of the art museum. The art museum cannot accommodate the practice of kaitiakitanga and the title of Kaitiaki Māori has been erroneously ascribed to curatorial positions that required a Māori appointee. While the Māori curator shares some attributes of the Kaitiaki, Māori curatorship has its origins in the traditions of Europe. It is practiced within western cultural institutions for predominantly non-Māori consumption.[72] It should never be confused with the customary role of Kaitiaki nor can it be for the exclusive benefit of Māori. The Māori curator is a subaltern of the state whose professional responsibility is to the institution and its objectives. If there is any room for the personal agenda or cultural obligations of the curator as "Māori", the expression of this will always be according to the level of cultural tolerance sanctioned by the art museum.

Although this thesis seeks to understand Māori curatorship it does not attempt to define the role of the Māori curator nor make a definitive statement on the nature of Māori curatorial practice. Although the art museum under investigation is one of the leading institutions in its field, the findings do not indicate national trends nor postulates a model for future development. Within the limitations of a Masterate project, the thesis documents the experience of the first appointee to the Māori curatorial position at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. It is subsequently restricted to the discipline of art, the cultural context of that art museum and the nascent stage of development for all parties involved. This project cannot represent other sites, particularly museums that hold ethnographic collections of taonga Māori. Nor can it investigate Māori curatorship in the context of developments within the museum sector, particularly in the area of governance (see Butts 2003, Tapsell 1998 Whaanga 1999). If anything, this project demonstrates that art museums have lagged considerably behind non-art museums in establishing equitable indigenous participation. Therefore, it encourages art museums to look to their counterparts for positive models for development.

Māori have publicly accused the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki of elitism and racism. But, racist or not, the art museum is politically obligated to involve Māori, and, Māori want to be involved. It has been the purpose of this thesis to investigate these claims from a Māori perspective and enable the dialogue to progress to a positive platform. This thesis however, has become embroiled in the politics of Māori curatorship. By confronting the wider issues uncovered by the research, it is the hope

[72] Despite repeated requests, statistics for Māori visitation at the Gallery since 1998 were not provided to the researcher.

of the researcher that future studies will be able to focus more clearly on the common practice of Māori curators nationwide.

Consequently, the project has had to maintain a strict focus amid an expansive and relatively undocumented cultural landscape. There are many avenues available to researchers particularly as Māori curatorship matures and flourishes through creative exhibition development and scholarship. This researcher gives priority to three lines of investigation that will benefit a deeper understanding of Māori curatorship and encourage development within the sector for the benefit of all Māori.

1. *Longitudinal studies*

   Longitudinal studies involving the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and future appointees to the Māori curatorial position would generate compelling evidence to examine two effects. The first would consider the type of influence this art museum has on the development of Māori curatorship, while evaluating the significant impacts of Māori curators on the culture of the art museum. Secondly, this approach would illustrate how the profile of Māori curators inflect upon the collection, exhibition and scholarship of Māori art within the site. This would identify what style of Māori curatorship succeeded in the art museum context, particularly as the art museum becomes more assertive and confident regarding Māori issues.

2. *Multiple case study*

   A definition of Māori curatorship could be determined by comparing and contrasting the practice of Māori curators across multiple sites or interdisciplinary institutions. This would challenge whether the concerns raised in this thesis are site-specific or discipline-specific and sift out the issues common to all Māori curators. A definition is important because it provides a foundation for emerging curators and fosters innovation in Māori curatorial practice.

   Most importantly, it is inevitable that Māori will follow international trends and establish cultural centres organized along ethnic or tribal lines. Māori curators will play a major role in the operations of these institutions and it will be worthy to evaluate what, if any, aspects of curatorial practice will be appropriated to suit the purposes of the cultural centre.

3. *Gender-based research framework*

A study of the unmistakable phenomenon of Māori women curators would contribute to multiple sociological fields including Museum studies, Women's studies and especially Māori studies. The importance of this phenomenon is its challenge to customary gender roles and models of Māori representation, instigated by and located in secular non-Māori cultural institutions. There are intriguing comparables within this study; of particularly interest is an analysis of Māori women curators working with taonga Māori and the restrictions of tapu juxtaposed against those who curate secular contemporary Māori art. Another approach is restricting the study to the discipline of art in order to describe the emerging role of Māori women as leaders and identify trends in their construction of contemporary Māori identity.

...

This research has uncovered overwhelming evidence of institutional racism. This leads me to conclude that the cultural conditions of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki limit the ability of the Maori curator to develop their practice according to Māori values.

> Ka mahi te ringaringa aroarohaki tauā.
> The hand which quivers in the face of the enemy is to be admired (Brougham, Reed and Karetu 1999:8).

Ngāhiraka's experience at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki provides unequivocal data upon which this claim can be made. By choosing to tell her story while still employed at the Gallery, Ngāhiraka has exposed the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki as an intrinsically hegemonic institution that continues to oppress Māori. Her candid voice and internal position becomes the ultimate form of activism and public challenge to the power structure of the site. It has been my obligation as Māori to present her conditions of practice in an uncompromising way. In doing so, this thesis becomes implicit in the activism of the curator and enables Māori curatorship to make a positive contribution to Māori self-determination.

POSTSCRIPT

Upon completion of the thesis, the main research participant was given another opportunity to respond:

NM POSTSCRIPT
16 February 2006.

My foundational understanding of the purpose and role of indigenous Curator, Maori Art at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki is much transformed. My collaborative journey with the author, in this version of the telling, is an unfolding of the limitations of identifying with a role, taking on that identity, and predictably, getting lost in the process.

The voice captured in this thesis is animated by a disposition that gives egoic interpretations of a brief moment in time. As manifested thoughts, ideas and labels, they too, are illusions within an empirical structure.

As such, the lessons learned include recognizing inauthentic thought patterns and forgivable lapses of ineffectiveness. Yet, the glimpses into authentic ways of seeing the totality of my chosen situation, suggests some movement toward my awakening from unawareness.

Appendix A: Auckland Art Gallery name change details

- The building for the Free Public Library and Art Gallery was opened on 26 March 1887.
- The Auckland Art Gallery opened as a wing of this building on 17 February 1888.
- By 1921 it is referred to as the Auckland City Art Gallery although several publications are headed 'Auckland Municipal Art Gallery'.
- In 1925 it returns to the Auckland Art Gallery and this continues to approximately 1954. Thereafter Auckland City Art Gallery appears again.
- In January 1996 the change was made to Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki.

Appendix B: Acquisition trends for the Maori art collection

Table 1. Acquisition trends for the collection of art depicting Māori (1889-2003)

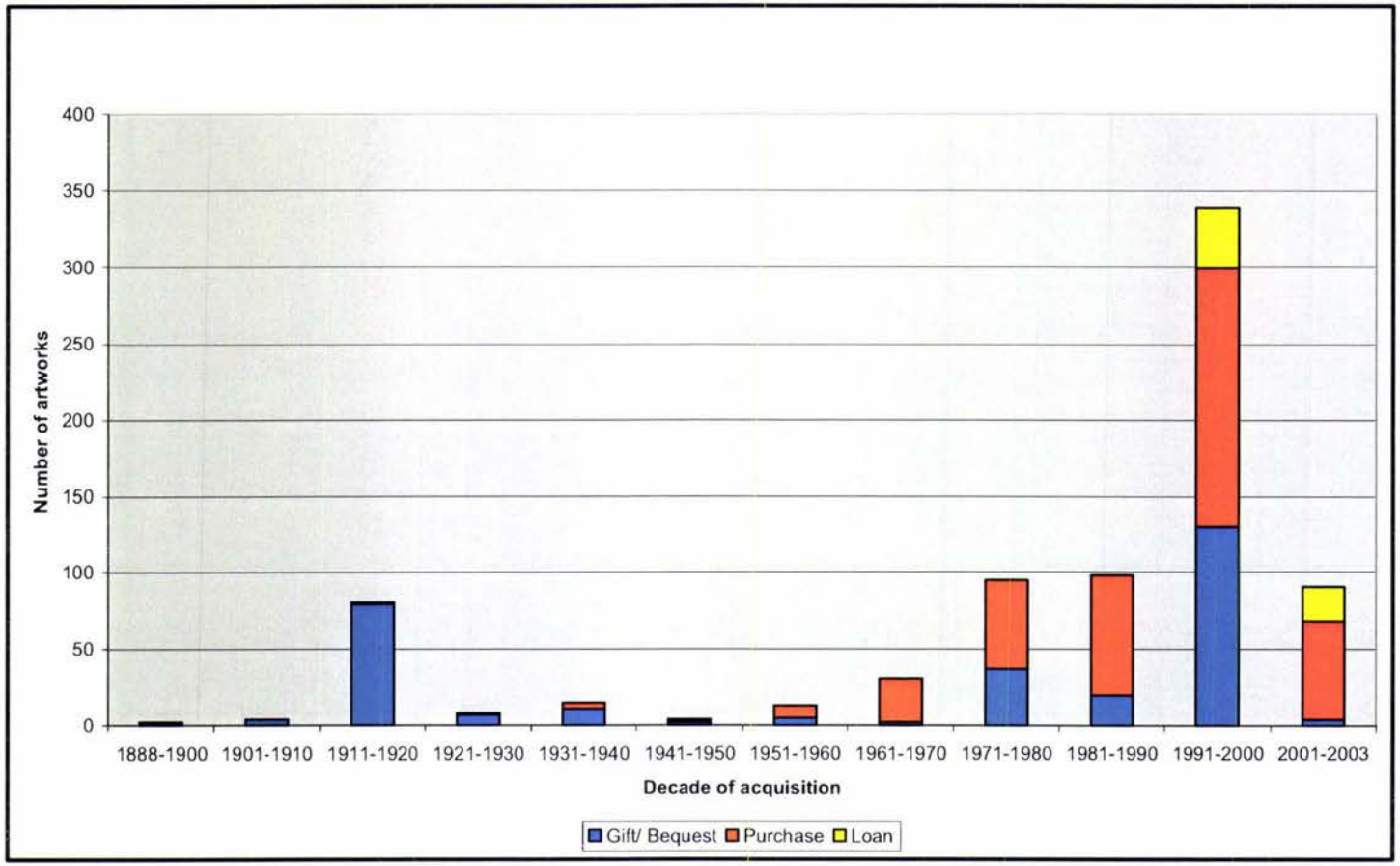


Table 2. Acquisition trends for the collection of art by Māori artists (1889-2003).

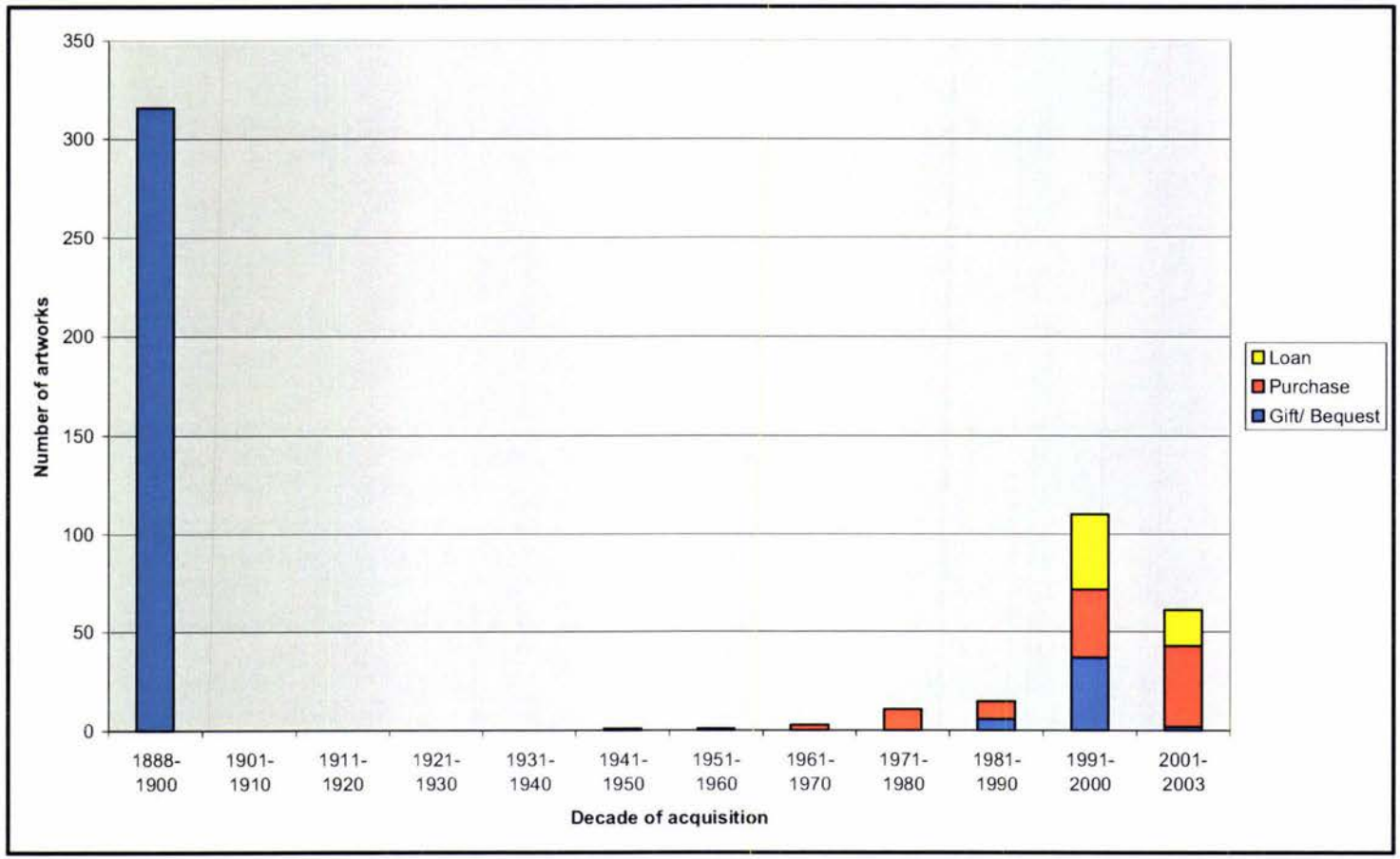
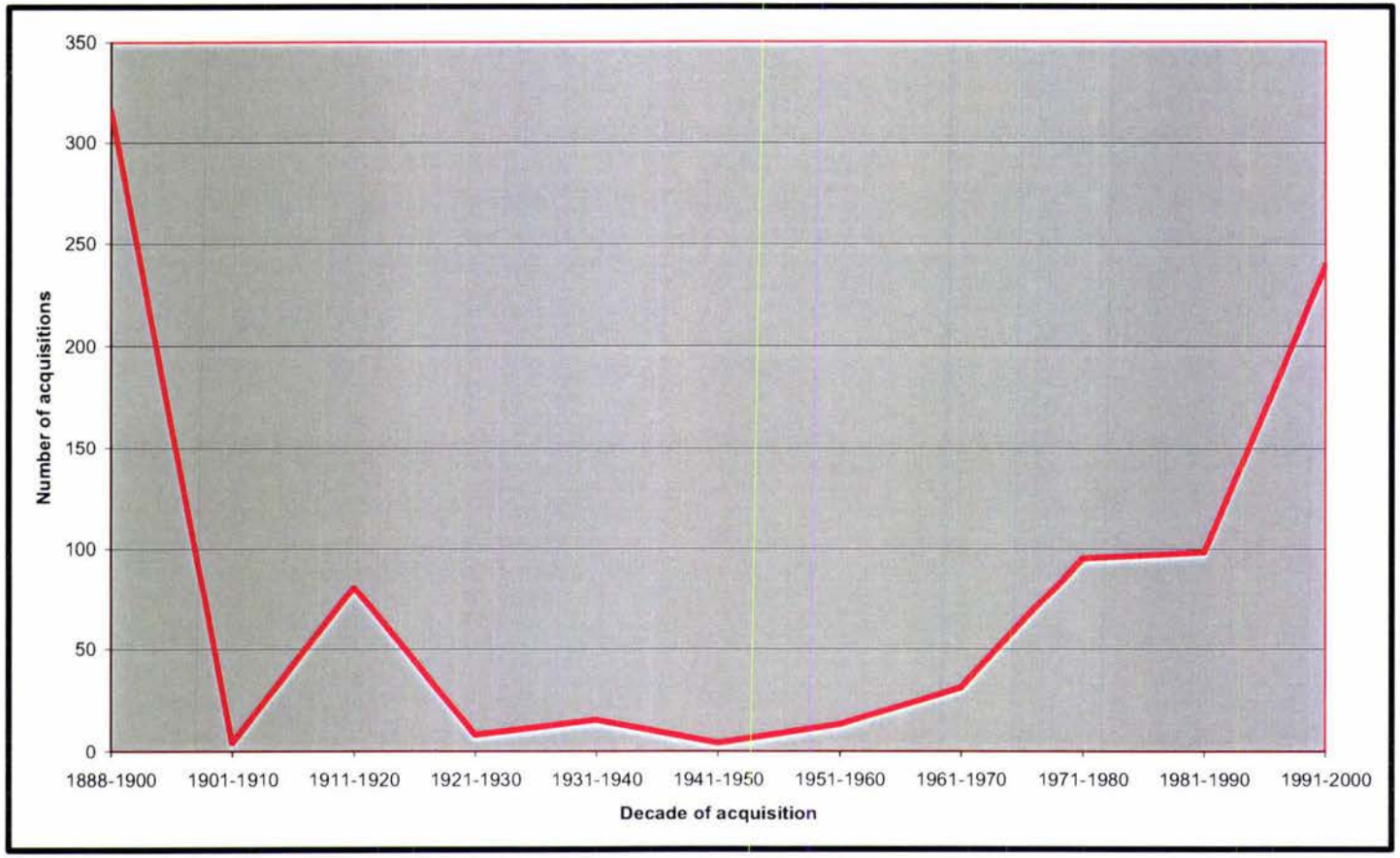


Table 3. The pattern of acquisition for the Maori art collection (1888-2003)



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Elizabeth Ellis	Pers.comm: 1 September 2004

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Glossary of Māori Terms

Ahi kā	occupation rights
Āwhangawhanga	uneasy, disturbed
Haka	song and dance
Hapū	family unit, clan
Heke	rafters
Hongi	press noses
Hui	congregate, meet
Iwi	tribe
Ka kite	see you
Kai	food
Kaitiaki	guardian
Kaiārahi	guide, escort
Karakia	prayer, chant, incantation
Karanga	call
Kare	term of address
Kaumātua	elder
Kaupapa	framework, strategy, theme, philosophy
Kete	basket, kit, bag
Kōanga	spring, planting time
Koha	donation, gift
Kōhanga reo	language nest
Kōrero	speak, news, narrative
Koro	elder man
Kōtiro	girl
Kōwhaiwhai	painted scroll ornamentation
Kuia	female elder
Kumara	sweet potato
Mākutu	Bewitch, curse
Mana	integrity, status, prestige
Mana wahine	status of women
Manuhiri	guest, visitor
Marae	meeting area, central area of village
Marae ātea	plaza, courtyard
Mātāmua	first born son
Mātauranga	information, knowledge, education
Mihi	greet, acknowledge
Moko	tattoo
Niho taniwha	monster's teeth
Pā	stockaded village
Paepae	orator's bench, threshold
Pākehā	non-Māori, European, caucasian
Poroporoaki	leave instructions at departing
Pou	post or pole
Poutokomanawa	centre post of whare
Pōwhiri	welcome, opening ceremony
Rangatahi	young people
Raranga	weaving
Rohe	boundary
Taha Māori	Māori side

Tāmaki Makaurau	Auckland
Taonga	property, treasure
Taonga pūoro	musical (wind) instrument
Tangata whenua	local people, aboriginal, native
Tangihanga	funeral
Tapu	sacred
Te reo	language
Te ringā hou	novice, new hand
Tikanga	protocol
Tipuna	ancestor
Toki	adze
Toi	art, knowledge
Tūturu	real, authentic
Waiata	song
Waka	canoe
Whaikōrero	oratory
Whakapākoko	image
Whakapapa	genealogy, cultural identity
Whakatauki	proverb
Whānau	family
Whanaungatanga	kinship
Whare whakairo	carved meeting house
Wharenui	big house