

Appendix B

Movements from Pearl Rivers:

Artistic Development Process

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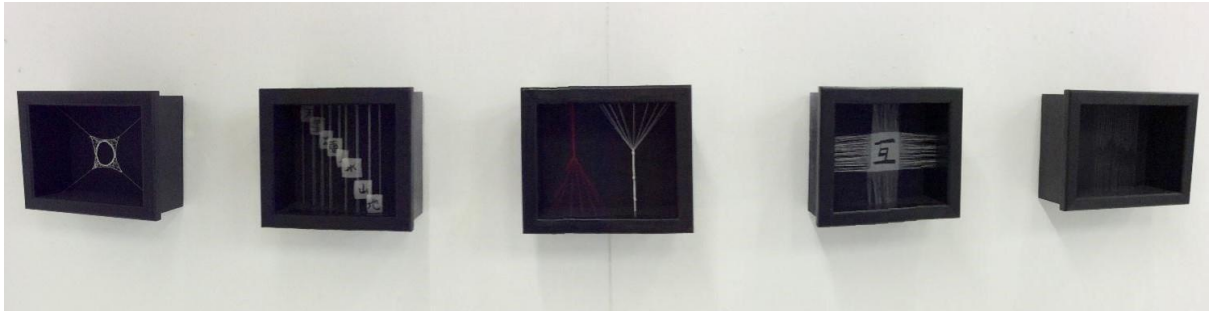
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Silk Ties series 2015

Figure 1

Silk Ties Series 2015



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2015). *Silk Ties Series*. [silk sculptures]. NZ Art Show, Wellington. Courtesy of the artist.

The artistic journey towards the *Movements from Pearl Rivers* exhibition began with the Silk Ties series in 2015. This research project initiated an investigation into Chinese cosmology and philosophy, as well as my own ancestral heritage in Southern China. Through this research, I was able to articulate elements from the Chinese worldview which resonated with the notion of *mana whenua*, a concept from matauranga Māori. Some of these findings were published in the article *Mana whenua: points of convergence in Chinese and Māori worldviews regarding harmonious relationships* (2020).

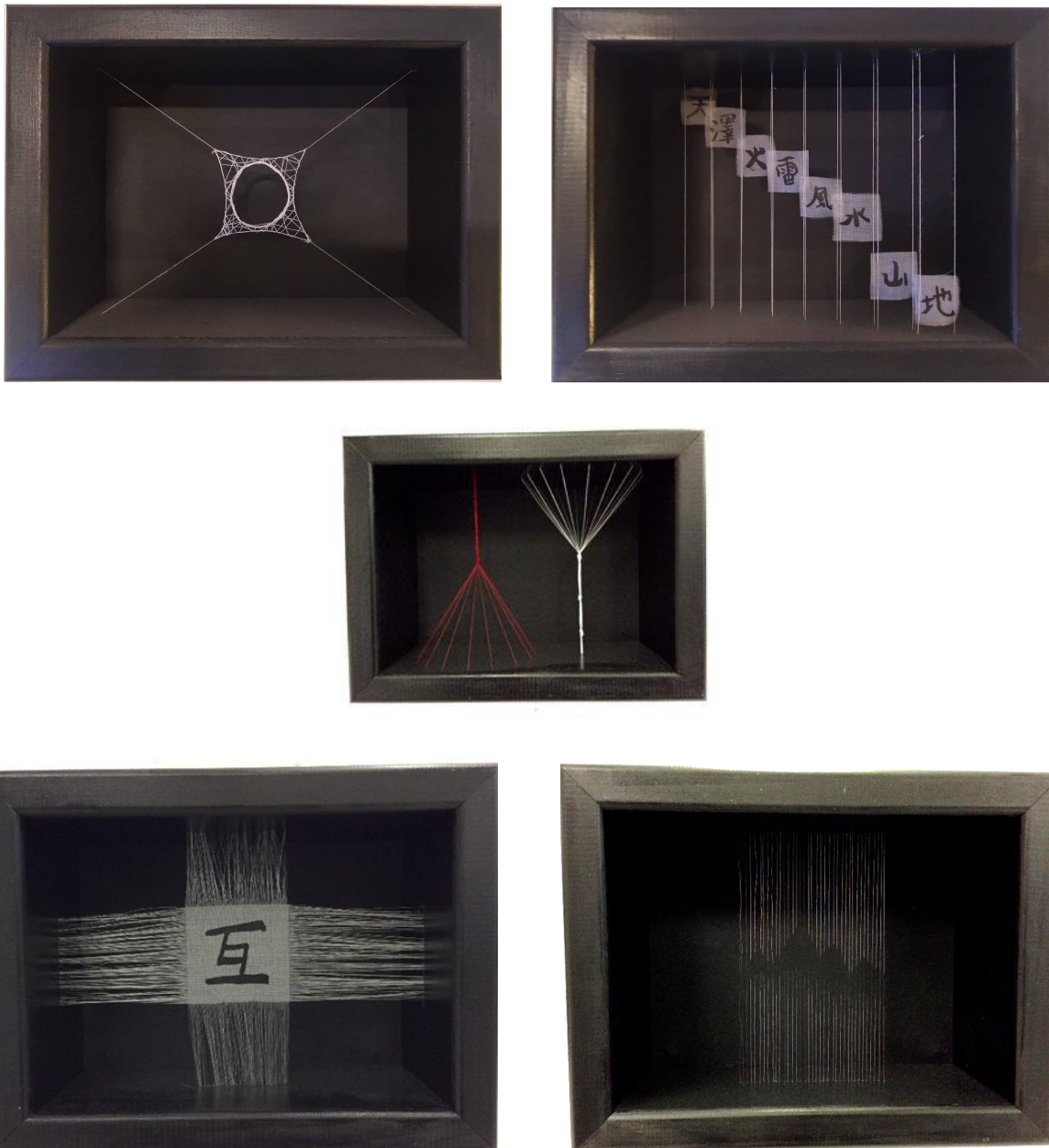
The visual outcome of this research was a series of silk thread sculptures which portrayed key concepts from Chinese cosmology. These sculptures involved unravelling silk fabric back to threads, in order to rework them into different configurations. This was also the period when I began to learn Chinese knotting. The sculptures required suspending threads through holes drilled into wooden frames. I also began to explore using Chinese ink on silk, and learning Chinese characters for key concepts.

A key principle explored in these sculptures was the notion of equilibrium where balance was paramount. Other principles included showing spiritual and physical, or

invisible and visible connections, as well as genealogical connection. I became aware of the way that air flow can interact with the threads; causing a breath and movement in the same spirit as qi essence which flows throughout the universe. I also began to use white, red, and black to refer to our spiritual and physical reality, in line with the Chinese use of these colours.

Figure 2

Silk Ties Boxes



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2015). *Silk Ties Series*. [silk sculptures]. NZ Art Show, Wellington. Courtesy of the artist.

Journey of the Ancestors 2015

In this project I was able to learn about Chinese lanterns and Chinese ancestral veneration practices. This was a photography based project, but it also entailed the creation of paper lanterns. This project also explored illumination of paper. The knowledge gained during this research project continues to influence and inform the work in *Movements from Pearl Rivers*.

Figure 3

Journey of the Ancestors series 2015

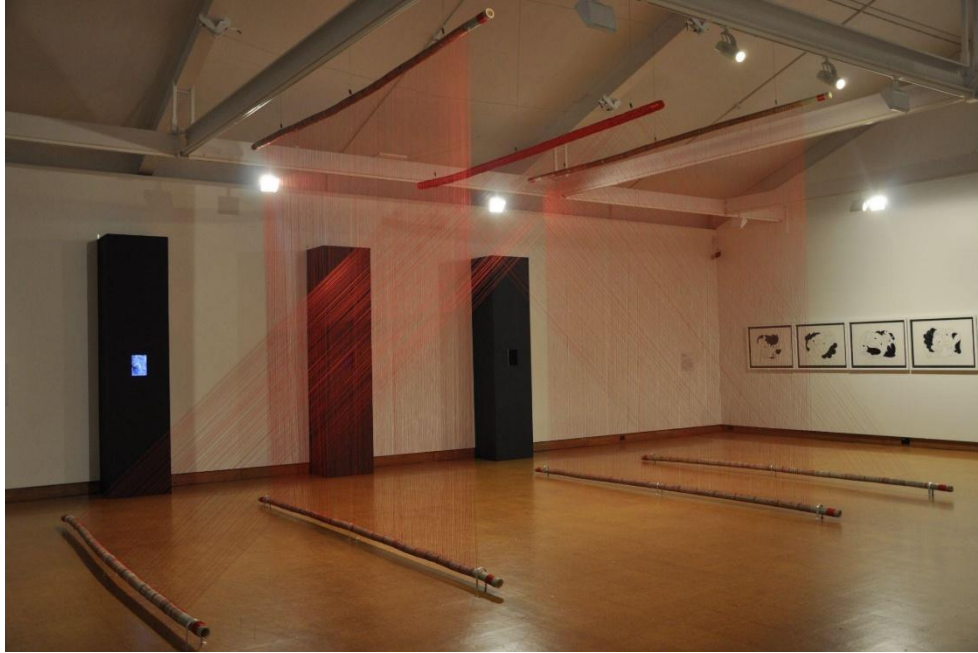


Note. Ma'auga. T. (2015). *Journey of the ancestors*. [Digital Photographs]. Toioho ki Āpiti, Palmerston North. Courtesy of the artist.

Ngā Aho 绪 2016

Figure 4

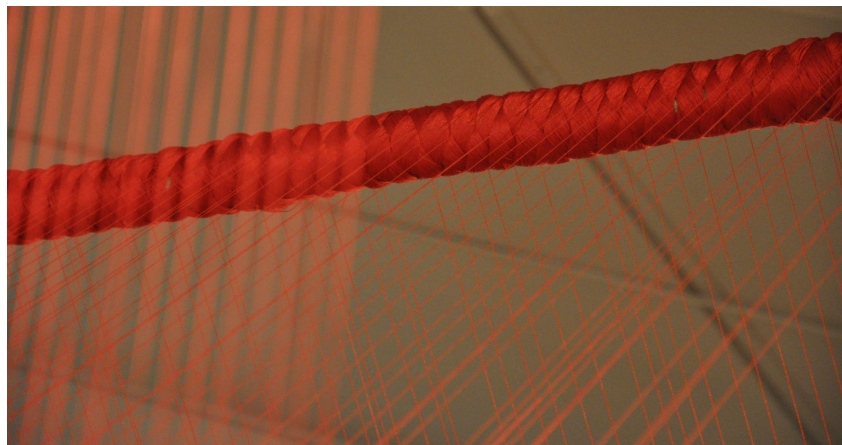
Ngā Aho 绪 2016



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2016). *Ngā Aho 绪*. [Thread installation]. Te Manawa Museum of Science and Art, Palmerston North. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 5

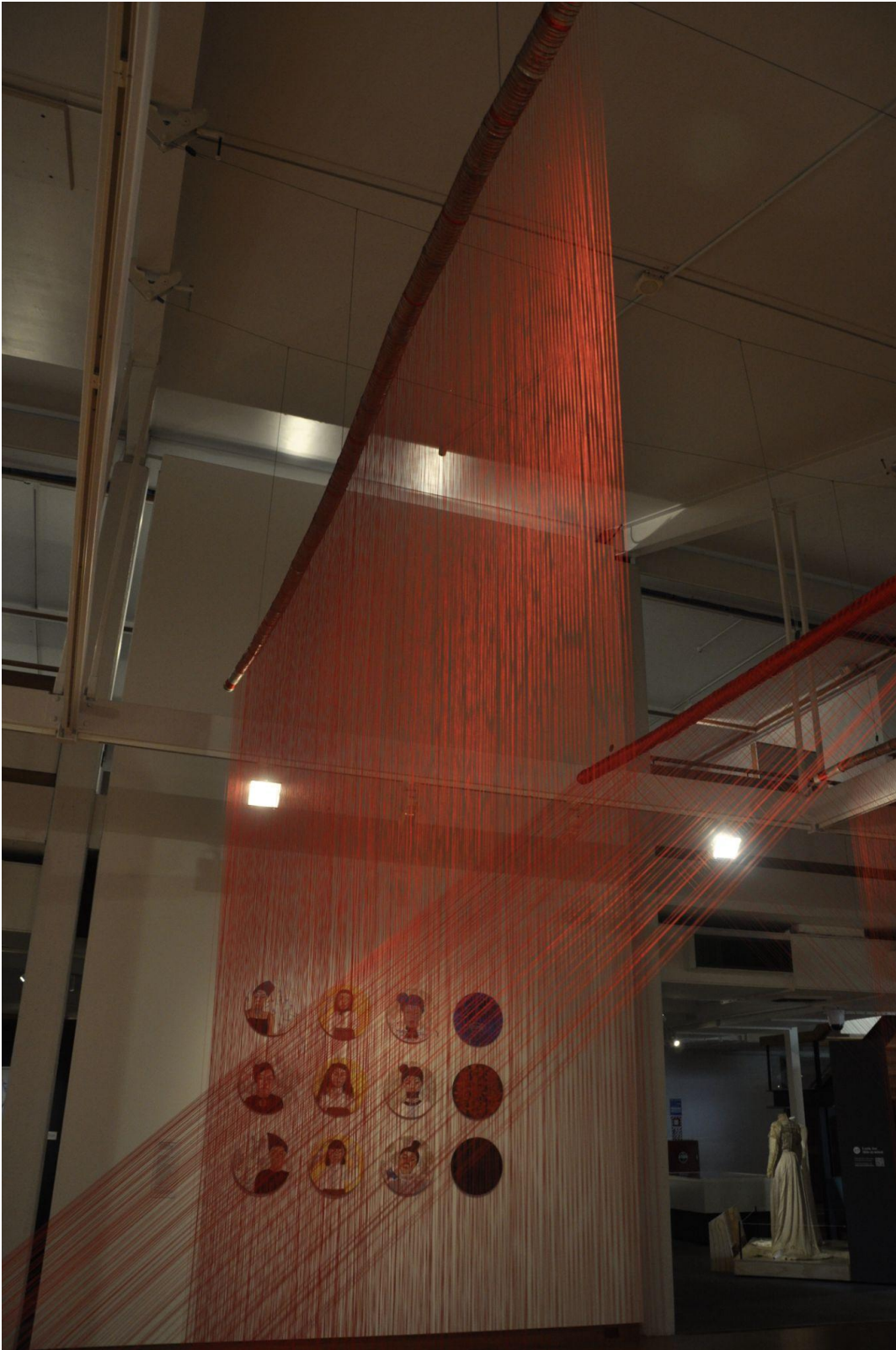
Detail of plaited ridgepole



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2016). *Ngā Aho 绪*. [Thread installation]. Te Manawa Museum of Science and Art, Palmerston North. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 6

Detail of intersecting wall and roof



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2016). *Ngā Aho* 绪. [Thread installation]. Te Manawa Museum of Science and Art, Palmerston North. Courtesy of the artist.

Ngā Aho 绪 developed from the Silk Ties series culminating in a large-scale site-specific thread installation. I used red Chinese nylon thread to suspend a house. This research project focused on the notion of *mana wahine* from a Chinese perspective. Due to the long oppression of women in China, this concept was more difficult to find relevant empowering literature. However, I was able to identify key concepts which were important for the empowerment of women, including myself as a descendant of Chinese women.

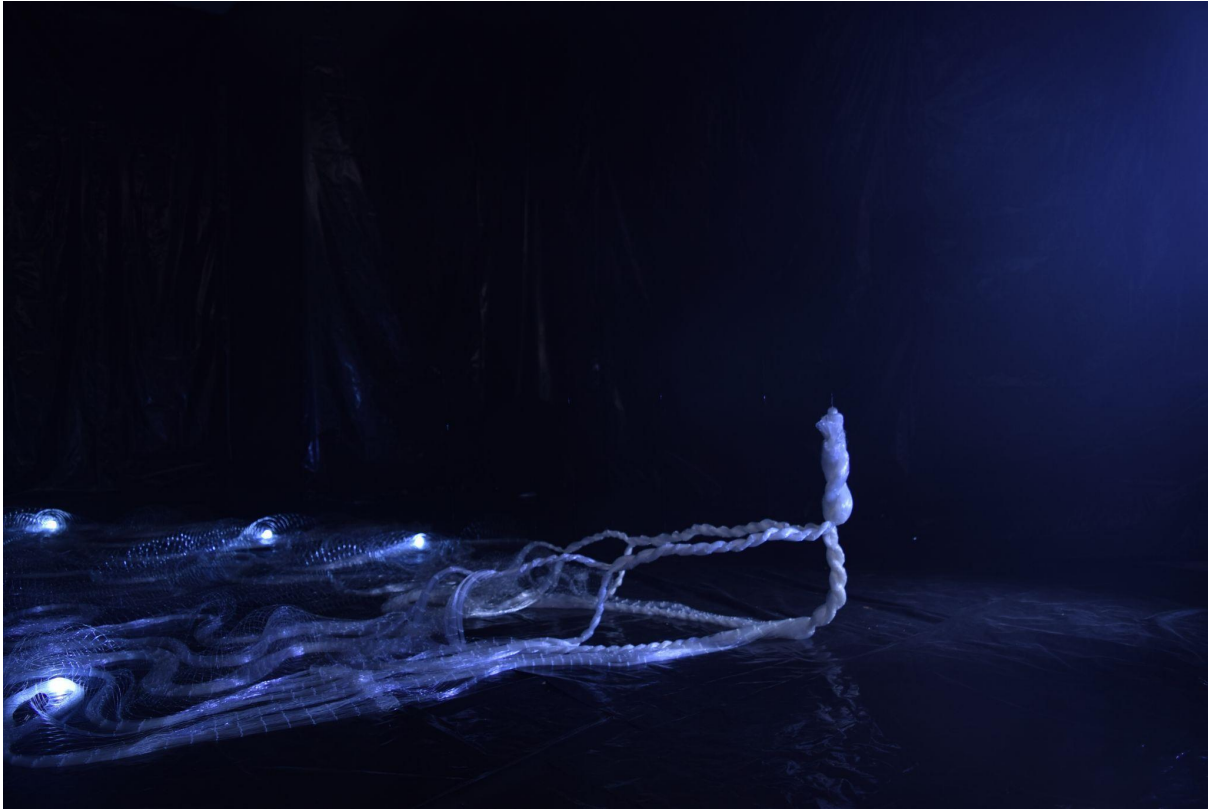
The notion of weaving was highlighted in this work, and the sculpture required the winding of thread around bamboo poles in the same way that one might prepare threads for weaving upon a loom. The centre pole of the house was plaited. In this project I was able to experience working with long threads and learn about plaiting using very long lengths. Binding was also placed along the bamboo poles. I learned about the centrality of women to the home in Chinese culture, and I highlighted the role of women and mothers in creating harmony within the home and the wider community environment. Again, the arrangement of cords and suspended bamboo, reflected the notion of an equilibrium with order and balance, and a weight held in check by a harmonious arrangement of threads. The work emphasised the notion of spiritual integrity and interconnection, using the language of threads.

With this work, I was also able to learn about public interaction with large-scale thread sculpture, and wire suspension of the installation from the gallery ceiling. The installation made possible the ethereal effect of the threads within the gallery space. It was a work that was created so that the public could touch and interact with the sculpture.

Fibres of our Ropes 2017

Figure 7

Detail of Fibres of our Ropes 2017



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2017). *Fibres of Our Ropes*. [Fishing net installation]. Toioho ki Āpiti, Palmerston North. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 8

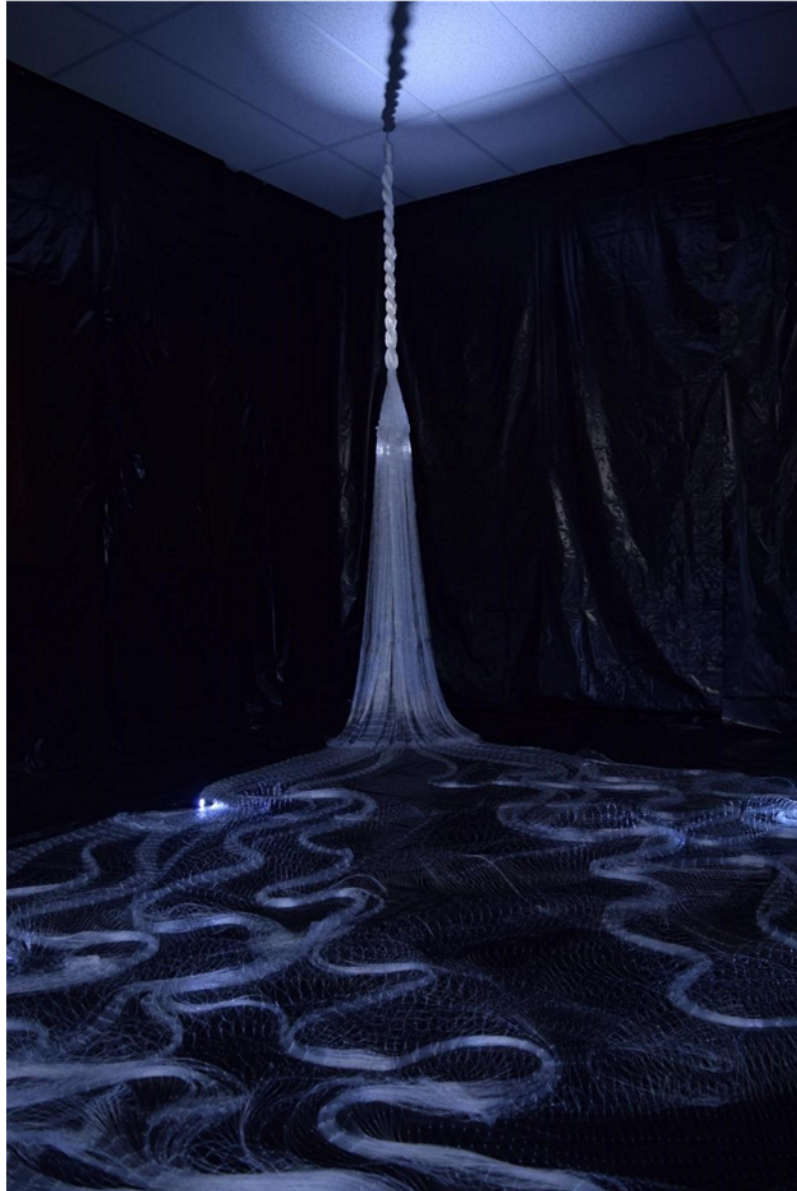
7 interconnected fishing nets



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2017). *Fibres of Our Ropes*. [Fishing net installation]. Toioho ki Āpiti, Palmerston North. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 9

Detail of rear end of sculpture



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2017). *Fibres of Our Ropes*. [Fishing net installation]. Toioho ki Āpiti, Palmerston North. Courtesy of the artist.

This was another large-scale, site-specific installation which built upon the previous research projects. This time, the work drew upon Chinese cosmology to explore the notion of the voyage of humanity from ancient origins to the present day. Like Ngā Aho 绪, the work was a fibre-based sculpture suspended from the ceiling. I used

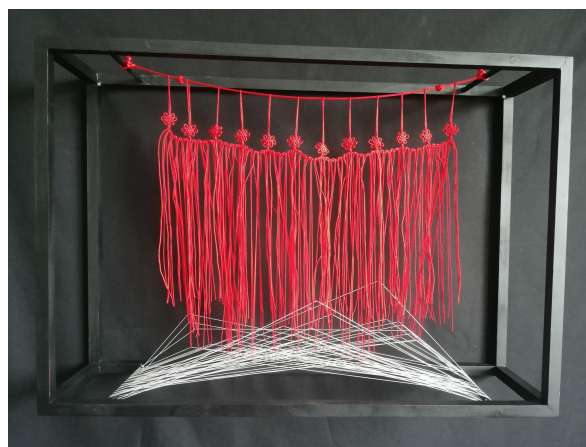
nylon fishing nets made in China, in a configuration which emphasised our common origin, evolution, diversification, multiplication, and reunification towards a progressive goal, whilst also alluding to the figure of a boat, the ocean, fishing, and voyaging. This work utilised lighting, electric fans, and a video projection of the ocean, to illuminate the work and emphasise movement and the flow of the qi spirit flowing through the physical reality.

Equilibrium Series 2018

This series of works were developmental works in which I was exploring smaller scale sculptures which could be sold. These works used cotton threads and wooden frames. The smaller scale works focused on the relationship between heaven and earth. One of the works, entitled *Disrupted Equilibrium* emphasised the chaos of disorderly relationships within the universe. I was also experimenting with the thickness of the lines, the openness of the frames, and combining a simple taaniko technique with Chinese knotting in one of the works. These works led to the making of *Aho Mutungakore* which was selected as a finalist in the 2018 National Contemporary Art Awards. This work explored the unravelling interconnections of threads between heaven and earth.

Figure 10

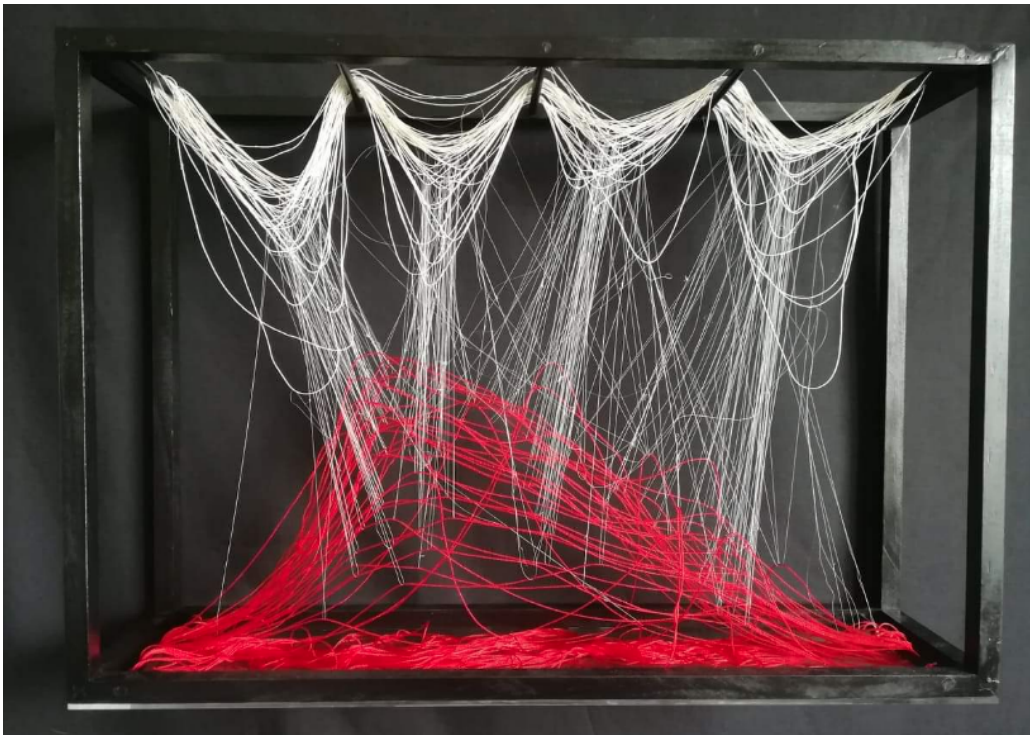
Eternal ties 2018



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2018). *Eternal ties*. [Thread sculpture]. NZ Art Show, Wellington. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 11

Upset Equilibrium 2018



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2018). *Upset Equilibrium*. [Thread sculpture]. NZ Art Show, Wellington. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 7

Interlacing Ties 2018



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2018). *Interlacing Ties*. [Thread sculpture]. NZ Art Show, Wellington. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 8

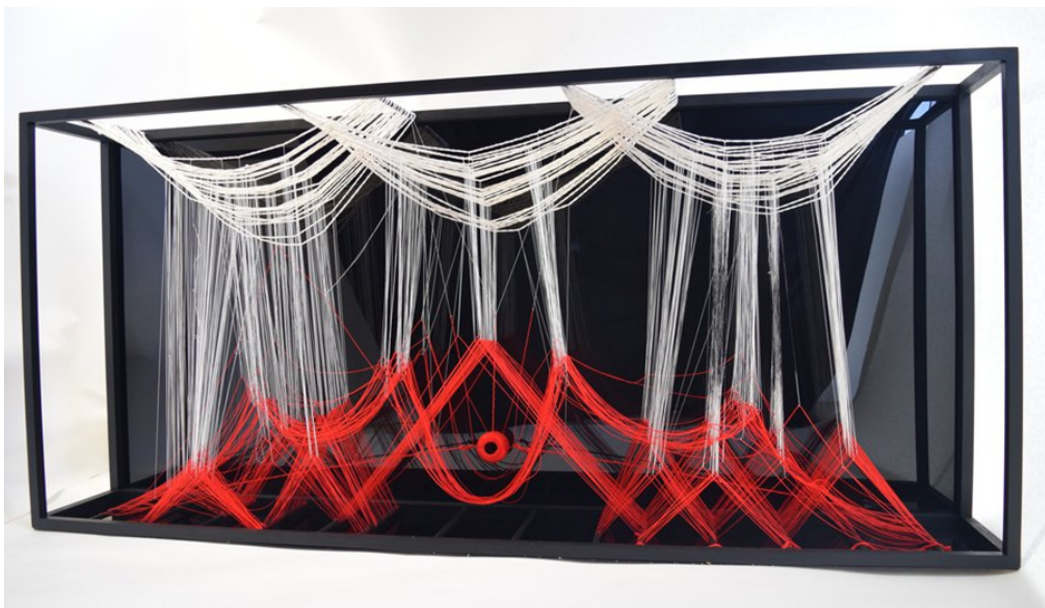
Clouds of Realms 2018



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2018). *Clouds of Realms*. [Thread sculpture]. NZ Art Show, Wellington. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 9

Aho Mutungakore 2018



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2018). *Aho Mutungakore*. [Thread sculpture]. National Contemporary Art Award, Waikato Museum, Waikato. Courtesy of the artist.

Collaborative fibre-based sculptures

I had begun exploring large-scale fibre-based sculpture as a medium for collaborative workshops. These were one-off workshops held at various other events. Through the workshops, participants would reflect together on key concepts such as the oneness of humanity, the connections between the diverse universe, and the nature of harmonious relationships. Participants would brainstorm images and symbols which represented important aspects of these concepts for them. They would consult and decide on a sculptural form to create, and then create it collectively within an hour. The group would also collectively write a statement about their work. The sculptures were temporary creations which contributed to the wider discourses within the larger hui spaces. Participants also reflected on their experiences. It was found that these workshops stimulated meaningful conversation and collaborative creativity, and that the medium had the potential for collaborative community construction.

Figure 10

Images from workshops 2018-2019



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2018-2019). *Collaborative workshops*. Race Unity Conference, Auckland. Courtesy of the artist.

Shared Lines: Pūtahitanga 2020

Figure 11

Nearness 2020



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2020). *Nearness*. [Papercutting]. Shared Lines: Pūtahitanga, <http://sharedlinesputahitanga.co.nz/>. Courtesy of the artist.

This paper cutting was part of the Shared Lines: Pūtahitanga exhibition. It enabled me to explore cutting out various images that were relevant to the Southern Chinese narrative into card. I was thinking about the interconnectedness and interrelationships between the forms, and the duality of form and its surrounding environment. Homeland was another work that engaged with the cut-out technique.

Figure 12

Homeland 2020



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2020). *Homeland*. [Papercutting]. Private Collection. Courtesy of the artist.

Kāpuia Ngā Aho 單絲不綫 2022

Figure 13

Mulberry Paper cuttings 2022



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2022). *Kāpuia Ngā Aho 單絲不綫*. [Papercutting]. The Physics Room, Christchurch. Courtesy of The Physics Room.

While developing my research proposal for this doctoral thesis, I had initially intended to focus on creative community collaboration which would represent an actual fostering of harmonious relationships which my previous work was discussing. My supervisor advised me not to take on the difficulties and complexities that community collaboration might bring for doctoral study, but instead directed me back towards a Chinese-Māori research focus. I followed his advice, but hoped that I could still collaborate with others in some way as part of the research. I came across a photo of a work by artist Wai Ching Chan, in which she had constructed a series of Chinese knots along a single cord suspended from the ceiling to the floor. It was an image of a concept that I had also envisioned, so I contacted her with the hope that we might one day be able to collaborate. Eventually she invited me to work with her on an exhibition commissioned by the Physics Room.

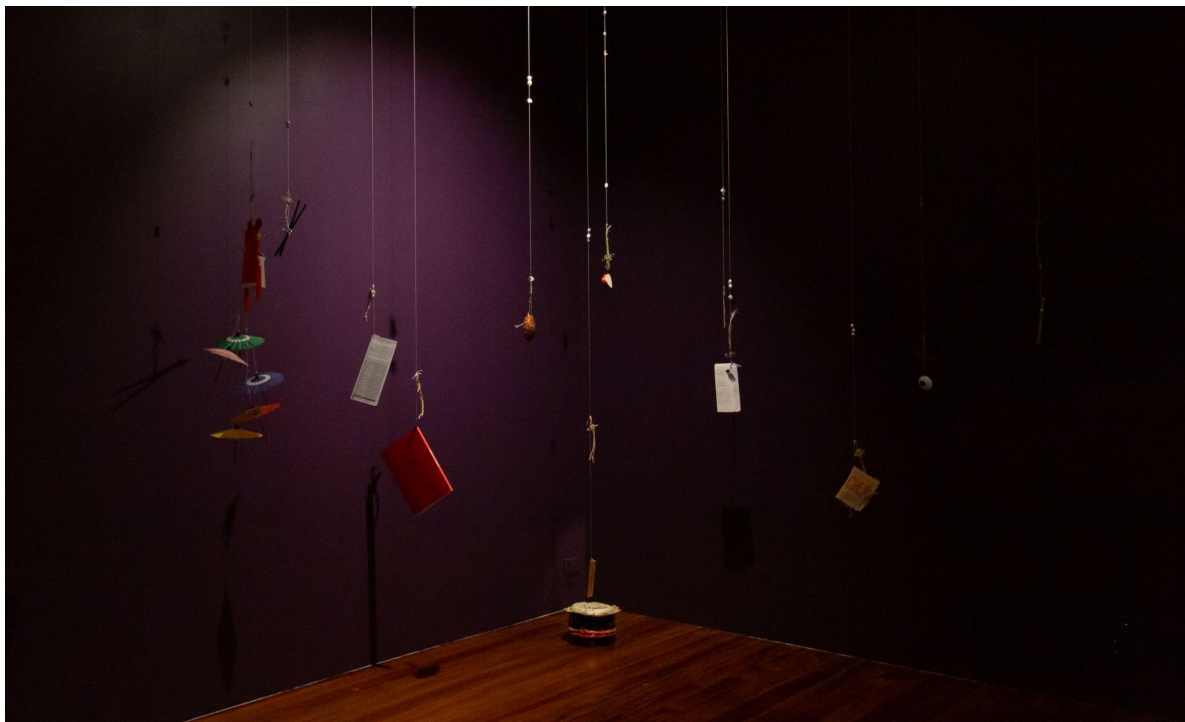
In *Kāpuia Ngā Aho 單絲不綫*, we focused on the origin narrative of the Goddess Nuwa, in which she cuts off the legs of a giant turtle named Ao to use as pillars to prop up the sky. This was another site-specific installation. We each created half of

the space separately from where we each resided. We utilised the two pillars which were already in the gallery space. I enwrapped one of these pillars with manila rope knotted in the DNA form, and another with blue Chinese knotting cord and a variety of oyster, paua, mother of pearl shells and fishing sinkers. Wai created two other pillars by suspending knotted and crocheted yarn. We each created ends of Nuwa's helix shaped scaly tail; she crocheted red yarn, and I cut into mulberry paper which was illuminated from behind.

At this stage in my doctoral research, I had been uncovering information about the ancient material culture of Southern China and migrations into Oceania. This exhibition provided a space to explore using materials relevant to the migration story. I discovered the difficulties of using manila rope, of cutting into fibrous mulberry paper, and drilling shells.

Figure 14

Objects contributed by Chinese New Zealanders



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2022). *Kāpuia Ngā Aho 單絲不綫*. [Object contributions]. The Physics Room, Christchurch. Courtesy of The Physics Room.

We also experienced the act of inviting other Chinese New Zealanders to contribute objects and stories which symbolised their Chinese-New Zealand heritage. We also gifted the contributors Pan Chang knots which we made from local harakeke and silk blends.

The contributors were invited to tell their stories and meet each other at the opening event and later at an online event. We shared Chinese tea and sweets at the opening, and placed lighted incense outside the gallery space at the opening, which was something I continued to explore for the *Movements from Pearl Rivers* exhibition.

This project helped me learn a great deal about what was possible for collaborating with the community within a gallery exhibition context.

Figure 15

Gallery space with 4 pillars and red crocheted tail



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2022). *Kāpuia Ngā Aho* 單絲不綫. [Fibre Installation]. The Physics Room, Christchurch. Courtesy of The Physics Room.

Figure 16

Lineage of Nuwa



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2022). *Kāpuia Ngā Aho* 單絲不綫. [Fibre Installation]. The Physics Room, Christchurch. Courtesy of The Physics Room.

Figure 17

Gallery space with paper cuttings



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2022). *Kāpuia Ngā Aho* 單絲不綫. [Fibre Installation]. The Physics Room, Christchurch. Courtesy of The Physics Room.

Figure 18

Pillar with shells and Chinese knotting cord



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2022). *Kāpuia Ngā Aho* 單絲不綫. [Fibre Installation]. The Physics Room, Christchurch. Courtesy of The Physics Room.

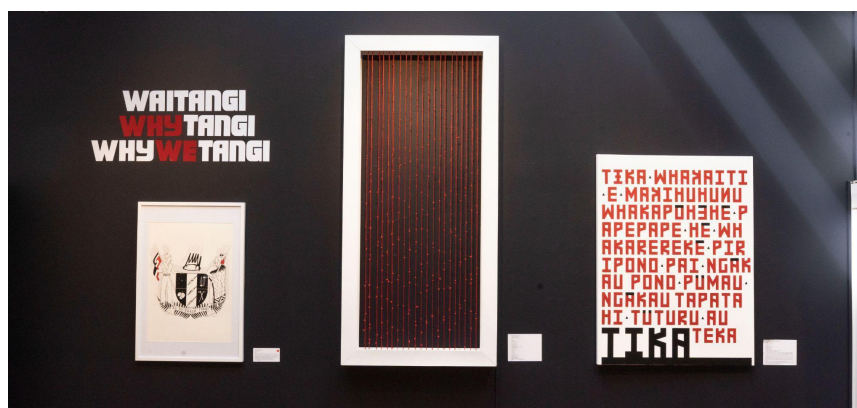
Heke Roimata 2022

This work was created for the WaitangiWhytangiWhywetangi exhibition. I had already constructed the knotted cords with the vision for using them in *Movements from Pearl Rivers*. When I was invited to contribute a work to the Waitangi exhibition, I used it as an opportunity to construct the electronic component which would rotate the knotted cords. As it needed to be a standalone work for the Waitangi exhibition, we constructed a frame for the cords which could be hung on a wall. It was a success, however the motor began to stall whenever a series of knots caught on the rod at the same time. While I had hoped that the rods which turned the threads would be grooved bamboo, my husband did not think that the bamboo would be even enough for the cords to rotate around safely, and I did not source a machine which could groove the rod. We resolved the issue by winding electrical tape at regular intervals around the rod and then painting the whole thing white.

The Whytangi exhibition toured to Whakatane, and I had another opportunity to refine the motor and frame construction. The first frame design, which my husband constructed, was changed from a mitered frame to a flat face frame cut out of a single piece of MDF in order to both look better and to be stronger.

Figure 19

Heke Roimata 2022



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2022). *Heke Roimata*. [Motorised thread sculpture].

Waitangi,Whytangi,Whywetangi. The Square Edge, Palmerston North. Courtesy of the artist.

Movements from Pearl Rivers 2023

The cascading cords

Figure 20

Cascading cords 2023



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2023). *Movements from Pearl Rivers*. [Motorised cords]. Te Manawa Museum of Science and Art, Palmerston North. Courtesy of the artist.

The artworks created for *Movements from Pearl Rivers* were developed over several years. My husband, Bruce, assisted me to construct the frames for the various works over the years, and also refined the design of the motorised boxes over time. The frames were rectangular in shape, and had been constructed in such a way as to be positioned on both the top and bottom ends, which also concealed the motor and rod that turned the threads. Ideally I would have preferred to use grooved bamboo rods at both ends which would be visible, while the motor would be attached and

concealed at the top using another material coherent with the narrative I was exploring. Due to lack of time to experiment further, we continued to use dowels with electrical tape ridges concealed with electrical heat shrink material. They served their purpose. The box frames were constructed from MDF and painted white. When installing these boxes it became apparent that while the bottom box mirrored the top, it was bulky and unnecessary. We decided to leave the bottom rod exposed, for people to see the rod rotating in the air as the cords pulled it.

It was initially envisioned that there would be five sets of cord boxes within the space, but it became apparent that three boxes sufficiently filled the space, and that allowing the boxes to be spread further apart enabled light to create shadows which did not bleed onto each other. Two boxes were then omitted which were destined to have 'afa, muka, hemp, and silk blended cords. The fibres that remained were all from Southern China: bamboo, banana, silk, cotton, and Chinese knotting cord. The nylon Chinese knotting cord was the only non-natural material in my artwork. It was accepted into the body of work given the significance that this material has with Chinese visual culture, with Chinese knotting, and with its vibrant visual effect.

Ideally, the installation of artwork would also have been coherent with the conceptual framework and line of material I was exploring. I had imagined, for example, using paper, cloth, cord, bamboo, and internal illumination in place of perspex, screws, MDF, plywood, and paint. This was, however, beyond the scope of the current research, and the installation methods normal for the gallery were used.

Bamboo

Bamboo was utilised to suspend the paper scrolls upon. The natural nodes of the bamboo create regular intervals to interact with. Since the Ngā Aho 绪 project, I have been learning about harvesting and using bamboo, yet there is still a great deal to learn, and the opportunity to learn from experienced experts from Asia has not been available to me here. Therefore, my use of bamboo has been very basic, simply as a natural frame for the fibre-based work.

It became apparent that one of the motors was becoming noisier overtime. I decided the space would benefit from a bamboo flute audio, which would communicate with the bamboo rods already in the exhibition. I asked a close friend, Saia Tu'itahi, if he had any audio tracks of his bamboo flute which I could play in the exhibition space. He immediately sent through several beautiful tracks. The flutes he makes are the Fangufangu, a Tongan nose flute, made from bamboo grown in Aotearoa. The bamboo nose flute can be found throughout Oceania, Southeast Asia, and Southern China. The oldest recorded bamboo flute is from China. The sound of the bamboo flute is timeless, its rhythms follow the rhythms of nature, and it is associated cross-culturally with the spirit. The bamboo flute represents another connection in material cultural heritage across the region.

Figure 21

Bamboo scrolls



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2023). *Movements from Pearl Rivers*. [Bamboo scrolls]. Te Manawa Museum of Science and Art, Palmerston North. Courtesy of the artist.

The Papercuttings

Throughout the doctoral study I had been experimenting with cutting different papers, using different knives, and had been thinking about different ways to suspend the paper. For the paper cuttings for Kāpuia Ngā Aho 單絲不綫 I had used a large mulberry paper. This paper was not actually ideal for paper cutting as it was fibrous, and was left very fragile after cutting. I had glued the cutting to another paper to resolve this issue, but the papers did not perfectly align together using this process. Eventually I found that the red rice paper was very good for cutting. While at

the outset I was not sure how I would present it, it became apparent that if it was suspended vertically it would communicate with the cascading cords. They were then wound around bamboo poles to allude to various Chinese visual conventions, such as vertical scroll paintings, calligraphy, and the relationship between heaven and earth.

Figure 22

Papercutting detail



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2023). *Movements from Pearl Rivers*. [Papercutting]. Te Manawa Museum of Science and Art, Palmerston North. Courtesy of the artist.

The woven objects

Each of these objects were among my first attempts to weave them. Throughout my upbringing over the years I have had the opportunity under many different teachers, to learn to weave with harakeke and pandanus. I applied this knowledge to weave the Southern Chinese hats. While I do not consider these creations to be perfect, and I am not displaying them for the purpose of demonstrating highly skilled weaving, I am displaying them merely to highlight a connection across weaving conventions between Southern China, Oceania, and Aotearoa. With the work, I am also asking the question as to whether it is acceptable for me as a descendant of the Southern Chinese dispersal to weave these Southern Chinese objects from local materials using the weaving knowledge which has been given to me throughout my upbringing. If it is unacceptable for me to use this knowledge in this way, in what context can I use this knowledge? Throughout the duration of this artistic journey, I had sought opportunities to learn Southern Chinese arts and crafts. I even began to plan a trip to

Southern China before COVID 19 intervened. However, none of these opportunities became possible for me during this time, nor have I ever had any opportunities throughout my life. Therefore, by weaving these objects, I am presenting an honest personal journey of seeking connections, and I am hoping that it will be accepted that this has been the most natural way for me to use the opportunities that have been given to me, to highlight a connection.

Figure 23

Woven objects



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2023). *Movements from Pearl Rivers*. [Woven objects]. Te Manawa Museum of Science and Art, Palmerston North. Courtesy of Te Manawa Museum of Science and Art.

Community Contributions

The initial pool of people I spoke with about contributing to this exhibition was much larger. Many however, lacked the time, were going through health difficulties, or did not feel a strong enough connection to China. In the end, 8 contributors offered their objects and stories.

It was decided that each object needed its own individualised shelf. This enabled the objects to be arranged along the wall in a flowing manner which communicated to the rest of the movement in the exhibition, while also not isolating the objects from each other. Some of the objects were precious and needed to be encased. I did not want the acrylic cases to make the objects feel like museum artefacts, rather, I wanted to show that these were living objects of connection between people, culture, and place. Therefore, the acrylic boxes and shelves were created to to be as minimal as possible..

The booklet of stories enabled the contributors to share their perspectives. As these were diverse residents of Manawatū, I wanted to allow them to share whatever they were motivated to share, and at whatever length they desired. This meant that some of the statements were one paragraph while others were several pages. I am happy with what they shared. If there was further time, I would make commentary on these objects, and on the diversity and common points of the contributors' stories. I would also be interested to create more community spaces for people of diverse backgrounds who share Southern Chinese ancestry to learn about our shared history and context. While I had intended to hand make the booklet of stories using mulberry paper, I lacked the time to take on another task, and in the end used a printery to print the booklet. The ultimate result served the purpose fine, and was also gifted to the contributors.

Figure 24

Community object contributions



Note. Ma'auga. T. (2023). *Movements from Pearl Rivers*. [Community object contributions]. Te Manawa Museum of Science and Art, Palmerston North. Courtesy of the artist.

Conclusion

While each of these projects entailed their own long detailed processes of evolution, they also represent stages of development leading towards *Movements from Pearl Rivers*. The threads which are found in the Silk Ties series unravel throughout each subsequent project to the most recent exhibition of *Movements from Pearl Rivers*. The threads of this learning do not start and end within this scope however. The influences and explorations preceding Silk Ties, even if they sit outside of fibre-based medium or conceptually Chinese focused work, have still provided a foundation for these explorations to begin. *Movements from Pearl Rivers*, despite being the culmination of this long research journey, also represents a point of learning along an unfurling journey, which will evolve and progress overtime.

This exhibition conveyed connections flowing from Southern China to Aotearoa through a site-specific installation of a body of artwork. The cascading knotted cords conveyed a notion of the ever-flowing spirit, flowing through genealogy and realms; connecting time, people, and places. The paper cuttings presented a narrative of the long evolutionary journey of Southern China, from cosmological origins to the ancient and more recent outward waves of migrations from those shores. The woven objects highlighted an ancient connection in Southern Chinese and Oceanic weaving heritage. The objects offered by diverse, local residents of the Manawatū who descend from the 19th Century Southern Chinese global dispersal grounded the installation in the present lived context; reinforcing connections between descendants and our evolution from cosmological origins.