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TAA =====><=====

=><==== E KŌRERO ANA

MARKS THAT SPEAK =====><



An exhibition report presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Māori Visual Arts

At Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

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2023

Abstract

This exhibition report is in support of the exhibition *Taa e kōrero ana - Marks that speak* held at Edith Gallery, Whanganui 30th September - 14th October 2023. It outlines the research that underpins the exhibition and personally peels back the layers of colonisation within my upbringing and print practice as a colonised Māori printmaker.

I have a 20 year career as a printmaker and am a founding member of Toi Whakaata - Māori print collective established in Whanganui in 2006. Over that time we have continuously discussed what is Māori printmaking? How can we ground our print practice within a Māori framework in an authentic way that maintains the integrity of both the print process and Māori world view. Nearly 20 years later this research contributes to that discussion by looking carefully at the introduction of the printing press albeit a letter press, and finally outlining aspects of a Māori approach to printmaking as developed over time.

Formally- this is a historical account of the introduction of the printing press to Aotearoa in the early 1800's and the implications within Māori culture. Introduced by the missionaries I critically discuss the need for, and the creation of a written Māori language to evangelise and civilise the Māori people. The introduction of literacy and text into Aotearoa had some expected and unexpected outcomes that are discussed further.

The reclamation of text as visual culture is explored through artists' models and a brief reflection on previous bodies of work made within my career since graduating with a Bachelor Of Fine Arts in 2002. This is followed by an in depth analysis of *Social Amnesia*, my first year MMVA exhibition in 2019 and finally *Taa e kōrero ana - Marks that speak*, 2023. The research and exhibition sheds light on the dual worlds I have had to navigate as a Catholic Māori woman and reflects on the effects of colonisation through religion, education and media. This work is a purposeful step towards decolonising myself through my print practice and I hope it will be able to assist others in doing the same.

Acknowledgements

Ka rongo au ki te rākau, ka rongo au ki taku tuākana
Ka rongo au ki te hau, ka rongo au ki te hauora
Ka rongo au ki te wai, ka rongo au ki te waiora
Ka au tonu nei he uri no Ranginui rāua ko Papatūānuku
Mai te whenua ki Ranginui ko ēnei taku Ao whakahirahira
He kākano au i ruia mai i Rangīātea
Tihei mauri ora

Thanks to all those who supported me through this journey.

To my kaiako and mentors for the support and knowledge shared over the years. Marty Vreede, Marilyn Vreede, Gabrielle Belz, Faith McManus & Kura Te Waru Rewiri tēnā koutou kātoa.

Toi Whakaata, my Māori print whanau - nga mihi nui ki a koutou, so much of this work is inspired by our many discussions, aspirations and inspiration over the many years we have shared together.

To my wider whanau whānui, friends and fellow ink slingers of the world he mihi mahana ki a koutou.

To my whānau, the mihi aroha.

My dad, I am forever grateful.

My son, always so proud of you.

My husband, thank you for believing in me.

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Introduction

“One quality in this many-stranded culture is so ingrained and widespread as to be easily overlooked. This is our dependence on the technology of printing. Printing, in all its phases of production, distribution, and reception influences our lives at every turn from cradle to grave. By means of printing we communicate, express ourselves, and store information. For Māori, print has been the most dramatic challenge to a 900-year oral tradition. To belong to our modern society is to have to cope with the printed word in all its forms”. (Harvey et al. p.11)

This exhibition report has as its focus my thesis exhibition *Taa e Kōrero ana - Marks that speak*, presented at Edith Gallery in Whanganui 30th September - 14th October, 2023. The excerpt above sets the stage for the research undertaken to create this body of work which was inspired by the question: What were the effects for Māori with the introduction of the printing press to Aotearoa in the early 1800's?

It is important to note that I am a visual arts printmaker who makes imagery on a roll-through etching press. The first printing presses to be introduced to Aotearoa were letterpress, designed to print posters, notices, pamphlets and book pages. This is an important distinction, as a visual artist I am aware of an artistic culture around letterpress art but up until now had little interest in this approach. I am instead interested in developing a Māori approach to visual printmaking that reflects a Māori worldview.

The introduction of the letterpress to Aotearoa is comparable in its revolutionary effect to the more recent introduction of the internet into our lives in the 1990's. Whenever, and wherever the printing press was introduced into societies throughout history the impact was long lasting. Here I explore some of those impacts, by firstly looking at aspects of what was required to effectively establish a printing press in Aotearoa at that time, some of the expected outcomes and more interestingly the unexpected outcomes that would transpire.

Chapter one, explores the historical accounts of the introduction of the printing press and consequently the evolution of an oral language to that of a written language for Māori.

Highlighting the role and aim of the missionaries as the first teachers of literacy to Māori, and the attempted indoctrination of Māori. The second part of that chapter looks at some of the expected outcomes and some of the unexpected outcomes that would in turn set the

foundations for future discourse to this day. Including evangelisation of a large portion of Māori, the writing and signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the impact and growth of Māori newspapers authored by both non-Māori and Māori and the rise and success of Māori religious movements throughout the 1800's.

Chapter two, explores the reclamation of text through the works of four wahine Māori artists, Tracey Tawhiao, Saffron Te Ratana, Charlotte Graham and Dorothy Waetford. The work of these women supports my research and art both critically and technically through their reclamation of text to invite and challenge the viewer. Following this I acknowledge the influence of Toi Whakaata - Māori print collective. I am a founding member of this group and the work developed within this roopu (group) is a huge influence on how I approach my printmaking. I take time to explain a Māori approach to 'print' as an underpinning structure within the making and installation of the final exhibition.

Chapter three, is an intensive reflection on text as a recurring theme throughout my career. Starting in 2002 with my graduate exhibition, touching on a few bodies of work throughout and culminating in an analysis of my first year Masters of Māori Visual Arts exhibition, *Social Amnesia*, 2019.

Chapter four critically analyses my final MMVA exhibition *Taa e kōrero ana - Marks that speak*, 2023. Here I investigate text as a mechanism for colonisation through legislation, education, religion and media. I identify myself as a colonised wahine Māori and this research has enabled me to come full circle with myself, shedding some of those layers of colonisation. Through this conscious act I aspire to decolonise myself through my art making practice.

Chapter five concludes with a light reflection on the response from the audience. I spent most days based in the exhibition as a purposeful means of manaakitanga¹ and ahi kaa². During this time I was able to engage in a variety of discourse around what people were seeing and experiencing, as well as listening to the work speak, to the marks speak.

¹ Manaakitanga - hospitality, kindness, support, caring for.

² Ahi kaa - burning fires of occupation, to occupy space as a means of claiming space and caring for it.

Chapter One:

A critical analysis of the introduction of the printing press and its effects on Māori.

An oral language translated into text.

I te tīmatanga te Kupu, a i te Atua te Kupu, ko te Atua anō hoki tāua Kupu

I te Atua anō tēnei Kupu i te tīmatanga

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God . John 1.1

(John Chapter 1 - Paipera Tapu, 1868)

1769 was the year that Captain Cook voyaged first to Tahiti, to observe the transit of Venus across the disc of the sun, and second, into the South Pacific in search of the “fabled great southern continent.”⁴ This was the first of three journeys Cook would make to Aotearoa, however, these journeys were not without incident with Māori of the time and there are still mixed emotions about the value and consequence of his arrival to Aotearoa so many years ago. However, during his first journey

Cook would circumnavigate and define the outline of the country. He created charts that would serve navigators for many years after. This journey resulted in some of the first documented words in te reo Māori, although not scientific in their rendering but rather to simply document what they thought they heard as demonstrated here with Cooks rendering of the South Island he recorded its name as Toai Poonamoo as his interpretation of Te Waipounamu⁵.

This was ‘the first time words in Māori

had been written down and subsequently printed and published’ (Harvey et al., 1997, p.17)

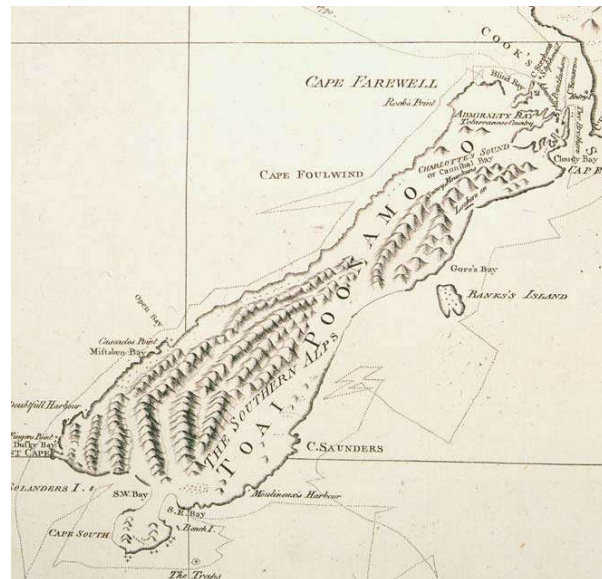


Figure 1 James Cook’s map of South Island 1769³

³ James Cook Map of the South Island, European discovery of New Zealand- Te Ara, 2005.

⁴ (Cook, James – Dictionary of New Zealand Biography – Te Ara, n.d.)

⁵ (Wilson) ‘European discovery of New Zealand - Cooks three voyages’ Te Ara- The encyclopaedia of New Zealand.

This event marked the beginning of what would be a revolutionary change for Māori with ongoing effects to customs, language, sharing of knowledge and beliefs.

It is no revelation that a written language would have a huge impact on Māori society. A written form of Māori language was inevitable, if not by the English then by another invasive force. What is of interest was how Māori responded to it throughout the 1800's to uplift and strengthen their own people. Māori were underestimated at nearly every turn as to their ability to harness and adapt to new technology, to evolve, innovate, transform, translate and reclaim themselves after every attempt to deny Māori of their cultural spirit and identity. Between Cook's initial journey in 1769 and the arrival of the first printing press in 1830 the Māori language was already being 'codified' for the most part without Māori consultation. This is typical of that time as the majority of the first publications and documents were written for Māori by Pakeha but rarely in consultation with Māori. This was natural behaviour for a settler, missionary or government official, as they held at their core a sense of superiority to Māori. This is highlighted by Lee in the preface of his and Kendall's second printed publication⁶ for the instruction of the natives in which they said:

“The furtherance of the Mission, sent out to New Zealand, for the double purpose of civilising and evangelising the Natives of that country, was the general object for which this work⁷ was undertaken.” (Lee & Kendall, 1820, p.ii)

They went onto say *“The particular objects therefore kept in view in this compilation, were, in the first place, to make it useful to the New Zealanders themselves; and, in the second, to their teachers - the Missionaries and settlers.” (Lee & Kendall, 1820, p.ii)*

The second part of this statement is interesting for a few reasons;

1. That Māori were being in print, categorised as New Zealanders even though I greatly doubt any Māori were asked if they were comfortable with this label.
2. That the Missionaries as well as the settlers would be teachers to Māori. Thus reinforcing the view that they were superior to Māori regardless of their status or literacy ability.

⁶ Grammar and Vocabulary of the Language of New Zealand, 1820.

⁷ the creation of a written language and publication of Grammar & Vocabulary of the Language of New Zealand, 1820.

It is this belief that was deeply ingrained in the psyche of a developing colony and continues to be an attitude that prevails today, with many in power believing wholeheartedly that they know what is best for Māori regardless of their lack of research and inability to consider the notion that Māori were and still are quite capable of governing themselves and uplifting their own people, given a real chance. The research uncovered here proves Māori were, as suspected, NOT a dying race requiring the smoothing of a pillow but rather an intelligent, strategic, fierce people who were innovative, adaptable, deep thinkers and socio-economically savvy.

Orthography is understood to be the science of creating a language which results in a conventional spelling and writing system. This requires that the oral language be learnt, analysed and manipulated to obey the conventional structures as understood by the “civilised man”. Only then could the men and women of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), fulfil their purpose to civilise and evangelise Māori.

Thomas Kendall, a lay-teacher for the CMS, based in the Bay of Islands was the first to engage in the work required to establish a Māori text. On his arrival to Aotearoa in 1814 he learnt te reo Māori and devised the first iteration of a Māori alphabet. How did he do this and did he include Māori in his construction of what would become the building blocks of a revolutionary technology to Māori? It would seem not until later years would Māori have any meaningful influence on the nuances of the Māori written language, and to this end many dialectical differences and clarity of vowel length would be omitted resulting in what would come to be known as ‘classical Māori’. The notion that dialectal differences were synonymous with Māori identity was of no concern to the missionaries as standardisation would be the strategy moving forward to unify all Māori under one God.

By 1815 Kendall had identified 14 letters to be sufficient to record te reo Māori.

One critical issue around the creation of a Māori text is, who is the authority? The missionary saw themselves as the authority on religion and orthography and the settlers as the authority on civilisation and governance. The orthographer here is not indigenous and manipulates the Māori oral language to conform to an English format from their own, English perspective. By diminishing any authority Māori might have over the creation of their own written language, Māori were placed at a disadvantage.

‘As a direct result of colonisation, is the fact that Māori use of writing and print is complicated by two languages’ (Harvey et al., 1997, p.7).

This meant the limited ‘classical Māori’ produced in a foreign code, used and taught throughout the country needed to be understood and mastered by Māori of all dialects if Māori were to progress. Fortunately, Māori were adept at reading symbols and took to reading reasonably well.

‘Māori appeared to acquire scriptural literacy easily... Bishop Pompallier believed that Māori could read within three months "as they would persevere endlessly with slates in hand". Māori eagerly taught other Māori, helping to spread the novelty of literacy and the Gospel.’ (Warren, 2015)



Figure 2 Reverend Thomas Kendall and Māori chiefs Hongi and Waikato, James Bury (1820). Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

The Bible; A tool for colonisation or liberation?

‘The Bible, the sole literature for many for a long time (well into the 20th century it was the only literature in Māori some read)...’ (Harvey et al., 1997, p.29).

It was by becoming literate that Māori exposed themselves to colonisation of the mind and spirit. As referenced in his article⁸ Dr Hirini Kaa⁹ says, ‘The late Ranginui Walker... once

⁸ When Christianity came to Aotearoa: 150 years of The Bible in te reo Māori. The Spinoff

⁹ An ordained Anglican Minister and historian of Ngāti Porou and Ngāti Kahungunu descent.

described Christianity as ‘total colonisation... in that it involved cultural invasion and colonisation of the minds of the invaded as well’. (Kaa, 2018) . Dr Kaa admits that Walker was right but goes on to say that there is more to translating the gospel than a literal one, but rather a cultural translation is required saying:

“Christianity, as expressed through the Bible, is actually always “translated” into a culture. So, while the missionaries read it as English (men) influenced by centuries of European thought, Māori were always going to read the Bible as Māori.” (Kaa, 2018)

Dr Kaa argues that the Bible was in actuality a tool for liberation, *“Te Paipera Tapu (The Holy Bible) that underpinned Christianity was so much more than the missionaries understood. When combined with mātauranga Māori (indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing) and indigenous agency, all around the world it became a source of liberation and release, inspiring multiple generations and countless movements to seek and achieve freedom.” (Kaa, 2018)*

Although Kaa is an Anglican minister it appears he attributes the emergence of Māori prophets and movements such as Te Ua Haumene of the Pai Marire faith¹⁰, Te Kooti of the Ringatu Faith¹¹ and Tahupōtiki Ratana of the Ratana¹² movement as directly inspired by Te Paipera Tapu (the Holy Bible). Prophecy has always been an important part of customary Māori society as overseen by tohunga¹³ and matakite¹⁴ but with the introduction of Christianity to Aotearoa Māori prophecy had a whole new narrative to establish itself within. Māori not only adopted christianity but once the lessons were learnt and the limitations were apparent many took ownership of it and translated it through a Māori-centric worldview. Indoctrination is the process of teaching a person or group to accept a set of beliefs uncritically. I think it is fair to say that even though many Māori were successfully indoctrinated, complete indoctrination was not achieved. Dr Kaa said it earlier, when combined with mātauranga Māori (Māori world view) and Māori agency, the Holy Bible becomes Te Paipera Tapu, uniquely Māori and of its own time and place. These religious

¹⁰ Pai Marire movement emerged in 1862 in the South-West Taranaki region after Te Ua had a vision of archangel Gabrielle. Also referred to as Hauhau, Pai Marire were seen as violent rebels by settlers and some other Māori.

¹¹ Emerged in the mid 1860's it translates to the upraised hand and was founded by Te Kooti Arikirangi te Tūruki after he had a vision whilst in captivity on Chatham Island between 1866 -1868.

¹² Tahupōtiki Ratana was prophesied as he who would emerge from the mouth Whangaehu River not far south from Whanganui, holding the Te Tiriti in one hand and Te Paipera Tapu in the other.

¹³ Spiritual guide - reader of the signs

¹⁴ Seers - A Māori person with supernatural insight who sees visions of the future

movements were acts of self-determination by Māori for Māori and support the reality that although colonisation was in full swing, the English would have to adapt and pivot at every turn to keep up with Māori innovation and aspiration.

Mana Māori - Māori literature by Māori for Māori

The Māori language dominated print in the 1800's,

“Of other forms of publishing in the 19th century, little now stands out apart from Māori publications. The largest New Zealand book of the 19th century was the Māori Bible”.
(Harvey et al., 1997, p.147)

However, the issue of authority was to become a catalyst for fundamental shifts in the future of Aotearoa. Although the language being used in the early to mid-1800's was Māori, the source was not. The author was still Pakeha and the authority still lay with them. It would not be until the mid-1800's that Māori would be authors of their own narratives, opinions and aspirations. Keenan discusses issues of the influence of the written word in his essay, *Aversion to print? Māori resistance to the written word* (Keenan, 2000, p.17). Here he highlights and critically discusses the impact of the written word on oral culture referencing the opinions and research of the late D.F McKenzie¹⁵.

“Māori people had much to gain by learning how to read and write. However, once committed to paper, words acquired status, and power, as Māori were to discover in a range of historical contexts” (Keenan, 2000, p.17)

By comparing the cultural status of oral discourse by Māori with the permanent status of the written word by Pakeha, McKenzie highlights the differing approaches describing it as two 'different and competitively powerful realities' (Keenan, 2000, p.18).

McKenzie uses the most historically controversial context as the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi¹⁶ as his test case and Keenan reflects on his findings by saying,

¹⁵ A professor of English and specialist in bibliographic studies.

¹⁶ also known as The Treaty of Waitangi; a written agreement between the tangata whenua and the British Crown.

“McKenzie saw the Treaty signing process as representing a ‘remarkable moment’. What we saw at Waitangi, he argued, were European assumptions about the ‘comprehension, status and binding power of written statements and written consent’ coming up against the ‘flexible accommodations of oral consent’. And he concluded, the flexible accommodation of oral consent - and the Māori people - lost out.” (Keenan, 2000, p.18)

Did Māori understand as Pakeha would have, that by signing the treaty document at that time, they were agreeing that what was written would be eternally binding? And what was their understanding of eternally binding? Did they also understand what would become the most critical concern of the treaty, that continues to provide endless examples of contention today is that two versions were written for two audiences, one in te reo Māori and one in English and that the majority of Māori who signed it, signed the Māori version. Each holds different meanings. This resulted in Māori and Pākehā having different expectations of the Treaty’s terms. Since then, reconciling these differences has presented Aotearoa/New Zealand with ongoing challenges.

This document was meant to formalise a partnership, a unified understanding between Rangatira Māori (Māori Chief) who represented their respective iwi and the British Crown and its constituents but also highlights the vast differences of two peoples of the time. If we have learnt anything from the past our world needs to be co-constructed as the carelessness to which the Treaty document was put together highlights the limitations of those who authored it.

The Māori Language Newspapers 1840 onwards

As stated above, it wouldn’t be until the mid 1800’s that Māori would become authors and take full advantage of the written word. This voice would come in the form of Māori language newspapers personified as birds sent out to spread the news of the people across the land, or waka (canoe) navigating the changing world, or stars in the night sky as a guide to its people. The first Māori language newspapers produced in the early 1800’s would be, as per usual of the time, Pakeha authored. Produced by the government and described by Jenifer Curnow in her essay *A brief history of Māori language newspapers*, “for colonising purposes... Māori being the only language available in which colonial authorities could exploit the power of print.” (Curnow et al, 2002, p.17) She goes on to say “Governor Hobson recognised both the power of print to inform and instruct, and the high literacy rate among

Māori.” (Curnow et al, 2002, p.18) This meant he saw the newspaper as a means to mass educate or at the very least, influence Māori to the ways of the colonial world.

The first publication would be *Ko te Karere o Niu Tireni*¹⁷. Funded by the government, it was a bilingual press, as was common. There would be numerous other church and philanthropic driven publications in the same style, but these could only operate as long as they did not contradict the narrative of the government of the time. It would be some years later, beginning in 1862 into the early 1900’s, that Māori owned newspapers would flourish. By this time Māori were actively literate and were consuming all manner of information from scripture to publications, it was also this consumption that would lead Māori to start questioning aspects of colonial protocol. Mainly the introduction of laws and restrictions, and the activity of land acquisition. Māori were forming their own thoughts and concerns and as a result the Kingitanga movement happened. Its aim, to establish a role equal to the status of the monarch of the British colonists, as a way of halting the alienation of Māori land. The first entirely owned and produced Māori language publication was *Te Hokioi o Niu Tireni e Rere Atu na*¹⁸, the publication of King Tawhiao Pōtatau Te Wherowhero. Like Hobson, Te Wherowhero saw the power of the newspaper as a mechanism for mass influence and education of his people. Of this phase of flourishing Curnow says: *“This medium was used to apprise the government and pakeha of Māori opinion, to unify Māori thought and action, particularly in regard to land, and to educate Māori about their own society and the world.”* (Curnow et al., 2002, p.17)

Even though *Te Hokioi* would only last one year, it was the beginning of a wave of Māori literature by Māori, for Māori, and was an assertive statement to the government that Māori were not by any stretch of the imagination a dying race and would not be so easily assimilated.

Conclusion

At every evolution Māori demonstrated self-determination and a commitment to their own customs and beliefs by taking what was introduced and transforming it into uniquely Māori versions. We see this with the adaptation of the Holy Bible to establish new Māori religious movements such as Pai Marire, Ringatu and Ratana. Years after the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi we see the evolution of Māori governance with the establishment of the Kingitanga in response to growing concerns around land grabbing. The development of Māori owned and

¹⁷ 1842 – 63 of varying titles

¹⁸ The War Bird of New Zealand in flight to you. January - May 1963

operated newspapers, in particular *Te Hokioi* as powerful tools to unify, educate and uplift Māori. These were all successful examples of a thriving race in the face of assimilation. A common thread in all these evolutions was the purposeful and powerful use of te reo Māori. Te reo Māori was the common ground shared by Pakeha and Māori both oral, and in print in the 1800's, but this would change dramatically in the new century. The 1900's would see a decline in Māori produced newspapers and in Māori literature due to a decline in the use of te reo Māori altogether. With the establishment of native schools, which would forbid the speaking and writing of te reo Māori the language would come under threat and would almost be lost.

The power of the word remains true, but issues around oral vs written, authority and comprehension also remain. As I write this our people chant a call to arms for Toitu te Tiriti - Honour the Treaty, because those new in power are looking to revise the Treaty of Waitangi as a national document. Our knee jerk reaction is of distrust as to what the government's motives are. But perhaps this is an opportunity for us as Māori. Knowing what we know now about the power of a written word, about the importance of shared comprehension, perhaps it is time to revisit and rewrite the treaty as a future focused nation, but the question is, who will be the author?

Chapter Two: Literature review - Artist models

Reclamation of text as visual culture.

I investigated Māori artists who have used text as an active component of their art practice, and although there are many men that come to mind, I chose to restrict my investigation to female artists of Māori descent. Any other artists mentioned here are in a secondary comparative or contrasting role.

I will look at Tracey Tawhiao's newspaper paintings, Saffronn Te Ratana's sculptural painting and Charlotte Grahams flag works in relation to Dorothy Waetford's ceramics works that deal with the order of the vowels AEIOU, as IOEAU. Other influential artists or collectives are further explored in Chapter three - Methodology where appropriate. The artworks selected here contribute to the critical and theoretical development within my research by asking the question:

‘How does text contribute to the meaning or activate the function of this work?’

Tracey Tawhiao - Ngai Te Rangi, Whakatohea, Ngāti Tuwharetoa

“The paternalism in Law towards Māori horrified me. The Resource management Act just annoyed the hell out of me. The tone was.... You can have YOUR land back to use and live on but here are the rules.” (Severin, 2015)

Tracey Tawhiao's newspaper paintings remind us of the power and influence of the written word in contemporary media. Her art practice employs the unconventional art material of newspapers.

“This newspaper series has its origins in Tawhiao's youth, when as a way of brightening up her grandparents' home on Matakana Island, she suggested redecorating their newspaper covered walls with colourful murals. While completing this project she noticed the negative connotations in the headlines and decided to embark on her series of artworks that subvert the truth of the daily news”. (Severin, 2015)

Tawhiao's continued use of this media evolved from her interest in the written word and text and is an extension of her live performances in which she highlights the oral aspect of Māori history. In the work *Pito*, Tawhiao takes six sections of newspaper and works directly and responsively by replacing blocks of text with blocks of green, white and black acrylic paint. Layering spaces with colour and recolonising the page with Māori inspired imagery reminiscent of whenua (land), Te Po (the great night) and Te Ao Marama (The world of light). However, in the top left panel she has left one word from the original text. 'Slave' is left bare, framed in black and white acrylic paint flanked by naively drawn blue mangopare or mangotipi motifs.



Figure 3 Pito, acrylic & oil pastel on newspaper, 2000.

These motifs in Māori design represent strength and speed and sit in direct contrast to the word slave. Tawhiao purposefully frames this English word conjuring up questions for the viewer, who are the slaves? The incorporation of Māori motif would suggest it is Māori who

are slaves, but perhaps we are all slaves to the system ruled by our constructed perceptions and bias? Here she reclaims published text as visual culture by painting over it, leaving only a clue of what was and re-indigenising white space. In the bottom left panel is written in Māori, AO MARAMA which means world of light and refers to the world we live in today. Stated in Māori text and in capital letters Tawhiao is laying claim to the space as a Māori space.

Saffronn Te Ratana - Ngai Tuhoe

Te Ratana is of mixed heritage with a Māori father of Tuhoe descent and a pakeha mother. She is well known for her contemporary approach to painting that encapsulates her Māoritanga and her Tuhoe-tana. What I gravitate towards is her thinking and unapologetic approach to making work for future generations.

“Thinking about our Tuhoe painted histories and thinking about how the ngahere (forest) is so important and how to teach my kids kaitiakitanga (stewardship).” (“Five Māori Painters: Saffronn Te Ratana”)

It is important to Te Ratana that her work resonate with tamariki and might be something they would want to engage with.



Figure 4 Whakarongo, mixed media, 2014.

“Using te reo in the artwork and making it a resource for our kids is an important part of (my) art practice now...it needs to really be useful to our moko.” (“Five Māori Painters: Saffron Te Ratana”)

In the work *Whakarongo*, 2014, Te Ratana creates a mini ngahere. Consisting of two trees emerging out of a plush velvet like landscape whose branches are inhabited by large Māori text and small carved acrylic manu (birds). A 3D interpretation of a painted ngahere singing to its people. I imagine the wind through the text creates the song and the manu sings along. Here the text is high above the viewer urging you to look up, it overlaps from varying perspectives as you move around it. As you look through the branches, you might struggle to interpret the text in its entirety but as it is in our nature to decipher text, we attempt to read left to right and top to bottom however, without the knowledge of te reo Māori you are at a loss. The text is purposeful, from a children's song encouraging our tamariki to kōrero i te reo Māori - speak te reo Māori. Te Ratana is not concerned with the views of the art world but for the health and wellbeing of future generations and it is this purpose that for me makes her work powerful and timeless.

Charlotte Graham - Ngāti Whanaunga, Waikato, Ngāti Kotimana

Graham is a contemporary painter, multimedia artist and climate activist. Here Graham activates space through the purposeful use of te reo Māori in the form of flags or large banners. She uses them to clear the way, cleanse, uplift and heal. In her interview with Jeremy Hansen, she discusses the healing quality of kupu (words) as follows.

Figure 5 Te Hau Whakaora, digital printed, installation shot in Britomart, 2021



“My work is often text-based, and often has a healing tone through it. As the flags fly with the air, they move within the realm of Rangi, the sky father, and Tāwhiri-mātea, the winds. ...The letters on the first and last two haki (flag) IOEAU, form the four pou, the four corners that surround the Arawai or water pathway. Within IOEAU, the letter I is the connection of Rangi and Papa, the sky father and earth mother, and O refers to the cycle of life. Io refers to the supreme being and the spiritual realm, and Au to the physical realm. The word loosely translates loosely as “I am of Io”. I like the idea of te reo Māori flying high, imbued with meaning and culture centred in wellbeing. To me, these works form a pathway of healing for everyone that visits,” (Graham, 2024)

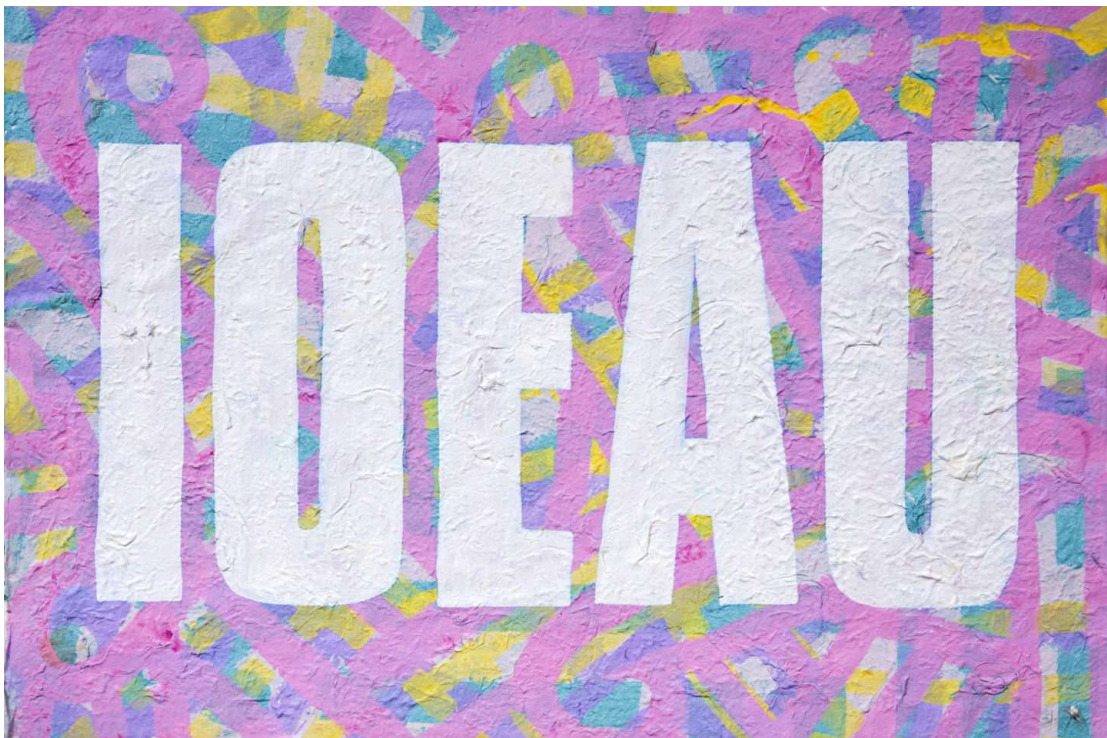


Figure 6 IOEAU, acrylic paint and kawakawa beeswax on handmade paper, 2021.

I am intrigued by Graham’s rearrangement of the vowels from the usual AEIOU to IOEAU and its loose translation of ‘I am of Io’. I recollect seeing this in the work of Dorothy Waetford in ceramic form and looked into her approach below.

Dorothy Waetford - Ngātiwai, Ngāpuhi-nui-tonu ngā iwi



Figure 7 I O E A U, clay, 2017

Of her work Waetford says,

“I’d been playing with text on clay pots and exploring the different figurative shapes and forms for years before making them. This series was inspired by the provocation; is the” natural” order AEIOU? Or IOEAU?

When I think about what IO (the supreme being) and AU (I, me) refer to in te reo Māori (the Māori language) the sequence effectively shifts my worldview. The ways in which power is embedded within sound and the languages we hear and see over and over, begs the question ‘What will I teach my grandchildren and why?’. ” (Waetford, 2022)

Both Waetford and Graham’s expression of the vowels in a Māori framework structure supports research to reclaim text as visual culture. Rearranging the vowels in this way is to challenge the Eurocentric structure that underpins the alphabet and its use by making connections to Māori philosophy and narrative. When asked about whether she came up with this approach, Waetford disclosed that she was not the source of this knowledge but rather she came to learn it in the late 1990’s at a wananga at Whakapara marae with Manu Korewha.

“He was a mai rākau exponent and a tohunga rongōā of some sort” says Waetford. It is interesting to note that this concept has stuck with Waetford as she continues to recreate this in uku (clay), in varying ways.

These wahine use text as examples of Māori expression to invite and challenge the viewer. They also challenge the use of Māori text as a Eurocentric framework and seek to reclaim the language within their work. As female makers it is worthy to note the recurring themes of healing, clearing the way, and protecting narrative and identity for future generations as a motivation. I too ponder the relevance of my work for future generations but have faith that my story is one that needs to be told as much as any other even only for my future descendants.

The personification of process - Toi Whakaata Māori print collective.

Toi Whakaata¹⁹ are a Māori print collective that have been developing kōrero around a Māori approach to printmaking since 2006. I am a founding member of this group which in my mind personifies the print process within a Māori worldview. It is important to acknowledge Toi Whakaata and the members within it, namely Gabrielle Belz and Faith McManus as mentors and peers who have contributed to the development of a Māori approach to print. Like the ceramic roopu, Ngā Kaihanga Uku - Māori clay makers, we look to the primal phases of time and to whakapapa to develop our print narrative within Te Ao Māori. Ngā Kaihanga Uku acknowledges clay, air, fire and water as central to their concepts of creation and being. However, their stories are not just about the materials but of the entities and relationships that created them (Riddell, 2023, p.23).

As described during a discussion with Gabrielle Belz, when explaining the name of our group Toi Whakaata, Belz says:

“It is to reveal to light and refers specifically to the separation of the paper from the printing plate in relation to the separation of Rangī and Papa to bring light into the space between to reveal and acknowledge what is created.” (Gabrielle Belz, 2022)

For me this kōrero allows me to situate my print practice within a Māori framework. In doing so I continue to decolonise and develop my printmaking approach. A Māori approach to

¹⁹ Māori Print Collective, established in 2006 in Whanganui by Vanessa Edwards, Mike Samuels and Gabrielle Belz.

printmaking through process as well as concept is explained below.

The printing plate becomes the whenua (land) plate as a manifestation of Papatuanuku, lovingly created, assembled, etched and carved by the creator's hand. The ink applied becomes toto (blood) the life force of Papatuanuku pregnant with potential. The paper becomes Ranginui (sky) the opposite of Papatuanuku as a clean empty surface. In their union they are sealed by toto (blood) the life force. United in space and time they mimic the phase of Te Pō²⁰ existing in a tight embrace with no light between them.

Nothing can be certain of what will be revealed, just an idea or a desire. The process emulates the state of Te Pō where you know something is there, but what exactly, cannot be known until it is revealed to the light. This is what printmakers describe as the 'a-ha' moment when the paper, Ranginui, is separated from the plate, Papatuanuku, to reveal the print, the child, a descendant. As the light reveals the image, that being a direct reflection of Papatuanuku, the paper changes from being a manifestation of Ranginui to becoming a manifestation of the child, a descendant of their union. The multiple descendants are produced out of this process over and over again, produced by the union between Papatuanuku and Ranginui and the reenactment of the separation by Tāne Mahuta²¹ resulting in the first revelation to light and the creation of Te Ao Marama.

As a Māori printmaker, this approach allows me the freedom to create not only editions of work where the print is to be exact replicas, but also 'generations' of work where each print can be treated differently resulting in prints that are similar but not the same, like siblings or cousins all descendants of the same ancestor or whenua.

In the same way that Ngā Kaihanga Uku ground their making process in the whakapapa of Hineahuone the first woman made of earth/clay (Riddell, p.23), as a printmaker I identify our whakapapa within the creation of Te Ao Marama and therefore acknowledge Tāne Mahuta as the creator of life and the bringer of light to the world as expressed in the following ruruku (pre colonial prayer).

²⁰ Te Pō - the great night, the second phase of time in the creation story.

²¹ Tāne Mahuta - Guardian or God of the forest.

Whaia whaia whaia te uru tapu nui a Tāne	Follow, follow, follow the sacred footsteps
Tāne te waiora	of Tāne
Tāne te pūkenga	Tāne the lifegiver
Tāne te wānanga	Tāne the skillful
Tāne te whakaputanei, ki te whai ao ki Te	Tāne the knowledgeable
Ao Marama	Tāne the bringer of light to the world
Tihei mauri ora	Let there be life.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

The following chapter tracks my artistic practice and methodologies undertaken culminating in my first year MMVA exhibition *Social Amnesia - He taonga tonu te wareware - Forgetfulness should be reckoned with always*, 2019.

It touches on relevant recurring themes in my print practice over a 20-year period, from my undergraduate exhibition in 2002 to some specific bodies of work illustrating my development as a Māori printmaker. Finally looking closely at my first year MMVA exhibition *Social Amnesia*, 2019. The analysis of which establishes much of the groundwork for my final MMVA exhibition *Taa e kōrero ana - Marks that speak*, 2023.

2002 BFA Graduate Exhibition

Having completed a four-year degree that began in 1999 I graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts, majoring in print from Whanganui Community Polytechnic, School of Fine Arts in 2002. Reflecting on what I made over 20 years ago, there are recurring themes through text. My graduate work consisted of 14 hand-printed woven paper kete adorning the wall. The first five incorporated etchings of hands weaving and represented the past, the middle four kete incorporated etched self-portraits and represented the present and the last 5 kete were screen printed text in contemporary candy like colours and represented the future.



Figure 8 Kete Kōrero - Candy Pink, woven text kete, screenprint on paper with fabric lining, 2002.



Figure 9 Kete Kōrero - Candy Pink detail, woven text kete, screenprint on paper with fabric lining, 2002.

and not having te reo Māori and by being made to become Catholic in my early teens I was assimilated into a colonised world. I did well at school and enjoyed its structure and measured successes. I relied heavily on reading and writing to achieve. I could not speak te reo and although we lived with my grandparents in Taumarunui who were native speakers they had not encouraged their children to speak te reo Māori. In fact they were themselves colonised by the teachings of the native schools and the Catholic church. This situation and experience would become a core influence on my current masters work.

Kupu huna - Hidden words



Figure 12 Whakarongo
Drypoint print, 2006

In 2006 I had enrolled in Te Wananga o Aotearoa and was learning te reo Māori when I discovered there were at least 5 dialects of te reo Māori in Aotearoa and this print *Whakarongo* was my response to that. I would revisit this concept again when making work on a letterpress as research for my masters. This time emphasising the letters AKA in kokowai red and the rest in black. AKA in this instance has a dual role; one as A.K.A meaning ‘also known as’ a common phrase used in English, and the word aka in Māori means vine and refers to the vine that grows up the thick trunks of our natives trees in the ngahere connecting the seed to the very top of the canopy towards the light.

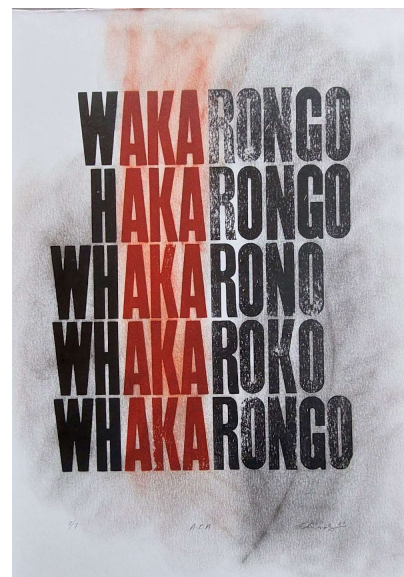


Figure 13 AKA - Also Known As,
letterpress, 2023.

In 2007 I would create another series called *Take it on the chin* exploring the question ‘Who owns our culture?’. This was a series of portraits of my close friends, none of whom were Māori, where I created a moko kauae²³ for each of them incorporating a Māori word into the negative space. Words like, aroha, kaha, ihi, and noa to reflect aspects of strong women. At the time I was seeing a lot of non-Māori appropriating Māori imagery and design and was responding to that. On reflection I realise I was guilty of the same appropriation because I did not have an appropriate understanding of what I was working with. I was coming at Māori art from a colonised perspective. I had no formal training of Māori design, Māori art or ta moko practices therefore my design of moko kauae were clumsy and inappropriate. When I compare this work to that of an artist like Aimee Ratana who in contrast grew up in her Māoritanga, or “Tuhoe Tana” as stated in the title of her work *Taku Tuhoe Tana, 2008*. I can't help but cringe at my early attempts to explore my Māori identity. Ratana's work is iwi based and reminds us that the word Māori was a term introduced to describe us as separate from the settlers and means normal/usual. We are in fact iwi and hapu based and prior to the colonisation of Aotearoa I would have been Ngāti Tuwharetoa, or Whakatohea not Māori. She uses herself in these images adorning herself with a moko kauae that outlines her lips in fine lines that connect to the word TUHOE across her chin. She is making a clear statement about the only identity she really can, her own.



Figure 14 E kite ana te aroha,
Drypoint print on woven paper, 2007.



Figure 15 Taku Tuhoe-Tana,
lips, 2008. Aimee Ratana.

²³ Moko kauae - female chin tattoo

I grew up knowing I was Māori, but my early childhood was formed in Queenstown and it would not be until I was 10 years old after the death of my mother that my father would bring us to live in Taumarunui with his parents where I had a crash course in being Māori and Catholic. The lack of exposure to my Māoritanga in my formative years means I feel like I am in a perpetual state of catchup when it comes to developing myself and my art as Māori. I have a constant nagging feeling that I am not quite Māori enough, which is an indication that I am still colonised.

First year MMVA, 2019 - *Social Amnesia*

This chapter is a deep analysis of my first year MMVA exhibition *Social Amnesia, He Taonga Tonu Te Wareware - forgetfulness should be reckoned with, always*.

I embarked on my MMVA²⁴ in 2019 through Toioho Ki Apiti the Māori Visual Arts School and was curious and anxious to see how I, a colonised Māori would respond in a kaupapa Māori space. Am I Māori enough?

Social amnesia is a term referencing the work of Russell Jacoby, that identifies the action of collective forgetting by a group of people. This collective amnesia can be a result of forcible repression of memories, ignorance, changing circumstances or changing interests. This is associated with colonisation and assimilation where one group of people are systematically encouraged to change who they are and in time forget their cultural identity in favour of the dominant culture. *He taonga tonu te wareware* is Māori saying that counteracts social amnesia, it refers to forgetfulness as being an enduring act and something we must actively resist. Tino rangatiratanga and acts of self-determination such as the Kingitanga, Māori religions, kohanga reo, kura kaupapa, wananga, Toi Māori Aotearoa, Māori television, Matatini and protest by occupation or hikoī are all acts of resistance to collective forgetting.

The exhibition was an immediate response to my research as outlined in the literature review and further defined above. This work saw me develop a strong interest in the history/whakapapa of Aotearoa and I felt like I was discovering our narrative for the first time.

As a result I composed a series of contemporary prints and sculptural explorations that instinctively translated my research into 2D and 3D formats. Reinforcing our people's ability

²⁴ Masters of Māori Visual Arts

to embrace and adapt to new technologies. I utilised non-conventional print methods to expand my print practice, including a laser-cutter to rasterize images into the surface of the MDF board that I would then hand cut with chisels incorporating handmade marks to offset the mechanical feel of the laser cut image. Some marks are on the surface of the block to create a sense of movement, direction, and energy. These marks are repetitive and methodical, multiple rhythmic deep scratches like *haehae*²⁵ referencing the scars and *mamae*²⁶ that we have endured through colonisation. The areas cut away from the back of the blocks create an entirely different outcome of wide purposeful shapes. I cut away approximately 50 - 70% of the thickness of the block leaving only a wafer thin layer of surface. This technique is about pressure, as the inked block travels through the press the pressure drops where I have cut away large areas and in those spaces the ink will not transfer 'black-black' but rather a fuzzy, grainy black revealing ghostly shapes from beneath the surface. These fuzzy spaces frame some work and in others, are the sole cause of the image.

I have not come across any other printmakers apart from a few locally who have utilised a laser cutter as a main tool within their work. It doesn't mean it does not happen but I determine that printmakers are hands on and process driven, so leaving the cutting up to a machine may go against their natural instincts. My process seeks a balance between mechanical tools and handmade marks and processes. These large format woodblocks would be inked up and printed in my studio at home.

Composition

For the purpose of explaining my methods I have selected the print *He rā e tō he rā e puta mai anō - when one sun sets another will rise*. As I research, I gather imagery mainly from online sources. This imagery is printed out, hand cut and arranged until a suitable composition is found. Each image used has a story to tell however collectively the images start to dialogue anew, challenging the viewer to contemplate or discuss potential narratives. Either way the aim is to encourage thought and discourse around the disparities and confusion within our countries' history. The images composed reflect various narratives discovered. The cut-out imagery is arranged and photographed, then printed off on a clean background.

²⁵ Parallel grooves in Māori carving, to lacerate

²⁶ Ongoing pain and hurt

Symbolism

This work is a homage to the first Māori written and produced newspaper, *Te Hokioi e rere atu na - The war bird flies out to you*²⁷. The image consists of a central bird skull staring directly out towards the viewer. This is the skull of the Haast eagle referred to by the Māori king as Te Hokioi. The Haast eagle is thought to be the biggest of its kind with a wingspan of up to three metres. It was a fierce predator as described in its translation as the war bird, a fitting name for the first Māori King's publication as a means to unite our people under the Kingitanga movement. The use of the skull reminds us that this bird is now extinct along with the king's publication which only lasted one year before 'in 1863 the Queen's soldiers crossed the border of the King's land and fighting began... the war silenced the formal dialogue'²⁸ between Māori and Pakeha, which was not subsequently revived.' (Head, pg.12). Above the skull sits a korimako bird calling out to our people. The korimako or bellbird is renowned for a unique call. In 1882-89 a Māori speaking newspaper named its publication Te Korimako and in its second phase Te Korimako Hou, it ceased in 1890 and the last issue noted metaphorically '*the bird was faltering in its flight...and needed more sustenance.*' (Curnow et al., 2002, p.25-26)

Below the skull is a koruru²⁹ minted onto the 10 cent piece. This image symbolises the monetisation of our resources, most notably our land. Although Māori were already adept at trading long before Aotearoa would become New Zealand this image reminds us that one peoples value may not be the same as another. A difference of perspective is highlighted, as Māori we do not feel we own land but rather belong to lands and therefore the value of the land is irrelevant, the sale of the land is irrelevant we will always lay claim to belonging to that land regardless of a deed, title or what or who is on the currency.



Figure 16 He ra e tō, he ra e putmai anō, collaged composition, 2019

²⁷ The newspaper, written and produced by the Māori King Potatau Te Wherowhero as a means of self determination and sovereignty.

²⁸ Te Hokioi was seen as the first Māori voice of our people that came directly from the king. He was able to rival the narrative of all other publications in the formal way of a printing press and written text.

²⁹ Carved face on the gable of a meeting house, often representing the ancestor after which the house is named.

Method

Using a photocopier, the clean image is printed off. I then use black indian ink to fill in the background and darken certain areas and white indian ink to highlight certain areas. This is an important step and is the first use of the handmade mark to ensure the laser cut image does not look like a photocopy.



Step 2: Hand inked composition.



Step 3: Laser cut image.



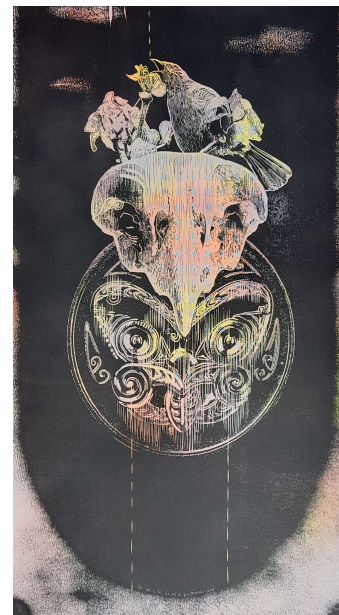
Step 4: Printed first state.



Step 5: Printed second state with hand cut marks into the surface.



Step 6: Hand cut back of the block to create a framed shape at the base.



Step 7: Final state
Printed over enamel paint underlay.

Figure 17 Method table for making He rā e tō, he rā e putmai anō, 2019.

Once I am happy with this image, I photograph it again and take it through a computer program like Illustrator³⁰, to prepare it for rasterizing into the MDF.

Once it is cut into the MDF I ink it up and run a test print through the press. This flips the image forwards and can often look quite different to the image you were working on initially. I contemplate what the image requires in terms of cutting and mark making into the surface with my chisels. This is an exciting point and I leave plenty of dark space around the central image to make marks. When I am cutting I feel like I am cutting directly into Te Pō³¹ and revealing the light from Te Ao Marama³². I will respond often instinctively to areas that require connection or energy through repetitive marks.

In this work, two distinct broken lines connect the eyes of the koruru to the bottom edge of the block as tears, mourning our collective loss due to monetisation and colonisation of our culture. The korimako also has a broken line connecting it to the top edge of the block, referencing the karanga and its connection to Te Ira Atua³³ reminding us that we are always connected to our celestial ancestors. Further marks are made across the surface of the coin, referencing haehae³⁴, metaphorical lacerations across our psyche. The block is inked up, printed and reflected upon again. The final phase is cutting into the back of the block. For this image a large U shape is cut away. This cradles the central image, framing the work in a fuzzy haze. Clouds are also cut away in the upper area creating depth and further reference to the celestial space. The oversized deep curve is a reference to the shape of a U in text and other references to letters are made in other works.

³⁰ Illustrator - a vector graphics editor and design program by Adobe Inc.

³¹ The Great Night - second phase of the Māori creation story.

³² The World of Light - third and current state of the world that we live in now.

³³ The celestial realm, the supernatural.

³⁴ Haehae - slashing, tearing, lacerating, cutting up. Also parallel grooves in carving.

Colour

Enamel spray paint provides instinctive expression below the surface. I utilise a Māori framework of the creation story when making prints referencing Te Kore³⁵ the primal nothingness as the blank page, in which the potential for everything exists. I then instinctively apply light layers of enamel spray paint, the fine dots of which intermingle and combine like stardust across our cosmos. Here lies the potential but nothing defined.

The wood block is inked up solid black and the enamel speckled paper is laid over top, face down. They then travel through the press, under great pressure fusing the paper to the block. When separated on the other side the paper is peeled back reflecting the block perfectly. The marks made either by laser cutter or by hand, on the surface or from beneath reveal glimpses into Te Kore and remind us that we are all stardust full of potential.

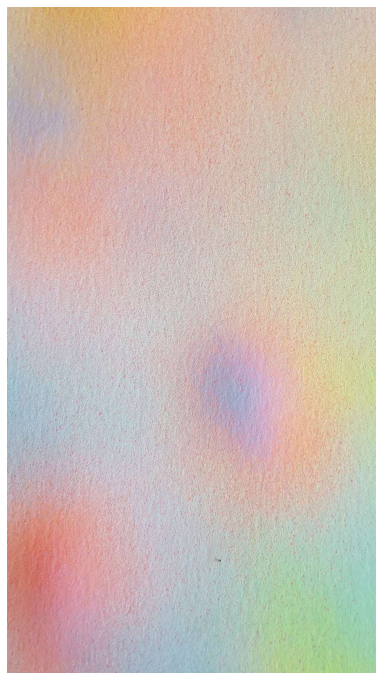


Figure 18 Colour underlay, 2019

3D Works - Letterpress type and perspex

There was a story by Lydsay Head in her article for the Christchurch Press, The origins of the printing press, 1993, that inspired these sculptural explorations.

“Te Hokioi” was so effective in disseminating Māori opinion that the government set up a rival printing press at Te Awamutu and put out a newspaper called (in translation) “The lonely sparrow on the roof”. After the paper launched a series of provocative attacks on Waikato King, Māori loaded the press on a platform straddling two canoes and carefully paddled this enemy voice out of their territory. The “Sparrow” was never issued again, and the press rests today in the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington. A rumour grew up that the Māori King's soldiers melted down the types of the Te Awamutu Press and used them for bullets. Behind such rumours is the implication that Māori wouldn't know what else to do with a printing press.” (Head, 1993, Christchurch Press)

It was the ironic thought of Māori using the poisonous type; poisonous in two ways both literally as it was lead and metaphorically as it was used to slander the Māori king, as

³⁵ The great void - 1st phase of time where nothing is known

physical bullets that inspired me to cast some bullets of my own. Resulting in a series of three sculptural waha (mouth) works. The cast bullets were developed to include a letter cast atop each, these letters set into the protruding ārero (tongue) spelt the word AMENE which is Māori for amen. Entitled *Taonga Tuku Iho - Treasure handed down*, this is a comment on the adoption of religion and technology as introduced by the settlers as food or knowledge that we were consuming.

Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro, nōna te ngahere. Ko te manu e kai ana i te matauranga, nōna te ao.

The bird that eats the berries of the miro tree makes its home in the bush but the bird that feasts on knowledge, makes its home in the whole world.

(Riley, 2013, p.503)

As the whakatauki³⁶ expresses above, if you eat of the miro the forest is yours but eat of knowledge and the world is yours. This saying reflects the curious nature of Māori and our appetite for knowledge and innovation but should heed as a warning, not to neglect the miro berry as our authentic source of nourishment.

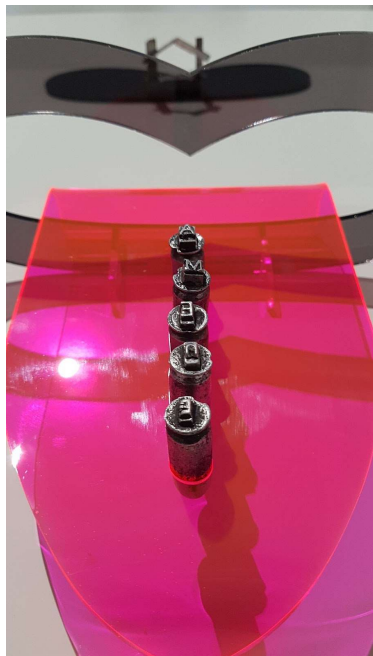


Figure 19 Taonga tuku iho, mixed media, 2019.



Figure 20 Taonga tuku iho, mixed media, 2019.

³⁶ Whakatauki - proverb or significant saying.

Waha prints - Mouth prints

Ka tangi atu, ka tangi mai. I cry outwards, I cry inwards.

The waha (mouth) works revealed themselves right at the end. They are the primal response to the information I had processed, the ghosts of the past ever present.

Only the back of the block was cut to create the ghostly shapes emerging from the depths. The emphasis is on the fuzzy layering and intermingling of ink and pressure to reveal shape and form. These works were set up in direct relation to the sculptural works as 2D responses from the past to the 3D expressions of the present day. The waha prints are a call for us to return to the miro berry and seek our authentic selves. For me this is perhaps a life journey.

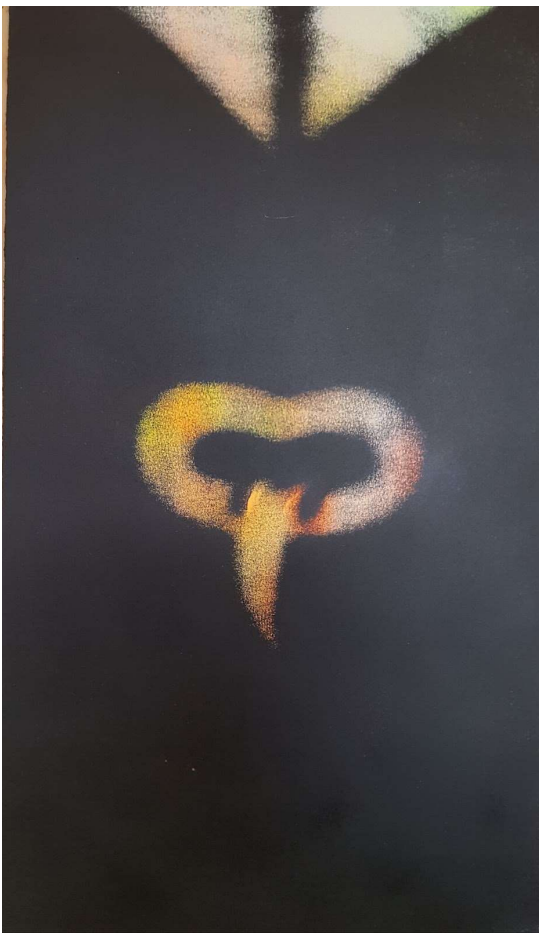


Figure 21 Ka tangi atu - I cry outwards, woodcut print and enamel, 2019.

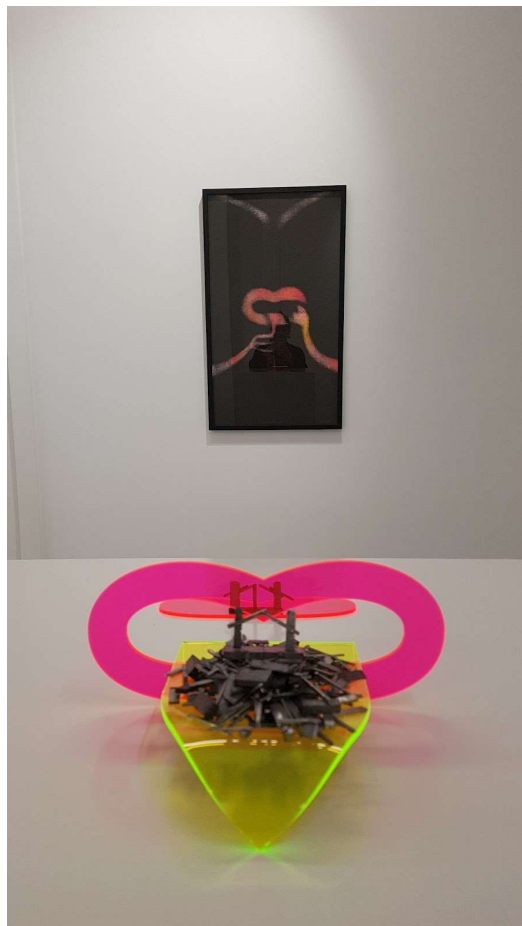


Figure 22 Reo tuku iho - language handed down (front), mixed media, 2019.
Ka tangi hoki ahau - I cry also (back print), woodcut print on enamel, 2019.

The installation was about activating the gallery space both physically and mentally. When installed around the walls and on the plinths the artworks collectively act like pou whakairo³⁷, tukutuku³⁸ or kowhaiwhai³⁹ in our whareniui. The narrative is activated by the viewer's response from their own personal ideology. To reclaim who we are is to acknowledge the multiple truths that exist to make us authentically Aotearoa, New Zealand.



Figure 23 Social Amnesia exhibition, 2019.



Figure 24 Social Amnesia exhibition, 2019.

³⁷ Pou whakairo - carved post in whareniui

³⁸ Tukutuku - form of woven lattice work to adorn and secure walls in whareniui.

³⁹ Kowhaiwhai - painted scroll motifs in whareniui

Chapter four: MMVA Exhibition. *Taa e kōrero ana - Marks that speak*

This chapter focuses on the thesis exhibition *Taa e kōrero ana - Marks that speak*. This exhibition, shown at Edith Gallery, Whanganui from the 30th September - 14th October, 2023. It attempts to personalise my masters journey looking carefully at colonisation and how it has shaped me, my thinking and my art practice to this point.

Firstly, I look at the inspiration behind the title then discuss the inclusion of the printing blocks as a purposeful part of the exhibit and a reference to the personification of the printing process. This is necessary in assisting the analysis of some of the decisions made in presenting my final MMVA exhibition. Finally I look at each work in relation to where and how it is exhibited in the space and its relevance to the rest of the show.

Mark making is the fundamental language of a printmaker and through our process we give meaning to the marks in a visual context. The title *Taa e kōrero ana - Marks that speak* was inspired by a narrative describing how a Raratongan chief first experienced the written word as marks that speak.⁴⁰ This passage reminds us that new technology at first can seem magical, but it is our curiosity that encourages us to ask questions to gain understanding of new things. In this case it is the past that I have become curious about and its influence in shaping me. I felt this was a simple and to the point title that honoured te reo Māori and the one element that is central to writing and printing making which is taa, the mark.

⁴⁰ *Far over the ocean of Kiwa lies Rarotonga, and from the harbour of Ngatangia had sailed some of the canoes of that migration that had brought the ancestors of the Māori to Ao-tea-roa. At Ngatangia, John Williams amazed their Raratongan cousins. While at work on the building of a church Williams had need of his carpenters square, so with a piece of charcoal he scribbled a brief note on a chip of wood and asked a Raratongan chief to hand it to his wife. It was a highly suspicious chief who handed the chip to Mrs Williams a few minutes later. He watched her every movement as she read the note, tossed it to one side and took the square from the tool chest.*

“Say daughter,” said the astonished chief, as he took the square, “how do you know that that is what Williams wants?”

“Why did you not bring me the chip just now?”

“Yes, but I did not hear it say anything.”

“If you did not, I did,” she replied and bade him hastened back with it to her husband. He needed no second telling. Pausing but to snatch up the magic chip he leapt from the house and ran to his people holding both chip and square before them.

“The wisdom of these British people; they can make chips talk! They can make chips talk! He shouted, and the talking chip, which was there after worn around his neck, became a nine days wonder.

(Reed p.4)

The inclusion of the printing block.

“Mai te whenua ki Ranginui, ko ēnei taku ao whakahirahira” (Marshall, 2016)

This is a line from a karakia recited by my uncle Pompey Marshall and translates to, from the land to Ranginui (sky) this is our splendid world.

I refer to this line to help to contextualise the inclusion of the printing block as a significant feature of the exhibition. The inclusion of the printing block is not a done thing in western print practices and traditionally once an edition is complete printers were to strike a line through the surface of the plate, erasing the opportunity for any further copies to be made. I purposefully include the printing block as a direct reference to Papatuanuku (Earth mother) as representative of the land and to highlight the relationship between the printing block and the print created. The space between the block and the print is what is experienced by the viewer. The presence of the printing block in direct relation to the print itself reflects the duality of worlds we navigate as Māori people, the Māori and the colonial. The thousands of marks made across the surface of these blocks, chiselled into finished works to create textured patterns reflect the scars left as a result of colonisation, marks left on the psyche of our people and of our whenua.

The Edith Gallery. 24 Taupo Quay, Whanganui.

Entering off the Quay there is a small foyer with offices on each side before you get into the Edith Gallery through open glass doors. This is the Whanganui UCOL student gallery that supports educational exhibitions from the community. I chose to exhibit here to maintain a sense of continuity as this is where I exhibited *Social Amnesia* and where the Quay School of Fine Arts used to be. For me it is a return to where I began my artistic life in tertiary education. The space, approximately 12m wide by 6m deep is of irregular shape and an industrial feel with high ceilings that are interrupted in places by vents, and suspended wiring tracks. Two posts in the centre of the room, irregularly spaced beams and braces on walls and internal sliding doors on the back wall make for a challenging space to install work.

Catalogue of works

The following is an explanation of each artwork. The methods, the inspiration and the conceptual themes that connect the body of work as a whole are touched on throughout. This is in order of how the works were created and resolved.

EKE - Ascension

On the left inner wall as you enter is, *EKE - Ascension*. Conceptually this work expresses the connection between Te Ira Tangata (space of humans) and The Ira Atua (celestial space). The word eke in this context means to rise or to ascend and has connotations to Tāne Mahuta ascending into the celestial realm to retrieve knowledge, but also to Christianity's Jesus ascending to heaven after his crucifixion. One of the main threads of the exhibition is seeking enlightenment through education and knowledge. I look at the parallel narratives of Tāne Mahuta and Jesus Christ in an attempt to make connections between the two as influential symbols of knowledge and understanding.

EKE is the most obvious example of a print exhibited in relation to its printing block because they intersect at the wall. The print is hung approximately 70 cm up the wall and the printing block is arranged to meet it and at the base, angled downwards towards the floor mirroring the print. The print is 160cm high by 100cm wide and had to be made in three parts and glued together on a large sheet of thin MDF. I needed to come up with a way of making large prints within the restrictions of my printing press at home, so making the work in parts was a necessity that I planned out and worked through.

The image is of a large waha - mouth at the centre top with a waterfall of marks flowing from within it. Within these water-like marks is the word EKE on repeat. Kowhaiwhai principles are applied where I have mirrored and reflected the word like one would a kowhaiwhai design, thus creating a pattern of interconnecting angles and shapes that can be explored up or down and left to right. I created two columns of words side by side to further accentuate the

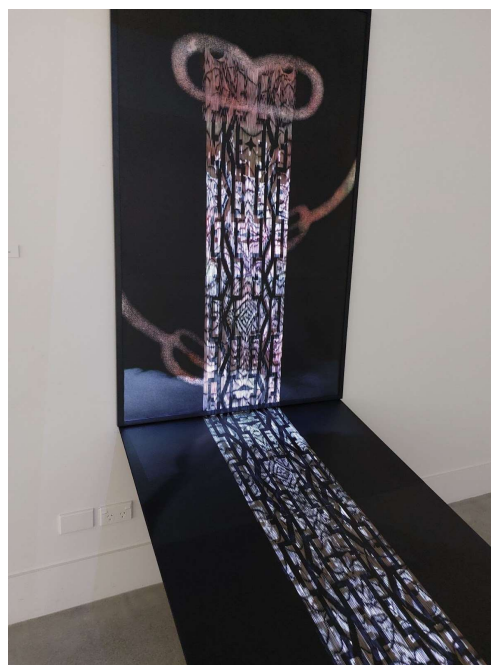


Figure 25 EKE - Ascension, woodcut on enamel print, hand cut MDF & projection, 2023.

reflective nature of kowhaiwhai and a sense of symmetry and balance to the work. This work is further activated by a moving image that is projected onto the piece from above. This was particularly challenging as a series of images were required to work in sync with each other to achieve the desired effect and could not be finalised until the work and projector was installed for spatial refinement on the computer program.



Figure 26 EKE - Ascension, woodcut on enamel print, hand cut MDF & projection, 2023.

I sought the expertise of Christopher Mertins, an image technician for this component of the work and needed to communicate and collaborate with him to achieve a good result. Thankfully he was easy to work with and took on my ideas with enthusiasm. I would like to acknowledge Christopher for his time and support in bringing this to fruition. The aim was to make the marks move and for the text to literally ascend from below into the print above, thus expressing our continuous connection to the spiritual realm.

Christopher and I explored many options of how to activate the work but in the end felt the simplest was most effective. Given we only had a short window to get it up and running before the opening we needed to keep it as simple as possible without diminishing

the idea or quality. A comment was made at my assessment as to whether the moving image was necessary at all, as they felt the marks had a strong quality of movement already. On reflection I would say the success of the work is not reliant on the projection to achieve a sense of movement but I was determined to explore and present this as an idea within this exhibition. Feedback around this was positive and many were mesmerised by the combination of image over print especially when they didn't notice it at first. I endeavoured to literally make the marks move to accentuate the meaning of the word and will explore this area further in the future which will require some professional development and refinement.



Figure 27 EKE - Ascension, woodcut on enamel print, hand cut MDF & projection (left). Whakapono Kāpō - Blind Faith, textured relief print (right), 2023.



Figure 28 AKA - DiVine, textured woodcut print on enamel & MDF, 2023.

AKA - DiVine

Diagonally opposite *EKE*, *AKA - DiVine* is exhibited in relation to its printing block. Wall hung, it is a three part print adhered to MDF.

Conceptually it reclaims text as visual culture utilising kowhaiwhai principles of reflection and repetition resulting in a vine-like mesh of connecting letters emerging from the shadows on either side. Aka as a word means vine or climbing plant (“Te Māra Reo”) and refers to the climbing vines in our ngahere. The english name for the artwork is DiVine, emphasising the word vine but also making reference to the divine, Jesus Christ. At the top centre of the work sits a large waha form which the AKA pattern passes through as it travels up and beyond. This waha represents narrative and communication. The dual narrative

of Tāne Mahuta or Jesus Christ. This exhibition examines these two narratives I have grown up with as a part of my cultural identity, my Māoritanga and my Catholicism.

The colours are revealed through the cut marks made in the woodblock. The repetitive vertical lines extracted from the black reveal what is beneath. Like *EKE* this results in a vibrational surface of mark making, resulting in energy and movement upwards or downwards. As you move towards the edges of the print portions remain uncut until it is solid black like the shadows of the ngahere where penetrating light through the canopy reveals patterns in the layers of vegetation.

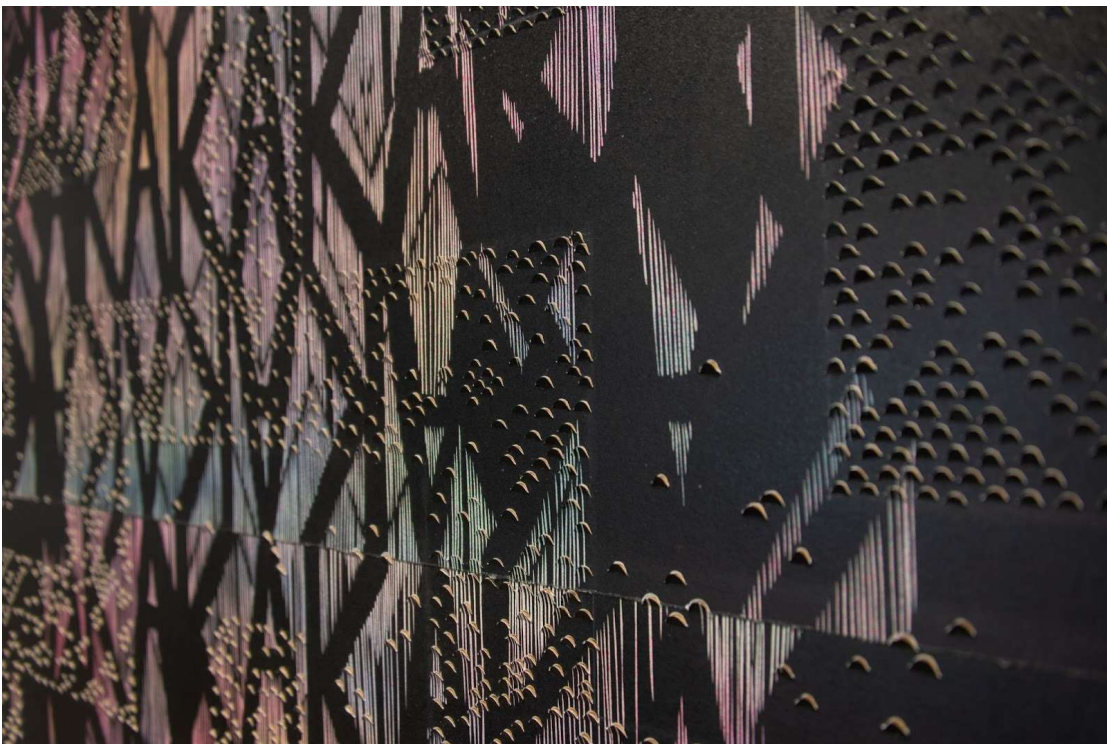


Figure 29 AKA - DiVine, textured woodcut print on enamel & MDF detail, 2023.

This layered work is accentuated by a textured surface. Because the prints are adhered to MDF using PVA glue the hard flat surface enabled me to cut in with my chisels to create the textured pattern. I do this by tapping the tip of the chisel into the surface approximately 0.5mm and then gently pull it back and away leaving a raised shape of the chisel in the surface and revealing the layers beneath. The pattern applied is the poutama design which refers to the ascending steps into the celestial realm taken by Tāne Mahuta to gain the kete of

knowledge⁴¹, in terms of Christianity the same pattern is often referred to as the stairs to heaven. Both narratives speak to aspiration and a movement towards enlightenment. The interesting part of this textured surface is as you move closer to or around the work the light catches the edges of the texture to reflect light off the flecks of white paper from beneath; the raised edges also cast shadows down across the surface of the art work. I purposefully adjusted the overhead lighting to maximise the dramatic effect without compromising the details using only the spotlights. This resulted in viewers dancing with the works, moving from side to side, bending down to get an upward view and looking closely from each side to gain the full effect.



Figure 30 A.K.A - Also Known As, hand cut MDF, paired with AKA - DiVine wood cut print (wall), 2023.

Paired with this work but separate is *A.K.A - Also Known As*. Which is the printing block presented to mirror the hung print. Installed horizontally it is raised off the floor on a plinth approximately 45cm off the ground and approximately 1 metre away from the base of *AKA - DiVine* enabling the viewer to move between the two works.

A.K.A is an acronym that has a dual purpose: it refers to the word aka as climbing vine but also to the saying ‘also known as’. This phrase is used to reveal the true or duplicitous identity of someone or something. In this case I am making a connection through whakapapa of the hung work to its origin of the printing block. The print represents Tāne Mahuta and

⁴¹ Kete of knowledge - three baskets of knowledge that Tāne Mahuta obtained and brought back to the human realm.

the ngahere but printing blocks represent Papatuanuku and the land. Here I emphasise the close relationship between the two through the reflection of one in the other. I purposefully separated the works because they are entities in their own right and can be experienced as individual works or quite easily as a pair depending on how you view the work in space. When looking down on the carved printing blocks I wanted the viewer to get a sense of movement of dappled light and shadow that is often cast across the forest floor when you are under the canopy.

A.K.A - Also Known As are three separate blocks that I needed to present as one and this required a series of problem solving tasks to achieve the desired result. I had prepared to frame the blocks to give a clean professional edge, however in the end I decided against it as I felt it actually detracted from the simplicity and sensitivity of the printing blocks in this instance. I fixed the work to another stronger sheet of MDF, painted the edges and pin nails so they faded into the work. I had to work with what I had and this plinth was available within the gallery and I utilised it. Ideally I would have made a purpose built plinth that was closer to the ground that encased the blocks at the surface.

***Atua - Energy Beyond &
Atua -Whenua***

Hung in the opposite left corner of the *A.K.A - Also Known As* are these two works. Presented horizontally so they appear to move towards or away from one another.

I emphasised this by utilising the corner space placing the print on the left and the printing block on the right using the corner as the intersecting point. The print on the left is entitled *Atua - Energy Beyond*. During wananga with Marilyn Vreede she explained that the word Atua is made up of two separate words, ‘A’ meaning energy and ‘tua’ meaning beyond. In that way whenever we pray using the word Atua she encourages us to



Figure 31 A.K.A - Also Known As, hand cut MDF (foreground), 2023.
Atua - Energy Beyond & Atua Whenua, woodcut print on enamel & MDF, 2023.

intentionally identify what energy we are asking for assistance in that moment. As a non practising Catholic this allows me to reclaim this word within a Māori context rather than a Catholic one and engage with karakia or prayer in a more authentic manner. The print is the male counterpart to the female matrix or whenua block.



Figure 32 Atua - Energy Beyond (left), woodcut print on enamel & Atua Whenua (right), hand cut MDF, 2023.



Figure 33 Atua - Energy Beyond, woodcut print & enamel on paper, 2023.

The waha (mouth) form is present on the far left, although on its side it is still recognisable. These works could equally be presented vertically but I wanted to create a sense of equality between the two. The word ATUA is again repeated using kowhaiwhai principles as were the previous works. The word is condensed, omitting the last A, however as the word also begins with an A, ATUA still resides within the pattern. Resulting in ATUATUATUATUATUA, which is then rotated and repeated below and above in a repetitive way to fill the space. There are several other words within this pattern and it was interesting to see which words appeared for different viewers during the exhibition. Some people saw TU, TUA and or ATU and commented on their discovery with friends, discussing kupu (words) and the magic of

deciphering the image. The giveaway of course was the title itself, perhaps I should have simply called it Energy Beyond. The varying marks, sometimes lines, sometimes short dashes or dots throughout the print cut through and across the kupu kowhaiwhai (patterned words) emphasising movement and connection.

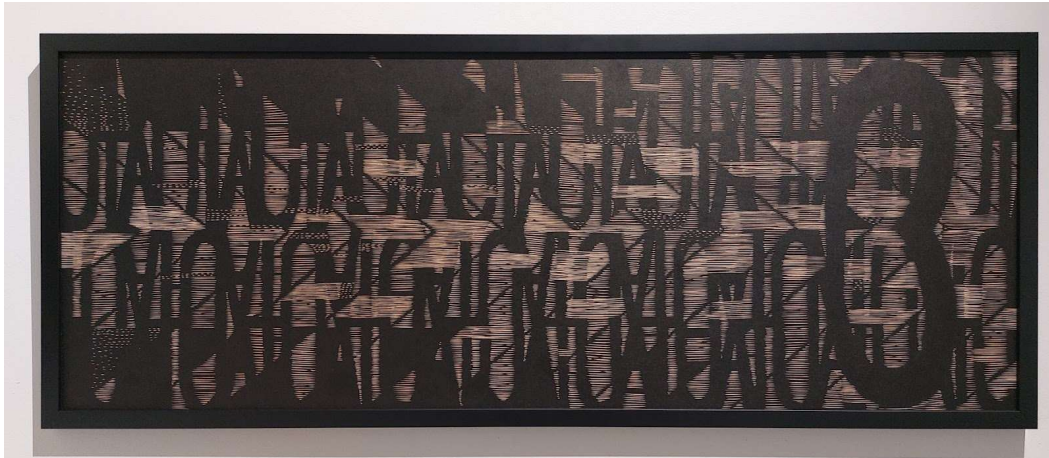


Figure 34 Atua Whenua, hand cut MDF, 2023.

The printing block was titled *Atua Whenua* and refers to the female component as the whenua. Present in the image is the kaokao pattern, which is a chevron motif that is described by Verenoa Hetet as a tukutuku pattern that represents protection. Usually pointing upwards, it is the shape of the arm/ armpit when you embrace someone. It is the shape of the ribs that protect your vital organs. Kaokao are usually placed in the four corners of the whareniui representing protection for all within the house. This was a shape that I also recognised in the church structures back in Taumarunui, especially Kakahi chapel where the timber on the walls is bare and assembled in this chevron shape. *Atua Whenua* is framed in the same manner as the print, creating unity and a polished finish. No glass is used with the framing throughout this exhibition and was a purposeful decision. Glass on large works can create a lot of

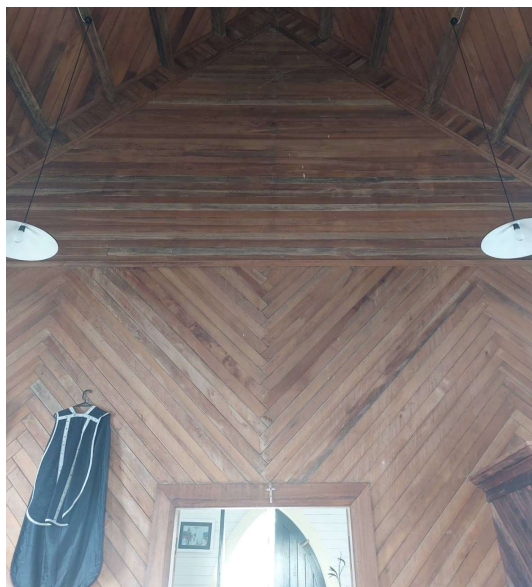


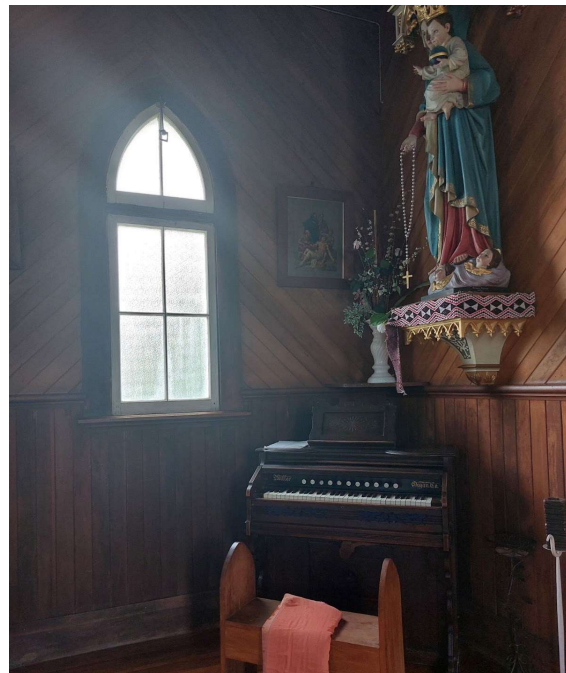
Figure 35 Kakahi Church interior, Kakahi, Taumarunui, 2023

reflection and become an extra barrier to experiencing the work and surface quality of the prints. Because the prints are printed using high quality oil-based relief ink I am confident that this is sufficient protection against dust and fading. However, in the future I may look into a spray on protective varnish of some kind to add an extra layer of protection.



Figure 36 Kakahi Church interior, Kakahi, Taumarunui, 2023

The matapihi or window, was another architectural feature that I wanted to explore inside the church. As a source of light, the windows were long and vertical, often with curved tips. They were set higher in the walls, requiring the patrons to look upwards towards the heavens when seated within. Light as enlightenment is a theme within the exhibition and the window is a symbol of both. These windows have a textured surface which diffuses the light and prevents you from seeing what is outside, thus allowing you to reflect and worship without distraction. This would be the inspiration for my next three works.



To replicate this feeling, I utilised the pressure print technique of cutting the back of the block, as explained previously. When the front is printed a fuzzy grainy surface emulates a frosted window and the darkness emulates the interior wall of the church. I had to cut the window a few times to get the right proportions in the block whilst leaving enough space around it to carve a poutama pattern into the negative space. It is within these three matapihi (window) works that I attempt to combine and find balance between both narratives of Catholicism and Māoritanga as many faith-going Māori have through customary forms of the past. Māori painter Sandy Adsett, made a work referencing the effect of Christianity in the Māori world with the painting, *Tāne Uprooted*⁴², 1985.



Figure 37 *Tāne Uprooted*, acrylic painting, Sandy Adsett, 1985.

I have seen this work a few times but most recently as a part of the Toi Koru retrospective exhibition, Sandy Adsett, 2022. Robert Jahnke was a part of an artist talk alongside Adsett and Kura Te Waru Rewiri at Te Manawa Gallery Palmerston North, 18th March, 2022. During his response Jahnke reflected on this painting and interpreted the light as follows,

“The light therefore not only could be a Christian light trying to enlighten us but also it could be a reference to Te Ao Māori⁴³ and the fact that, in the end, it is our Māori grounding, our Māori knowledge that brings the reality of what is real back to us as Māori.” (Jahnke, 2023)

Adsett as a self-professed atheist in response to Jahnke's analysis explained that he doesn't have a spiritual feeling in his work and when he was pressed on this he responded,

⁴² *Tāne Uprooted*, 1985 by Sandy Adsett. Collection of the Sarjeant Gallery, Te Whare o Rehua, Whanganui.

⁴³ Te Ao Māori - the world of light, the current phase of time that we exist in.

“I said I was an atheist and needed to say that.... And for our family. I didn't want them to be controlled, by beliefs that would mean there was a choice of whether they were going to heaven or going to hell... in Māori mythology at least you went to an underworld and you weren't sent down in fire or something. So it was just a way that I felt it controlled too much of our decision making... there was an expectation that I should consider that as a means of interpreting (my) art and people wanting it (spirituality) to be there.” (Adsett, 2023)

This conversation underpins the conflict Māori experience in trying to find a balance between religious and Māori beliefs. A way to be both without ridicule or damnation. In the past when the church had a stronger influence on life, the choice was outwardly clear, one should be a good and devout Christian nowadays however, more and more indigenous peoples including Māori are reverting back to indigenous knowledge, frameworks and belief systems and as a result are having to re-engage with their Christian beliefs in a new way.

AKE, AKE, AKE, Amine & Ka whawhai tonu mātou, AKE, AKE, AKE.

AKE AKE AKE, Amine (on the left)

and *Ka whawhai tonu mātou,*

AKE, AKE, AKE (on the right) are

both diptych works that sit alongside each other utilising balance and symmetry to create a strong reference to a window formation. Above are the prints over enamel backgrounds that depict two windows merging out of the shadows. There is a clear cross through the centre of each window and the shape mimics the windows seen at Kakahi marae, Taumarunui.

The poutama design is present framing the window and rising upwards from the left and right towards the centre. The poutama design is carved using vertical lines and dashes to extract the light from the darkness and create a sense of movement upwards. When analysed closely the kaokao⁴⁴

pattern is present as diagonal black lines that converge in the centre, and finally within this pattern is a third taaniko⁴⁵ pattern whakarua kōpito⁴⁶. The marks fade out as it travels down the block into the shadows. I particularly enjoy making marks and the action of revealing light in a dark space.



Figure 38 *AKE, AKE, AKE, Amine* (left) & *Ka whawhai tonu mātou, AKE, AKE, AKE* (right), textured woodcut print on enamel (above) & hand cut MDF (below), 2023.

⁴⁴ Kaokao - chevron tukutuku pattern representing protection.

⁴⁵ Taaniko - customary Māori weaving technique. A form of finger weaving (Moko and Mead p.7)

⁴⁶ A taaniko pattern based on diamonds, where two points meet. Is also referred to as waharua - two mouths and can express when people meet, when an important event occurs. (Moko and Mead p.72)

Below these two works is displayed the printing blocks presented to reflect the works above. This was purposeful as I wanted to present the whenua blocks as not only the land but as a spiritual reference to Rarohenga - the underworld⁴⁷. The dark black space that pulsates in the centre of the works is portal like, cave like, tunnel like and invites you in. When discussing these works in my assessment I was asked how I view black referring to this black space, I responded that I see this black space as a feminine space and a feminine colour, the beginning, the end. The darkness is comforting and inviting in this context, not spooky or scary as portrayed in other contexts that we grew up in. Here the poutama pattern invites you downwards into Rarohenga, into the past.

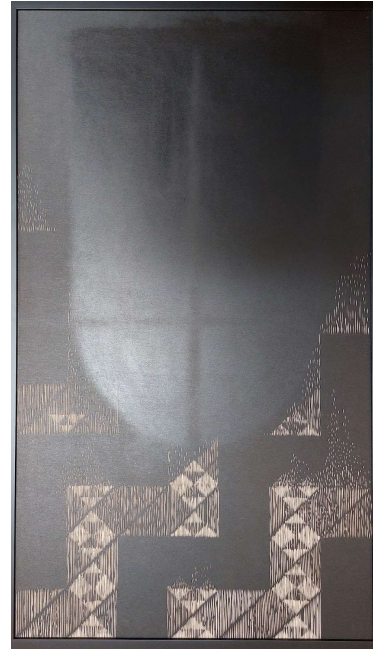


Figure 39 Ka whawhai tonu mātou, AKE, AKE, AKE, detail of lower portion, 2023.

The print works above reference the interior of the church and reflect Te Ao Marama - the world of light. Light enters through the diffused windows bringing enlightenment, my question is from what source? The title *AKE, AKE, AKE, Amine* refers to Christianity and is often how we finish Catholic prayer. Translated it means forever and ever and ever, Amen. I purposefully contrasted that with the title of the work on the right *Ka whawhai tonu mātou AKE, AKE, AKE - Struggle without end*. This is a phrase used by Māori to recognise acts of self determination. It has been a catch phrase in many peaceful protests of hiko⁴⁸ and is the title of Ranginui Walker's book on the history of Aotearoa. This phrase warns us not to be complacent, that all is not well and reminds Māori to never give up our struggle for self determination and prosperity. The titles challenge the viewer to consider the use of Māori language in differing contexts and the history associated with that, highlighting opposing perspectives within our culture and within my life personally.

⁴⁷ Rarohenga is the subterranean realm where spirits of the dead go after death to be cared for by Hine-nui-te-pō. It is not a bad place, it is filled with light and peace.

⁴⁸ Hiko meaning to walk, is a recognised form of Māori peaceful protest, and refers to protest marches throughout our history.

Maramatanga - Enlightenment

The next work is titled Maramatanga and simply translates to Enlightenment. It is in exactly the same format as the previous two works and was created to be the centrepiece to the trinity of AKE AKE AKE. However, I chose to exhibit this work separately and away from the other two for a few reasons. I realised when hung all together the individual strength of each pair was diluted and the trinity concept took over. Also, physically there was not enough room on the back wall for the three works to be displayed without being obstructed by the two posts in the middle of the space and I had to rethink the installation. I am pleased with the outcome.

Maramatanga sits on its own, on your right as you enter, next to the light of the glass wall. If a viewer was viewing the exhibition from left to right, then this would be the last work. A strong finish that reinforces the theme of light from the shadows and is an aspirational work epitomising the message of the show.



Figure 40 Maramatanga - Enlightenment, textured woodcut print on enamel & hand cut MDF, 2023.

Finally, the surface of these three works are also carved. The word AKE is carved across the window of each print. Not obvious at first, but once the viewer sees something their curiosity draws them in and they endeavour to decipher. Because the prints are presented quite high on the wall the viewer is able to get under the work enough to see the shadows of the textured surface, the closer they get the easier it is to see the word. The word is singular- and read from left to right as normal. These are the only times I use a word to be read as a word in the exhibition.

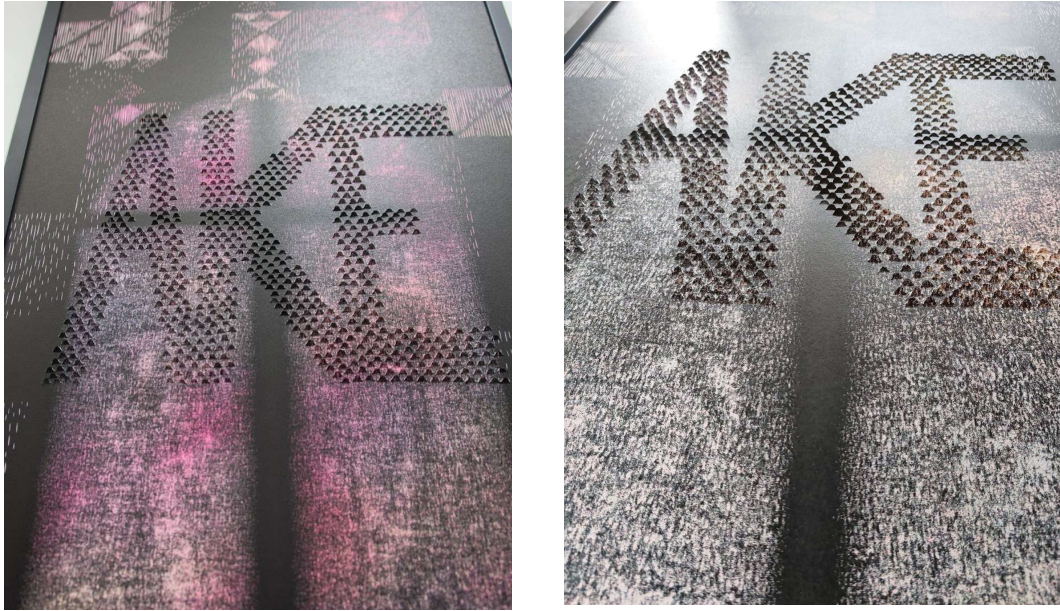


Figure 41 AKE, AKE, AKE, Amine (left) & Ka whawhai tonu mātou, AKE, AKE, AKE (right), 2023 detail of textured surface.



Figure 42 AKE, AKE, AKE, Amine (left) & Ka whawhai tonu mātou, AKE, AKE, AKE (right), 2023 detail from below.

Whakapono Kāpō - Blind Faith

The last work is titled *Whakapono Kāpō - Blind Faith*. It is a triptych and the only work that was not accompanied by their printing blocks mainly because being flat black, I used one uncut block to print them all.

Blind Faith is dedicated to my nana Marewa Molly Edwards (nee Collier) a devout Catholic from Whakatohea. When I asked her one day how that worked with her Māoritanga I distinctly remember her replying, “God comes before all else.”

This was perplexing at the time as a young Māori girl trying to figure out who I was and has remained with me since. I am in awe of her dedication and devotion to her faith and have many memories of Sunday church, the ceremony, the sermons and the sense of community. I was baptised young but it wasn't until we moved north to Taumarunui from the Te Waipounamu that I was indoctrinated quite quickly into first holy communion and confirmation. I wanted to belong so did not question this at the time. Years later as a 17-year-old I would be critical of the church and stopped attending each Sunday. My father thought I was losing my faith and sought guidance from Father Zion. He came home with 10 bullet points of why one should go to church, and in doing so missed the one point I was making. I wasn't losing my faith, I was questioning the institutionalisation of faith and simply felt going to church was unnecessary. A wonderful woman described it to me as the following, “faith is pure belief, if it could be proven it would be science.”⁴⁹

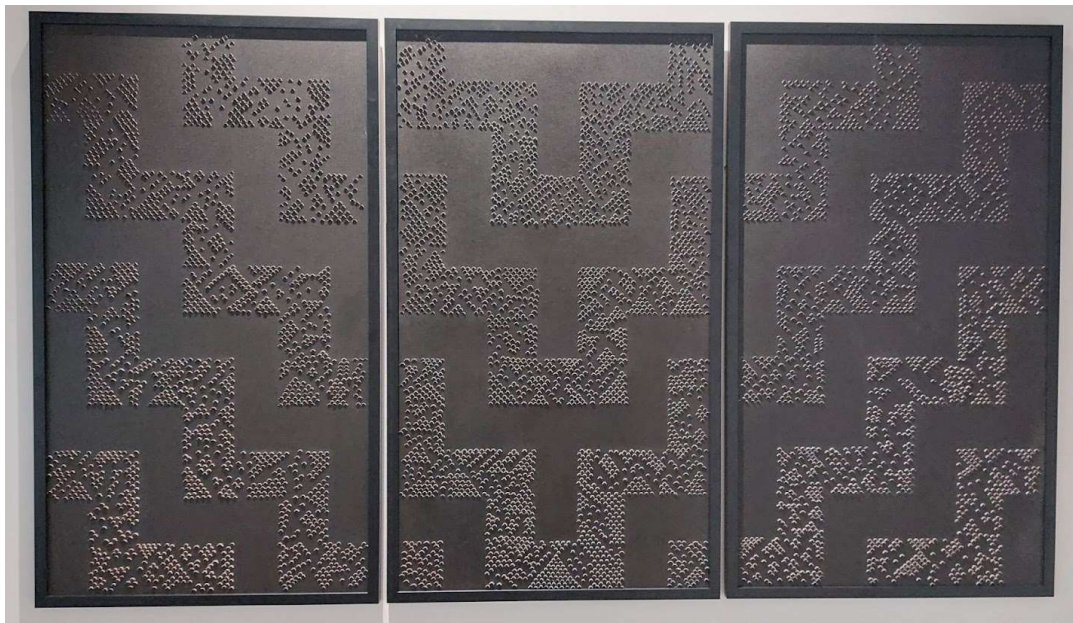


Figure 43 Whakapono Kāpō - Blind Faith, textured relief print, 2023.

⁴⁹ Marilyn Vreede - Te Ataarangi session 2023

This work is flat black printed from uncut woodblock to cover the entire page. As a printmaker it is challenging to print a flat solid black across such a large surface without issues. It requires perfect inking of the block, perfect pressure of the press and, to achieve this multiple times requires knowing how much ink to leave on and how much to take off after each print to sustain perfection.

Although on the surface it is flat black the whakapapa established by activating the paper using the Māori framework as explained previously in *Social Amnesia* was followed. So although all the viewer sees is flat black it is important to note that this tikanga is being followed and the black has been printed over a layer of enamel spray like the other works. This resulted in three black prints adhered to MDF using PVA glue. The poutama design in its simplicity is carved into the surface. The textural application was responsive as I wanted to fill the space instinctively resulting in a sense of movement. Some viewers described it like water ripples, others like mist whilst some commented on a variety of designs and objects they could identify in the carved space. I referred to Tāne Mahuta and imagined looking up through the canopy of the ngahere to see the merging of leaves and light. As you move around this piece the light catches the tips of the protruding incisions that reveal white edge paper that contrast against the solid black surface. It takes on a variety of appearances as the light shifts as you move around the piece.



Figure 44 Whakapono Kāpō - Blind Faith, textured relief print detail from the left, 2023.



Figure 45 Whakaponu Kāpō - Blind Faith, textured relief print detail from below, 2023.

This work was the last to be made, like the waha series in *Social Amnesia* it felt like the response piece, unexpected and unplanned. On a personal level it honours my nan and her unwavering faith and servitude to the Catholic church, hence its title but within its elements resides our Māoritanga. Although I am a confirmed Catholic I am no longer a “practising” Catholic. One can argue both for and against the introduction of religion into Aotearoa but for my nana there was no question.



Figure 46 My father, Ngakuru Edwards and I at the opening, 2023.

I brought my father into the space before the opening and was anxious as to how he would respond given that it speaks so directly to how I was brought up. What resulted was an open discussion around how he was brought up and his thoughts on religion and its place. He understood for the first time how this had affected me and brought us closer. My father opened the show for me and identified this work, *Blind Faith*, as his mother. This was the first time he had opened an exhibition for me and timely for us all.

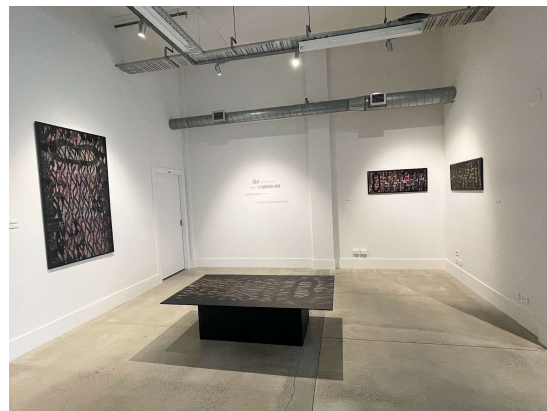
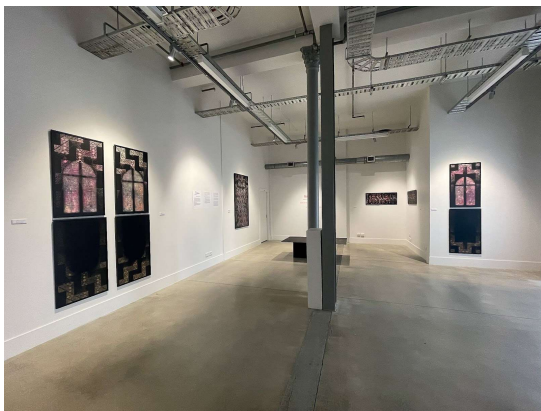
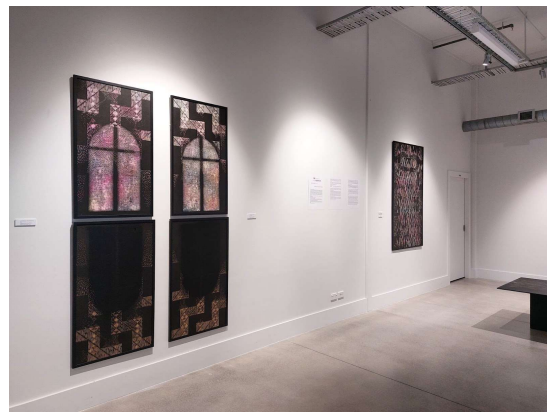
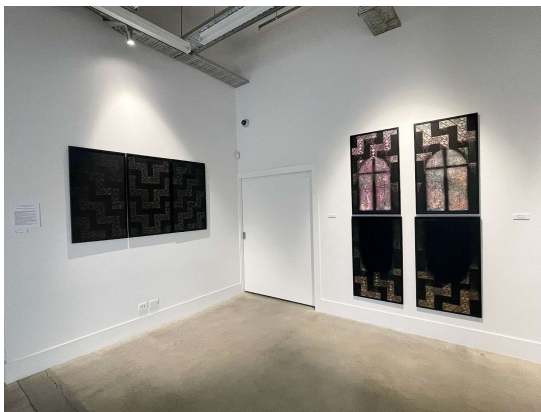
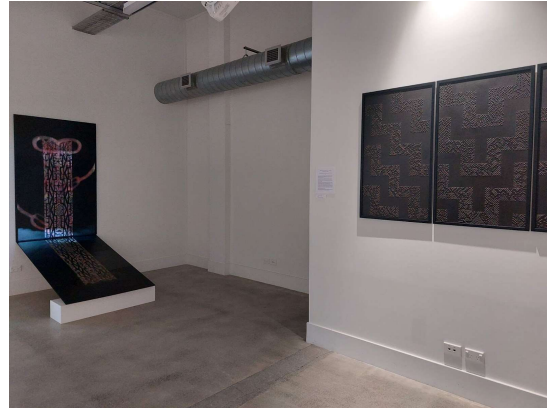
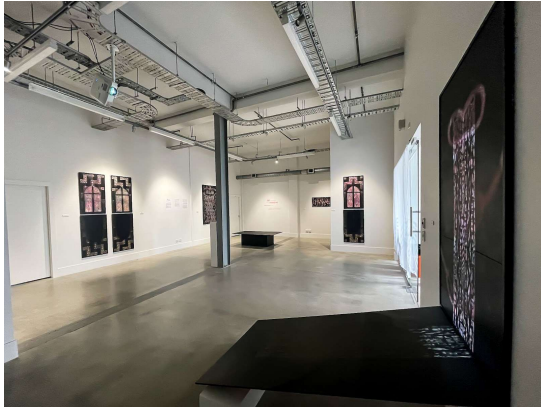


Figure 47 *Taa e kōrero ana - Marks that speak* exhibition, installation images, 2023.

Installation:

The works were installed taking into account the variations in the space provided. Because it was an industrial, irregular shaped, interior space, with jutting out cupboards, internal sliding doors, a wall of glass and posts and brackets in odd places within the space and across the walls I took as much time as possible to install. It ended up being 5 days. I hung and rehung

the work daily, looking at variations in space, and the relationships between works. This is often how I work as I allow myself the flexibility to respond to the space and to the work in real time. The only work that had to be placed where it was, was the projection piece EKE - Ascension. That wall was the darkest and the projector needed to be installed and arranged at an appropriate distance with access to powerpoints.

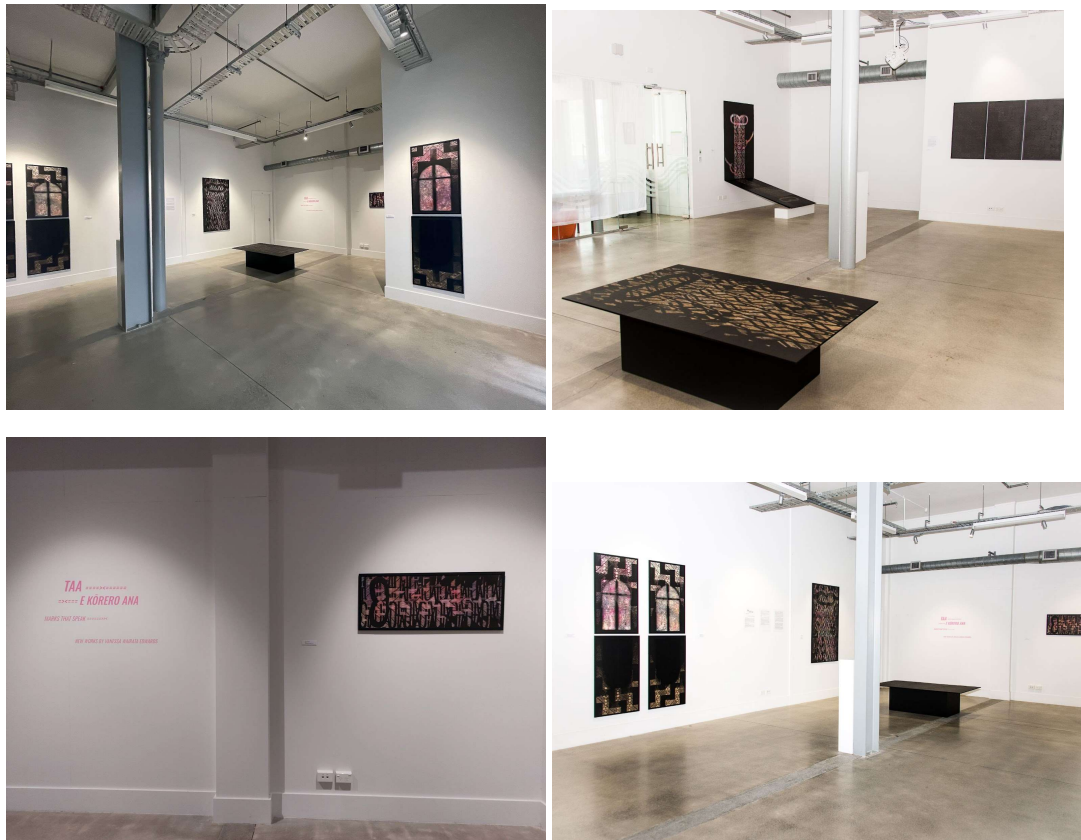


Figure 48 *Taa e kōrero ana - Marks that speak* exhibition, installation images, 2023.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Throughout the duration of the exhibition I sat in the space. It was a privilege to do so as I had been making the work in my studio and hadn't had the opportunity to see the work in its full active capacity. I also wanted to activate manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga over the show. To welcome viewers, warm the space and look after the work. Over this time I had many discussions that activated the space and contributed to the outcome.

What was of interest was how many people could relate to the internal conflict of religion and cultural custom. You could see that for some it became slightly uncomfortable, not enough to make them leave but rather enough to have them share their own experiences and engage in discussion. Other comments that I recorded included:

'The work encouraged you to look from many angles like the subject matter of history, the understanding of it'

The mark making is 'like piupiu'

'Fluid text of a linguistic nature, kowhaiwhai and font.'

'Subtle luminosity in the colour palette - it shimmers'

There was an article in the local paper by Māori writer, Whitney Nicholls-Potts. She also wrote a response essay to the exhibition of which she described the exhibition as,

"This body of work is a continuing conversation started four years ago when facing the inherently fragmented colonised identities of growing up in Aotearoa and trying to reconcile them. Identities were mainstream faith, values and the use of language have been at odds with indigenous worldviews. It speaks to the history of textualising the Māori language as part of the process of colonisation. The full circle moment these works are presented within, contemplate the dance of duality, walking in two worlds and the multitude of life between the sky and the earth." (Whitney Nicholls-Potts. 2023)

This response was poetic and expressive and I included a full version of this essay in a retrospective catalogue that was produced after the exhibition. I appreciated the conversation with Nicholls-Potts, as we both shared a Catholic upbringing and reflected on what that meant as wahine Māori today. Personally going to church was not a bad experience, it was

actually a family custom and a time that I will cherish. Even now when I enter our churches I find a serenity within the space, much like when I enter a whareniui, like I belong there.

The introduction of the printing press to Aotearoa was of course a revolutionary shift in our history as Māori. The effect was much more than the introduction of a written language or religion, but a new power struggle of authority through written word. It was a strategic phase in the Empire's expansion and colonisation of indigenous people across the world and continues to be a powerful tool within education, government and media. In saying that I am reminded that communication and visual text is as powerful as written text, and the role of the artist, of the poet, of the performer, of the speaker, of the singer is to remind us that we have many forms of cultural communication and to return to the miro tree to take sustenance from our customary ways.

As I write this Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the founding document of Aotearoa/ New Zealand that for Māori, protects our right to be Māori and for the coloniser, assumes we handed over our sovereignty to her majesty the Queen, is being contested in Government by a coalition party, tabled as The Treaty Bill. Māori and allies across the country are mobilising to once again protect our right to have a Māori voice and to be acknowledged as tangata whenua of this land. It seems no matter how far we have come, the struggle remains.

Ka whawhai tonu mātou AKE, AKE, AKE.

Finally, as new technology is introduced into each new generation we are challenged to level up and broaden our approach to maintaining and protecting our knowledge, our language, our narratives and our whenua for future generations. Communication and authority remain at the core of our struggle.

On a personal note the internal struggle of decolonising a colonised mind is ongoing, however, as a result of my research I am inspired by the many historical accounts of Māori innovation and self-determination. I view the development of a Māori approach to printmaking as an act of self-determination that has the capacity to establish an authentic and meaningful print culture unique to Aotearoa.

Am I Māori enough?

Ae, he wahine Māori ahau.

AKE, AKE, AKE, Amine.

Appendix 1 *Exhibition invitation*

**TAA
E KŌRERO ANA**

MARKS THAT SPEAK

**NEW WORKS BY
VANESSA WAIRATA EDWARDS**

**JOIN US TO CELEBRATE THE OPENING OF THIS SHOW
SATURDAY 30TH SEPT - 5:30PM
EDITH GALLERY. 24 TAUPO QUAY, WHANGANUI**

**FOLLOWED BY FURTHER REFRESHMENTS & CELEBRATIONS
AT BROWN & CO GALLERY CNR OF DREWS AVE & RIDGEWAY
STREET.**

**SHOWING FROM 2ND - 14TH OCTOBER
MONDAY - SATURDAY 10AM - 4PM**

TOIOHO
COLLEGE OF DESIGN
OF AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY
OF TECHNOLOGY

**MASSEY
UNIVERSITY**
TE KŪHANGA KI PŌHANGI

**Kaputī
Studio**

**BROWN
& CO**
Uprising Design

UCOL
Universal College of Learning
Te Pae Mātauranga ki te Ao

Taa e kōrero ana - Marks that speak: Whanganui artist Vanessa Wairata Edwards' new exhibition

Whanganui Chronicle. By Whitney Nicholls-Potts

7 Oct, 2023



Vanessa Wairata Edwards' new works continue her exploration of the fragmented colonised identities of growing up in Aotearoa, and her attempt to reconcile them. Photo / Whitney Nicholls-Potts

Taa e kōrero ana is a compelling exhibition of new works and explorations by Vanessa Wairata Edwards showing now at Edith Gallery on Taupō Quay until October 14.

This body of work is the visual component of Edwards' final year Masters of Māori visual arts and, in many ways, is a full circle moment as she reflects upon her postgraduate show *Social Amnesia, He taonga tonu te wareware - forgetfulness should be reckoned with always* at the Edith Gallery in 2019. These new works are continuing a conversation started four years ago when facing the inherently fragmented colonised identities of growing up in Aotearoa and trying to reconcile them. Identities where the mainstream faith, values and use of language have been at odds with indigenous worldviews. It speaks to the history of textualising the Māori language as part of the process of colonisation. The full circle moment these works are presented within contemplate the dance of duality, walking in two worlds and the multitude of life between the sky and the earth.

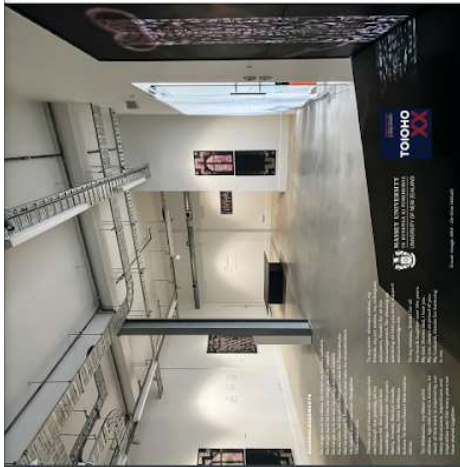
Edwards works with laser cutters and hand-cut marks to develop her imagery and ideas. Her work has developed into large woodblock prints that explore text as visual culture and its effects on Tangata Whenua. With these techniques, her ability to translate the vibrations of the traditionally orally transferred language is palpable.

One of the works in this show, *Atua - whenua*, arranges the word “Atua” in a flow of repetition. Atua translates to “supernatural being” or is commonly translated as “god”. The artist presents the word visually in a rhythmic flow revealing many other words that share the same vibrational whakapapa. It builds layers upon the idea of supernatural beings - who in a Māori worldview rule the cosmos and our earthly world. For example, “Tua” translates to “beyond”. “Atu” translates to “further” and “tu” means to “stand” - bringing us back to the land we stand on, whenua.

Edwards is one of our most compelling contemporary artists and this show is a moment to behold. We are invited to ruminate in this space on what it means to be and the interconnectedness of all things. Building her art practice passionately alongside being a mum, wife and secondary school art teacher, her 20-year printmaking career has seen her exhibit for the biggest and most visited art show at Auckland Art Gallery - *Toi Tū Toi Ora 2020*. Recently, she co-curated the group show *He tohu tēnā pea* in partnership with Te Whare o Rehua, which happened to be the impressive closing exhibition for Sarjeant on the Quay. She is a co-founder of Toi Whakaata - Māori print collective and is an advocate for developing a Māori approach to printmaking.

“It has taken me a long time out there just honing my skills as a printmaker before I really felt prepared to start dismantling some of the Eurocentric conventions of printmaking and develop and apply a more Māori-centric approach,” Edwards said.

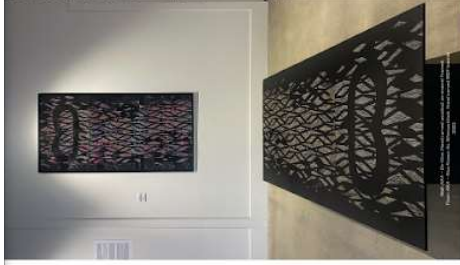
“Our print collective has been a part of that shift and it will be ongoing. I am really starting to consciously ask how I can decolonise my practice and construct a uniquely Māori approach to printmaking for future generations.



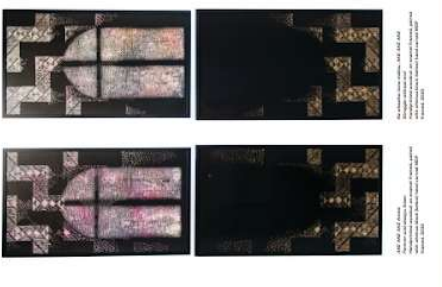
THE KŌRERO ANA, MARKS THAT SPEAK
 The Kōrero Ana, Marks That Speak, is a large-scale wall sculpture by artist Tāia E. Kōrero Ana. The work is a complex, multi-layered piece that combines traditional Māori motifs with contemporary design. It features a dense, repeating pattern of stylized, interconnected shapes that create a sense of depth and movement. The sculpture is made of dark, perforated metal, which allows light to filter through, creating a play of light and shadow. The overall effect is one of a living, breathing wall that changes as the viewer's perspective shifts.



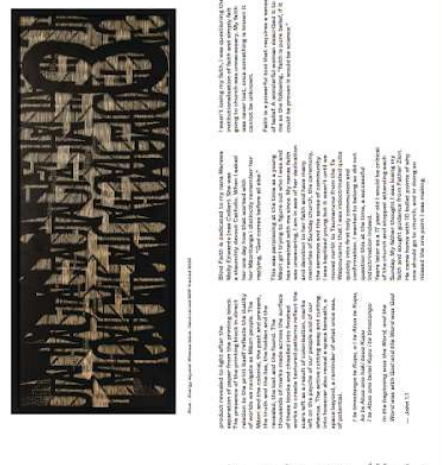
The artist explains that the work is a metaphor for the human condition. The repeating patterns represent the individual experiences of each person, while the overall structure suggests a shared humanity. The use of metal, a material often associated with strength and durability, symbolizes the resilience of the human spirit. The perforations are a nod to the traditional Māori practice of creating intricate carvings in wood and stone, which were used to tell stories and preserve history. In this way, the sculpture serves as a bridge between the past and the present, connecting the artist's cultural heritage to a global audience.



TĀIA E KŌRERO ANA MARKS THAT SPEAK
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Appendix 3 Retrospective catalogue

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