Bronze as a non-customary intervention in the interpretation of insects from the natural world of Māori

VOLUME ONE

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

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Fine Arts

at Massey University, Palmerston North
Aotearoa, New Zealand.

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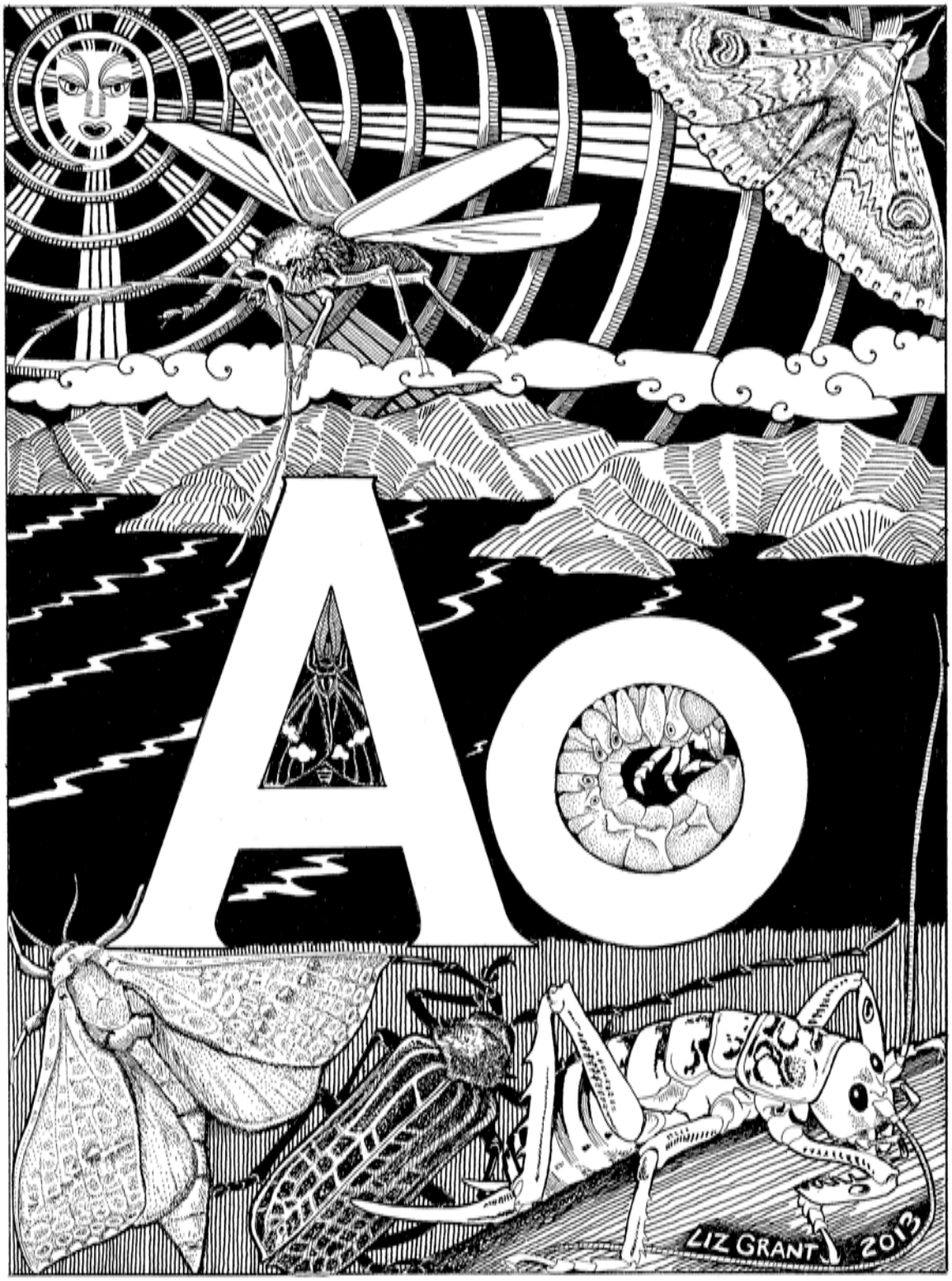
2014

Art lies in nature

Dürer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LIZ GRANT 2013

Abstract

Without insects the world as we know it would not exist. Insects are essential for life on earth, and yet they invoke from us, a gambit of emotions ranging from fear to fascination. The way in which insects impact on our lives is both surprising and diverse, and yet, in spite of their importance, insects are primarily overlooked as members of our natural world because they are small and inconspicuous.

For Māori, insects are part of ngā tamariki a Tāne, borne from the union between Tāne Mahuta and Punga. But, the distraction associated with colonisation, has faded much of the mātauranga (knowledge) and oral story telling associated with insects from Te ao Māori.

For this reason, this thesis focuses on insects recognised by Māori and considered significant to Māori around the time of European colonisation as based on written documentation (mostly European) derived from colonial field work observations, dictionaries, missionaries and researchers both Māori and non Māori during the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty first centuries. Set within a scientific framework, the topics covered, range from cosmo-genealogical entomology, through to entomophagy.

Using bronze, the thesis exhibition will visually present the diverse ways in which insects were significant to Māori. Given the inherent fragility of the invertebrate fauna and the strength and durability of bronze, this constitutes an ideal medium to interpret their life histories. Concurrently this work seeks to promote an aesthetic appreciation for insects by displaying their diverse forms and colours.

The intended out come is to be both informative and visually stimulating.

Preface

The perceived value of insects in a modern world is small. For early Māori, who relied heavily on the surrounding world of nature to survive, insects played a great and varied role in sustaining the people both physically and spiritually.

This thesis will consider the importance and significance of insects within the natural world of Maori around the time of European colonisation. It will conclude with an artistic interpretation that processes insects in a colonial New Zealand manner, but will particularly reflect the perspective of a cultural Aotearoa. The work also aims to promote an aesthetic appreciation of insects. This ethno-entomology will necessarily include considerations and discussions of entomophagy (eating insects), academic entomology (scientific entomology) and cultural entomology where insects are associated with musical, cosmo-logical and traditional story telling.

Acknowledgements

Ko Tainui te waka
Ko Hotorua te tangata
Ko Wharepuhunga te maunga
Ko Waikato te awa
Ko Ngāti Raukawa te iwi
Ko Ngāti Huri te hapū
Ko Pikitu rāua ko Poupatate ngā marae
Ko Rauti tōku tupuna
Ko Liz Grant ahau

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Robert Jahnke, who encouraged me to embark on this PhD, and whose own artwork is inspirational and exemplifies high excellence in production.

I would like to acknowledge the Massey University Doctoral Scholarship that gave me financial peace of mind and helped to make the funding of my particular medium possible. I am also grateful for the financial assistance given through the Purehuroa Award.

Ross Wilson of Marton foundries had the difficult task of casting all my insects. I know I mercilessly pushed his boundaries and gave him many sleepless nights as he endeavoured to negotiate and worry over the technical difficulties of actually casting such small and intricate work. But he did it and always with a smile.

Many thanks go to Jono Williams of Frogparking, who laboriously entered the dimensions for the patterns of the drawer and cabinets onto the computer so that a wooden pattern could be made of each, and to Brett Rangitaawa from Heavy Metal foundries in Petone who sand-cast all the drawers and cabinets from these patterns. Brad Boniface who took the photographs of the completed drawers and cabinets, also took the great image of my painted wētā-punga out in the ‘wild’ (my garden).

Thanks also go to Hone Morris who kindly provided contemporary translations for many of the karakia and waiata that appear in Chapter Two and the Appendices, and to Wendy Pond for her valuable comments regarding Māori and insects.

I would like to acknowledge my grandfather, Ross Michie, who inspired my love of nature and love of beach combing. Who would also let me, when I was young, sit in front of, and 'pour over' his 'Cabinet of curiosities' that contained his life's collection of nature's treasures, - if I asked politely. Grandpa, I have several 'cabinets of curiosity' of my own now!

I wish to thank my father, Lewis Grant for instilling in me a love of books, particularly reference books, and the desire for having one's own library. I wish you could have been here dad, to see my work – and my library! And my mum Mavis Grant, for giving me her patience and ability to embark on things that are immensely time consuming. You gave me your hands - and have always been there for me.

Thanks also go to friends and family who took an interest in my work.

Finally, and very importantly, I would like to acknowledge the support, encouragement, and love shown me by my husband, Don Sandbrook. Throughout my studies and production of art, you have always been my number one fan, offering many positive words of admiration for my work. You helped enormously with the tedious finishing and braising and have been exceptional when it came to discussing technical issues. You even helped out with the cooking!

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