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BEYOND THE CORNERS OF OUR WHARE

A CONCEPTUAL MĀORI RESPONSE TO
STATE SURVEILLANCE IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

TERRI TE TAU

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An Exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Creative Arts

Dedicated to my creative and courageous niece

Iris Maiata Pouao

Auahatia te toi i te mana o ngā rangi

2007 - 2014

ABSTRACT

This exegesis is a response to surveillance undertaken during ‘Operation 8,’ an anti-terror investigation carried out by the New Zealand Police in 2007. As an artist within the community subjected to the surveillance action, I was motivated to explore how an interdisciplinary arts practice, informed by Māori concepts and cosmo-genealogy, might respond to state surveillance.

Power relations and surveillance are examined by juxtaposing a Māori world-view against state sanctioned surveillance of its citizens. A creative practice-based inquiry was utilised to explore intersections and differences between these two perspectives.

The creative components of this research project comprise a science fiction literary component, sculpture, installation and video. The project is informed by art and literature that positions the research within the local but contextualised against global developments in surveillance.

Māori concepts of mana, tapu, mauri, whanaungatanga and mana motuhake with a primary focus on hau provide a foundation for this research guided by the whakataukī (proverb):

‘He kokonga whare e kitea, he kokonga ngākau e kore e kitea.’

The corners of a house can be seen, the corners of the heart cannot be seen.

When viewed within the context of surveillance the whakataukī asks how we are affected when the intimate private lives of individuals and community – the corners of the house - are visible to those with whom we have no direct relationship.

The second aspect of the whakataukī refers to those attributes that are unseen. The qualities that surveillance technology cannot quantify; internal feelings and intentions. The heart as a hidden space is explored in this exegesis as a site of resistance, where the capacity of surveillance technique to interpret values of an individual and community are questioned.

HE MIHI

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