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Lisa Reihana: Emissaries is the most ambitious project in Lisa Reihana’s longstanding digital practice. Much like Captain James Cook’s three epic and world-changing Pacific voyages, each iteration of its centrepiece – the video in Pursuit of Venus [infected], 2015–17 – became more ambitious in scale, required more resources and involved greater risk.

The outcomes for Reihana and Cook are radically different yet entwined in the presentation of Lisa Reihana: Emissaries at Tese dell’Isolotto in 2017 as part of the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. Exhibited in this space, which is rich with emissarial and seafaring memories, Reihana’s latest work marks a new height in her remarkable career. Cook’s death in 1779 abruptly ended his astonishing work, while Reihana’s reconsideration of Pacific history beats with respectful echoes of a continuum.

Her soundscape includes the ticking of the clock Cook used on his second and third voyages – an object prized and still wound daily at its home in the Royal Society’s London library nearly 250 years later. Cook’s legacy literally marks the seconds of time, the value of longitude and even the creation of a system of coordinates that govern GPS, perhaps used by many Biennale visitors to find their way around Venice.

Navigation and globalisation are but two perspectives in a work brimming with meaning and fascination. Lisa Reihana: Emissaries engages viewers in breathtakingly diverse ways, and unashamedly concerns the world and its people. Through the Biennale Arte 2017 I hope a huge audience discovers an exhibition and an artist whose work beguiles and provokes, and reminds us about the sometimes charming and other times terrifying challenges of cross-cultural encounter and being human.

It has been my privilege to work with Lisa Reihana, curator Rhana Devenport, project director Jude Chambers and their talented project teams to realise this exhibition. We set out to increase the value and lower the risk to everyone concerned – and look at what we have achieved. We thank Creative New Zealand for their support of this and each official exhibition since New Zealand began presenting in Venice in 2001. I also extend warm thanks to key partner Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and our presenting partner Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki.

Every New Zealand at Venice project is underpinned by the generous support of our Patrons, currently led so ably and enthusiastically by Leigh Melville, and our sponsors. Our projects rely on them more than ever – deep thanks to you all.

Special thanks must also go to the exhibition catalogue contributors: Witi Ihimaera, Rhana Devenport, Anne Salmond, Nikos Papastergiadis, Lisa Reihana, Brook Andrew, Jens Hoffmann, Vivienne Webb, Keith Moore, Andrew Clifford, and Megan Tamati-Guerrero. I acknowledge our designer Philip Kelly, editor Clare McIntosh and publication manager Catherine Hammond. Assistance was also received from the Royal Society, London, and the de Young, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

For many years Vivienne Stone, Sam Tozer, Tim Gruchy and James Pinker have supported this artwork and been integral to its realisation – thank you.

Final thanks belong to four very special people. Alan Sorrell and Julie Maxton, who led me to a clock that made me cry on first sight; Peter Gordon, who never stops giving; and Lisa Reihana, whose art has always changed my mind for the better.

Alastair Carruthers CNZM
COMMISSIONER – LISA REIHANA: EMISSARIES

Lisa Reihana: Emissaries
Commissioner’s Foreword

Alastair Carruthers CNZM
COMMISSIONER – LISA REIHANA: EMISSARIES

LISA REIHANA EMISSARIES

Alastair Carruthers CNZM
COMMISSIONER – LISA REIHANA: EMISSARIES

LISA REIHANA EMISSARIES
Look upon us now:
Here we are, emissaries arrived . . .

We lift our arms and offer you, halcyon citadel, the haka.
Great kāinga, your winged lion flew triumphant above all the capitals of Europa. You anchor at the navel of your universe just as we, in our island citadel of Tahiti, anchored at the aquamarine, gold and azure pito of ours. We pay tribute to St Theodore and the bestiary which attends him: the crocodile, phoenix, cuttlefish, octopus, swan, basilisk, hawk, centaur, dragon, cat and golden salamander. They are manaia, marahau and tanihwa of equal power to ours.

A hee mai te tua, e ia papama ‘ehe
No te tai a tau a Po . . .
The sea rolled, the tides mounting
For a period of nights . . .
E po fanaura’a atua, o te po Mua Taia’aroa
It was the God’s birth night,
The night of Mua Taia’aroa

Heralds in the heavens often presage changes coming to earth.
Thus did our whakapapa begin when it became known that Venus would transit across the surface of the sun.
The announcement brought scientists rushing from their hemisphere in the north to set up observatories in the south; on their arrival the womb of the world was enlarged. From their centre of power in Europa they came to ours in the azure Pacific where we held the tino rangatiratanga. Here, we kept the sovereign balance to their domain.

One such scientist was James Cook who arrived in Tahiti to observe the transit on 3 June 1769. In the world that has gone before us, we were the iwi, the original settlers, with our own music in our southern spheres. Purutu, gift of the gods, our Garden of Eden. The sky was above, Ranginui e! The sea was below, Tangaroa e! The islands were in between, ngā motu o Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa e!

Other voyagers, of a most marvellous kind, scattered to the Indies and South America. Quickened by the irritation, the pregnancy reached parturition, became swollen, it spat out and delivered of itself ships that were wondrous to look upon, carrying their own clouds above them. Aiming their telescopes to the infinite air, the star seekers saw Venus, moving in the heavens like a giant waka. There it sailed, with the star clusters of Alcyone, Elnath, Aldebaran and Alhena looking on. The canoe bucked in the fiery cyclones that burst across the blazing eye of the sun. Its timbers smouldered, and its sails burst into flame. Would the waka survive? Yes! There Kōpū bucked in the fiery cyclones that burst across the blazing eye of the sun. Its timbers smouldered, and its sails burst into flame. Would the waka survive? Yes! There Kōpū was, making escape into the cool universe beyond.

No such escape awaited us. Having calibrated heaven, the strangers began to calibrate the earth. From marvellous they became mischievous: measuring, sketching, surveying, naming, they turned their telescopes on us.

A hee mai te tua, e ia papama ‘ehe
No te tai a tau a Po . . .
The sea rolled, the tides mounting
For a period of nights . . .
E po fanaura’a atua, o te po Mua Taia’aroa
It was the God’s birth night,
The night of Mua Taia’aroa

A te, sovrania augusta,
You august sovereign, Indianiendiam la chioma,
We crown you, A te l’Asia,
A te l’Africa s’attira A te Europa
Ora consacta e dona, Now let Europe consecrate
And bestow on you this imperial crown
Of the world

Therefore, become kaitiaki . . .
E mokopuna, all of you come from a long line of ancestors stretching back to Rangiatea or to Europa or America to whom you are accountable and with whom you have an implicit contract.

That contract is to protect the ocean which is now your home, to protect your history and whakapapa, so that you may go onward and secure the future for your children’s children.

We hand to you all the tokotoko, the ceremonial stick of leadership.

A te, sovrania augusta,
You august sovereign, Indianiendiam la chioma,
We crown you, A te l’Asia,
A te l’Africa s’attira A te Europa
Ora consacta e dona, Now let Europe consecrate
And bestow on you this imperial crown
Of the world

And may the shimmer of sunlight ever dance across your pathway.
Lisa Reihana is an artist of fearless imagination. Her technically ambitious and poetically nuanced work draws on historical evidence, fictional narratives, mythology and kinship to disrupt time, truth, gender and accepted modes of representation.

The exhibition Lisa Reihana: Emissaries presents her expansive multi-channel project in Pursuit of Venus [infected] 2015–17 alongside interrelated photo-based and sculptural works. The exhibition, conceived as a meditation on ideas generated by cartographic endeavours and scientific exploration, unravels Enlightenment ideals and philosophy, the colonial impulse, and the distant yet pervasive gaze of power and desire.

In Pursuit of Venus [infected] is a cinematic remaking of the neoclassical French wallpaper Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique, 1804–5. The designer of this commercially produced wallpaper referenced illustrations made on the voyages to the Pacific by French explorers Jean-François de La Pérouse and Louis Antoine de Bougainville and the British cartographer and navigator Captain James Cook. Cook led three British voyages to the Pacific. The first voyage (1768–71) was primarily undertaken to measure the Transit of Venus and search for the southern continent – the hypothetical Terra Australis Incognita, or the unknown land of the south. The second (1772–75) was also a commission from the Royal Society to search for Terra Australis. The final voyage Cook made (1776–79) was to return the Tahitian traveller Omai, who had joined the second voyage, to his home island and to locate the Northwest Passage around the American continent. Two centuries later, Reihana harnesses digital technologies to animate, activate and recast the original wallpaper, populating her immersive video panorama with real, invented and speculative narratives of encounter between the animate, activate and recast the original wallpaper, populating her immersive video panorama with real, invented and speculative narratives of encounter between the peoples of the Pacific and Europe. The title in Pursuit of Venus [infected] consciously plays with the term ‘POV’, or the filmmaker’s ‘point of view’ and draws attention to the effect one’s perspective or position has on creating meaning. The ‘Venus’ alludes to both the 18th-century endeavour to calculate the distance between the Earth and the Sun by timing the Transit of Venus and to Europe’s romantic conception of the South Seas, which is seen in Bougainville’s name for Tahiti, ‘New Cythera’, a reference to the birthplace of the goddess of love, Aphrodite or Venus.

Working at the forefront of contemporary practice, Reihana has helped forge the development of time-based art in Aotearoa New Zealand, and she continues experimenting across different media, including digital video, film, sound, photography, spatial design, performance, body adornment and sculptural form. Reihana’s practice is driven by a deep connection to the communities she works with, which informs a collaborative working method which she describes as kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face).

In 2015 when Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki exhibited in Pursuit of Venus [infected] and published the accompanying book we did not envisage that the artwork and the discussions it generated would continue to expand and would do so rapidly.

Indeed, Reihana has shaped the opportunity of Biennale Arte 2017 to realise this project in its entirety. The duration of the video work is exactly double – 64 minutes – 10 vignettes have been added to the existing 70 in the 2015 version. Shoots have taken place at Campbelltown Art Centre with the Australian Aboriginal Kosmurri community, in London at the Royal Society, and in Auckland working with actors to inhabit the digitally rendered Māori, Tahitian, Hawaiian and Nootka Sound canoes. The emotional arc of the work is powerfully enhanced by its soundscape, created by Reihana’s collaborator James Pinker. New inclusions of Aboriginal song, the recording of the ticking of the Royal Society’s hand-wound clock and recordings of taonga puoro (Māori musical instruments) from the collection of Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, have all contributed to the creation of a markedly expanded work than that presented at Auckland Art Gallery two years ago.

Now 10 years in the making, in Pursuit of Venus [infected] is a remarkably complex digital animation that is vast in conception and ambitious in scale. The work comprises over 1,500 individual digital layers totalling 33 million pixels per frame. At 25 frames a second and 64 minutes in length, that equates to 3.168 trillion pixels. It took a year to determine the location of the horizon and months to decide the pixel ratio to ensure the future-proofing and the 15k resolution that the work inhabits. For Biennale Arte 2017 it is a five-channel projection accompanied by 71 surround sound. An early decision to commission an illustrator to hand paint the pared-back version of the wallpaper’s sky, sea and foreshore provided the ground for the habitation of Reihana’s orchestration of plants, Pacific peoples, British sailors and naval ships and, more recently, indigenous peoples from Australia and Nootka Sound. The work is a conscious performance of discovery, a becoming witness, a panoramic pantomime which in its fervour echoes early 19th-century Europe’s ‘panoramania’.

Through the process, Reihana has been acutely conscious of the ethics of engagement and the problematics of representation. Discussions with and advice from specialists in indigenous epistemology helped shape the stance of the work. Three months in 2013 undertaking a Montalvo Artist Residency in California afforded Reihana rare time to script the dramatic moments, something she had commissioned from other experts in previous projects such as Native Portraits i.n.1897, 1997 Negotiations with Pacific performing groups as they visited Auckland for the annual Pasifika Festival over several years occurred alongside experimentations with costume designers, producers, a dramaturg, choreographer, programmer, cinematographer and composer. In addition to the input of these contributors Reihana engaged in long conversations with actors and an observance of the push-pull between improvisation and directorial control. All these collaborations have contributed to a densely layered and mesmerising work.

The writers commissioned for this publication have endeavoured to tease out ideas and multiple perspectives encircling the exhibition. Novelist and playwright Witi Ihimaera opens the book with a mih (welcome), Nikos Papastergiadis considers
Arcadia and imagined memories, Jens Hoffmann discusses ‘panoramania’, Anne Salmond’s extended text examines the figure of Tupaia and the hau (life force), while artist Brook Andrew’s conversation with Reihana addresses ethics and representation within art making. In addition, Vivienne Webb outlines the design and production of the original wallpaper, Andrew Clifford focuses on the soundscape of In Pursuit of Venus (infected), Keith Moore discusses the Royal Society’s clock which travelled with Cook on his second and third voyages and Megan Tamati-Quennell collates a concise biography of the artist and her near 30-year practice.

Reihana’s expansionism reflects her passion for inquiry and revels in questions generated by Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique itself, such as why were the first peoples of Australia barely included, relegated to the middle distance in drops XVIII and XIX. Her project is not a digital recreation of the wallpaper; rather, it is a radical reclamation from a trans-Pacific perspective. Reihana seizes on the trope of the wallpaper to cast a generous reimagining of actions and encounters that may or may not have taken place among peoples in Nootka Sound, Raïatea, Tonga, Tahiti, Vanuatu, Hawai‘i, Aotearoa, New Caledonia, Marquesas Islands, Australia and Palau. Her timescale is a contemporaneous, historically infected now. The Pacific Ocean, a water mass that covers one third of the planet, becomes a bed of action for speculations on human behaviour. Greetings, exchanges, ceremony, taunts, misunderstandings, violence and untold intimacies entwine and unravel.

Encompassing multiple and egalitarian interests, this body of work provides a touchstone for productive dialogue on topics such as indigenous cinema, postcolonial urges, coded languages of performance and customary practices within a contemporary continuum of re-enactment, reclamation and alterity.

Rhana Devenport
CURATOR – LISA REIHANA: EMISSARIES
EMISSARIES: A NEW PACIFIC FOR THE PAST OF TOMORROW

Society Islands, Mask from a Parae (mourner’s costume), probably collected by George Bennet in the 1820s, partial tropic bird feathers, coconut fibre. Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge.

Photo: Gwil Owen
'Above, Afraid, Aloft, Anchor' are the first four words in a dictionary of Polynesian language from the Pacific Island traveller Omai in the late 18th century. The words, brought together by accident of alphabetisation, can be seen as a kind of shorthand for Omai's cross-cultural experiences and for events from the project of exploration in which he was an active agent. While it was Captain James Cook who took Omai to England, it was the well-connected and ambitious naturalist Joseph Banks who ensured that he was fêted in the nation's centre of power, London. Omai was born around 1751 in Ra’iātea, the second largest island after Tahiti in the South Pacific's Society Islands. He first met Cook as a teenager in Tahiti on the commander's first voyage in 1769. During Cook's second voyage, Omai joined the HMS *Adventure* in 1773 under Captain Tobias Furneaux and arrived in London a year later. Renowned for his charm, wit and to English eyes his exotic good looks, Omai was a feature at social gatherings, and in 1776 the influential portraitist Sir Joshua Reynolds painted the young attaché. Omai's voyage home after a two-year stay became the topic of a wildly popular pantomime, *Omai – A Voyage 'Round the World*, which from 1785 played to full houses in London. His safe return from England to the Pacific was the prime motivation for Cook's third voyage (1776–79). After arriving back to his home island of Huahine in 1777, Omai decorated a European-style house with furniture and other accoutrements that he had been gifted, only to die two years later aged just 29.

Omai's diplomacy unfolded in the high society of London, but another great emissary, Tupaia, who was also from Ra’iātea, played a key diplomatic role with both Australian Aboriginal people and the New Zealand Māori during Cook's first voyage (1768–71) in the Pacific. A brilliant navigator, translator and Arioi high priest, Tupaia was born around 1725 and in 1769 joined the HMS *Endeavour* at the insistence of Joseph Banks when it passed through Ra’iātea. Banks personally paid for Tupaia's welfare on the journey while he drew navigational charts for 130 Pacific islands in a vast radius and named 74. Tupaia accompanied Cook and Banks on forays to Australia and New Zealand and worked closely with the latter to compile an account of Tahiti and its people. Although the *Endeavour*’s sailors were not impressed by Tupaia's regal and authoritative disposition, Māori immediately recognised him as a tohunga (expert) and presented him with an esteemed dog-skin cloak. Tupaia, however, never reached England: in 1770, aged 45, he died from dysentery in Batavia along with many seamen and scientists on that voyage.

Omai and Tupaia – both recognisable in their spectacularly draped sun-bleached white tapa (bark cloth) attire – are constants in the exhibition Lisa Reihana: *Emissaries* (2017). Both appear discoursing with Banks and Cook in the exhibition’s centrepiece – the panoramic projection in *Pursuit of Venus [infected]*, 2015–17. The repeated appearances of these emissaries from the South in the scrolling narrative of this work is a powerful signifier of the exchanges that took place during Cook’s Pacific voyages of discovery – and indeed helped secure the success of those voyages, whose effects remain alive and contested to this day.
A Wallpaper of Elaborate Scheme, a Work of Shifting Scales

For this exhibition, Reihana has brought together a group of works that encircle speculative ideas generated by the Enlightenment’s most reproduced and fanciful depiction of the South Seas – Joseph Dufour & Cie and Jean-Gabriel Charvet’s Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique, 1804–5. The wallpaper acts as the intellectual-aesthetic scaffolding of Reihana’s Emissaries project. Borrowing from visual and descriptive representations of Cook, Jean-François de Galaup, de La Pérouse and Louis Antoine de Bougainville’s voyages, Dufour and Charvet’s decorative panoramic wallpaper proved to be both a zenith in the technology of representation at the outset of the 19th century and the hardened pinnacle of an idealised colonial impulse. Of Les Sauvages Reihana says, ‘This fascinating wallpaper is a concoction, a fabulation invented in someone else’s elsewhere, and a technical marvel of its time.’ Comprising in total 20 drops of paper embellished with over 1000 woodblock prints, Les Sauvages graced dining and drawing rooms across Europe and North America, creating site-specific immersive environments 200 years before the invention of Oculus Rift. In these domestic settings of the privileged, the wallpaper cast the wealthy as worldly participants and purveyors of faraway places, and their guests as amused and titillated momentary adventurers. The buried Roman city of Pompeii had been rediscovered in 1748 and rapidly influenced the fashions of the late 18th century. It is in part for this reason that the diaphanous and alluring neoclassical costumes caressing the near naked pale-skinned dancers in the wallpaper spoke less to Tahitian or Hawaiian modes of dress than to the prevailing taste of the European elite. Charvet, as illustrator, crafted an imaginative hybrid accumulation of bodies in attire ranging from elaborate quasi-tribal to seductive exotic. In the wallpaper Tahitian afternoon sun falls warmly on verdant land populated with plants plucked arbitrarily from botanical illustrations drawn on Cook’s Pacific voyages and flora from South America, where the illustrator had recently travelled.

Les Sauvages was part instructive, part entertainment and utterly reflective of its time and the ideological aspirations of Enlightenment thought and the Age of Reason, complete with Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s notion of the noble savage and societal progress. Reihana, acutely aware of the legacy of Enlightenment thought and the way this continues to play out in the wallpaper, explains:

I chose to transgress the wallpaper’s conventions. Well aware of the slippery nature of viewpoints and truth, I deliberately included scenes that show the risks of encounter and cultural conflicts . . . I used several techniques in my attempts to resist what I describe as the “festival gaze” (brown bodies on show).

She draws attention to ruptures and fault lines, to contradictions, and to the irrevocable failures and the unexpected surprises of communication. The video
panorama, then, raises questions about cultural forgetting, visceral power and sexual identity. The radical introduction of a transgender Captain Cook references Pacific peoples’ confusion as to the explorer’s sexual orientation. In fact in relation to this there is a doubling with the inclusion of a male Cook in the ‘Gender Cook’ vignette of the initial version and then a second vignette with a female Cook cast in the same role. The 32-minute loop becomes 64 minutes with the inclusion of this barely discernible yet fundamental flip.

By re-enacting scenarios through digital video and photography, Reihana recasts, reclaims and reimagines history and its representation from a 21st-century Māori and Pacific perspective. The enhancement and enlarging of characters to a human scale in Pursuit of Venus [infected] implicates us, the viewers, fully in the speculative theatrical and historical drama that unfolds. Simultaneously, the presentation of key characters at a giant size in the photographic portraits diminishes us. And in a dramatic inversion of scale, Reihana introduces the miniature in her manipulation of telescopes – or as they were known in Cook’s time, ‘perspectival tubes’ or ‘spying glasses’ – which hone nuanced details and characters including the Nootka Sound figure that so captured the artist’s imagination when she was researching the collection of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge.6

Time and Space

While the panoramic pseudo-pantomime7 of in Pursuit of Venus [infected] can be traced to Les Sauvages, its filmic point of view is reflective of Reihana’s ongoing interests in Māori filmmaker Barry Barclay’s conception of the ‘fourth cinema’ from which an indigenous theory can be framed. Reihana explains:

The fourth wall is a cinematic term that describes an audience’s invisible ‘fly on the wall’ viewpoint. Barclay considers it a privileging view, and in ‘Celebrating Fourth Cinema’ theorises an indigenous cinema where First Peoples control the camera rather than being the subject of its gaze . . . in Pursuit of Venus [infected] reflects these ideas by placing viewers as tangata whenua (people of the land). The resulting experience is that you are watching the foreshore action from behind the flora. With the inclusion of the haka (posture dance), which is unusually seen from behind, the dancers are performing a challenge on our behalf. This reverses the perspective to one of insider/tangata whenua rather than an outsider/audience member.8

Working with scale and time, Reihana telescopes into a dramatic moment of rupture – the death of Captain Cook at Kealakekua Bay in Hawai’i on 14 February 1779, which is an almost invisible event hidden in the far distance in Les Sauvages – to create

6 See pp 94–95 for a representation of this figure.
the violent and dramatic climax of *Pursuit of Venus (infected)*. Potentially mortal consequences of actions, hubris and misunderstandings are brought to the fore. The novelty of this moment and its impact is profound, yet this drama plays out within an endlessly looping visual world, ensuring that time here is cyclical and not teleological.16 A limitless becoming, the temporal and spatial dimensionality of *Pursuit of Venus (infected)*, is one of its most radical elements; it eschews European readings in favour of engaging with metaphysical perspectives that include the recently articulated Pacific theory of time and space known as Tā–Vā. I suggest that the cyclical time of *Pursuit of Venus (infected)* is informed by Pacific conceptions of time as articulated in the Tā–Vā theory. Tā–Vā differs from Aristotelian-founded, Western temporal and spatial metaphysics in its emphasis on perpetual cycles, and in this way it relates more to Henri Bergson's idea of duration while also offering something entirely new.

Spatial theorist Albert L. Refiti notes that 'Although barely ten years-old, the Tā–Vā theory of reality has been vital to the work of producing concepts in Pacific Thought'.17 Pacific Thought is a broad grouping of ideas from thinkers, writers and artists in Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere in the Pacific, which has been in circulation since the 1990s. Theorist 'Okusitino Mahina proposed in 2010 that the Tā–Vā theory is a productive concept unifying nature, mind and reality, and is a cyclical process of becoming. In this theory, time and space are in a perpetual game of repulsion and attraction in an eternal state of cycle and exchange. The theory derives in part from Tongan conceptions of performance (tong time in space) and material arts with Tā (beating) being active and Vā (intervals/silence) being inactive. The transformative combination unleashes volcanic power within objects and produces a constant state of flux. Mahina explains: 'The crux of the theory suggests that the material world is perpetually under transformation by Tā (time and action) and Vā (space and content)'18 Refiti discusses the production of ngatu or Tongan bark cloth as a negotiation of Tā and Vā into form. Reihana is conscious of the technological advances wrought through French paper-making in the late 18th century and the technical precision required with woodblock printing to produce multiple versions for international distribution.19 Her elaborate and ambitious digital compositing and spatial and temporal conception in *Pursuit of Venus (infected)* – which in sheer complexity of production is a contemporary equivalent of the Dufour wallpaper – also parallels the negotiation of Tā–Vā within the creation of customary ngatu.

Cosmogony is the theory of the origin of the universe – the birth of time and space in which mythological time plays a key contributing role. The phrase made famous by Claude Lévi-Strauss is appropriate; he said, ‘art is for the suppression of time’.15 John Potts notes, ‘ancestral events continuously described though oral narration are understood not as “history” – consigned irretrievably to the past – but as foundational events existing simultaneously in past, present and future’. Ka mura, ka muri is a Māori proverb that aligns with the Māori world view that one walks through life backwards looking to the future as one approaches it but instead looking back to and being informed by the past. The past and present are, therefore, a single space.

The all-pervasive mathematical conceptions of time proposed by Descartes and Newton were challenged by Henri Bergson at the turn of the 20th century in a new conception of time which focused on intuition and internal streams of consciousness, known as ‘duration’. This idea was explored by writers James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, among others, and later championed by Gilles Deleuze in the 1980s. Bergson's durational and intuitive time offered affinities for late 20th and early 21st-century time-based practitioners such as video and performance artists.20 At the eve of the Information Age, in the 1970s, Frederic Jameson associated modernism with time and postmodernism with space, and in 1989 David Harvey described ‘the condition of post-modernity’ as one in which there was ‘space-time compression’ and communication and information flows – a quickening of time and a shrinking of space.21 Since the turn of this century theorists have focused on ‘internet time’ and networked online communications; and since 2007 the smartphone phenomenon has radically altered and integrated time and space with geospatial ‘locative media, a collaborative cartography of space and mind, places and the connections between them’.22 This has introduced what Ichio Habuchi terms ‘telecoconing’. Nicolas Bourriaud talks about ‘altermodernity’ rather than ‘postmodernity’, recognising a ‘translation orientated modernity’ where the immigrant, the wanderer, the exile and the tourist are the dominant figures of contemporary society.23 This idea relates to Reihana’s exploration of the inquisitive and acquisitive explorer and the mis-translation of custom in hitherto unknown lands. Bourriaud also speaks about artists as ‘semionauts’, agents who navigate the virtual oceans of images or signs.24

Reihana’s semionautical and sustained interest in a popular, decorative and quasi-educational 19th-century representation of the idealised Pacific is not a nostalgic revisiting or a righting/er-writing of wrongs; rather, it opens fissures in codified representation and the colonial impulse to explore directly the intentions and possibilities of human encounter and exchange. This is not a reconstruction of the past but a regenerative imaginative inquiry into a contemporaneous cultural present and future. Politics of memory come into play as Reihana challenges both the truth of the observations and the authenticity of events and appearance. The post-death dismembering of Cook which we see in *Pursuit of Venus (infected)* – itself an act of reverence by the Hawaiians – is perhaps symbolic of the disillusion or misconception of memory. In 21st-century theoretical physics there is the idea of the multiverse, of parallel versions of time, which link back to Bergson’s idea of varying intensities of time and infinite becoming. Reihana’s scrolling, endlessly-looping field of land, sea and sky cradles a multiverse of actions and encounters.
The Transit

It was the scientific project of measuring both chronological time and heavenly distance that launched Cook on his first voyage to the Pacific or, as the region was called then, the ‘South Seas’. At the insistence of the Royal Society, King George III initiated a voyage to record the Transit of Venus in Tahiti in 1769. Never before had such an amount of money been committed to a scientific project. The Navy purchased a vessel and named it Endeavour, and Cook, a cartographer and astronomer, was commissioned by the Admiralty to lead the voyage (he was paid a flat fee of £100 for his astronomical observations). In the spirit of the Enlightenment, Cook was requested to make ‘ethnographical observations and botanical, mineral and animal collections . . . to make sense of this new world’. The Admiralty’s secret papers, read by Cook only after the Transit sighting, outlined the secondary purpose of the voyage – to seek Terra Australis Incognita, ‘the unknown land of the South’.

The first recording of a Transit of Venus was in 1639,13 in 1761 another Transit was more widely observed and recorded, and soon after this the scientific and astronomical communities understood that the Transit offered a rare and important opportunity to measure the heavens. Simply put, by recording the time it took for Venus to transit the Sun, and comparing the solar parallax, or differences between observations across the globe, the distance between the Earth and the Sun could be determined. This was by no means merely a British venture; in many ways that was one of the world’s first and most collaborative international endeavours, as the comparatives from different parts of the world were essential to determine the result. The project engaged 125 observers from 10 countries in over 100 locations across the world. Catherine the Great, for example, was thrilled at the project’s potential and took a passionate interest in the domain of the British explorers or the visual artists on board their vessels, as this extract from Herman Melville’s famous novel about the white leviathan Moby-Dick attests:

Consider all this; and then turn to this green, gentle, and most docile earth; measure the Heavens . . . and then turn to this green, gentle, and most docile earth; measure the Heavens for as this appalling ocean surrounds the verdant land, so in the soul of man there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompassed by all the horrors of the half known life.

Representations of the Pacific

Imaginative representations of the Pacific and its islands of possibility were not only the domain of the British explorers or the visual artists on board their vessels, as this extract from Herman Melville’s famous novel about the white leviathan Moby-Dick attests:

...and then turn to this green, gentle, and most docile earth; measure the Heavens for as this appalling ocean surrounds the verdant land, so in the soul of man there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompassed by all the horrors of the half known life. God keep thee! Push not off from that isle, thou canst never return!135

Here, Melville could equally be speaking of what befell Cook in Hawai’i, and it is highly likely that his imagination was fuelled by images of the Pacific which were circulating at the time of the novel’s creation. Moby-Dick was published 82 years after Cook’s first Pacific voyage and 47 years after the production of Dufour and Charvet’s wallpaper.

It has been stated that the volume of pictorial representations of Cook’s voyages is unsurpassed by those generated during other expeditions before or since.136 Cook’s voyages produced 600 watercolours, gouaches and drawings, 130 copperplate engravings and 50 engravings from unaethorised publications, plus 2000 natural history drawings and watercolours. These pictorial reports and artworks circulated feel more habitable.130 Cook’s and Banks’ green-floored world enclosed in the ship is brought to mind, almost 250 years later, by Reihana’s green screen in the darkened film studio as she captured footage to Chroma key composite actors and vessels in the making of In Pursuit of Venus (infected).
in the European book market for generations, and directly influenced Dufour and Chavert’s wallpaper. Works by John Webber, the artist on the third and final voyage, attracted great attention – particularly *The Death of Cook*, 1787 (National Portrait Gallery, Canberra), which was based on his own experiences, although he did not actually witness Cook’s death. Webber’s were ‘encounter’ images that encompassed rituals of dance, performance, banquets and barter and sales. Under Cook’s direction, he depicted ceremonies, funerals, rituals and human sacrifices. Cook often took active part in these events, such as the Lono ceremony in Hawai‘i involving his partial stripping, which is seen in *in Pursuit of Venus (infected)*. On his return to London, Webber produced paintings and the aquatint series *Views in the South Seas*, 1786–92 which helped him become one of the first successful independent artist-publishers, an enterprise that had become popular in the 18th century to meet the desire for images of the exotic and which ensured a lineage of Pacific-related illustration that survives up to the present day and finds new form in Reihana’s project.

However, European artists were not the only ones to travel with Cook. Joining Sydney Parkinson and Herman Spöring Jr on the first voyage was our emissary Tupaia, who produced watercolours unlike any other. A reflection of the esteem in which he was held, Tupaia was given access to precious watercolour paints and, using the colours that predominate in bark-cloth painting – red, brown and black – made a number of pencil and watercolour works, which were attributed to ‘Artist of the Chief Mourner’. Only in 1997 were they reattributed to Tupaia. One such image shows Banks exchanging a piece of cloth for a crayfish. It is perhaps telling of Tupaia’s perspective on cross-cultural contact during the first voyage that he chose to depict this exchange, which might also be viewed as reciprocal gifting (koha), a customary practice in Polynesia with links to Tā–Vā. Of course, formal gifting is a hallmark of diplomatic ritual, so we should not be surprised by the fact that it caught the watchful emissary’s eye. All seems well in Tupaia’s watercolour, a moment of offer and acceptance performed by each party, but we know not all interactions borne out of Cook’s voyages and the consequential colonisation of the Pacific maintained this calm balance. It is that knowledge that helps give Tupaia’s image the charge it has. And it is this that gives images such as Tupaia’s and the gargantuan fiction of idealisation we experience in Dufour’s wallpaper the intellectual–emotional prompts that make them alive to politically powerful reappraisal in the present.

**Emissaries – A New Pacific of the Past for Tomorrow**

Framing the action of *in Pursuit of Venus (infected)* in the exhibition are two large-scaled digital images: one depicts Joseph Banks in his luxuriant and confident splendour; the other is of the Chief Mourner, an emissary between life and death. **On the first voyage accompanying Joseph Banks were botanical and natural history illustrator Sydney Parkinson and the Finnish draughtsman, botanist, clerk and instrument maker Herman Spöring Jr. On the second voyage was landscape artist William Hodges. The third voyage artists were John Webber and Willem Ellis, the latter an amateur who assisted the ship’s surgeon.** **See p 45 for a reproduction of the watercolour.** **See pp 59 and 93 for images of the Chief Mourner.**
Reihana explains:

The spectacular Chief Mourner costume, heiva tupapa‘u, was worn during funerary rituals, and I wanted to understand why it struck such fear for the Tahitians... Rarely seen and worn only when a Chief passed away, its use marked chaotic times when a village was leaderless and political machinations were afoot. The Chief Mourner would terrorise local villagers in the mornings and evenings, accompanied by assistants whose bodies were blackened with soot. The pearlescent mask and breastplate reflect bright light, literally blinding those who beheld it. For unlucky ones, the result was death. Accounts from Cook’s first voyage describe Joseph Banks joining the Chief Mourner. Correspondence from Banks unearthed in 1997 confirmed that Tupaia created the famous illustration of this costumed diviner. In Pursuit of Venus [infected] restages Tupaia’s drawing – his image is surrounded by a group of women decorating tapa and we see Banks ‘blackening up’ and joining in the killing spree. It’s fascinating to consider Banks’ willingness to join an indigenous death ritual. The Chief Mourner’s actions were at once those of creator and destroyer, collapsing the space between life and death, chaos and permanence.

In the centre of Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique, in drop X, there is a Māori figure who gazes back over his right shoulder, straining to see the death of Cook on the beach of faraway Kealakekua Bay. One way of understanding Reihana’s relationship to her project is to imagine that she inhabits this figure as she envisages representations and realities of Pacific peoples now and through time, and considers Cook’s voyages – his actions, his scientific endeavours, his death and the thousands of images and representations that emerged from those and other European voyages which have been folded into the collective imaginary of the Pacific.

For this final iteration of in Pursuit of Venus [infected] Reihana has included a schism to her own cyclical time register. The rupture is the presence of the Pacific canoes which, with their crews, are the only vignettes in the animated tableau that move left to right, seemingly against time. This gesture, disruptive of a teleological understanding of history, may be read as symbolic of the two emissaries: Omai and his elaborate return to the island of his origin; and Tupaia and his modest yet powerful renderings of gifting between strangers once worlds apart.
The replica of Captain Cook's ship HMS Endeavour arrives in Sydney Harbour after a 13-month, 13,300 nautical mile circumnavigation of Australia, on May 23, 2012.

(Photograph by Wolter Peeters/The Sydney Morning Herald via Getty Images)
Memory is the capacity to recall images from the past. Imagination is the art of generating images. Between memory and imagination is the difference between excavating the old and bringing forth the new. The former summons what was once real and existent, while the latter calls into existence a possibility. Memory and imagination give us a different view on the present. But what if an artist starts making new memories? Or, put another way, what if the artist is using their imagination to project images towards a possible past? For at least a moment, the status of being an artist exempts them from the usual judgements of delusion and confusion. When an artist crosses this border we, at first, tend to suspend the normal reflex of dismissal. We assume that this ‘error’ is deliberate, that there may be some deeper purpose to this foray into the overlay of history and fantasy. Let us begin by making some breathing space between memory and imagination in the work of Lisa Reihana.

Reihana’s 2017 project Emissaries and the magnificent In Pursuit of Venus [infected], 2015–17 draw from a longstanding thematic interest and arise from her persistence with a distinctive approach towards the history of colonialism. Throughout her practice Reihana has looked back into the colonial world and forward to an emergent postcolonial order. The formal colonial apparatus has been long gone in New Zealand as it has also disconnected many other former colonies in the south. However, the public imaginary in the south is still ‘infected’ and haunted by its past. There is an uneasy lag between the dismantling of the economic relations and legal structures that produced the exploitative world of colonialism and the development of open and equal conditions of exchange. Thus, while most of the colonial systems have been dislodged from their position of authority, the decolonisation of the imagination in the south is far from complete. This gap between historical conditions and the emergence of new political realities reveals the difference between the time frames of the rational order and imaginary processes. Images and fantasies linger in the body, infiltrate the mind and continue to shape the present. What can be done with these remnants? As every refugee, migrant and traveller knows, no one comes into the world pure, the bitter-sweet stereotype lingers in unwanted places and always arrives ahead of you.

Early in her career, Reihana’s video animation Wog Features, 1990 was presented in the pioneering global survey exhibition Il Sud Del Mondo – L’Altra Arte Contemporanea (1991). The exhibition included art from Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania. Appropriately it was held in Marsala, Sicily. The south of Italy was also the focus of one of Antonio Gramsci’s most famous, albeit incomplete, essays in which he pondered on the vital forms of cultural knowledge and political resilience that are embodied by the peasantry. Unlike other revolutionaries who dismissed the peasant as the ‘awkward class’, Gramsci stressed the importance of learning from the south and called for the positive appreciation of regional consciousness. The essay remained as a set of unfinished notes that were scattered on his desk, and found
after he was arrested and imprisoned by the Italian Fascists. Almost a century later, it appears that the global art world, or at least the friendly monster known as Documenta XIV, is once again trying to learn from the south.

Wog Features was one the most prescient works of its generation. At around the same time writers like Salman Rushdie and artists like Destiny Deacon were adopting the postcolonial survivalist tactic of taking names that were given in scorn and not only wearing them with pride but also working them into their literary and artistic style. A new subversive and ironic way of making art was emerging. In Wog Features, Reihana is both director and one of the performers. She inhabits the masks, plays with the beads, spins the globe, pulls the sleight of hand that conceals the ‘i’ in ‘icon’ to reveal the ‘con’, and, in general, shows how images and words circulate to both produce and distort identities. This distortion, or what in postcolonial cultural theory is addressed under the heading of the ‘politics of representation’, has been the subject of considerable debate. Most reactions focus on the injury and deception that is caused by the distortion. Reihana does not gloss over the pain caused by racist and gendered stereotyping, but what is distinctive about her approach is that she never gives the last laugh to the coloniser. For all the harm that is projected onto bodies and cultures of the south, Reihana’s video animation also demonstrates that the performers who mimic these fantasies are by no means diminished. On the contrary, they play with the symbols that, in the colonial mindset, are objects of derision and the means for condescension. They eject these symbols from the colonial value system and begin to twist them into new objects of desire and, in turn, enjoy the power of making others ‘eat your words’. In short, the stereotype is not treated as the inevitable negation of identity, but as a jagged spur to agency.

We who live in the real territories and work from the imagined zones of the south do not need to be reminded of the ambivalent categories and concepts that persist in the history of art. The term ‘primitive’ was a foundational concept for defining the distinctiveness of the Enlightenment principles in Eurocentric art history, but also providing the negative reference point. It pointed to cultures that were stuck in the past and were outside of the motor of rationality and progress. For those who questioned the direction and felt sadness about all that was lost in the relentless drive towards a mechanised and abstracted future, the idea of primitivism also provided some kind of succour. It was the prime source of nostalgic and redemptive thinking in modernism. Primitivism has now lost its magnetic aura, but the allure of the Other has far from faded. In the place of a binary distinction between the primitive and the modern, there are more obscure categories that allow for the smuggling of magic and the mystery of old vices. The rejected memories are recycled awry in the imagination. To bear witness to this interpenetration would require a cataclysmic intellectual effort. Enlightenment principles and rationalist methodologies would need to be overturned. The historical narratives would need to move in new directions and develop far more complex structures. They would need to reveal the shuttling between north and south,
showing how this pair is not an opposition, but operates as a constitutive coupling formation that is entangled in the complex fibres of creative imagination. At present there are some glimpses of these narratives, but in general we are still waiting for art history to find a new set of rhapsodic voices. What we have learnt, in the early days of postcolonial critique, is that the image of Arcadia that was desperately projected like a loving ox on the south is a ‘terrible gift’.1 The idea of Arcadia is therefore like an archive that bears contradictory messages. For the north it opens the self to the bathetic wish of return to innocence; it bears testament to the violence of the past, but it also holds onto something else that is precious. The paradox of this colonial archive, which recurs in many instances across the south, is that it is the only remaining durable record of history. The coloniser sponsored the capture of the symbols of life that it was also bent on destroying. The archive opens up a Pandora’s box of conflicting emotions. It admits that for all the coloniser’s material gains and political power it has also lost something vital and delicious. The image of Arcadia comes back to haunt the victor as it harkens back to an imagined moment of sentimental connection with its own origin, but also beckons the Other to be the bearer of a primal instinct and passion that it would also rather not have to name.

From the perspective of the south the image of Arcadia is indeed a mixed blessing. The gaps in our archive are not filled by these galloping fantasies. They are uneven and arbitrary, but nevertheless not entirely useless starting points. Arcadia, when seen from the south, is a prompt for double consciousness. We see the stereotypical thing through which we are seen, and we also see the person we wanted to be seen as in all our encounters. We also see the historical stage that is projected onto the landscape and the fault lines where image and reality rub and bleed. It is this double consciousness that is also a mixed blessing, it is the curse, that allows us ‘to believe again in what it knows does not exist’.2 It ushers in an opportunity to repeat a belief that we know is both a false memory and a useful starting point for the imagination.

In 2004 I invited Lisa Reihana to be on a panel with the South African artist Kendell Geers and the South American artist Carlos Capelán. In my memory of this encounter each of the artists sang more than spoke to each other. The voices crossed over each other in as much a contrapuntal way as they converged at any specific point. Shortly after the event I took Carlos Capelán to Sydney and we stood on the headlands looking down at La Perouse beach. I pointed out to him that this suburb was named after Jean-François de Galaup La Pérouse, the French captain who had arrived just a few days after the first fleet from England began their invasion in Botany Bay. Captain La Pérouse chose not to stay, but prior to this point, he also had the perspicacity to throw off his ship a young boy called Napoleon who was seeking adventures in the new world. I wondered what difference it would have made if Napoleon remained on board. Carlos replied, ‘All your roads would be straight and Alice Springs would be your capital.’ We laughed and looked out into the horizon of the Pacific Ocean, and Carlos added, ‘So this is the view from the other side.’ Lisa Reihana’s panoramic video...
in Pursuit of Venus [infected] is a filmic re-imaging of the French scenic wallpaper Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique, which was made in 1804–5 by Joseph Dufour and included images from both Captain Cook and Captain La Pérouse’s voyages.

The backdrop story to Reihana’s video is the 19th-century fascination with Arcadia. The skies are blue, the landscape is soft and verdant and all the people are healthy and beautiful. There are no blemishes, or even any signs of conflict. On the contrary, the scene is framed by shade-giving trees and the gestures are welcoming and reciprocal. This is hospitality in its idyllic extreme. It recalls the generous forms of welcome that are described in Homer’s Odyssey. Book One of the belated recording of Homer’s epic song reveals that the process of reception and hospitality unfolds in the seven key steps. First there is a mute kind of greeting. Then there is the offer of washing. A stranger is given the opportunity to wash their body, in particular, their hands. After cleaning themselves, both the stranger and host are joined in a prayer to the gods, a libation of some sort. At that point the stranger, who has probably arrived on bended knee, or upright according to their status, is given the freedom to present himself as an equal, to stand up and face his host. Then there is the sharing of food. After washing, prayer, uplifting and digestion of the food, begins the conversation. Only at this point does the host ask the guest – and the word for stranger xenos and hospitality xenia share a common etymological origin – Where have you come from? Who are your people? Where has your journey taken you? Where are you going? It concludes with the expectation that the stranger will be given gifts to facilitate their ongoing journey, and the gift-giving also serves as a solidification of a bond of union between the xenia – the host and the guest. This is the sort of ritual of hospitality that we see from the outset of The Odyssey. However, there are many other examples of reception that are the antithesis or more calculated versions of this hospitality. Cyclops greets strangers by making a meal of them. King Alcinous is very generous to Odysseus, but his motivations may be swayed by the fear that this stranger is a god in disguise, and in any case, whatever gifts he and his fellow princes lavish on their guests, the costs are quickly recovered by imposing even harsher taxes upon their own people. No free meals in the Mediterranean either then or now.

Odysseus’s journey is no wander through Arcadia. It is violent and demanding. The Arcadia that is represented in Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique which Reihana draws on in her panoramic video is, in its original format, dripping with virtue. The evocation of paradise found is so full of the sweet sentiment that we could now characterise it as high colonial kitsch. The narrative arc is such that any realist would squirm with revulsion. It is begging to be turned upside down to be put right side up. In Wog Features Reihana turned negative stereotypes of migrants and indigenous people into positive attributes, in the new video in Pursuit of Venus [infected] the contact narrative unfolds in an equally uneasy manner, it spices the erotic dancing and mystic poised imagery of Arcadia into the violent and disjointed catapulting worlds of the colonising soldiers and indigenous warriors. The worlds are presented in tense and
composed the sonnet ‘On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer’. With no more than 14 lines he combined the ecstatic pleasure of reading with the thrill of possessive discovery. In a potent testament to its own time it introduced references to both the classical Odyssean ordeal and the unquenchable zest of colonialism. The sonnet ends with the reference to Cortez climbing the valleys and peaks of Panama until he arrives at the rapturous moment of seeing the Pacific on the other side. In reality it was not Cortez who reached the peak, it was the members of Vasco Núñez de Balboa’s expedition. Let’s not hover in the realm of facts but fan open once again the breathing space between memory and imagination. For, as we recall the elegiac songs and sculptural installation On first looking into Chapman’s Homer (2011) in Venice, by Michael Parekowhai, we may well ask: who is looking back at the coloniser from the other side of the Pacific!

Looking back, and not just in anger, is a profound step towards recognition. In Reihana’s project Emissaries and the magnificent in Pursuit of Venus [infected], there is a powerful staging of the return of the gaze. This response is not in your face, it is neither a direct confrontation, nor a sentimental starry-eyed adoration, it is a slow and caring looking back at the memory of colonial history that can also open another way of reinhabiting the landscape of survival.

Much have I travell’d in the realms of gold, And many goodly states and kingdoms seen; Round many western islands have I been Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold. Oft of one wide expanse had I been told That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne; Yet did I never breathe its pure serene Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold. Then felt I like some watcher of the skies When new plant swims into his ken; Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes He star’d at the Pacific – and all his men Look’d at each other with a wild surmise – Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

In 1816 the young poet John Keats stayed up all night reading a fresh translation of Homer’s Odyssey by the playwright George Chapman. By breakfast time he had
ANNE SALMOND

VOYAGING WORLDS

Image ISS042-E-17867 taken by astronauts aboard the International Space Station (ISS). Photo courtesy of Earth Science and Remote Sensing Unit, NASA Johnson Space Center.
In the 21st-century Pacific, the most iconic images of the earth are those taken from outer space. A blue globe hangs in a pool of darkness, spinning in the sun. When the Pacific Ocean comes into sight, its scatter of islands is barely visible.

Edged by the continents of Asia, Australia and the Americas, the scale of this great ocean is impressive. Marbled by drifts of cloud, the Pacific covers almost a third of the earth's surface. In the far southern reaches, one can see the islands of New Zealand, the last significant land mass on earth to be found and settled by people.

The ancestors of Māori invented blue-water sailing. As they sailed across the Pacific, stars, comets, clouds, the sun, the moon and birds appeared at different heights in the heavens. At night, stars rose up in the sky, guiding them on their voyages. As winds blew and waves and swells slapped against the hulls of their canoes, it seemed that they stood still in the ocean while islands floated towards them.

The Brazilian anthropologist Viveiros de Castro has argued for the 'ontological self-determination' of the world's peoples. Here, he is not talking about 'world views' (as though despite our different visions, there is just one world after all), or even 'humanity' or 'the planet', but suggesting that different peoples may explore different realities, and have the right to do so.

For the Polynesian voyagers, a layered, curved universe in which islands sailed across the sea and stars across the sky was not a myth, but based on experience. Their explosive migrations east to Easter Island and the west coast of South America, north to Hawaii and south to New Zealand were made possible by a navigation system based on deep knowledge of the sea, winds and stars; fast, resilient canoes; a portable suite of plants and animals; and kin-based forms of order that allowed them to transplant themselves in new and unfamiliar lands.

When the first star navigators arrived in New Zealand in about the early 14th century, they had to rapidly adapt to plants and animals, landscapes and climatic conditions very different from those in their tropical homelands. By the time the first Europeans came ashore perhaps 400 years later, Māori had developed many new technologies, along with new dialects, art forms and philosophical ideas. Far from a static 'traditional' society, early Māori life was dynamic and rapidly changing.

In order to reach these remote islands, the first Western explorers, Abel Tasman in 1642 and Captain James Cook in 1769–70, faced similar challenges. They had to master the art of sailing for long periods across great distances, along with technologies (including projectile weapons) that allowed them to survive the challenges from island warriors.

At the time of the Endeavour's arrival, life in Europe was also in a phase of explosive innovation. The settlers who arrived in the wake of the early European explorers brought with them new repertoires of plants and animals, habits of mind and ways of living, casting up realities that like those of their Polynesian predecessors, made it possible for them to inhabit places very different from their homelands.

Since the early 19th century in New Zealand, settlers from Polynesia and Europe (and elsewhere) have clashed and forged alliances with one another. In this remote, beautiful archipelago, debates over what is real, and good, and what matters in people's lives have been fiercely contested.

Hau: The Wind of Life

In October 1769 in Uawa, on the east coast of the North Island of New Zealand, the star navigator and high priest Tupaia sketched Joseph Banks, a wealthy young botanist, exchanging white cloth for a crayfish with a local man. Tupaia and Banks had arrived on board the Endeavour, commanded by James Cook and sent into the Pacific by the Royal Society of London and the British Admiralty to observe the Transit of Venus, and to search for Terra Australis Incognita (the Unknown Southern Continent).
The ship had sailed from Ra’iatea, Tupai’a’s home island and one of the homelands of Māori. After a three-month stay in Tahiti, where Tupai’a joined the expedition, the high priest escorted his Endeavour shipmates to the great voyaging marae (ancestral site) Taputapuatea, where he trained as a priest of ‘Oro, the god of fertility and war in the Society Islands. Afterwards they headed south across the Pacific, arriving on the east coast of New Zealand in spring, when the kōwhai trees were flowering.

Although Tupai’a died during the HMS Endeavour’s return journey to England, in Batavia, Banks preserved the sketch made by the high priest in Uawa, along with others he had drawn in Tahiti and Australia. These were lodged in the British Museum, where many years later, art historians guessed that since many of these ‘naïve’ images were painted in watercolours, the artist might have been none other than Joseph Banks himself.

It was not until 1997 that these drawings were attributed to Tupai’a. During his research into the life of Joseph Banks (later friend of George III, President of the Royal Society and impresario of British imperial exploration), Banks’ biographer Harold Carter noticed a passage in one of his letters that mentioned this drawing. In 1812, Banks wrote to a friend, Tupai’a the Indian man who came with me from Otaheite Learned to draw in a way not Quite unintelligible. The genius for Caricature which all wild People Possesed Led him to Caricature me and he drew me with a nail in my hand delivering it to an Indian who sold me a Lobster but with my other hand I had a firm fist on the Lobster determind not to Quit the nail until I had Livery and Seizin of the article purchased.

While the Uawa sketch shows Banks holding a piece of white cloth (almost certainly Tahitian bark-cloth, highly sought after by Māori), rather than a nail, the description in his letter almost certainly refers to the image that Banks lodged (with others by the same artist) in the British Museum.

Far from being a ‘wild man’, however, Tupai’a was a brilliant and charismatic leader in the Society Islands. When he joined the Endeavour, he was wanting to enlist Cook and his men in seeking to avenge the conquest of his home island, Ra’iatea. A high priest and star navigator, Tupai’a was a leading figure in the Arioi cult dedicated to ‘Oro, the god of fertility and war, famed for its lovers, artists, dancers, actors, scholars, warriors and star navigators.

After their departure from Tahiti, Tupai’a piloted the ship through the surrounding islands, and worked with Captain Cook on a remarkable chart of the Pacific, centred upon Tahiti and based on relative bearings and distances in space-time (elapsed nights) between different islands. Later, the young naturalist Georg Forster would describe Tupai’a as ‘an extraordinary genius’.

Like his charts, Tupai’a’s sketches were revolutionary. During his time with the Royal Society party, he often sat with the ship’s artists, drawing the same subjects but creating new kinds of artworks, using European techniques with a quintessentially Polynesian vision. Painted in the colours of bark cloth, black, brown and red-brown, his image portrays two men, one European (Joseph Banks) and one Māori, standing face to face, offering gifts to each other.

Kin Cosmos

In New Zealand, as in the Society Islands at that time, life was ordered by relational networks, and driven by exchange. If a taonga (treasured item) was handed over, it carried part of the vital force or hau of the donor and his or her kin group, tangling the lives of donor and recipient together.

In 1907, when Elsdon Best, a New Zealand ethnologist who had spent a lifetime studying Māori customs, wrote to an elder called Tamati Ranapiri, asking him to explain the concept of the hau, Ranapiri replied, As for the hau, it isn’t the wind that blows, not at all. Let me explain it to you carefully. Now, you have an ancestral item (taonga) that you give to me, without the two of us putting a price on it, and I give it to someone else. Perhaps after a long while, this person remembers that he has this taonga, and that he should give me a return gift, and he does so.

This is the hau of the taonga that was previously given to me. I must pass on that treasure to you. It would not be right for me to keep it for myself. Whether it is a very good taonga or a bad one, I must give to you, because it is the hau of your taonga, and if I hold on to it for myself, I will die. This is the hau. That’s enough.

The hau is at the heart of life itself. As Ranapiri explained to Best, if a person fails to uphold their obligations in these transactions, their own life force is threatened. As good or bad taonga and gifts or insults pass back and forth, embodying the power of the hau, patterns of relations are transformed, for better or for worse.

Thus when Māori greet each other by pressing noses, their hau (breath, wind of life) intermingles. If a person presses noses with a carved ancestor, the same thing happens. When rangatira or chiefs speak of an ancestor in the first person as ahau, or ‘I’, it is because they are the ‘living face’ of that ancestor, and if they speak of their descent groups in the same way, it is because they share ancestral hau together.

A refusal to enter into reciprocal exchanges, on the other hand, is known as hau whitia, or hau turned aside. Hauhauaitu (or ‘harm to the hau’) is manifested as illness or ill

8 Or perhaps Tahitian does, as used by the Arioi artists in the Society Islands?
11 For an account of the Arioi and early Tahitian society, see Anne Salmond, Ahihi Ahihi Arioi’s Island: The European Discovery of Tahiti, Penguin/Marking, Auckland, 2009.
12 Quoted in Salmond 2003, p 36, which sets Tupai’a life in the context of life in the Society Islands at that time, and discusses his chart. See also Anne Salmond, Tupai’a, the Navigator (Prew, in (eds) Sean Mallon, Kolokesa Mahina-Tuite, and Darren Selais Tangape o le Ahihi Noi New Zealand and the Peoples of the Pacific, Te Papa Press, Wellington, p 57-76.
13 Or perhaps Tahitian does, as used by the Arioi artists in the Society Islands?
14 Letter from Tamati Ranapiri to Paepohonu (Elsdon Best), 23 November 1907, p 2, MS Papers 1907-137, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, trans Anne Salmond.
16 Sometimes called to hā – breath, teata.
fortune, a breakdown in the balance of exchanges. The life force has been harmed, showing signs of collapse and failure.

In early times, the hau of an enemy might be extinguished by rituals including whie te hau (gathering in the hau), while the hau of a kin group might be destroyed by ceremonies that included whāngai hau (feed the hau), in which the hau of their leader was fed to an enemy atua (ancestor god).

Equally, the hau might be revitalised by a successful act of retribution, for instance in the kai hau kai (eating the hau as food) ceremony, in which the hau of the enemy and his or her atua was consumed. In this way, the original insult is wiped out, restoring era - life, health, prosperity and abundance – to the victors.

In ancestral Māori thinking, then, exchange is the stuff of life. As beings engage with each other in these relational networks, new forms of life are generated, along with efforts at domination, control or liberation. As Marshall Sahlins remarks, 'The [Māori] universe is a gigantic kin, a genealogy...a...veritable ontology' – a way of being that patterns the world, based on whakapapa – vast, intricate networks of relations in which all forms of life are linked, generated by exchanges between complementary pairs, animated by hau.

In this cosmic kin world, people can activate different links under different circumstances, constantly changing through space and time. On the marae (ceremonial centre for kin groups), with its carved meeting house, its marae ātea or forecourt for orators, where hosts and visitors sit facing each other, and its dining hall, ancestors are present as their descendants debate the questions of the day, recount ancestral deeds, forge new alliances, and are married or farewelled back to the Pō, the ancestral realm.

This is captured in a haka (war chant) composed by Merimeri Penfold:

He iwi kē, he iwi kē
One strange people and another

Titiro atu, titiro mai
Looking at each other

This chant evokes an exchange of gazes across the marae. Iwi means ‘a group of people’ and kē invokes the strangeness of one group to another. Titiro atu is one’s glance directed at another, while titiro mai is the other’s glance in reply. In these recursive exchanges, identity takes shape, and shifts. All of the action – for better or for worse – happens across the pae, the middle ground.

Tupāia’s Cave: First Encounters – He iwi kē, he iwi kē
(One strange people, and another)

As we have seen, the Endeavour was on a scientific voyage of exploration, sponsored by the Admiralty and the Royal Society of London. Before they sailed from England, the Earl of Morton, president of the Royal Society and a Scottish astronomer, had given Cook a set of ‘Hints’ about how he and his men should conduct themselves in encounters with any ‘natives’ they might meet in the Pacific, urging him:

To check the petulance of the Sailors, and restrain the wanton use of Fire Arms.

To have it still in view that shedding the blood of those people is a crime of the high nature. - They are human creatures, the work of the same omnipotent Author, equally under his care with the most polished European, perhaps being less offensive, more entitled to his favor. They are the natural, and in the strictest sense of the word, the legal possessors of the several Regions they inhabit.

No European Nation has a right to occupy any part of their country, or settle among them without their voluntary consent . . . Therefore should they in a hostile manner oppose a landing, and kill some men in the attempt, even this would hardly justify firing among them, ’til every other gentler method had been tried.

In his ‘Hints’, the Earl of Morton also suggested how Cook and the Royal Society party of scientists and artists might determine whether or not any land they discovered was part of a large continent, describe the ‘appearance and natural dispositions’ of its inhabitants, including their ‘progress in Arts or Science’, especially astronomy, and observe and describe the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms (including fossils) in the places that they visited.

In addition, the Admiralty gave James Cook a set of secret instructions, ordering him to search for and claim Terra Australis Incognita, a mythical continent thought to lie in the far southern ocean, and with the Consent of the Natives to take possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the Name of the King of Great Britain, or, if you find the Country uninhabited take Possession for His Majesty by setting up Proper Marks and Inscriptions, as first discoverers and possessors.

On 3 October 1769, almost a month after sailing south from the Society Islands, when a sudden squall hit the ship, Joseph Banks was jubilant, certain that at last they were about to discover Terra Australis: This [is] a sure sign of land as such squalls are rarely (if ever) met with at any considerable distance from it . . . Now do I wish that our freinds in England could by the assistance of some magical spying glass take a peep at our situation:

Dr. Solander sets at the Cabin table describing, myself at my Bureau Journalizing, between us hangs a large bunch of sea wood, upon the table lays the wood and barnacles; they would see that notwithstanding our
Ceremonial Gatherings

Hui: A Study of Maori See Salmond, Captain Cook’s First Voyage, 1768–1771, 1962, and Parkinson later sketched. The owners of these paddles also offered their canoe, perhaps hoping to entice the visitors ashore.154

Finally, one of the warriors swam across the river and stood on Te Toka-a-Taiau, a sacred rock near the river’s edge, a famous tribal boundary marker.36 Putting down his musket, Cook went to meet him, and they greeted each other with a hongi (pressing noses), mingling their hau together. When the other men swam across the river and tried to exchange weapons with the strangers, however, this ended in a scuffle and further shootings that left a warrior named Te Rakau lying dead beside the river.

Later that day, when Cook tried to capture some young men from a fishing canoe in an attempt to take them on board the Endeavour, treat them kindly and gain their trust, they resisted, hurling their paddles, anchor stones and fish at the strangers. When Cook’s men fired, four of these fishermen were wounded, two of whom fell into the sea and drowned. That night Banks wrote in his journal, “Thus ended the most disagreeable day My life has yet seen, black be the mark for it and heaven send that such may never return to embitter future reflection.”155 The memory of the killings in Turanga has not faded, however. The shots fired by the Endeavour’s men still echo across the bay.

Despairing of being able to befriend these people, Captain Cook decided to head south to discover whether or not this land was Terra Australis Incognita. As the Endeavour sailed from the bay, the wind died and the ship was becalmed off Te Kuri a Paoa (Young Nick’s Head), where canoes came out, but stayed at a distance.

When a small canoe from Turanganui arrived, bringing the man who had greeted Cook on Te Toka-a-Taiau, he invited Cook, Tupaia and their companions to return to the bay. Seeing this, the crews of the other canoes also boarded the ship. During this encounter, a set of paddles, their blades vividly painted with swirling scarlet kōwhaiwhai patterns, was presented to the strangers, which the ship’s artist Sydney Parkinson later sketched. The memory of these paddles also offered their canoe, perhaps hoping to entice the visitors ashore.160

Cook sailed off, however, heading south. After Coasting Hawke’s Bay, where canoe-borne priests and warriors vigorously challenged the ship and its crew, the Endeavour was caught in contrary winds. Deciding to retrace his track, Cook headed north at Cape Turnagain, sailing past the Mahia Peninsula and Turanganui until they arrived in a wero or ritual challenge), the cowxswain shot him dead. This set the scene for the tense, uneasy meetings that followed.

The next day when Cook’s party, accompanied by Tupaia, returned to the east bank of the river, the body of this man, a rangatira named Te Maro, still lay on the beach. Warriors lined up on the opposite bank of the Turanganui, defying the strangers with a fiery haka (war dance). When these men reproached them for the shooting, Tupaia found he could understand what they were saying. He told them that his companions only wanted fresh food and water, and offered them iron in exchange.
at Anaura Bay, 85 kilometres north of Gisborne, where they experienced their first peaceful exchanges with Māori people.

Te Whakatatare-o-te-rangi, the ariki or paramount chief of this district, who had already heard about the strangers, was eager to learn more about them. Te Whakatatare had trained at Te Rawheoro, the nearby school of learning at Uawa, where students learned about the ancestral voyages from Hawaiki, how to build canoes, and the arts of tattoo, carving and star navigation. Intensely curious about these bizarre visitors, their strange vessel and the star navigator who had arrived from Ra’iātea, the ancestral homeland, he sent envoys out to the ship to meet them, and then invited Tupaia and his companions ashore.

As the Endeavour’s anchors splashed down in Anaura Bay, the high chief donned his ceremonial cloak, and accompanied by another senior leader, went out to the ship. As these two venerable men, one wearing a dog-skin cape and the other dressed in a cloak covered with tufts of red feathers, came alongside, Tupaia invited them on board, where Captain Cook presented each of them with four yards of linen and a spike nail. As always, Tupaia handled the rituals of greeting with local people.

When Te Whakatatare and Tupaia met, this was an encounter between Polynesian aristocrats. Tupaia, a highborn priest and star navigator who had trained at Taputapuatea, one of the greatest voyaging marae in the Pacific, was reputed to be one of the most intelligent and knowledgeable men in the Society Islands. When warriors from Borabora, a nearby island, conquered his homeland, Tupaia had fled to Tahiti where he became the lover and high priest of Purea, the ‘Queen’ of that island.

In June 1769, shortly after a failed attempt to install Purea’s son as the paramount chief of the island, the Endeavour expedition arrived at Matavai Bay in Tahiti, where the Royal Society party set up a shore camp. Intrigued by the strangers and fascinated by their scientific instruments and rituals, Tupaia spent a great deal of time with them.

When they left Tahiti the high priest decided to go with them, hoping to persuade Captain Cook to help him drive the Borabora invaders from his homeland. During their voyage through the Society Islands, he piloted the Endeavour and guided his companions through the rituals of landing and exchanges with local people, including those in Turanganui and Hawke’s Bay.

By the time the Endeavour anchored off Anaura Bay, the ship’s supplies of fresh food, water and firewood were running low, and Cook was delighted by the friendly welcome they received from Te Whakatatare and his people. Still convinced that they had found Terra Australis, Banks was eager to explore Anaura and discover what exotic plants and animals this fabled continent had to offer.

That afternoon, after dining in the Great Cabin with Cook and Banks, Te Whakatatare escorted Cook, Banks, Solander, William Monkhouse (the ship’s surgeon) and Tupaia ashore to a village where his people sat quietly beside their houses. The high chief showed them large hillside gardens, which Banks and Monkhouse described as meticulously weeded, planted with kūmara (sweet potato) and yams in mounds laid out in rows or a quincunx pattern, taro in circular concaves to keep them moist, a few bark-cloth plants, and flowering gourd plants sprawling over the houses.

Walking into the hills on the south side of Anaura Bay, they visited a single dwelling inhabited by a man and his wife, who showed them all their possessions, and the man presented them with the body of a mummified new-born baby. As visitors (possibly ancestors) from Ra’iātea, perhaps they seemed fitting guardians for this dead child.

Back at the beach, however, the waves were running high, and the sailors struggled to load the water barrels into the boats. When Banks borrowed a canoe to go out to the Endeavour, it capsized, unceremoniously tossing him and his companions into the surf. After this mishap, Te Whakatatare decided to guide the ship to Uawa Crow known as Tolaga Bay) 10 kilometres to the south, where the inlet of Opoutama provided a more sheltered harbour.
At that time Uawa was the headquarters for two senior descent groups, one led by Te Whakatatare and the other by his daughter-in-law Hine Matioro. In 1769 Hine Matioro (a high-born woman later described by the early missionaries as a ‘Queen’) was still very young, and Te Whakatatare led the East Coast people.26

When the ship anchored off Uawa, Cook and Green, the expedition’s astronomer, carried out a series of instrumental observations. By now Tupaia was used to this kind of performance, but Te Whakatatare must have been fascinated. The tohunga (experts) at Te Rawhoreo also studied the moon, stars, and the movements in the sky to predict the weather, anticipate seasonal rhythms, and guide their canoes across the ocean.

In order to estimate the longitude of Uawa, Cook and Green used their sextants to measure the angular distance from the moon to the sun, and the tables in the Nautical Almanac to calculate their position. When this did not agree with their previous estimates, they worked out an average, recording this in the ship’s log. At noon when Cook used the astronomical quadrant to observe the altitude of the sun, he was able to estimate the latitude of the bay with much greater precision.

While Captain Cook and Green were making these observations, Lieutenant Gore with a guard of marines and sailors landed at Opoutapu inlet (now named ‘Cook’s Cove’).

As canoes flocked around the ship, their crews exchanged fish and ‘curiosities’ (artefacts) for Tahitian bark-cloth and European beads, nails, trinkets and glass bottles. The local people put a high value on their sweet potatoes, however, and refused to exchange their greenstone ornaments and weapons for anything that the strangers could offer.

Meanwhile, Banks and Solander were impatient to go ashore. When Cook finally landed them and their assistants in Cook’s Cove, they were enthralled by what they found.

According to the artist Sydney Parkinson:

The country about the bay is agreeable beyond description, and, with proper cultivation, might be rendered a kind of second Paradise. The hills are covered with beautiful flowering shrubs, intermingled with a great number of tall and stately palms, which fill the air with a most grateful fragrant perfume.

Everywhere they looked, Banks and Solander discovered plants unknown to European science. Wandering around the cove, they collected specimens from a bewildering variety of new species of trees, palms, bushes, ferns and creepers and ferns. They also found many beautiful kinds of birds, including parrots, pigeons and quail, and Polynesian rats and dogs like those in Tahiti. Blazing away with their guns, they shot birds whose skins were later preserved on board the Endeavour.

When they returned to the ship, Banks and his companions sat in the Great Cabin, Parkinson sketching plants while Banks and Solander classified them using the Linnaean method, and Herman Spöring (Banks’ Finnish draughtsman) wrote down the botanical descriptions. Afterwards, the plants were pressed between pages torn from a commentary on Milton’s Paradise Lost, ripped apart for the purpose.

During their visit to Uawa, Tupaia often slept ashore in a cave. The local people were fascinated by this star navigator from Raiatea, who had brought this weird vessel and its strange crew to Uawa. When they exchanged stories about the creation of the cosmos, the priests from Te Rawhoreo told him that at the beginning of the world, Tane, the son of Rangi and Papa, created many new forms of life by having sex with different kinds of beings.

This story was later recounted by the East Coast tohunga Mohi Ruatapu, who explained how Tane shaped the first woman, thrusting his penis into different parts of her body to create sweat, saliva and mucus.27 In the Society Islands, on the other hand, Tane was the god of beauty and peace, and the guardian of blue-water sailors.

In the rituals at Taputapuatea in Raiatea, dedicated to ‘Oro, the god of fertility and war, the priests (including Tupaia) offered slain enemies as sacrifices, with their jawbones, skulls and hair kept as trophies on his marae. Despite this, Tupaia was scandalised by the Maori custom of kāi tangata (eating people), the ritual sacrifice of their enemies. In the Society Islands it was the ancestors who consumed the bodies of enemy warriors, not the priests, and Tupaia may have considered a new local custom sacrilegious.28

Although many of the Europeans, including the sailors, were also horrified by kāi tangata (for very different reasons), James Cook was phlegmatic. As we’ve seen, he thought that it ‘seems to come from custom and not from a Savage disposition this they cannot be charged with – they appear to have but few Vices’.29

The Wooden World of the Endeavour

If one examines the Endeavour records and Māori oral histories of these meetings, it is clear that these were complex encounters, characterised by intense curiosity and empirical inquiry.

Tupaia was on his own voyage of discovery, adding new islands to the lists of those known to Society Island navigators while studying their inhabitants and landscapes. At the same time, he served as an interpreter and mediator for his European companions, initiating new kinds of exchanges. As a leading expert from the ancestral whare ‘aara-upu (schools of learning) in the Society Islands, an ancestral homeland of Maori, Tupaia had a great deal to offer the tohunga in New Zealand.
At the same time, the Endeavour expedition was a travelling sideshow of the Enlightenment, lavishly provided with scientific equipment to scan the heavens, collect and examine plants and animals and explore the remote corners of the planet. Just as the Endeavour arrived in New Zealand, modernity was taking shape in Europe. As Frangomy, Helbroen and Rider have noted, in mid-18th century Europe, a mechanistic, quantitative vision of reality was going viral. Many aspects of life were transformed – from science (with the use of instruments and measurement, the division of the disciplines and the increased specialisation of knowledge) to administration (with the invention of censuses, surveys, and bureaucratic systems) and industry (with manufacturing based on mechanisation, the replication of parts and processes), for instance.13

This particular strand of Enlightenment thought traces back at least as far back as the 17th century, when the philosopher Rene Descartes had a new vision of reality, at once powerful and intoxicating. In his dream, the Cogito – the thinking self – became the eye of the world, which in turn became an object for inspection. As the mind’s eye replaced the Eye of God, people were divided from Nature, and eventually from each other. As mind (res cogitans) was divided from matter (res extensa), subject from object and Culture from Nature, different realms of reality were set apart and entities detached, treated as bounded objects to be classified and examined 14 This ‘Order of Things’, as Michel Foucault has called it, lay at the heart of Enlightenment science.15

Here, the cosmos was understood as a singular, bounded, law-governed entity (or uni-verse) – a view of reality sometimes described as a ‘one world ontology’. In this way, the world was transformed into bounded objects at different scales, whether units of time, blocks of land, areas of ocean or different types of living beings, that can be classified and counted in various ways. On board the Endeavour, this form of order was reflected in cartography and Linnaean taxonomy, for example.

Often, the grid was hierarchical – based on the old European vision of the Great Chain of Being, with God at the apex followed by archangels and angels, divine kings, the aristocracy and successive ranks of human beings, followed by animals, plants and minerals and the earth in descending order.16 Those at the top of the Great Chain exercised power and authority over those lower down, who in turn were required to offer deference, obedience and tribute. In this cosmic model, men ruled over women and children, free men over slaves, and ‘civilised’ people over ‘barbarians’ and ‘savages’.

Another iconic model was the idea of the cosmos as a machine, made up of distinct, divisible working parts. Coupled with notions of ‘progress’ and ‘improvement’, the Order of Things gave an air of virtue to imperial expansion, the industrial revolution, global capitalism and models of technocratic control. With its focus on discovery, instrumental recording, mathematical and taxonomic description, the Endeavour voyage epitomised this way of understanding the world.

At the same time, however, as Peter Hans Reill and others have argued, another strand in Enlightenment thinking explored relational forms of order. Here, one of the iconic motifs was the network (or web).17 These thinkers, including Buffon in France, many of those involved in the Scottish Enlightenment, and later the Humboldt brothers in Germany, and Erasmus Darwin and Joseph Priestley in England, understood the world as a ‘tree of life’, patterned by networks of relations among (and within) different life forms, animated by interactions among complementary forces – the ‘Order of Relations’, one might call it. These forms of order underpinned ideas of transformation, in both the cosmos and social life. In many ways, they resonate with Māori and Pacific ways of thinking.

Relational ideas in the Enlightenment, based on Greek-Roman precedents of equilibrium and exchange, provided an alternative to the old top-down models, underpinning arguments for freedom from the rule of the merchants (Adam Smith’s The Wealth of Nations 1776), and the rights of ordinary people (Tom Paine’s A Vindication of the Rights of Women 1792), slaves, and indigenous people. In this ‘web of life’, people were just one life form among many, and the world was constantly changing. Ancestral ideas such as justice, truth, equality and honour helped to determine how exchanges among people should be handled. Here one can find the origins of participatory democracy, the emancipation of women and slaves, earth sciences, environmental theory, anthropology, the World Wide Web and the science of complex systems, for example.18

On board the Endeavour, this kind of thinking was reflected in the Earl of Morton’s survey, the Survey of the Grid. Here, the cosmos was understood as a singular, bounded, law-governed entity (or uni-verse) – a view of reality sometimes described as a ‘one world ontology’.19 In modernist science, the aim was to examine, record, classify, count and analyse everything that exists, and discover the laws that govern these phenomena.20

This in way of knowing, one of the iconic patterns was the grid, used to abstract, divide up and measure space, time and life forms, bringing them under control for practical purposes.21 In this way, the world was transformed into bounded objects at different scales, whether units of time, blocks of land, areas of ocean or different types of living beings, that can be classified and counted in various ways. On board the Endeavour, this form of order was reflected in cartography and Linnaean taxonomy, for example.
domination and exploitation), arguments in favour of peace (in the midst of almost incessant fighting) and the rights of consumers (at a time of frequent food riots) and commoners, just before the French Revolution and the American War of Independence.

Together, these and other strands in Enlightenment thought produced passionate debates about topics as varied as land use, slavery, taxation, education and the rights of ordinary people (including the rights of those living in colonies, commoners, women and indigenous people) – debates that in many ways, we are still having.

Not surprisingly, these divergent views were also echoed on board the *Endeavour*. As a member of the landed gentry, Banks found hierarchies and gridded models congenial. Like the great Swedish naturalist Linnaeus, he invoked the Great Chain of Being, and took it for granted that he and his fellow Europeans (especially the gentry) occupied a higher place on the cosmic ladder than the people he met in the Pacific.

In his musings on Māori cannibalism, for instance, Banks remarked that ‘Nature recoils at the thought of any species preying upon itself,’ adding, ‘Anyone who considers the admirable chain of nature in which Man, alone endowd with reason, justly claims the higher rank, will easily see that no Conclusion in favour of such a practise can be drawn from the actions of a race of beings placd so infinitely below us in the order of Nature.’

Although Banks was fascinated by Tupaia, enjoyed his company and learned a great deal from him, he found no difficulty in comparing the high priest with the lions and tigers kept and displayed by his aristocratic friends in their zoological parks back in England. A keen Linnaean botanist and scientific farmer, this future President of the Royal Society was also quick to identify and classify plants, resources and places that might serve Britain’s economic interests.

James Cook, on the other hand, was less certain about the virtues of a stratified world. A farm labourer’s son, he had served his apprenticeship with Captain John Walker, a Quaker ship owner in Whitby who became his lifelong guide and mentor. The Society of Friends was at the radical edge of relational thinking in Britain, with beliefs in spiritual equality for all (including women), freedom for slaves and fair treatment for indigenous peoples.

As we have seen, Cook regarded Māori cannibalism as an ancestral custom, not a mark of savage depravity, and was perturbed by the impacts of venereal diseases and European goods on Pacific islanders. As he later remarked of his encounters in New Zealand:

> What is still more to our shame as civilized Christians, we debauch their morals . . . and we interduce among them wants and perhaps diseases which they never before knew, and which serves only to disturb that

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happy tranquility which they and their forefathers had enjo'yd. If anyone denies the truth of this assertion let him tell me what the natives of the whole extent of America have gained by the commerce they have had with Europeans.45

No doubt Cook’s attitudes were shaped by the Earl of Morton’s ‘Hints’, as well as by his own upbringing. Like him, each member of the Royal Society party (and the crew) had their own views about imperial expansion and the nobility of ‘savages’ (a concept that infuriated many of the sailors). Despite Cook’s humanitarian impulses, however, there is no doubt that on board his ship, the ‘Order of Things’ was dominant. In Cook’s surveys and charts, the ship’s track and coastlines were traced on sheets of paper gridded with latitude and longitude, fixed by surveying and astronomical observation, with orientation indicated by compass bearings.46

In the alchemy of hydrography, the land was reduced to a coastline, stripped of most of its features and emptied of people – a terra nullius. With its inhabitants erased, the sea was similarly abstracted into a blank, two-dimensional watery wasteland – a mare nullius, waiting to be discovered and claimed by European powers.47

In the ship’s logs, time was gridded into years, months, days and hours, with columns and headings showing the direction of the wind, the location of the ship and its speed measured by knots across the ocean. Instruments such as telescopes, quadrants, sextants and chronometers gave increased precision and scope to these measurements, although older technologies continued to be used. The depth of the coastal seabed was measured with the lead, for instance, especially near harbours or lagoons, and these soundings were recorded on the charts.

While the officers draughted these records, the naturalists collected specimens of plants and animals and sorted these into genera, classes and orders, each with its own definition and (binomial) descriptor. Banks used the taxonic system devised by Solander’s mentor Carl Linnaeus, sorting plants into genera and species by counting soundings were recorded on the charts.

Like the ship’s charts and journals, this gridded system of classification was abstract and highly ‘artificial’ (and criticised as such, by the French naturalist Buffon for example).48 It was based on a few distinctive features that allowed specimens to be placed in mutually exclusive categories whose contents could be easily sorted and compared – invaluable in its simplicity for describing the extravagant profusion of exotic animals and plants that travelling Europeans encountered in their voyages around the world.

In addition, the Royal Society party gathered numerous ‘type specimens’. In the case of plants, these were pressed, while animals were skinned or bottled, and labelled, ready to be taken home to Britain, and artefacts (‘artificial curiosities’) were collected as exemplars of local ways of living.

The same taxonomic approach is reflected in Parkinson’s sketches. He was a botanical draughtsman, disciplined to accurately trace the outlines of different species of plants on paper. The first image of a plant was usually a simple pencil sketch, with notes or splashes of colour to guide a later, more finished portrait, usually in watercolour.

Flowers, stamens and pistils were important for the purposes of botanical classification, and for this reason, the scales of these parts are often exaggerated, or colours made more vivid, or parts that were never present at the same time are depicted in a single drawing. ‘Realist’ art, then, was not a mirror of the world but strategically shaped by scientific and aesthetic purposes, as the art historian Bernard Smith has argued in his brilliant studies of the artists who sailed with Captain Cook.49 Likewise, Banks’ observations of landscapes, people and artefacts were organised according to a taxonomic system that Cook copied, allowing the different places they visited to be compared under headings such as ‘Terrain’, ‘Climate’, ‘Minerals’, ‘Population’, ‘Forts and Leaders’, ‘Religion’, ‘Burial and Mourning’. Here, Banks drew upon methods for describing new countries that had been devised by members of the Royal Society during the early years of Enlightenment science.50

Under these gridded headings, the accounts of what the explorers saw and experienced often seem curiously inanimate and inert. The ship’s journals, on the other hand, especially those by Banks and ship surgeon Monkhouse (who according to Cook was given to ‘intemperance’), are vivid and lively, demonstrating the wide-ranging, detailed style of observation cultivated during an 18th-century scientific education.

At this time in Europe, relational thinking dominated the medical schools, and medical students in London, Edinburgh, Montpellier and Leyden were taught to observe and meticulously describe plants, landscapes and climates as well as people and their diseases, and reflect on the complex interactions among (and within) these living beings.51

In many of these centres, Cartesian dualism and mechanistic, quantitative models of Nature were vigorously contested. Buffon, for example, argued that the mathematical ‘truths’ claimed for these kinds of accounts were artificial and abstract, and self-exterminating in nature. [These are] only truths of definition. They depend on simple, but abstract suppositions, and all truths of this kind are abstract consequences compounded from these definitions . . . thus mathematical truths are only

44 Cook in Beaglehole, 1962, vol II, p 175
46 Anna Salmond, ‘The Formation of Fish Ecological Collisions at Sea’ in eds Silke Helfrich and David Bollier, Patterns of Ontological Collisions at Sea’ in eds Silke Helfrich and David Bollier, Patterns of Commoning, Off the Common Books, Amherst, 2015.
the exact repetitions of the definitions or suppositions... They reduce to the identity of ideas, and have no reality.46

Instead, Buffon advocated the close empirical observation and testing of the patterns of relations among (and within) different kinds of phenomena.

On board the Endeavour, the ship’s surgeon Monkhouse, Solander and his clerk Herman Spöring each had medical training. Monkhouse’s journal in particular is finely crafted, combining a wealth of detail with an omnivorous curiosity about everything that could be seen (especially of human life) in the localities that they visited. Unfortunately, however, it survives only in a fragment, beginning in Poverty Bay and ending with the Endeavour’s visit to Anaura Bay.47

At the end of the voyage, the officers’ journals, logs and charts were handed in to the Admiralty, where they were classified and stored, while Joseph Banks either owned, could claim or procured the ‘gentlemen’s’ written accounts, and many of the sketches, paintings, ‘artificial curiosities’ and botanical and zoological objects collected by both scientists and sailors.

The artefacts were later sketched, listed and classified in London using a functional typology (‘paddle’, ‘spear’, ‘club’ etc), along with the location in which they were collected, and kept and exhibited in Banks’ private collection.

The charts with their linked records – logs, journals and sketches – placed New Zealand and its coastlines on the maps of the world, while the artefacts and specimens became part of collections that exhibited the cultural and natural orders of the world, displayed in museums back in Britain.

In many ways, the ‘wooden world’ of the Endeavour, with its instruments, scientists and artists, was a travelling laboratory, capturing and recording new phenomena. In the process, Māori and their territories came under ‘imperial eyes’, a top-down inspection linked with global expansion and colonial control.48

At the same time, there was also a willingness to engage with Māori and a curiosity about different ways of living that derived from relational thinking, suggesting a more open-minded approach to these encounters ‘across the pae’.

Voyaging Taonga

If one examines the records from the Māori or Polynesian sides of the meetings that took place when the Endeavour visited Anaura and Uawa, on the other hand, few eyewitness accounts remain, compared with those that survive in European archives.

This asymmetry in lines of evidence is not accidental, but arises from very different ways of preserving significant objects and information.

When Tupaiia died in Batavia, his memories of his extraordinary adventures on board the Endeavour died with him, and the gifts that he had been given during the voyage were dispersed (or claimed by Banks, as his sponsor).

Among Hauiti people, memories of the Endeavour’s visit were kept alive in oral traditions and songs. The people of this region were famed as composers, acclaimed as ‘the bards of their country’.49 They passed Tupaiia’s name down to their children, transformed nails into carving chisels and handed down the blue beads given to them by Captain Cook to their descendants.

Like Cook and his Royal Society companions, local Māori were intensely curious about the strangers they met during the encounters in Uawa. The local whare wānanga (school of learning) Te Rawhoro was a magnet for tohunga (experts) from other regions, a centre for exchanges about oral histories, voyaging and the arts. Carvers and tattooists from Te Rawhoro travelled widely, carrying out commissions in other parts of the country.

During their meetings with their Endeavour visitors, Māori, Polynesian and European goods and technologies were exchanged, and tested. Even the conversations that occurred were highly experimental, based on borrowings and innovations. Tupaiia, Te Whakataata, the priest from Te Rawhoro and other Hauitians must have spoken with each other in a mixture of Tahitian and Māori. Tupaiia, an experienced traveller who had mastered the sound shifts between different Polynesian languages, quickly learned to communicate with Māori. He had also acquired a little English, while some of the scientists, artists and sailors had a smattering of Tahitian, which they tried out on the local inhabitants.

Like these dialogues, Tupaiia’s charts and sketches were created across the pae, the middle ground, reflecting the history of exchanges between the high priest and the ship’s navigators (Cook and Robert Molyneux) and the expedition’s artists, Parkinson and Spöring, as well as his own navigational and artistic expertise and what he witnessed during his travels. In Tahiti, Tupaiia had given his shipmates (including Parkinson and Banks) Aroio tattoos, while they taught him to sketch and paint in watercolour in a ‘realist’ style (although in his sketch of Banks in an exchange with a Māori warrior, he depicted both men with eyes based on an ancient Pacific motif, also found on the ‘Lapita’ pottery made by the ancestors of Polynesians).

Unfortunately, we know almost nothing about Tupaiia’s reactions to Māori art. During his visit to Uawa, however, the young Quaker artist Sydney Parkinson was struck by the rioting spirals that embellished everyday objects:
The men have a particular taste for carving: their boats, paddles, boards to put on their houses, tops of walking sticks, and even their boats valens, are carved in a variety of flourishes, turnings and windings, that are unbroken; but their favourite figure seems to be a volute, or spiral, which they vary many ways, single, double, and triple, and with as much truth as if done from mathematical draughts: yet the only instruments we have seen are a chizzel, and an axe made of stone. Their fancy, indeed, is very wild and extravagant.

Disciplined as he was by a Quaker upbringing and the conventions of botanical draughting, Parkinson was bemused by Māori art forms. Here, the emphasis is not on distinct entities and their outlines, but on the spaces between them. In many carvings, ancestors emerge from each other or are locked in sexual congress. Although Parkinson was taken aback, it is likely that Joseph Banks, a member of the ‘Hellfire Club’ back at home who had a libertine streak, found these images titillating. In their own context, however, they are neither provocative nor shocking. They celebrate fertility through the union of complementary forces, and the passage of the hau from one generation to another.

In Māori art, the power of life and growth (hau ora and hau tipu) is often expressed in exuberant, sprawling spirals incised on bodies, faces and objects. Etched with chisels and stained with dye, these transform people and carvings into living ancestors.

According to Pei te Hurinui Jones, a 20th-century expert from the Tainui whare wānanga, the double spiral in Māori carving and tattoo depicts the emergence of the cosmos, impelled by the breath of life. A person might likewise sing their desire into the wind (hau), sending it to a distant lover. Spirals are song lines in ink or wood, unfurling the world.


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52 Sydney Parkinson, *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas, in His Majesty’s Ship, the Endeavour*. Faithfully Transcribed from the Papers of the Late Sydney Parkinson, Draughtsman to Joseph Banks, Esq. Stanfield Parkinson, London, 1773, p 98.


55 For example, in the famous waiata (song) that begins E pā to hau he wini raro, e homai aroha – ‘your hau comes to me as a northern wind, bringing aroha . . .’

Lisa Reihana played many roles in the making of her remarkable video installation work, *in Pursuit of Venus *(*infected*), 2015–17. She played the role of the artist, yes, but also balanced that of the filmmaker, the historian, the advocate and the dramaturge. Reihana’s grand accomplishment is an hour long video-based experience that places her viewers inside a staggering, immersive representation of Pacific peoples during their first encounters with European explorers. A reanimation of sorts of a 19th-century panoramic wallpaper, Reihana’s video reimagines these exchanges from an alternative point of view, challenging and complicating the colonial narrative put forth in the original. A romanticised backdrop of the Pacific Islands serves as a setting – or as Reihana might call it, the tūrangawaewae (place to stand) – for this captivating revisionist history about moments of contact, connection and conflict during the Pacific’s early colonial era.

Reihana’s *in Pursuit of Venus *(*infected*) is sweeping in its ambition and panoramic in its scale. Stretching across an expanse of wall, the epic work scrolls slowly as it fills the very room. Its verdant scenes, lush with tropical growth and ocean views are made living by vignettes populated with the film’s subjects. Reihana’s painterly backdrop moves deliberately: its scenes and figures appear at the right and finally vanish at the left. Arranged in carefully orchestrated groups or introduced as solitary figures, the work’s characters are clad variously in Polynesian clothing and the garb of 18th-century European explorers. As they edge towards the centre of the panorama, these reanimated historical characters enact scenarios of ritual, encounter, trade, disagreement and connection.

A single snapshot of the moving narrative includes several types and depths of interaction among the characters, reconstructing imagined moments taken from the history of the European ‘discovery’ and colonisation of the Pacific. At points several vignettes appear on the screen at once, blending with and overlapping the individual narratives playing out before us. Among the many characters who appear are the explorer Captain James Cook; Joseph Banks, a botanist who joined Cook’s expedition; and the Tahitian chief and navigator Tupaia, who served as a translator for the British explorers. Across the 64 minutes of footage, the soundtrack changes, also, as different scenes move in and out of prominence. The rhythms, chants and claps of a group of Polynesian men performing a dance give way to the ambient sound of birds in this tropical landscape, which is then joined by a solemn sounding – and definitively European – tune. Polynesian songs mingle with fluted melodies. Often, the voices captured on the soundtrack rise in panic or pain – though sometimes, too, in laughter.
in Pursuit of Venus [infected] borrows from several different media and artistic approaches, ingesting the technologies of film, relying on the dramatics of the theatre and capitalising on the impact of immersive multimedia works. And while it can certainly be understood as being securely within these traditions of theatre, film and contemporary installation art, it is those earlier traditions that Reihana calls on which contain the most evocative points of comparison and departure.

Of course, one of Reihana’s central inspirations and direct sources behind in Pursuit of Venus [infected] is the 19th-century wallpaper, Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique, 1804–05, which is translated, variously, as The Savages of the Pacific Ocean or The Native Peoples of the Pacific Ocean. Designed by Jean-Gabriel Charvet, the 20-panelled wallpaper was produced by the French company Joseph Dufour et Cie. Printed from woodblocks, one panel at a time, Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique was truly a technical accomplishment during its day, one of many painterly wallpapers produced during this time, its panoramic scene stretches over 10 metres. The design was informed by Charvet’s own travels, and based on the widely published journals of Captain James Cook. Each of the wallpaper’s 20 panels is filled with figures who exist together within a utopian vision of the region’s landscape – a lush green scene with thatched huts, turquoise skies and vegetation seemingly plucked from an Henri Rousseau painting. At the time of its production, Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique was the largest panoramic wallpaper ever made, and its grandiose scale and exotic subjects made it a commercial success.

Reihana’s encounter with Charvet’s wallpaper at an exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia was a moment of inspiration for the artist, who found herself struck by the depiction of Pacific peoples. What its French creators had meant as a representation of the exotic peoples that Cook had encountered during his voyages, Reihana saw as completely foreign and divided from these people and their histories. in Pursuit of Venus [infected] is, therefore, something of a reclamation of Charvet’s original – an attempt to assert a new representation of these peoples. She was also fascinated by the wallpaper’s unusual inclusion – the death of Captain Cook, who was killed on a Hawaiian island during his third voyage. Looking at this moment which disrupts the idyllic storyline, Reihana conceives of a more complete retelling that contextualises the Hawaiian island during his third voyage. Each of the wallpaper’s 20 panels is filled with figures who exist together within a utopian vision of the region’s landscape – a lush green scene with thatched huts, turquoise skies and vegetation seemingly plucked from an Henri Rousseau painting. At the time of its production, Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique was the largest panoramic wallpaper ever made, and its grandiose scale and exotic subjects made it a commercial success.

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The thirst for this broadened sort of vision among a European mass audience is an indicator and a symptom of the great tumult befalling Europe and the rest of the world during this era. The historical concept of the panorama is unavoidably linked – through the points of their mutual coincidence, and through the cultural motivations that they share – to the project of European colonialism. As some scholars of these 19th-century media forms have argued, the panorama both reflected and augmented a new way of viewing the world. For the common European citizen, panoramas connected them through virtual experience with parts of the world that were being claimed in their name (or in the name of their rulers, as it were). The horizon line prominent in these forms of vision corresponded to feelings of hope in the possibilities within and beyond that line, just as much as it relates to oceanic navigation and burgeoning technologies. It is also not a stretch to associate this grandiosity of vision with a sense of control or ownership, one that was shared with Europe’s emerging middle class through spectacular experiences such as the panorama. Charvet’s printed panoramic wallpaper is serene in its depiction of European–Pacific Islander encounters; perhaps this is what struck Reihana as so foreign. Reihana’s experimental approach seen in in Pursuit of Venus [infected] not only defines this work as a great feat of filmmaking, but it also ties it through form and content to this critical moment in history.

Moving panoramas were large canvases, painted rather hastily at times, that would be slowly revealed with the help of a turn-crank apparatus, taking their viewers on a virtual journey to exotic locations and the scenes of historic events. The panorama – in its several forms – presaged cinema and served as an early form of virtual reality, with its expansive views offering unprecedented vision and perspective on a widening world. By the mid-1800s, these popular forms of entertainment (and their close relatives, the static, circular panoramas housed within rounded enclosures erected throughout the continent) had even necessitated a new term: ‘panorama’. The panorama – in its several forms – presaged cinema and served as an early form of virtual reality, with its expansive views offering unprecedented vision and perspective on a widening world. By the mid-1800s, these popular forms of entertainment (and their close relatives, the static, circular panoramas housed within rounded enclosures erected throughout the continent) had even necessitated a new term: ‘panorama’. The panorama – in its several forms – presaged cinema and served as an early form of virtual reality, with its expansive views offering unprecedented vision and perspective on a widening world. By the mid-1800s, these popular forms of entertainment (and their close relatives, the static, circular panoramas housed within rounded enclosures erected throughout the continent) had even necessitated a new term: ‘panorama'.

The large movements and constrained parameters of the actors’ motion recall another European tradition – that of the pantomime. With actors performing in front of a green screen, their bodies were then transported into the illustrative setting of the panoramic background, moving the action of the whole into a flattened and horizontal tableau that again recalls the linearity of a theatrical stage.
But there is an element of theatrical, and denies viewers the resolution achieved through the usual dramatic arc. While Reihana’s animated tableaux move through various phases – beginning idyllically, demonstrating early encounters, and finally reaching a crescendo of conflict with Captain Cook’s death – it is shown not as a sequence, from beginning to end, but as a continuous loop. The work resists the classical structure of Freitag’s pyramid by existing in an unbroken loop of interaction – encounter, covenant, rupture, struggle, death – with endless repetitions, no beginnings, no ends. Every scene in Reihana’s work is bound to appear again; every interaction shot through with both the promise of mutual understanding and the threat of disillusion.

This practice of looping, of course, calls us back into the contemporary art context, where video works displayed in galleries are often run continuously for sporadically present audiences. But in the case of in Pursuit of Venus [infected], it also serves a signifying function, connecting the project yet again through both form and content to the historical context of colonialism. By refusing resolution, and instead continuously rehearsing the same series of interactions ad infinitum, Reihana’s work highlights the persistence of these colonial dynamics even within our postcolonial world. The moment of infection is the moment after which nothing will ever be the same. These historical shifts, these moments of contact and contamination, are continuously re-inscribed in the present. The colonial project, though now held up as history, has lasting, continual and urgent repercussions even today.

Reihana’s monumental artwork relies on a complex technological mechanism that projects the seamless, scrolling film in such a way that creates a viewing experience in which one can truly get lost. It is no less than breathtaking, simply as a visual document. But technical mastery aside, it is really the layering of context, content and container in Reihana’s work that qualifies it as being remarkable. Borrowing broadly and masterfully from historical spectacles imbued with colonialist implications, Reihana demonstrates an exceptional sensitivity to the importance of form, its significations and its possibilities. By leveraging the painterly, the panoramic, the cinematic and the dramatic, Reihana is able to create a stunning document that unravels a complex colonial history. Though she does not seek to rewrite this history, to make it something that it is not, she has, in essence, reclaimed it.
IN CONVERSATION

John Sherwin after John Webber, A Dance in Otaheite 1784 (detail), engraving, 402 x 560 mm, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 2006.
LISA REIHANA: I’m interested in talking with you for two reasons. First, to ensure that there’s an Aboriginal voice in the catalogue, as there is now Aboriginal content in the artwork. This is a strategy to resist the myth of terra nullius, or ‘nobody’s land’, which looms large in my psyche. I conflate terra nullius with Australia, and to me Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique reveals the broader project of Empire. It was amazing to add this missing dimension through the support of Campbelltown Arts Centre. Director Michael Dagostino put me in touch with their Aboriginal elder Aunty Glenda, and alongside his fantastic staff, Campbelltown provided the resources enabling the video shoot. Their generous contribution has made a huge difference to Pursuit of Venus (infected). Second, you are a contemporary artist who also works with museum collections, and you offer new insights and a counterpoint to the way history is understood and conveyed by historians or archaeologists. While I was visiting the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge I fell in love with an object from Nootka Sound. But I saw this piece, I saw him, not as an object but as an ancestor. Māori often use the word taonga, which is translated as ‘treasure’. Being with him I felt the deep aroha (love) I feel in the presence of my own ancestors. There was an energy emanating from him.

BROOK ANDREW: I remember visiting you in Auckland when you first started the in Pursuit of Venus (infected) project. That was the first time you spoke of this widely ambitious and seminal animation project, which was a very long-term and big idea. And in some cases, this is very much how I practice. Sometimes it takes me many years or longer to realise a project or artwork. Not just the technical aspects and the cultural aspects, but also reflecting on my own creative and cultural processes, sharing and discussing with others in my community, museum curators and anthropologists and the wider audience. The process and subject matter can at times place me in a vulnerable position. It’s like, how do I process and assemble ideas and facts around hidden histories and trauma to create new narratives? How can I create new strategies to re-present this? How do I activate and share this process while working with disparate processes and sources? How do I form my own thought processes while also being mindful and honour my mixed-cultural identities? I often think about how we live in a world where the colonial fallout towards indigeneity is devastating to our communities. We have been objectified and romanticised and reduced to a single word, or human remains on display without the consent of the communities these objects belong to. Though clearly there’s more complex actions in motion that in many ways can subjugate us and affect our ability to deeply engage with objects in collections, especially objects whose original use of power for religious or other purposes we don’t understand due to genocidal practices, so work like ours can be simultaneously confronting and rejuvenating. It can also be traumatic and confusing to be confronted with the immensity of how much our cultures have been misappropriated, exported and disseminated through the organ of colonialism – though we still lift our heads up high. So in some ways it’s about how you unpack this situation. I’ll talk about it from a recent example.

The Musée d’ethnographie de Genève contacted me to be involved in an exhibition called L’effet boomerang. Les arts aborigènes d’Australie. There was one other similar exhibition organised by the museum but located at the Musée Rath, also in Geneva, in 1960, called Australie. Its modernist poster had a boomerang on it and it has that ‘expo’ expression – and funny enough this new exhibition also has a boomerang on it, but with my pattern behind it. I have particular views on the European organs of modernism and how modernism kept the colonial body going, so the history of representation in both posters was an interesting signal. The museum was attracted to my alternative narrative approach to questioning historicity and the museum narrative – the experimental testing grounds; they thought deeply about my own museum intervention practice and about how to present Aboriginal culture through a pure contemporary art expression. The curious thing was, the designers’ take on a contemporary approach to Aboriginality is to present the cultural objects as art in an art white cube design, to in some ways rectify the visual apparatus of the classical primitivist museum diorama. This was a curious approach for me as I’d not heard of it before on such a scale in an ethnographic museum – it was their experiment. The important point here is apart from this white cube approach, I was successful in negotiating a legal contract where the exhibition would not have secret/sacred objects or human remains on display without the consent of the communities these objects
came from. This was a coup – I’ve never experienced this before or heard of it in a European museum context. Though the daunting task of assisting a museum with this process in a short turnaround time can be an exhausting process when community members often live in a different time and place – it is not the Swiss time! – unless you’re taking your time as an artist and working at your own pace. When working alone, you have time to change your mind about process – your mind opens up and spews other things. What I’ve found recently while working is the sense of responsibility, of how many people you need to talk to, and who you need to talk to. And people can sometimes change their minds – it’s what’s visible and what’s not visible. I think inter-generational differences about how we see cultural revitalisation, memory, trauma, encountering objects, museums and the way we practise our own cultures and as contemporary artists can be confronting, and to also add museum collections and communities produces an undulating action of change – it can be inspiring, definitely collaborative and can raise new questions. It’s a lot to handle and often there are high expectations placed on us and we can be scrutinised.

I find it inspiring when you talk about the ancestor figure from Nootka Sound and how important the figure is for you. You know, within Aboriginal Australia apart from the joy we have in continuing culture, there’s also a lot of pain, there’s real inter-generational trauma, there can also be conflict within our own communities about the representation of objects and for some of us, how we represent them. This is because our culture has changed and continues to. We are inventing and redefining and I think people forget the problem with the colonial organ and its effects on us. We are not the primitive stand-still unchanged specimen in a jar. We were always changing and evolving, things didn’t just stand still when the British broke international law and started a war in Australia. This is linked to my previous point on objects in museums too, in regards to the fallout of this war. If I look at the dendroglyphs carvings on trees, specific to southeast Australia, many from Wiradjuri nation, which is my mother’s nation. There are different views in our Wiradjuri nation as to how we engage with the carved tree sections that have been repatriated to communities from museums and also the trees that still exist in museums, like in Geneva – some are on display and some are not. Some say it’s okay to look at these trees and others say it’s not. This is because the carved trees had two purposes – one action was used for the burial of men of high degree and the other type was for boys initiation. In 1944, a group including Norman Tindale, ethnologist, Adelaide Museum; T M Prescott, director, Melbourne Museum; a Mr Tugby, ethnologist and Mr Hitchcock, ornithologist, also from the Melbourne Museum; Mr Bailey, leader of an American group and H R Balfour, a retired pastoralist from Alburey were accompanied by the Australian Army and used massive circular saws to cut down, desecrate and steal nearly 7000 carved trees. The cut sections were then traded across the world, including to the Musée d’ethnographie de Genève, which had two on public display when I was there. There were around 7500 carved trees recorded, but only about 60 survive in the landscape today. You can only imagine the devastation this has had on our continuing cultures.

Within our community, some Aboriginal Lands Councils display repatriated carved trees for everyone to see. But there are some elders who say, ‘People are going to get sick, they shouldn’t see some trees on display.’ In many cases it’s difficult to ascertain exactly which carved trees were for burial and which for initiation. We have a dilemma around the visibility and representation of some of our material culture – for our children, for our families who have been affected through this removal of cultural and religious heritage; but in saying this, we also have powerful leaders who share and hold knowledge. This is similar, of course, to what happened in Aotearoa and other places in the Pacific and around the world. On a recent trip to Hokkaido with curator Mami Kataoka we spent time with Mayun Kiki; a young Ainu woman who is searching to revive traditional tattoo practices for women. She is the only Ainu woman with traditional tattoos, and because of the taboo nature in Japanese culture and in turn her own – due to Japanese colonisation – she makes this journey an international one to reclaim cultural practices. In this context, Aboriginal Australia, it is a diverse and vast one with more than 300 different Aboriginal nations and language groups, so when we go to museums it’s kind of like, you know, I want to use the word ‘mess’. It’s a mess. Not in the derogatory, kind of terrible sense, but it’s . . .

LR: . . . The access and the information is all messed up, is that what you mean?

BA: Yes, how do you deal with that, and what do you do with the experience when I am there and I cannot afford to fly my entire family or peers over? This is where embodying a contemporary artist of the world is important too – it’s an opportunity to reconfigure the dominant Eurocentric narrative and insert our own. There are some specific situations where I come across important objects or photos, or people contact me from a museum, and I immediately pass these on to the people in the respective community connected to the objects. There are ways in which I have personally dealt with this as an artist, some people respond with thankfulness and others respond with anger and misunderstanding – I understand trauma and that not understanding the full story is the cause of this. There was a tree section in my 2016 exhibition Evidence at the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney. We created a visual apparatus where the carved tree was covered with a printed linen over the vitrine, it had a little flap which people could lift up if they wanted to – or not. And so it was about a strategy of seeing or not seeing and reflecting on the preciousness but also the tragedy of its existence in the museum. But the most important aspect of this action is the story of the tree and how it ended up in the museum. When I saw the tree in the museum inventory, they were adamant that it was not in the collection. We finally discovered that the tree only arrived at the museum because of a sympathetic manager of a wood mill back in the early 1900s. If he did not send the tree section to the museum, it would have been destroyed, along with the other recorded 7500 trees. Another action to conceal and reveal was with the 2007 Gun-metal Grey series of screenprints that were created through unpronounced or ‘orphaned’ portraits from New South Wales. It was about finding a way to see the image but also disappear it –
of the ‘other’, when they realise our actions can deconstruct and exist outside of the primitivist equation. In this way, working with museums also confronts the cultures that have made the ‘mess’, not only our own cultures. And I think it helps to untangle it, because it’s the kind of perverse objectification of a so-called dying culture to redefine, and I have seen that some of our own people can objectify and romanticise ourselves too. So in many ways we all need to ‘de-colonise’ ourselves . . . this is something the extraordinary poet Romaine Moreton said to me at least 15 years ago. What are the politics of power and representation for indigenous peoples in the Pacific?

When I was about 15 my grandmother said to us, ’You know Brook, I had such a great time in the mission, we could just be free and run around!’ And I remember we were all sitting around playing cards – we’re a big card-playing family! – and we’re all musing about how great that would be. And about a decade later, while creating museum interventions and unpacking what this mess is, it’s like, no actually, she wasn’t free – she was forbidden to speak her traditional language or practise her traditional culture. But, she also said to me when I was about 23, ’Brook, remember, you are also white,’ and this shocked me but I realised she was not only protecting me from reverse racism, but also reminding me of the happiness of her white father. I now realise it’s contextual, my grandmother was happy on the mission because she was with her close-knit Aboriginal family, and this was difficult to maintain when they moved to Enmore and Redfern in Sydney. When her mother died in childbirth, all of her brothers and sisters were taken in by her aunties and uncles, thankfully – I say this as the Aborigines Protection Board were actively stealing children during this time. So they weren’t part of the Stolen Generations,1 but they were still part of both the fringe and Erambie Mission. The fringe is right next to the mission. In most cases, if you were more fair-skinned, you went to the fringe, if you were darker-skinned, you stayed on the mission – but of course this was a complicated action and was not always the case. Aboriginal people were under the Aborigines Protection Board which was an Australian version of an apartheid and slavery system. The thing is, my grandmother’s family was affected by the policies of segregation and assimilation but we are survivors and proud. So when I’m in these museums and I’m looking at the mess and I’m trying to understand what this is about, I’m not just taking in my story now, I carry all of that with me. About what’s missing and how I can fill it, and so when you get there your brain feels like it’s three metres wide in your head. There’s a ‘lightning’ stone from western New South Wales in the Musée d’ethnographie de Genève – probably for making ceremony around rain ancestors – I need to check this. Part of this work is to inform people back home about this stone and many other objects, and the most revitalising thought is that the interventions and unpacking what this mess is, it’s like, no actually, she wasn’t free – but of course this was a complicated action and was not always the case. Aboriginal people were under the Aborigines Protection Board which was an Australian version of an apartheid and slavery system. The thing is, my grandmother’s family was affected by the policies of segregation and assimilation but we are survivors and proud. So when I’m in these museums and I’m looking at the mess and I’m trying to understand what this is about, I’m not just taking in my story now, I carry all of that with me. About what’s missing and how I can fill it, and so when you get there your brain feels like it’s three metres wide in your head. There’s a ‘lightning’ stone from western New South Wales in the Musée d’ethnographie de Genève – probably for making ceremony around rain ancestors – I need to check this. Part of this work is to inform people back home about this stone and many other objects, and the most revitalising thought is that the way this is about, I’m not just taking in my story now, I carry all of that with me. About what’s missing and how I can fill it, and so when you get there your brain feels like it’s three metres wide in your head. There’s a ‘lightning’ stone from western New South Wales in the Musée d’ethnographie de Genève – probably for making ceremony around rain ancestors – I need to check this. Part of this work is to inform people back home about this stone and many other objects, and the most revitalising thought is that the museum is encouraging this.

LR: You have been talking about what we might term ‘cultural safety’. I wonder if you aren’t burdened by deep cultural knowledge – can it hurt you? Perhaps that’s why your grandmother felt happy? But, she also said to me when I was about 23, ‘Brook, remember, you are also white,’ and this shocked me but I realised she was not only protecting me from reverse racism, but also reminding me of the happiness of her white father. I now realise it’s contextual, my grandmother was happy on the mission because she was with her close-knit Aboriginal family, and this was difficult to maintain when they moved to Enmore and Redfern in Sydney. When her mother died in childbirth, all of her brothers and sisters were taken in by her aunties and uncles, thankfully – I say this as the Aborigines Protection Board were actively stealing children during this time. So they weren’t part of the Stolen Generations, but they were still part of both the fringe and Erambie Mission. The fringe is right next to the mission. In most cases, if you were more fair-skinned, you went to the fringe, if you were darker-skinned, you stayed on the mission – but of course this was a complicated action and was not always the case. Aboriginal people were under the Aborigines Protection Board which was an Australian version of an apartheid and slavery system. The thing is, my grandmother’s family was affected by the policies of segregation and assimilation but we are survivors and proud. So when I’m in these museums and I’m looking at the mess and I’m trying to understand what this is about, I’m not just taking in my story now, I carry all of that with me. About what’s missing and how I can fill it, and so when you get there your brain feels like it’s three metres wide in your head. There’s a ‘lightning’ stone from western New South Wales in the Musée d’ethnographie de Genève – probably for making ceremony around rain ancestors – I need to check this. Part of this work is to inform people back home about this stone and many other objects, and the most revitalising thought is that the museum is encouraging this.

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are worried about Māori knowledge being used in this way. The artist wants to explore Māori sounds as a form of healing. I wonder if her soundtrack included material that wasn’t meant for general consumption – can it cause harm? As most people would be unable to hear or decipher the information, does this provide an inbuilt measure of cultural safety? However, some people are acutely sensitive, they ‘resonate’ at a subtle pitch, and could become unwell …

BA: I agree with you, there are vibrations and resonance. I think we are all burdened by the fallout of colonisation and what we’ve inherited, for better or worse – it’s the actions we do around this that matter and sometimes we need to start by creating a future that assists all of us. For me to be labelled a ‘contemporary artist’ – which I had to fight for and was criticised for – is something that I feel strongly about. I am not bound by someone else’s idea of who I am or by the doctrines of primitivism. As for the international scene … for many years now I’ve been thinking about what art is – what is its function in the international and local context? The way in which artists are involved in an art scene and the dominion of a particular kind of often Eurocentric ‘art’ style and way of action. What is that – who makes decisions around this? So when I hear you talk about sounds and healing, I agree it can be both healing and new ways to recontextualise that is, dare I say, natural within our communities that occurred traditionally. For example, musicians like Jessie Lloyd are creating contemporary actions like gathering old songs sung on missions around Australia, revitalising these – they are simultaneously painful and joyful. Similarly, my current research is investigating the lack of monuments, memorials and remembering of the Frontier Wars. I’m conducting international comparisons with other cultures who’ve placed on an object – someone collected it at a certain moment in time. Like artists do, we get so caught up in our own island histories and trying to unpack those and reclaim history through generations. But in saying this different too.

LR: I agree. It’s an interesting proposition and it reminds me of when I was in Cambodia recently. I was talking to some artists at Sa Sa Art Projects – two Taiwanese and a Cambodian. They were explaining how artist-run spaces are conducted in their art world – artists are the curators who run the spaces. One project involved them spending two months in each other’s countries, they make work and publish catalogues – their countries have been collaborating for decades. Their close geography reflects their histories, and they are united! I agree Pacific countries should be doing more together. But I think what happens is we get so caught up in our own island histories and trying to unpack those and reclaim history through generations. But in saying this Melbourne has a very strong inter-Pacific and collaborative supportive culture. I also want to reflect a little bit on what you said about World War I. I’ve been working with Koori Liaison Officer Maxine Briggs at the State Library of Victoria. We’re working on protocol issues around photographs. We are collaborating on text for a book to be published about that with my own practice but I think it’s important to experiment and activate a kind of frisson – regardless if the result is a failure or not.

BA: I see First Australians as the oldest culture in the world, and Māori are the youngest. And an important thing for me is our proximity – the oldest and the youngest cultures in the world live right next door to each other. And there’s so much knowledge we could share. We can learn from each other because we’re so close, and yet we’re so different too.

LR: Every place has its own resonance. At the moment I’m thinking about the ANZACs – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps – because we’re commemorating the men and women who went to Gallipoli to fight in World War I. It’s a time of remembering, and a time of questioning. One hundred years on and the focus has shifted. We can reconsider the Great War’s value, and ask, why did Māori fight on behalf of a country that hadn’t given them the right to vote, and why fight for a country that has colonised yours? These are revisionist times.

Museums are contested places, storehouses that reveal how and what value was placed on an object – someone collected it at a certain moment in time. Like artists do – we collect materials and ephemera. And time has an incredible role to play in these histories and the pain that we’re still coming to terms with.

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BA: I think it’s important to experiment and activate a sense of trauma – like the sound recordings – and this is sometimes unknown until it’s triggered. There’s an important Australian site called Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls, where girls from the Stolen Generations had to fight for and was criticised for – is something that I feel strongly about. I am not bound by someone else’s idea of who I am or by the doctrines of primitivism. As for the international scene … for many years now I’ve been thinking about what art is – what is its function in the international and local context? The way in which artists are involved in an art scene and the dominion of a particular kind of often Eurocentric ‘art’ style and way of action. What is that – who makes decisions around this? So when I hear you talk about sounds and healing, I agree it can be both healing and new ways to recontextualise that is, dare I say, natural within our communities that occurred traditionally. For example, musicians like Jessie Lloyd are creating contemporary actions like gathering old songs sung on missions around Australia, revitalising these – they are simultaneously painful and joyful. Similarly, my current research is investigating the lack of monuments, memorials and remembering of the Frontier Wars. I’m conducting international comparisons with other cultures who’ve placed on an object – someone collected it at a certain moment in time. Like artists do, we get so caught up in our own island histories and trying to unpack those and reclaim history through generations. But in saying this different too.

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at war photos of Aboriginal armed servicemen and women, and she said that people during the first and second world wars, for example, didn't have the same perspectives on colonisation as we do today. They just wanted to go to war because they wanted to protect their country. Some of those families are now fourth-generation Aboriginal families in the armed services. Of course they were aware of the problems of not being legally recognised as Australian citizens at the time, but a lot of Aboriginal people thought, 'Well this is our country and we're going to fight for it. We'll fight with whoever wants to fight with us.' And I reflect on my grandmother and the things she would say. I remember meeting up with a whole bunch of the aunts and my nana was still alive. … while talking she said the word 'Abo'. One of her younger aunty-sisters said, 'Rosey, we don't use the word Abo anymore!' I think my grandmother was surprised because she still lived a different reality – Abo wasn't a bad word. My mother still uses the word pickaninny – it sounds bizarre but I don't judge them. It's remiss of me, or any of my family, to judge our elders and their experiences of identity ownership even if I think it's offensive.

LR: Those are some of the ethics we struggle with when we're creating artwork. A sense of empathy is really important to maintain so you can be open, to understand multiple ways that the world operates because there's all these crazy, different ways of being within it.

BA: Empathy and compassion, absolutely, also a sense of humbleness. My 1996 artwork Sexy and Dangerous was a starting point for a mix of empathy and visibility, and this became a comparative speaking point – the original photograph was the first colonial ethnographic image I encountered. Most Aboriginal people didn't know what an ethnographic image was in the 1990s. Didn't even know about people being documented for the colonial machine. No one knew it, unless you specifically had access to them. Twenty years ago my interest in those images was about re-presentation and self-identified power and presence, and assisting in the visibility of these photos, and looking deeply returning the colonial gaze and weaving this back into a dominant Eurocentric narrative. I was so obsessed with the colonial gaze, looking at the violence of the gaze, the power of the gaze – though I believe it's not all disempowering. I wanted to release these people – they were innocent times of encountering these histories. In doing all of this, and looking at many, many collections, and making work about it and discussing with people like lawyer Terri Janke … and having community workshops like with my grandmother's elders group. I am still moved by the power of these images – our ancestors – and how important it is for us to allow them to be seen or remembered. What I'm trying to say is that we spend so much time looking at the colonial gaze and the violence of the colonial gaze …

LR: … that we overlook the image's own innate power …

BA: Yes … but it's not even about them looking back, that's clear, that's obvious. I'm thinking about more than the photograph. I'm thinking about what action is occurring in colonial photography generally, and across the Pacific. And I think the ancestors' power is innate, it is a different sense of visibility – so different to the colonial gaze that it's too easy to miss. There was one photo at the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, capturing the landing at Motumotu in Freshwater Bay in the late 19th century when the Australian Government took control of the then British New Guinea. It was a flag-raising ceremony and it had these extraordinary ocean boat scenes. They were extraordinary because both locals and the Australian Navy were just hanging out together – there was no apparent apartheid. They were just together. […] it was diplomatic but also very casual … there are women and men and children. There's one image in which a chief is getting his photo taken. An Australian sailor, assistant to the photographer, is holding his hand out motioning, 'Stop and don't move.' This action is related to the camera shutter speed – as you know, with early camera technology, you can't move. But when you look at the photo it's too easy to think the sailor exerts power over the chief – if anything, this in itself dismisses the position of the chief; you know you could think that he's controlling him, patronising him, that the chief is powerless. When in actual fact the chief is powerful, for me, it looks like the chief was in total control and wanted his photo taken and the community wanted their photo taken with him. How do we get beyond naivety, beyond our own colonisation
of the action? Looking at these images beyond a knee-jerk negative response? There's understandably a way of looking at images like this where many indigenous people could be offended by the action of the photographer's assistant, but there are moments where we can start to feel empowered and possibly see that in actual fact, the subjects and us may not always be disempowered. Of course, and without a doubt, the majority of ethnographic photography is brutal and disempowering. I think some see this difference, especially the younger generation.

LR: It's important to recognise that people have their own tino rangatiratanga (absolute sovereignty), their own self-determination within whatever situation they find themselves. When I began researching for Native Portraits in 1995 in about 1995 it was my first time to investigate the beautiful portraits of Māori held in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa's collections. I had a stereotype in mind about the early New Zealand photographers, the Burton Brothers. I thought that they were out there taking everything. But when I delved into the collection, I realised Māori were using these images for their own purposes, because we are people who maintain our own agency. Māori were just as interested in looking at themselves, employing the latest technology to use for their own purposes. We should not see ourselves as victims.

That mentality is not going to move us forward, and it certainly didn't get us to where you and I are today.

You have told me that you've been working with the State Library of Victoria on making a resource to help people understand how to work with photographs, especially for non-indigenous communities. What do you see as most important? Can you take an image and use it carte blanche? If you alter an image, is that any different? If there's a photograph of an unnamed person, how can you ethically work with it?

I'm interested in what you think is important when you're working with other people's images. From my perspective, what I do is make images. I don't take them. Working in a studio makes this incredibly clear, it's not stolen moments I am after. This is my strategy for finding an ethical way of working through that.

BA: I'll start with my recent experience in Hokkaido when I met Mayun Kiki. She saw that in one of my 52 Portraits paintings was an Ainu woman. I asked what she thought about this, especially because of the tattoo, and she was proud to see it. Though I am sure some other people may respond differently. It's been a very long journey in Australia. Generally, over the last 20 years, it went from people rarely knowing these images existed to where we are now. Back in the mid-1990s, artist Rea and myself researched not only family images but also images from archives which we were shocked to see. This was an artistic experimental phase, in a period where Aboriginal people were taking control of histories that we didn't even know existed – material histories, photographic histories, object histories. And then communities started to work with photos as well. For example, communities were reproducing them on community and organisational posters. Terri Janke drafted the report Our Culture: Our Future in 1999, commissioned by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. She and others continue to move forward in that area. And there's been a shift due to its reception in wider Australia. I'll share some of the history here.

When I made Sexy and Dangerous, I was three years out of university, and still very heavily involved with Rea. Destiny Deacon and Tracey Moffatt were a big influence. Working side by side with Rea, both of our research, and especially hers, was about the international trade in Aboriginal human remains. Rea was geared toward family images because her interest was in domestic service – her mother's family were domestic servants. Leah King-Smith was also working with library collections. In 1998 I won the esteemed Aboriginal Kate Challis RAKA award for Sexy & Dangerous – I was in good company with artists like Lin Onus and Ivan Sen, and receiving encouragement from Aboriginal judges to confront ideas about Primitivism and photography. This created more discussions around ideas surrounding representation of photography and protocols. People hadn't spoken much about it before, so there was little established ground for how to move forward. I started looking at photographs from my mother's country. In some rare cases, communities' ancestors were photographed and their names were recorded. They have photographic representations with names, but there were also a lot of portraits without provenance or names. We call them orphan images because we don't know where they come from, or maybe only know it's Victoria, for example. The Gun-metal Grey series took me seven years to realise. I was collecting unprovenanced photographs, but in that case I knew they were from New South Wales. My grandmother was always saying, 'Brook, you can make artworks out of photos of me and our family and it's really important that you do that.' I am working on this, it's so close to the bone and in many ways I am waiting to collect more images from my mother's father's side of the family who is Ngunnawal.

LR: Yes, traditionally that's the sanctioned way to work, right, with your family's images or symbols. So in some ways, you have swung completely the other way.

BA: Yes and no. And it's a very good question about linear narrative time and an Aboriginal sense of time and justice. I have always worked with family patterns and sensibilities in my work – but there was an urgency around the visibility for me regarding these ethnographic photographs. Arguably, the Gun-metal Grey artworks are family ancestors or close to my traditional homelands. You see, we unfortunately don't have many photos of our family – we were documented for science mostly and it's reclaiming these that is an action I find powerful and family oriented. I am planning to make more recent family photos into artworks – it's again a very long process. If I was to show them in a public arena, I would be exposing very personal and recent history, not from '100 years ago, but it will eventuate as it is my late grandmother's
wish. The way in which Christian Boltanski works with orphaned images is interesting to reflect on: what is exposed and personal and what is unknown. The Gun-metal Grey images are mysterious and powerful as they look deeply back to us, which in some ways could be claimed as even more traumatic as there are no recorded names, though one friend, who has family connections to Wiradjuri, did say that one of the portraits from this series was an ancestor of his – and he was happy to see her in the work.

This is important as even though I do my best to research images, nothing may ever eventuate regarding their true identity, or in rare cases like this – it arrives. Importantly, I made a decision not to re-produce the Gun-metal Grey portraits as photographs like in Sex & Dangerous, but as mixed-media prints to remove them from the burden of colonial photography. After my six to seven years of procrastination, I worked with printers Trent Walter and Stewart Russell to develop a technique to print onto a foil to realise these works so that the image disappears and reappears. It was Marcia Langton, Australia’s foremost Aboriginal anthropologist and academic, who gave me the final nudge and inspiration to create them. Marcia, way before my generation, was one of the first Aboriginal people to investigate and experience ethnographic photographs in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies collection. The artworks’ materiality has a specific action of visibility and invisibility. Again like Oscar Muñoz, whose video works include actions of painting portraits with water on concrete, this enables a disappearing effect of the subjects. That’s where my interest is intensifying and connecting internationally to create an equilibrium of narratives – ideas of the disappeared – and how parallel cultures in the world deal with these kinds of traumatic photographs and what they evoke.

LR: That’s something I struggle with in wanting to include reference to the Nootka Sound people. When I first left New Zealand, I lived in Australia; the next place I went to was the Pacific Northwest. I feel a genuine relationship with that area, something I learnt about with the benefit of our elders such as Arnold Manaaki Wilson and John Tahuparae – who have since passed away. They opened up new learnings with Pacific Northwest elders. While we were editing in Pursuit of Venus [infected], I spoke to Jason Ryle, a friend who runs the imagineNATIVE Film & Media Arts Festival in Toronto. I explained that ideally I would prefer to travel to Canada to record footage with local people from Nootka Sound. I asked Jason what he thought. He replied that even Canadian filmmakers encounter the same issues, finding it difficult to be as tribally specific as they’d like, for instance the actor Wes Studi might play a Cherokee Indian in one film, Choctaw in another film, and then be cast as an Apache in the next. Issues around representation and authenticity are fraught and difficult. I have included imagery in Pursuit of Venus [infected] which contravenes my best practice. But I felt if I didn’t include First Nations Peoples in the work their absence writes people imagery in which contravenes my best practice. But I in Pursuit of Venus [infected] did say that one of the portraits from this series was an ancestor of his – and he was happy to see her in the work.

I'm interested in the ethics of representation. I'm working with video and it's hyper-real when shot on 4K and 6K cameras. We're dialling it back to look like an illustration, to look more like the wallpaper. I'm working with someone, and I'm putting them out into the world – working with people who are alive – that is another level beyond working with an archive.

BA: I think the issue of traditional secret/sacred protocols and ethics is extraordinarily important, and clearly not only for Indigenous peoples. We're dealing with materials where it's our generation accessing objects that could have these values, and many don't. This nods to your point about what is written in or out of history due to its visibility. The rules around engagement with cultural objects are shifting as museum practices have invited interaction and collaboration to redesign ways of seeing and actioning cultural objects. We've needed to develop cultural-ethical actions that have not existed in this particular way before – and yes, like you, it is not just the archive we are reflecting on here, it does concern people who are alive today. Ideas around cultural protocols and what is secret/sacred and what is not can sometimes be blurry. Ethics is fascinating and contentious, when there is talk about Picasso and others who used indigenous or African carving design as their artistic influence. We have Australian artists like Margaret Preston who in the 1950s painted kitsch-style generic Aboriginal motifs into her work, not dissimilar to tourist art. There are complicated issues of non-indigenous people representing Indigenous motifs, and many Aboriginal people are still sensitive about this representation today – but who does own a kitsch representation or another motif like a dot? which is a style in some Aboriginal art? I'm not saying that it shouldn't exist, in fact I think Preston had a genuine concern for reconciliation. These appropriations are not secret/sacred and hence are more like ideas of who may represent. If I look at protocols in relation to my own contemporary art practice, none are secret/sacred in nature. They are inspired by particular designs but they are anew – like other artists, no one has the right to dictate my contemporary versions and reworking of my inherited traditions, both Aboriginal and Celtic, or from my wider experiences. It's important for us to be able to break with tradition as well as be inspired by it – and to even revolt within our own new styles. Europeans have a history of this with artists as infamous as Caravaggio and Dadaists – these artists were unpopular in their own times as they broke with tradition and created something anew – actions that challenged the status quo and dominant thinking of the day. These actions produce new ways of seeing – challenging and disarming current dilemmas. They both lubricate and smash a bottleneck of unhappiness and frustration with systems that don't work anymore or that generally need to be shifted to free the human condition.
PLATES

PORTRAITS

IN PURSUIT OF VENUS [INFECTED]

VIDEO STILLS
(Right) Lisa Reihana, Emissary No.1 – Chief Mourner 2017, photograph
FINAL IMAGE TO COME
BECAUSE WE ARE FROM THE FUTURE
multi-channel HD digital video, colour, sound, 64 min, Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki, gift of the Patrons of the Auckland Art Gallery, 2014
Jean Gabriel Charvet (designer, French, 1750–1829), Joseph Dufour (printer, French, 1742–1827), Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique, c1804–06. Six of 20 panels of wallpaper, one of which is a reproduction, block-printed watercolour on paper, 251.5 x 54 cm each panel, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, museum purchase, Gift of Georgia M Worthington and The Fine Arts Museums Trustees Fund, 77.6.1–10
The wallpaper forms a compendium reflecting the Enlightenment conception of a universal human nature. The shift towards the hierarchical analysis of racial ‘types’ is not yet evident; instead there is a generalising or homogenising impulse governed by a process of selection and omission. 11 The figures throughout are Europeanised, and with a few exceptions largely white. The draped costumes are modelled on Greco-Roman styles together with elements drawn from Empire fashion, although layered with authenticating ethnographic detail. Nudity is evident while piercing and tattooing are barely discernible. 12 As Dufour articulated: ‘We have permitted ourselves to suppress the absurd parts of a picture, which is only intended to offer pleasant objects to the eyes of the public.’ 13

Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique presents a decorative vision of the Pacific at several removes from the original field drawings. Design Jean-Gabriel Chartet’s preparatory drawing for the wallpaper in the Lyon Museum of Fine Arts demonstrates that the primary source for the serial structure, the numbered key to the scenes and many of the figures in the wallpaper was Jacques Cassant de Saint-Sauveur’s engraving Tableau des découvertes du Captaine Cook, et de la Pérouse, c.1788. The final wallpaper design includes three additional scenes drawn from engravings after John Webber, the artist on Cook’s third Pacific expedition (1776–80) yet extensively adapted to follow European pictorial conventions. The Tahitian dancers in wallpaper drop V allude to the mythical Three Graces, companions of Aphrodite. 14 Similarly, the muscularity and stature of the Tongan wrestlers in drop XVI owe as much to the depiction of the Three Graces, as to the drawings of boxing on which they are based. 15

Thus the imaginative voyage evoked in the wallpaper was both geographic and temporal, with distance in space linked to distance in time, back to a generalised classical past. It is significant that the overall scene is Tahiti, which French explorer Louis Antoine de Bougainville famously visited in 1767 and described as an earthly paradise far from the corruption of civilisation. Bougainville named the island New Cythera, after the mythical Greek island of love, believed in antiquity to be the birthplace of Aphrodite, or the Roman equivalent Venus. Michelangelo’s Creation, 1511–12 in the Sistine Chapel, which is replayed by the inhabitants of Nootka Sound, on non-European peoples. The vision of place presented in Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique is simultaneously nostalgic and a dreamlike vision of a possible future imagined by idealists. The term les sauvages would have had nuances revolving around the concept of indigenous peoples living in an uncorrupted state of harmony with nature, as proposed by Enlightenment philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Both the images and the accompanying text have been extensively modified from the source material in order to adhere to this idealised vision. 16 Only one rupture in the fantasy is included in the
form of the death of Cook in Hawai‘i, also adapted from a print by Webber. Yet details of the battle scene are barely discernible in the mid-distance of drops VIII–IX, and any suggestion of resistance by the local people is still further minimised by two flirtatious couples in the foreground who upstage the dramatic action.

Revolutions appear central to the wallpaper and its historical trajectory, including revolutions around the room by the viewer of the wallpaper, revolutions of the globe, revolutions in politics and in thought. The circular structure of the ‘wallpaper without ends’ is mirrored in these voyages, involving a journey and return to the point of origin. Cook’s first circumnavigation of the earth aimed to view from Tahiti the 1769 Transit of Venus across the Sun, in order to measure the revolutions of the planets and calculate the size of the solar system. Lisa Reihana’s work is measuring different revolutions, and inviting her viewers on another journey of investigation. Reihana’s in Pursuit of Venus [Infected] plots the distance and the difference between the European vision that produced the wallpaper and the diverse people who now see it. ✦
Key to Scenes
Locations for each scene of the wallpaper are listed: firstly, by their indigenous name where possible (bold). The name is given secondly in the 19th-century French used in the prospectus (italic), and thirdly in the standard contemporary English.

01 Nootka, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada
02 Uliétéa, îles des Amis, Rarotonga, Society Islands, French Polynesia
03 Happdáee, îles des Amis, Lifuka, Ha’apai Group, Tonga
04, 05, 06 Otahiti, Tahiti, Society Islands, French Polynesia
07 Tanna, Nouvelles Hébrides, Tanna, Vanuatu
08, 09 Niuatoputapu, îles de l’Amirauté, USA
10, 11 Kanaky, Nouvelle-Hollande, New Caledonia
12 Alaxsxaq, Entrée du prince Guillaume, nord de l’Amerique, Prince William Sound, Alaska, USA
13 Annamooka, Nomuka, Ha’apai Group, Tonga
14 Kaua, Nouvelle-Hollande, Tahiti, French Polynesia
15, 16 Tongatabo, îles des Amis, Tongatapu, Tongatapu Group, Tonga
17 Sainte Christine, île de Pâques, Îles Marquises, French Polynesia
18 Santé Christine, îles Marquises, Tahiti, French Polynesia
19 Belau, Pelew/Palaos, Palau
20 Rapanui, Île de Pâques, Easter Island, Chile

Dufour et Cie, printer & publisher, Jean-Gabriel Charvet, designer. The Voyages of Captain Cook (Les Sauvages de la mer Pacifique) (detail 1805), woodblock, printed in colour from multiple hand-painted gouache through stencils, printed image (overall) 170 x 1060 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased from admission charges 1982–83.
UNMUTING HISTORY
A POLYPHONIC TABLEAU

The Royal Society, London showing instruments from Cook’s voyages. Photo: James Pinker
Much taonga pūoro recreates the sound of birds and insects, a sonic landscape that has changed and quietened considerably since Cook’s first arrival in Aotearoa, when the expedition’s naturalist Joseph Banks described it as ‘the most melodious wild music I have ever heard’.4 For Pursuit of Venus [infected], soundtrack co-composers James Pinker and Sean Cooper have provided contemporary recordings of our present-day dawn chorus with birds from across the Pacific and beyond.4 As Pinker notes, this is not intended as an authentic or ethnographic period recreation but is a contemporary repositioning of the wallpaper’s own imagined Pacific, which in turn is heavily influenced by classical scenes. The hybrid nature of Pursuit of Venus [infected]’s new performances are inherent in their contemporaneity, produced with new technology, instruments and performers living in a Westernised post-contact Pacific.

For the first few minutes there is singing, pounding drums and the slapping sounds of Samoan dance, a bodily montage that takes us through the imagined Arcadian paradise of the Pacific Islands until a ship is sighted offshore. A sound reminiscent of a harpsichord strikes up, repeating a cyclical phrase from one of Bach’s final, unfinished works – an incomplete melody that remains stuck in time, caught in the moment of its maker’s mortality, circling like in Pursuit of Venus [infected]’s perpetual video time loop Bach, a Baroque composer whose classical interests anticipate those of the wallpaper, was likely to have been part of Cook’s sound world, just as he became part of the sound world of Tom Bailey, who performs it here.5 As if in response, there is a deep trumpet-like call, reminiscent of the earlier 1642 arrival of Dutch explorer, Abel Tasman, who did not set foot in Aotearoa after he mistook a trumpeted challenge from Māori as a welcome. Tasman’s crew responded in kind, resulting in a deadly attack.6 A new era of exchange, misunderstanding and intersecting sound worlds had begun.

After the first phase of tentative interactions, we find that Europeans are increasingly centre stage. There is the gentle tapping of Tahitian tatau (tattooing) implements – one of the sailors in this vignette is a merchant navy seaman, owns the equipment that was first scored Reihana’s installation at Archill Gallery in 1999 who first scored Reihana’s projects, particularly with Pinker in the group, Holiwater, which combines Indian classical musicians with Western musicians.7

Kei a te Pō Te Timatitanga o te Waiaitanga mai te Atua, ko te Ao, Ko te Ao Mārama, Ko te Ao Tūroa.

It was in the night where the gods sang the world into existence, from the world of light into the world of music:

Twentieth-century avant-garde composer John Cage once remarked that history has been invented for it to be written.7 Cage also recalled learning that everything has a latent spirit that can be released through vibration. Thus began a career of hitting and rubbing everyday materials and opening up a world of listening. Cage’s process of activating the sonic potential of objects partly anticipates the work of Richard Nunns and Hirini Melbourne in reviving the use of taonga pūoro – Māori musical instruments that had fallen into disuse through colonial repression and which came to mostly lie dormant, silenced in museum displays. Through a process of trial and error, educated guesses and extensive fieldwork to locate the oral histories that describe the instruments’ use or sounds, Nunns, Melbourne and other researchers found ways to play the instruments as well as learning the contexts in which they were used. From the mid-1990s an important part of Aotearoa’s sonic vocabulary began to return.7 (Taonga pūoro is performed on Reihana’s 1995 video, A Maori Dragon Story, by musician Te Miringa (Milton) Hohaia.)

Lisa Reihana’s in Pursuit of Venus [infected], 2015–17, begins with the scene-setting sounds of Hawaiian drumming, the ocean, birds, singing and taonga pūoro, creating a lush tableau of pan-Pacific activity. It is less a recreation than a reimagining of the sound world that awaited Captain James Cook and his fellow travellers as they began to explore the Pacific. Or, at least, it is the creation of a sound world that could have accompanied the scenes depicted in the 19th-century wallpaper that provides the basic framework. Reihana has said of this wallpaper: ‘perhaps the presence of so many people was a way Dufour could overcome the muteness of the printed image, you can almost imagine the noise of the crowds.’8

The taonga pūoro sounds in Reihana’s artwork include some that are edited and selected from recordings of actual instruments collected by Cook on his first voyage, which are now held at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington, while other sounds (and other elements of the video) are similarly revived from colonial documentation and collections, including a rattle from the Nootka people on the West Coast of Canada, sourced from the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge, United Kingdom,7 in Pursuit of Venus [infected] gives an independent voice back to the colonial spoils and accounts of this period, placing these in dialogue with voices, dances and rituals from the cultures of this region, all connected by the sound of Te Moana nui a Kiwa, the ocean constantly lapping at the shore.
an old station clock that no longer has hands and resides in a café. It still passes time, indicated by its ticking even if it does not tell any particular time. Its days of marking the arrival and departure of travellers have passed but it continues to mark potential travel.

in Pursuit of Venus [infected]'s recording is of the ticking and winding of an actual clock that Cook kept in his rooms on the second and third voyages, one of several he used to remain aligned with Greenwich Mean Time while travelling into new time zones, heading east towards the Pacific and into the future.

Musician-writer David Toop uses the term 'soundmarks' to describe an atmospheric audio landmark that not only situates us in a place but could also place us at a particular point of time through memory or recreation – he gives examples of suburban factories and the horns of urban boats, which are fast becoming extinct or silent.

These sounds are as much a part of the landscape as historic buildings, but they are seldom preserved or archived. If recreated, however, they can become a portal to a period in time and culture.

There are other sounds that are less literal to the scene – an Indian electronic shruti box (like a tamboura or harmonium) drones in the background, perhaps as a symbol of the British Empire's expansionist politics of the time and the larger colonial project that underpins the arrival of Cook and others from the West into the Pacific.

A rhythmic electronic pulse adds to the tension of growing conflict just before Cook is suddenly killed, struck from behind after firing his pistol in the air. The low trumpet continues to blast like an air-raid siren and the ticking/winding lingers as we anticipate this event's aftermath. In the background there is a haka (Māori war song/dance). The sea returns as other sounds fade. A female voice begins a waiata (song), a lament for Cook. As the sequence concludes, a group of sailors sing a shanty that was written in tribute to Cook during his first voyage. It recalls an earlier live performance from Reihana singing the well-known European sea shanty, 'My Bonny'.

The video's looping structure leaves us in limbo. Pinker describes the dynamic of these scenes as an antebellum, a prewar state before a major clash, which is perhaps defined by or the result of these initial cross-cultural encounters. There is a tapestry of sound worlds that have been woven together, combining voices much in the way migration, trade and colonisation have created connections that link our islands and sound worlds. in Pursuit of Venus [infected] holds us in this ante-bellum moment of its narrative so we can consider the powerful seeds planted by these first emissaries. It is a contemporary narrative that looks back as much as it looks forward, and lets us hear it anew. As the shanty is sung, a quiet falls across the landscape and we can hear birds again. A gentle drumbeat strikes up as the ocean laps in the background, different voices are singing and figures dance. in Pursuit of Venus [infected]'s arc has returned to the beginning and a Western ship is about to arrive...
TEARDROPS, TIME AND MARINERS

Inner workings of John Arnold chronometer 1771, brass, made for Captain James Cook's second voyage in 1772. © The Royal Society
The Royal Navy captain of a British vessel of exploration, charged with a scientific mission, completes three pioneering and sometimes dangerous government-sponsored voyages. A familiar story? Perhaps not. The protagonist is Edmond Halley not Captain James Cook. Halley, astronomer, commander of HMS Paramore and predictor of the comet now named in his honour, took to the seas in the name of science 70 years before the circumnavigations of HMS Endeavour and HMS Resolution.

His Newtonian interests in navigation and the heavens allowed Halley to make a second prediction of posthumous events in the paper Methodus singularis quâ Solis Parallaxis sive distanta à Terra, ope Veneris intra Solem . . . published in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society. In the papers he noted the years for sets of Transits of Venus across the Sun (1761 and 1769) and the opportunity they offered to calculate solar parallax (a triangulation using two points on the Earth and the observer’s angle to the Sun) and therefore estimate the distance between the Earth and the Sun. Halley pleaded for a programme of work:

I recommend it therefore again and again to those curious astronomers who, when I am dead, will have an opportunity of observing these things, that they remember my admonition, and diligently apply themselves with all imaginable success; in the first place, that they may not by the unreasonable obscurity of a cloudy sky be deprived of this most desirable sight, and then, that having ascertained with more exactness the magnitudes of the planetary orbits, it may rebound to their immortal glory.

The Royal Society’s southerly observations of 1769 were entrusted to the expedition led by James Cook FRS, sailing with Endeavour to Tahiti, where Cook and the astronomer Charles Green managed a set of successful transit observations under clear Pacific skies. Their passenger, the gentleman natural historian Sir Joseph Banks, would become the most influential Royal Society president after Sir Isaac Newton, and Banks’ experiences in the Society Islands, Australia and New Zealand would shape his practice of science (and much else) for the rest of his life.

Observational astronomy depended entirely upon the timing of events, and in developing her new artwork, Lisa Reihana visited today’s Royal Society to view the Society’s surviving period instruments. She saw the early future-scanning embodied developing her new artwork, Lisa Reihana visited today’s Royal Society to view the Society’s surviving period instruments. She saw the early future-scanning embodied observing the planet Venus. The Society’s archives contain many such accounts, imbuing the precise moment of observation with high drama at the arrival of the distorted, teardrop-shaped planet at the appointed place and time:

Yet – and in all of Cook’s voyages – it is the contacts of people and their cultural exchanges that form the most dramatic and the most haunting episodes from the past – it is for that reason they are remembered and it was in this environment that Reihana wished to replace the objects. She was entertained too, with personal letters from the period: some documented the equivalent 1773 journey of Mai (Omai) aboard HMS Adventure (captained by Tobias Furneaux as part of Cook’s first Resolution voyage) and his reactions to the alien culture of Georgian England.

Mai himself became the subject of many works of art, including portraits and plays, as the burgeoning Romantic era commenced its own intellectual explorations of nature, horror and the sublime. At the other side of the world from the skies of Mai, Cook and Banks, William Wales FRS overwintered on the frozen Churchill River at Hudson’s Bay in North America to ensure his own transit measurements. Wales would later teach at Christ’s Hospital School, where his tales of exotic voyaging adventure found the eager ears of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, resurfacing later in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

The involvement of Fellows of the Royal Society in the scientific exploration of the Pacific Ocean – its islands and land masses, but also its deeps – began most fully in the 18th century and, under the influence of Sir Joseph Banks particularly, continued into the 19th century and to this day. The roll call of these scientists and their vessels is truly impressive: from Cook’s Endeavour and HMS Resolution, to Robert FitzRoy and Charles Darwin on the HMS Beagle, Darwin’s great friend Thomas Henry Huxley on HMS Rattlesnake, James Clark Ross and Joseph Dalton Hooker on the (recently rediscovered) ships HMS Erebus and HMS Terror, to the Challenger mission of George Nares and Charles Wyville Thompson. In their various ways, each produced new ways of looking at the world. In her art, Lisa Reihana does the same. ✤
Lisa Reihana uses the analogy of a two-way mirror to describe her art practice. It is a practice that is both reflective of culture and transcendent; hers is a practice that explores, disrupts and reimagines notions of power, gender and representation. Informed by diverse sources Reihana’s artwork ‘recalibrates’ accepted understandings and assumed truths.

A multifaceted artist, Reihana’s practice extends across media including video, film, photography, installation, sculpture, design, text, performance, costume and body adornment. She works with complex ideas that are drawn from and informed by eclectic sources. Her sources include the whare whakairo or the Māori meeting house, 1970s video art by Nam June Paik, Jean Cocteau’s surrealist films, Marcel Duchamp’s ready-mades, the immersive video environments of Bill Viola, black feminist art and theory from artists and cultural theorists such as Adrian Piper, Tracey Moffatt and bell hooks, indigenous politics and aesthetics, and popular culture. Reihana’s work deftly communicates complex ideas and the concepts she works with incorporate notions related to community and collaboration, with the latter informing her working methods. Other subjects explored in her work include Māori and Pacific representation, globalised indigeneity, biculturalism, the postcolonial condition, and investigations into hybridity, sexuality and gender.

Reihana is the sole woman in a pioneering group of Māori artists who in the 1990s were named the ‘Young Guns’ by Māori art historian Jonathan Mane-Wheoki. These artists represented an urban Māori avant-garde. The Young Guns challenged the status quo, and through their questioning, profoundly altered the definitions of Māori art and artists, and the contexts in which their work could be sited. Later, the same group was renamed the ‘Māori Internationals’ by Mane-Wheoki after earning international reputations and securing opportunities on the global art stage.

Since the 1990s Reihana has significantly influenced the development of contemporary art and contemporary Māori art in Aotearoa New Zealand. She is recognised particularly for her groundbreaking time-based art and for her innovative and technically sophisticated command of digital media. Reihana’s art has been the focus of a number of solo exhibitions including Lisa Reihana: in Pursuit of Venus [Infected], Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Auckland, New Zealand (2015), in Pursuit of Venus, A Space Gallery, Toronto, Canada (2013); Mai i te aroha, i o te aroha, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand (2008); Lisa Reihana: Digital Marae, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand (2007); and Native Portraits n19897, Museo Laboratorio di Arte Contemporanea, Rome, Italy (2007).


Pivotal works in Reihana’s oeuvre, including in Pursuit of Venus [Infected], 2015 and Native Portraits n19897, 1997, displace and revise colonial/settler views and return indigenous agency. Other principal works – Digital Marae, 1995–ongoing and Tai Whetuki – House of Death Redux, 2016 – reinterpret indigenous knowledge and aesthetics in contemporary idioms to express both the vitality and the dichotomy of urban Māori experience.


Reihana completed a Masters in Design from the School of Visual Art and Design, Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland in 2014 and graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art from Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland in 1987. Connected tribally to the Far North of New Zealand’s North Island through her father Huri Waka Reihana, Reihana is of Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine and Ngāi Tū descent. She was born in Auckland in 1964, the city where she now lives and works.
Selected Solo Exhibitions

2017

Toi Whakarongo: House of Death, Auckland Art Festival, Auckland, New Zealand

2016

Lisa Reihana in Pursuit of Venus [Infected], Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand

Lisa Reihana in Pursuit of Venus [Infected], Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia

Toi Whakarongo: House of Death, Auckland Art Festival, Auckland, New Zealand

2014

In Pursuit of Venus, ArtBeam, Gwangju, South Korea

2013

Idea KAA, Auckland, New Zealand

2012

KAA Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

2011

KAA Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

2010

In Pursuit of Venus, ArtBeam, Gwangju, South Korea

Selected Group Exhibitions

2017

(With) Honiara Biennale, Honiara, Solomon Islands

2016

[5th] Kochi-Mสritchi Biennale, Kochi, India

Ata Ta Tangata: 10th Pingyao International Photography Festival, Pingyao, China

Christchurch Pop Up Exhibition, Milford Galleries, Wynn Williams House, Christchurch, New Zealand

Footage, Gunam Museum, Hagatna, Guam

He Waka Ora: New Milford Galleries, Dunedin, New Zealand

Montclair Film Festival, Didi, New Zealand

Milford Galleries, Auckland Art Fair, Auckland, New Zealand

Nga Taonga Whakaitiwhai, Jodithan Smart Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand

Spring Catalogue 2018, Milford Galleries, Queenstown, New Zealand

The Walters Prize 2015, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand

The Wakaatu Chronic, Milford Galleries, Dunedin, New Zealand

[1st] Yinchuan Biennale, Museum of Contemporary Art, Yinchuan, China

2015

Idea KAA: Final Film Festival, Warszawa, New Zealand

A Permanent Mark: The Impact of Tattoos Culture on Contemporary Art, Pinnacles Gallery, Townsville, Australia

Aotearoa: Milford Galleries, Dunedin, New Zealand

Colonial Affairs, Salamanca Art Centre, Hobart, Australia

Dead Ringer: Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth, Australia

Shoe and Tell Milford Galleries, Dunedin, New Zealand

Transpulicity Outshort: A Contemporary Look at Historical New Zealand, National Portrait Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand

2014

Binding and Loaping: Transept of Presence in Contemporary Pacific Art, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, USA

Photosphere: Kitakata, Spole Art and Music Festival, Taapakang, New Zealand

Other Ways: Art on the Manukau, Tai Turu Centre for the Arts, Auckland, New Zealand

Pak and Ngai Huia o HMB, Taiwhetu Museum, Gisborne, New Zealand

Signature Art Prize, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore

Te Ha u Te U: Messages from the West, Te Whakarewarewa Contemporary Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand

Tai Māori: Art Market, TSB Bank Arena, Wellington, New Zealand

Whakapono: Faith and Foundation, Hokitika Library, Dunedin, New Zealand

2013

Hookipa: Slipknot, Auckland, New Zealand

Suspended Histories, Museum Van Loon, Amsterdam, Netherlands

2012

Beyond Likeness: Contemporary Portrait, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, Perth, Australia

Contact Artists from Australia, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, Germany

Home on Native Land, Tiff Bell Lightbox, Toronto, Canada

In Pursuit of Venus, Albertson House, Auckland, New Zealand

Partners Dance Gifts of the Patrons of the Gallery, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, New Zealand

Te Kaha: Te Matatini, New Zealand International Festival of the Arts, Howick, New Zealand

2011

Bront Graham/Lisa Reihana: Nga Huia o Wai, Nga Tai E Ta Ton, Felthy Contemporary, Melbourne, Australia

Close Encounter: The Next 500 Years, Plug Inn CA, Winnipeg, Canada

E Tai Ake: Standing Strong, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongrenwa, Wellington, New Zealand

Oceania: Imagining the Pacific, City Gallery Wellington, New Zealand

Presence: New Acquisitions and Works from the Collection, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand

Stopthegap: International Indigenous Art in Motion, Samstag Museum, Adelaide, Australia


2010

Close Encounters, Hyde Park Art Centre, Chicago, USA

Digital Mare, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney, Australia

Edge of Elsewhere, 44th CAA for Contemporary Asian Art and Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney, Australia

Ethnographic: Museum Inside the Artist, the October Gallery, London, UK

Mines Mael, Museum Volkskunde, Liechtenstein

Nga Huia o Wai, CA Gallery, Sydney, Australia

Logg House, Auckland Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand

No Heroes, Outfit London Film Festival, Angeles, USA

Progress Reports, Art in an Era of Diversity, Korea, Korea

RE:counting coup, imax/KAVAFY, New Media & Film Festival, Toronto, Canada

Readymade, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand

Singapore Compass: Sculpture from the Collection, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand

The Thicker: Seymour Museum of Modern Art, South Korea

Unveiled: The New Zealand Project, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia

2009

AIF/Scared: Body (D) Works: From the Collection, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand

Anna Lande Digital Art Award, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

The Great Journey. In Pursuit of the Aboriginal Real, Kasumim Museum of Fine Arts, Kasumim, Taiwan

At Home with: Conversations in Mind, St Paul St Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand

Laudemus Museum Contemporary, Panama City, Panama

Paolina de la Villa, Ponce a Piea, Guadeloupe, 10th Havana Biennale, Centro Desembo de los Artistas Visuales, Havana, Cuba

Mind Game, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand

Whakapono: Faith and Foundation, Hokitika Library, Dunedin, New Zealand

2008

Legends, Slipknot, Auckland, New Zealand

MAM Unwrapped, Missoula Art Museum, Missoula, MT, USA

2006

3D3i, Auckland Artists Project, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand

Pasifica Styles, Cambridge Museum, Cambridge, UK

MAM Unwrapped, Missoula Art Museum, Missoula, MT, USA

2005

Ke hea taukata i te korari? To Runanga A He Hapa Piha, Kahoku, New Zealand

Latifah 2005: Tneni del Pafiche, Hotel de Ville, Paris, France

Paradise Postcard, Antipokes, Hawke’s Bay Cultural Trust, Hastings, New Zealand

Remember New Zealand: at the 25th Paolo Biennale, Arttopia, Auckland, New Zealand

Sho Ruthe: Takes on the Documentary Sensibility in Moving Images from Around Asia and the Pacific, Arttopia, Auckland, New Zealand

To A Man, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongrenwa, Wellington, New Zealand

To Altor: The Eternal Thread, Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland, New Zealand

Uncanny (The Unnaturally Strange), Arttopia, Auckland, New Zealand

2004

Face Value, The Arts at the Mala Garfa, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

I and thanks for all the IKA, Arttopia, Auckland, New Zealand

Imagination MATTE Festival, Toronto, Canada

McKean, Huters, Reihana, Milford Galleries, Auckland, New Zealand

The Nature Machine, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia

Paradise Postcard: Contemporary Art from the Pacific, Asia Society Museum, New York, USA

The 2nd Auckland Triennial Public/Private: Tuntemattu/Tuntemattu, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand

Readymade, Mini Gallery, Sydney, Australia

Remember New Zealand: 2005 Paolo Biennale, Oscar Niemeyer Pavilion, São Paulo, Brazil

Sho Ruthe: Takes on the Documentary Sensibility in Moving Images from Around Asia and the Pacific, Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania

To Altor: The Eternal Thread, Pokela Galleria, Porvoo, Romsa Museum, Romsa, New Zealand

To Roa/Papa Art of the Nation 1970 – Today, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongrenwa, Wellington, New Zealand

2003

Artspace, Auckland, New Zealand

Cuckoo Room: Center for Contemporary Art, Malmo, Sweden

I and thanks for all the IKA, Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania

2002

East Window, Auckland, New Zealand

Kei hea te putake o te korari? MAM Unwrapped, Missoula Art Museum, Missoula, MT, USA

2001

4A Gallery, Sydney, Australia

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand

The Other Gallery, Banff Centre, Canada

IKI and thanks for all the IKA, Malmö Konsthall, Malmö, Sweden

Airspace, Auckland, New Zealand

2000

Roundabout, City Gallery Wellington, New Zealand

RE:counting coup, imagineNATIVE New Media & Film Festival Toronto, Canada

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Selected Exhibitions & Publications

2010 Rangimarie Last Dance, G Theatre, Auckland, New Zealand

2010 Ruepepe Victoria Park Tunnel, Toi u Taiao, Victoria Park & Motorway designs, Auckland Transport, Auckland, New Zealand

2009 Pō Toi o Matea Ti Whana, Corteo Estate, Auckland, Bruce Mason Centre, Takapuna Beach, New Zealand

2008 Ina te ao anō Ina te ao, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand

2006 Tamaki of 100 Studios – 54/21 Auckland Artist Projects, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand

2006 Native Portraits n.1989, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand

Selected Publications


2010 Reihana Davenport, ed, Digital Māori, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand

2010 Victoria Lynn, Double Take: Anne Lands Award for Video and New Media Arts, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2003


1999 Toi U Taiao: Three Generations of Artists from New Zealand, Museum Friedericianum, Kassel, Germany; Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand

1998 Facing Art Now Looks Back, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongariro, Wellington, New Zealand

1998 – Floris the Bloomer of the Wero, Mori Gallery, Sydney, Australia

1997 Te Aro Haere, The Pacific in Photo Art from Aotearoa, Australasia, Australia

1995 Te Po o Matariki Toi Whenua, Corbans Estate, Auckland; Bruce Mason Theatre, Kupenga Victoria Park Tunnel, Te To Bridge Bay Exhibition Centre, Hastings, 2005.

1995 Parallel Practices: Biculturalism in Contemporary Art, Hawke’s Bay Exhibition Centre, Hastings, New Zealand


1989 Te Aro Haere, The Pacific in Photo Art from Aotearoa, Australasia, Australia


Brook Andrew is an interdisciplinary artist who examines dominant narratives, often relating to colonialism and modernist histories. Through museum and archival interventions he aims to offer alternative versions of forgotten histories; illustrating different ways for interpreting history in the world today. Apart from drawing inspiration from vernacular objects and the archives he travels internationally to work with communities and various private and public collections to tease out new interpretations. Most recently, Andrew has been awarded a New Zealand Creativity Fellowship and worked with the Māori Boy. A writer and three-time winner of the Watti/Montana Book of the Year award, a Kathleen Manderfield Fellow and a Distinguished Companion in the New Zealand Order of Merit. Previously, in 1990, he took a position at the University of Auckland, becoming a professor and Distinguished Creative Fellow in Māori Literature, winning in 2010 his memoir Māori Boy won best non-fiction in the Ockhams Book of the Year awards in 2015. The French Government made him Chevalier in the Order of Arts and Letters in 2016.

Keith Moore is Head of Library and Information Services at the Royal Society of London. Keith has been the Society’s Librarian since July 2005. In 2004, he was awarded the Rutherford Medal and was made Kiwibank New Zealander of the Year, and was appointed a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to arts governance. He is based in New Zealand and London.

Brook Andrew is the inaugural Director of Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery in West Auckland, formerly known as Lopod House, where Lisa Reihana has featured in exhibitions including the Pacific Space project LAPA (1996) and her McCahon House Residency exhibition Nga Hui e Wha (2010). Clifford’s own research tracks the colliding-worlds of contemporary art, performance and music. He has contributed texts to publications throughout the Asia-Pacific region, including recent essays about John Parker, Yuki Kihara, Megan Tamati-Quennell, Te Warata, and the chief executive of two large New Zealand law firms, chairman of the Arts Council of New Zealand To Aotearoa (Creative New Zealand) from 2007 to 2010, and held other Creative New Zealand governance roles from 2001 to 2009. He has been a board member of the Royal New Zealand Ballet and is currently the chairman of the Te Papa Foundation and a Council member of Te Papa. Carpentier has been a patron of three previous New Zealand Venice Biennale presentations, and is currently co-curator of a second feature film. In the 2014 New Year Honours he was appointed a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to arts governance. He is based in New Zealand and London.

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Talent
Christine Acker
Mirri Winter
Davide Bish
John Webb/Marine/Midshipmen/Sailor/Flagger
Joel Bell
First Australian Passenger
Mark Clare
Lieutenant King
Nino Collins
Murmu/Veal/Tahitian Villager
Hanan Faase
Tahitian Trader
Jeremiah Falata
Tahitian Slave/Aranoa Marriage Dance
Mikey Falese
Haunui Chief/Veal/Captain/Ka'au/Iru/Tahitian Warrior
Sotanea Feitulisi
Turtle Tribe/Faaa Fag
All F Fox
Man from Boodaban/Tahitian Chief
Solomon Fomanu
Kava Ceremony/Chief/Turtle Tribe/Boad Attendents
Amal Groom
Musician
Elly-Anne Gundy
Psaeon Skin Cloth Maker
Joel Herbert
Joseph Banks/Marine/Midshipmen/Flagged Sailor/Sailor
Owen-Reau
Chief Kaloupia/Araro/3/Hawaiian Warrior
Mikaela Kirkwood
Moanalani Mortar
Zandra Minue
Pregnant Arioi/Moanalani/Veal/Hungry Mother
Sapeli Mike
Tupaea/Haunui Warrior
TJ Moss
Waisa/Hungry Tahitian/Chief's son/Arioi Mafeta/Veal
Lychnis Muli
Moanalani/Veal/Boad liaison/Vealgar
Andrew Norman
Marine/Midshipmen/Sailor
Tui Petelo
Club Dance
Tatiana Pelaeau
Talarae/Boad Attendents/Moanalani/Veal
Xavier Peterson
Papua Tanepe/Araro/Turtle Tribe
James Petelo
Sailor
Katerina Polikai
Sandy Chief
Levin James Rewa
Hungry Man/Moanalani Warrior
Rosanna Raymond
Wahine in Ticoona Hat
Kingston Ria
Crying Child
Sanaya Saulumea
Boad Attendents/Faaa Fag
Gabby Solomon
Olives Daughter/Veal/Moanalani
Juno San-Chon
Tattos/Lerie Mane/Araro Baby/Veal/Pap
Venus Stephens
Chief's Attendents
Marie Sutkin
Captain Cook
Jacob Tanea

Stand by Posts
Henry Tari
Great Arioi
Luma Tasi
Chief's Wife/Moanalani/Kaloupia's Wife
Riki Titi
Tahitian Warrior/Tattooist/Chief's Attendents/Hungry Man
Ales Tufta
Clara's Chief/Moanalani Chief/Hawaiian Warrior/Araro/Veal
Losia Tui
Moanalani/Veal/Chief's Wife
Makalele Uli
Club Dance/Quneu Oloniu/Bride of Morgan
Fifi Vanuina
Tupua/Court Dance/Faaa Fag
Wendy Vane
Tahitian Slave/Tahitian Marriage Dance
Dan Vare
Meat/wagau/Maronui/Sailor
Loon Wadham
Sydney Parkinson/Marine/Midshipmen/Sailor
Julia Waiata
Captain Cook

New Zealand at Venice Patrons*
*Correct at time of printing: for a complete list see www.nzatvenice.com