Urban Maori Art:
The Third Generation of Contemporary Maori Artists: Identity and Identification

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Observe the young and tender frond of this punga-shaped and curved like a scroll of a fiddle; fit instrument to play archaic tunes.

A.R.D. Fairburn

ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE!

Peter Robinson Divine Comedy (Detail) (2001)
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Abstract

Kia u ki tou kawai tupuna, kia matauria ai, i ahu mai koe i hea anga ana koe ko hea

Trace out your ancestral stem, so that it may be known where you come from and in which direction you are going.

The intention of this thesis is to examine and interpret the artistic careers and practice of University of Auckland Bachelor of Fine Arts graduates Lisa Reihana (1987), Brett Graham (1989), and Michael Parekowhai (1990), and University of Canterbury Bachelor of Fine Arts graduates Shane Cotton (1989) and Peter Robinson (1989). These urban artists are from a third generation of contemporary Maori artists, and they have been selected for this study because they represent a phenomenon within the New Zealand arts establishment. Graduating within three years of one another, they have instantly and successfully mapped out their artistic careers, rapidly rising in status nationally, and internationally, over the past decade.

An examination of how contemporary Maori art has been defined by Maori and Pakeha critics and artists, and who is legitimised as Maori artists, presented as the debate between an essentialist and a post-modern, post-colonial argument, frames the context for this survey of identity and identification.

The thesis investigates a contemporary Maori art movement: presenting a whanau of artists who form an artistic and educational support network of contemporaries, that whakapapa back to the Tovey generation - the kaumatua artists, influential in the work of Shane Cotton (Ngati Hine, Nga Puhi), Brett Graham (Ngati Koroki Kahukura), Michael Parekowhai (Nga-Ariki/Te Aitanga, Rongowhakaata) Lisa Reihana (Ngati Hine, Nga Puhi, Ngai Tu), and Peter Robinson (Kai Tahu). The artistic whanau now includes Cotton, Graham, Parekowhai, Reihana and Robinson who in turn influence and support their third generation peers, subsequently informing the artistic practice of the fourth generation of contemporary Maori artists, and forming a vital link in the continuation and development of the contemporary Maori art movement.

The sesquicentenary of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1990 raised the question, once again, of how we identify as a nation, specifically, is there a New Zealand bicultural identity? The historically familiar focus on forming a partnership between the tangata whenua and Pakeha continued to be
of importance for the nation as it approached the end of the millenium. The issue for New Zealand, as a country populated by a diverse range of migrant and locally born peoples, more recently, has become less concerned with ‘creating’ a bicultural identity and more interested in visually representing a multicultural nation.

The last decade of the second millenium (1990 – 2000), is the main focus of this study because each one of the five artists profiled is conscious of speaking between two cultures, and they utilise their artistic works as the vehicle through which to investigate their Maoritanga and their bicultural reality. In a global climate of an increased awareness involving the rights of indigenous peoples, the third generation of contemporary urban Maori artists, the thesis will argue, became cultural ambassadors both nationally and internationally, their work an institutionally acceptable bicultural fusion of Pakeha and Maori concerns. The easy facility with which they negotiate between these two worlds makes them a pivotal generation in any study of contemporary Maori art.

This thesis aims to reveal the changing and sometimes controversial face of contemporary Maori art, establishing the necessity for this change, revealing where the artists position themselves as a result of their geographical location within New Zealand, and in terms of their own connection to their Maori heritage and knowledge of their whakapapa, investigating issues of identity and identification.
Kaupapa

I investigate contemporary Maori art within the context of my own cultural traditions and heritage as a contemporary of the third generation of Maori artists, educated at the University of Canterbury. The artists have told me their stories, trusting I am of Kai Tahu descent, korero over coffee, which echoes through this text negotiating this space that is being defined as New Zealand art from a bicultural perspective ‘one-to-the-other’. My kaupapa is to create a dialogue as opposed to delivering a discourse, allowing space so that the artists may have their own voice, motivated out of respect for an oral tradition that has woven stories as much through metaphorical speech as through factual account, and informed by the ethnographic practice of qualitative interviewing. My voice is added to the voices of Maori and Pakeha art writers who contribute to our understanding of the contemporary Maori art movement. I have attempted to follow the advice of Robert Jahnke:

Cultural difference can be accommodated through dialogue rather than discourse, through dialogical action rather than antialogical action, through korero (conversation), rather than text, Biculturalism need not be two-in-one so much as one-to-the-other.¹

Introduction

The mission of the “young guns” is not dissimilar to that of the Maori artists of the nineteenth century. Many of the younger generation have emerged out of alternative sites of contestation. Many are urban-bred with tickets to artistic achievement attained from the bastions of Western aesthetic dissemination. Their facility and eloquence is a product of urban realities.

The “young guns”, is the term now commonly used to describe the third generation of contemporary Maori artists. These artists are not easily accommodated by previously exclusive definitions of contemporary Maori art, and as the whakatauki goes: as one frond falls another frond rises (Ka mate he tete kura, ara mai he tete kura), however, these rising fronds challenge the current New Zealand arts establishment, and are a threat to some Maori kaumatua of the older generation:

Maori artists trained in the art schools of the Pakeha are spearheading a movement to change the face of Maori art more radically than ever before. One does not know whether they innovate with love and understanding or whether they are about to ignite new fires of destruction.

Urban, individualistic and self aware, these artists grapple with image making whilst addressing issues of identity, demonstrating their facility with a knowing irony that evolves out of an academic, philosophical environment. The ‘Young Guns’ (in the words of Keri Hulme describing the bone people), 'weave strange and hurtful pasts into strangely bright futures.' What follows is an investigation of those threads. Lisa Reihana, urban urchin, has strong connections to the threads of the kahukura (feathered cloak), yet chameleon-like is able to recreate herself in an instant within a cosmopolitan context. Reihana is aware of herself as an artist; as a woman, as a Maori woman artist. Radhika Mohanram points out that ‘Maori feminism fits seamlessly within a postcolonial context, but with a difference; Maori feminism if read within the framework of

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3 The term was coined by Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, who referred to ‘the rise and rise of young Maori artists, the young guns’, in Concert FM’s Arts Week programme on 30 September 1995. It was again referred to by Sidney Mead in Maori Art on the World Scene. Palmerston North, 1996.
nationalism reveals Maori feminists to be not an uncontaminated continuum with a pre-contact era but rather to be enmeshed within a neo-patriarchy which is a product of colonialism on women.\(^7\) Reihana is a pivotal figurine in the contemporary Maori art movement, she draws strength from the mana wahine of a traditional weaving past and adds to the korero of the preceding generation of contemporaries, and is similarly a link to the achievements of the fourth generation of artists as a teacher and mentor. Is there ‘space’ in this dialogue for a contemporary Maori women’s art movement?

Closely connected to the pae (threshold) are Brett Graham and Michael Parekowhai, for whom an ‘essentialist’ reading of their work is appropriate. Brett Graham connects back to father Fred Graham, a Tovey generation artist, while Parekowhai dances lightly in a more ambivalent fashion than his Auckland contemporary, aware that his work is a gift conferred on him through the ancestors. He enjoys a good-humoured negotiation of the space between the essential elements of a culture he is familiar with, and the notion of the constructed cultural space that allows for a multiplicity of interpretations.

Shane Cotton and Peter Robinson are graduates of the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts. Both had their degrees conferred in 1989 and were given the financial support of scholarship assistance from Maori Educational Foundation grants in their undergraduate years. Cotton investigates his ‘Maoriness’ from an essentialist perspective having embarked on an artistic journey of the present through the past whilst Robinson explored the primitive ‘alter/native’ and chose to construct himself as a negotiable cultural site, careering to international stardom. Chris Heaphy and Eugene Hansen, who graduated from the University of Canterbury in 1991, are also a part of this sub-tribe, a hapu of the third generation of contemporary Maori artists.

The difference between the urban artists who received their education in Auckland and those who were educated in Christchurch is significant. Mohanram writes that ‘place/landscape is saturated with relations of domination which are relevant to the construction of identity...power and development are anchored spatially as well.’\(^8\) Kathleen Kirby extends this by pointing out: ‘At the same time, other ideas about space and place cut across these local and “real” boundaries.

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\(^7\) Radhika Mohanram. *Black Body: Women, Colonialism and Space* New South Wales, 1999. p.xviii

\(^8\) Mohanram. *Black Body*: p.pxv
to produce a more fluid understanding. It makes good sense to preserve the old ideas of place alongside these more fluid, changing spaces: a way to express this is in terms of “strategic essentialism”, where you maintain physical/geographical/personal markers because they have a particular importance.9

In contrast to those who have received their training at either the Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland10, or the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts11, are the Polytechnic trained artists. The kaupapa of their work echoes, almost to the koru, customary motifs and techniques and rather than reworking, extending and revitalising the imagery and symbolism which would lead to the survival of the culture, it does instead relate more easily to an ‘essential’ definition of contemporary Maori art.

There is often a great deal of integrity and technical dexterity in the work produced by the emergent Polytechnic artists. Take, for example, the artistic achievements of students from Toihoukura, the Contemporary Maori art section of Tairawhiti Polytechnic in Gisborne working under the tutelage of Derek Lardelli, Steve Gibbs and Sandy Adsett. Their art, which is by Maori for Maori, does reflect a community-based consciousness yet ‘traditional’ formalist concerns do little to enhance the evolving scope of contemporary Maori art today, and these artists are therefore not the subject of this study.

The Young Guns, (not to be confused with those artists from the Waiairiki Institute of Technology and the New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute at Rotorua who exhibited under this title at the Rotorua Museum of Art and History), are the third generation of contemporary Maori artists to emerge during the nineteen-nineties from a traditional and contemporary Maori arts and crafts background. They are proof of the whakataukī: I cannot be lost, I am the seed scattered from Rangiatea. (E kore au e ngaro te purapura i ruia mai i Rangiatea)12 Rangiatea is regarded as a sacred place of origin in the homeland of Hawaiki, birthplace of a people whose ancestors crossed the sea to Aotearoa, forever surviving and flourishing.13 They also ‘arise’,

10 For the remaining body of the text the University of Auckland’s Elam School of Fine Arts will be referred to as ‘Elam’.
11 Throughout the rest of the text the Canterbury School of Fine Arts will be referred to as ‘Canterbury’.
12 A.E.W. Reed. The Reed Book of Maori Proverbs: Te Kohikohinga Whakatauki a Reed. p.54
phoenix-like, out of the flames of a European modernist and post-modernist artistic and educational tradition, brandishing their torch of enlightenment and knowledge with a difference; they are perhaps closer to the Black Phoenix (1984) of Ralph Hotere's painting - burnished with flames drawn on metal, creations ignited from a tarred brush. They facilitate their careers with humour and freedom reminiscent of the 'spirit' of Cushla Parekowhai's children:

The children laughed and we were drawn to the flames together. And then for some reason a small child ripped away their paper face and threw it on the fire. The mask ignited in an instant and we shrieked with the thrill of it as the classroom identity we had laboured over burst into flame – for just that moment the spirits inside us were free.

The artists of this generation attempt to cross the pae with the past before them and they encounter a 'newness' that is not part of a continuum of the past and present. Homi Bhabha describes this 'newness' as an act of 'cultural translation', elucidating that:

Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in between' space that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia of the living.

This reconfiguration is not only the product of a Maori historical consciousness as the cultural traditions of Pakeha and Maori are interwoven and enmeshed in the work of the artists represented. The result is an ambivalent tension between 'identity and difference, attraction and repulsion, union and separation'. What follows is an investigation of Bhabha's negotiated 'in between' space, the space in between:

One cannot say with certainty where the mainstream development is or in which direction it will flow next. What is certain, however, is the diversity; the vigour and the commitment of present day Maori artists.

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Section I. Continuity and Change

1.1 The Space Between: Defining A Voice

Before the question of tracing and defining what constitutes contemporary Maori art can be asked, the question of who has the right of reply must be addressed; as with any visit to a marae there is increasingly a protocol to be observed. The ‘space between’, the place of creative possibility from which definition springs, is itself a text that has to be articulated before it can be interpreted.

I te kore, ki te po, ki te ao maarama  
*Out of the nothingness, into the night, into the world of light.*

In the beginning is night, in the end is night, nothing to nothingness is the whole journey. Traversing, negotiating and transacting a space that is vibrant with the possibility of ‘becoming’, a definition of contemporary Maori art is constructed and chased into the world of light – Te Ao Marama - by Maori and Pakeha art writers alike who name and claim the space between: ‘The words come everywhere before art, with art, in art and about it’; *He kupu kei runga, there are words attached to it,* is an assertion of the need to clothe or cloak *taonga tuku iho* with words that holds particular spiritual significance for Maori. Robert Jahnke states that the ‘deployment of works in contemporary Maori art functions at several levels. Words offer clues to translation, they evoke poetic metaphor beyond image, and they generate dialogue over the essence of Maori art’.19

Pakeha art writers have stridently mapped out the parameters of this area of New Zealand art history that has until recently been existing in the wasteland, undefined. ‘What is it?/ How is contemporary Maori art to be defined in relation to traditional Maori art?/ How may the tradition be spoken in contemporary terms?/ How does one define it in relation to European Modern and post Modern art?/ Need there be any such relation? How to deal with the exclusion of Maori art from most of New Zealand art history?’20 Art writers map, chart, survey, track, peg out, and

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draw up parameters and boundaries and lay claim simply by defining. It is important to be aware that ‘[m]aps constitute geography according to their own cultural matrix…mapping embodies colonization: [and] materializing the land according to a European logic erases the order it might formerly have possessed, converting it into European land.’ Maori have their own pou whenua (boundary markers) invisible perhaps to European art criticism they tell a story (korero) relevant for Maori.

The question Pakeha art writers ought to be asking is, are these questions ours to ask, or are we employing a Western interpretation which is based on colonial theoretical frameworks as a continuation of the colonising process? Does a Pakeha interest in contemporary Maori art ‘compensate for what we perceive to be the spiritual bankruptcy of the West?’ Jahnke declares that ‘this construct called ‘Maori Art’ is under siege by several contemporary Pakeha art commentators as they attempt to dethrone the cultural adjective in favour of their international nomenclature.’ Maori Art is simply absorbed into a European New Zealand art tradition. Jahnke further notes that the debate has been marginalised by continuing to ‘debate’ the issue of who has the right to define, ‘even though definition constitutes a legitimate process of cultural rationalisation of any evolving construct.’

There is little doubt that a definition of contemporary Maori art has been ‘evolving’ since the 1960s, which constitutes a legitimate process of cultural rationalisation when the defining voice is Maori. Heralded as the ‘new frontier’ by Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, Maori art criticism creates a korero that disrupts the totalising gaze of colonialism. Maori art writers are demonstrating an increasing willingness to negotiate the liminal space in order to define the tenets of their own artistic practice. Scholars such as Professor Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, Dr Deidre Brown, Ngarino Ellis, George Hubbard, Robert Jahnke, Christine Kelly, Stephen Lawrence, Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, Ngahiraka Mason, Dr Hirini Moko Mead, Rangihiroa Panoho, Leonie Pihama, Julie Paama-Pengelly, Penny Swann, Ngapine Te Ao and Patricia Wallace are redressing a definition of contemporary Maori art because it had previously slipped through the network of classification that would normally locate states of position in cultural space.

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24 Jonathan Mane-Wheoki. Massey University Maori Art Conference Address. 1996.
A Maori insider construction understands how the art engages with Maori and the wider world from a comprehensive cultural base that embraces a holistic and inclusive approach, within a Maori conceptual framework. That framework, as Graham Smith postulates, (in a conference paper delivered at Massey University in 1990 entitled *Research Issues Related to Maori Education*) has four major concerns: firstly, a definition relates to ‘being Maori’, secondly, it is ‘connected to Maori philosophy and principles’, thirdly, it ‘takes for granted the validity and legitimacy of Maori, the importance of Maori language and culture and finally, it is concerned with the struggle for autonomy and power over Maori cultural well being.25

The Maori model assumes that we are in a continuum and a holism, spiralling inwards and outwards, turning and returning, world without end, rather than being a series of logical codifications mapped on a chronological framework. In Maori language there is no distinction between the word for space and time, they are the same, and within this context there is not one singular truth, a finite definition (definition by its very nature suggests closure), but rather an antipositivistic understanding that knowledge is an ongoing process, multiple and contested and contesting, all held in the same frame. This process of defining and refining contemporary Maori art by Maori art writers differs from a Pakeha construction which can seek to classify, quantify and hence commodify the art product. Pakeha sociologist James Ritchie explains a particularly Western approach to defining:

> Western logic links lineal rather than non-lineal codifications of reality, seeks watertight exclusive categories, is intolerant of ambiguities, fluidities, transformational processes and mutability. It seeks to deny the basically metaphoric nature of language, preferring a world of ‘objective realities’.26

Pakeha art writers make valuable contributions to this field of research, however, when they are prepared, as many are, to destabilise their voice of power and remain open to becoming aware of how they construct the worlds they inhabit and travel between, and how these constructions inform the reading and writing process of the ‘space between’. Texts such as *Decolonizing Methodologies* by Linda Tuhiwai Smith offer invaluable advice to Pakeha art writers when researching across the cultures in terms of appropriate protocol. Inherent in the Pakeha

researchers' position is the need these writers have to acknowledge the power relations inherent in the discourse, the dynamics of which have disadvantaged Maori previously. In a cross-cultural context questions such as who asked the writer to pose the question, for whom are the answers relevant and ultimately what knowledge do Maori people gain and to whom is the researcher accountable are important to ask.\(^{27}\) Naming authorial intention is also important when writing across the cultural divide, mapping territory, as it undermines the notion of an ‘objective reality’. Many writers are contributing to the korero by setting up dialogues with the artists themselves, exchanging information and opportunity and allowing the artists to speak for themselves through the text, effectively raising the profile of the contemporary Maori art movement, ensuring its survival.

One way to subvert the dominant critical discourse is to leave space in the text for all of the voices, to suspend meaning and resist closure. Pacific Island writer, Albert Wendt, reinforces the importance of the Va, or Wa and its function:

> Va is the space between, the betweenness, not empty space and not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things.\(^{28}\)

The Unity-that-is-All is the platform from which the voices defining contemporary Maori art will be recounted, and a 'space' holding these separate entities will be 'experienced', rather than mapped and therefore colonized.

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In 1991 Robert Leonard echoed the voices of a number of art critics when he declared that 'Contemporary Maori art' is a contested term.' He further stated:

There is disagreement on where to draw the line, on what kinds of work can be admitted as 'contemporary Maori'. Some will tell you Maori art is simply art made by Maori. Others will permit only those works by Maori which express traditional Maori concepts or values; use traditional materials and iconography. Some argue the very idea of 'contemporary Maori art is nonsensical, that Maori art is communal, marae based; necessarily 'traditional'.

A decade on and many of the contentious questions raised during the 1990s have been asked and often answered by a small number of Maori academics. The 'Young Guns' have risen to achieve national and international status through a great deal of debate as the third generation of contemporary artists in what is now an increasingly acceptable facet of the canons of New Zealand art history. We can now account for a 'Contemporary Maori art movement.'

Any understanding of contemporary Maori art history requires a Maori appreciation of history. It is a history where the past is conceived of as something to be faced and it is the future that lies behind, a concept that has come to determine how Maori art is defined. The dynamic relationship that exists between the past, present and the future translates as He tirohanga ki muri: looking backwards to the future. In the eternal now the 'traditional' can be considered 'contemporary', and the ancestors assume a 'contemporary' or present importance. The framework of reference for Maori is a spiral continuum and any artist who whakapapas back to a Maori ancestral lineage is 'contemporary', the past, present and future are held in temporal suspension; what remains relevant is the arts and crafts practice at the time it takes place.

'Contemporary Maori art' in the sense of art that is created now, viewed from a Maori cultural perspective, deviates from a Western understanding. Darcy Nicholas states that the 'mere

30 A.T.Hakiwai. 'Chapter Three.' D.C.Starzecka. (ed.) Maori Art and Culture. London: 1996. p.52-53. 'There is a dynamic relationship between the past/present/future....the past is in front of us, it is known. The future is behind us, unknown.'
creation of a work of art places it in the realm of tradition. Tradition is the step just taken.’ He goes on to say: ‘Contemporary Maori art really has no particular meaning to me. Our art has relevance to what is happening to Maori people today.’

The Ngata Legacy.

The ‘modern movement’ in the contemporary Maori arts is imbedded in the achievements of Sir Apirana Ngata who re-established the connection to a creative past and spearheaded a cultural ‘Renaissance’, encouraging a number of restorative projects nationally. The links to a whakapapa of Maori artist/craftsmen were rekindled with the revival of traditional practices fostered by Ngata, who after his appointment as the Chairman of the Native Affairs Council in 1926 organised the Rotorua School of carvers to work on the wharenui Tukaki. The school commenced in 1928 and included six Arawa carvers from Ngati Whakaue. Pine Taiapa, a student of the school, defines Maori art and crafts in an inclusive way as ‘carving, basketry, weaving, thatching, netting, plaiting, painting, hunting, folk dancing, military displays, fishing, rowing, paddling, agriculture, house building, canoe modelling and weapon fashioning.’ A link between the arts and values of the new world, and those of the ancient world of a Pre-European era had been re-established.

Maori became aware of their ‘art’, which was often an integration of aesthetic form and practical function, as ‘Maori art’ only in relation to European art objects. As Roger Neich points out, this was an extension of ‘Maori self-consciousness’ that was one of the first effects of European contact. The distinctive characteristics of the original taonga have little in common with a European understanding of art objects. Hirini Moko Mead refers to these characteristics: ‘A lump of wood of little or no significance is thus transformed through the art process, by building words (korero) into it and by contact with people, into a thing Maori class as taonga, or in full, taonga tuku iho.’ Implicit in this is the notion that there are words attached to it.

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The object is also intrinsically linked in a spiritual way to the mana of the personalities who have ‘touched’ it: ‘when a descendent holds one of these pieces all the ihi (power), wehi (awe) and wana (authority) of the ancestors flows into the living person. Tears flow and a living bridge is built between the living and the dead, the past and the present.’ The works embody a significance beyond the lifeless museum storage shelves or even beyond the hands of the maker: they are the ancestor, and rather than being owned and displayed they are instead cared for by the iwi as one would care for a respected relative. Gerard O’Regan (Ngai Tahu), identifies that ‘the reflected aspirations of iwi...are crucial in establishing the ownership of the art, for community ownership occurred not only in the sense of physical access but also through understanding and empathy with the intellectual content and community history to be found in the work.’

It is not relevant to speak of Western distinctions between ‘craft’ and ‘fine art’ when referring to taonga tuku iho because this makes little sense in a Maori context; nor is the differentiation between the traditional and the contemporaneous relevant. Stewart MacLennan writing about Maori art in New Zealand in 1966 declared that ‘their meaning and purpose is of the past and they linger on in practice only as traditional craft,’ a view which is invalidated in light of subsequent art criticism. Two years later in 1968, R.N. O’Reilly, who was reviewing the Maori art section of An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand stated, ‘We must learn to consider Maori art as art.’ He was referring to traditional taonga, and his statement effectively reconceptualizes these ancient forms from museum artefact to aesthetic object. It was, in fact, a European aesthetic understanding of Maori arts and crafts, and the recontextualisation within a museum context of traditional taonga, that paved the way for art made by Maori to be conceived of in a contemporary context.

The Ngata ‘Renaissance’ of Maori cultural activity provided a traditional base from which a contemporary Maori art could develop. It mirrored subsequent contemporary generational stages because continuity with the past was established and the cultural products were viewed and understood from a Maori world view (Matauranga Maori). Maori ‘art’ making was also at the

35 A.T. Hakiwai, quotes Tamati Kruger in Art and Culture. p.55
37 S.B. MacLennan. ‘Art in New Zealand’ An Encyclopedia of New Zealand. 1. 1966. p.87
time intimately linked to a political agenda, and the need for Maori to establish a separate identity was a major source of motivation in the process of revival.

The second phase of development that helped to lay the foundation for the contemporary arts following the revival of Maori aesthetic pursuits also evolved out of the initiatives of Ngata prior to 1950, and was the result of the encouragement he gave to education as a means of cultural viability. Ngata’s policies fostered a generation of artists who were firmly grounded in their revived culture and who were open to the forms of European Modernism. Many of the ‘artists’ who identified as ‘Maori artists’ had a strong connection with their marae-based culture operating from a community based consciousness. Their self-identification was through the living memory of their ancestors and the land to which they belonged.
The First Generation

The contemporary Maori art movement began in the nineteen-fifties. Baden Pere and Buck Nin in the Foreword to the catalogue of *New Zealand Maori Culture and the Contemporary Scene* (1966), declare: 'This modern movement in Maori expression is barely five years old and subject to many changes in direction.' The first generation of 'contemporaries' included artists who had completed the third year specialist course for primary school teacher trainees at Dunedin Teacher's College in the early nineteen-fifties. Several of those artists were tertiary qualified and worked in the Secondary School system. Selwyn Wilson, the first Maori university graduate in Fine Arts, completed a diploma, majoring in painting at the Elam Art School of Fine Arts graduating in 1952, and Arnold Manaaki Wilson was the second to graduate with a Diploma of Fine Arts with Honors in sculpture in 1954. He trained as a secondary school teacher and while he is a first generation contemporary Maori artist he was not directly associated with Gordon Tovey.

The majority of this first generation had come into contact with Pakeha educator Gordon Tovey who had been appointed the first national Supervisor of Art and Crafts in the Department of Education in 1946, and they are better known as the ‘Tovey generation.’ Gordon Tovey's ultimate vision for art education in New Zealand, which developed throughout the course of his career in the arts, combined a practical assessment of the need for specialist art teachers with a vision to infuse traditional Maori art with the “progressive” forms of Modernism. Fred Graham and John Bevan Ford became art specialists in 1951; Ralph Hotere in 1952; Katarina Mataira and Cath Brown in 1953; Mere Kururangi in 1954; Muru Walters in 1955, Paratene Matchitt in 1957; Cliff Whiting in 1958; Clive Arlidge in 1959; and Sandy Adsett. Selwyn Murupaenga, Keriana Tuhaka are also members of this generation.

The educational focus was part of a larger New Zealand wide, national bicultural imperative that sought to ‘happily’ combine Maori and Pakeha art making in order to reflect the ‘true’ New Zealander, someone who is part Maori and part Pakeha. The apparently mutual cross-fertilization of ideas, and easy symbiotic relationship between Maori and Pakeha culture takes on

40 Jonathan Mane-Wheoki.. ‘Gordon Tovey and the History of the Contemporary Maori Art Movement.’ *Tovey & the Tovey Generation*. Pataka Museum of Arts & Cultures, Porirua. p.2.
41 Ibid.p.3.
new meaning when considering Rangihiroa Panoho’s analysis of the art of Paratene Matchitt, where he extends the rich interchange, shifting the power balance:

Biculturalism in Matchitt’s art is not really about the equal blending or the happy synthesis of Maori and Pakeha cultural art forms and technology, rather in the artist’s work it came to mean the energetic pumping of one (the western art/culture) to sustain and ensure the survival of the other, Maori art in a contemporary form and context.  

The survival of Maori art in the nineteen-fifties and ‘sixties is connected to ‘traditionally’ recognised arts and crafts of Maori, te toi whakairo (carving), in particular, and the Tovey generation developed artistic work related to the land from a spiritual and material-holistic point of view that conceived of their Maoritanga in essentialist terms. What is also integral to this group of artists is the reassertion of the principle of change that is as much a part of Maoridom as is a constant relationship with an ancestral and land-based connection. It is a reminder of the presence of individualism that exists alongside fulfilling a collective aspiration. The ‘Godfather’ of contemporary Maori art is an excellent example of a Tovey generation artist. Arnold Wilson’s sculptural work is informed by both a European Modernist tradition and customary Maori art, although he engages with international modernism on Maori terms. Tane Mahuta (1957), retains the ihi or life spirit of Maori art form, yet it is simplified for the sake of the work’s own compositional value and expressivity. The modernist reductive elements, organic biomorphism and ‘primitive’ aspects of the work demonstrate a familiarity with Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. While this particular piece is executed in ‘traditional’ materials and the artist is a dextrous carver, Wilson, like his contemporaries, often utilized power tools, creating assemblage or relief using both industrial and synthetic materials – plywood, custom wood, fibreglass, stainless steel, plastic, pva.

Modernist Maori art, the art produced by the Tovey generation, often rested uneasily between two worlds: ‘Maori art was in a state of flux. Maori talent was striking out in new directions for which there were no models and no guidelines. Because these new directions were non-

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43 Wilson was named The Godfather by Sandy Adsett and an article by Mane-Wheoki has the same title. Art New Zealand 96, spring 2000: pp.94-98, p.111.
traditional, the Maori community itself was uncertain as to whether they were culturally acceptable." It tended to be located outside the dealer galleries and the core of the art institutional framework because of its relationship to Maori communities and a Maori kauapapa. It enjoyed a much easier relationship often with provincial galleries such as the Dowse Art Museum in Lower Hutt and the Sarjeant Art Gallery in Wanganui as an extension of a community based originally rural cultural heritage. Despite the fact that the work was artistically meritorious enough to have held its own in any art-historical context it continued to be placed in a ‘Museum’ sphere and was conceived of in ‘traditional’ terms as artifacts of an essential culture. The Sarjeant Art Gallery Collecting Brief for Contemporary Maori Art mirrors this belief:

We shall be directed towards developing a collection of the best art in all mediums by Maori artists who have contributed to the development of Maori art and show aesthetic links to those traditional artforms most important and central to the Maori community; that is artwork found in the Whare Whakairo, the focal point of the Marae.45

The ‘Westernised’ aspect of the artistic forms of art did not always sit easily in a Maori context either and was challenged by Maori conservatives and traditionalists as Cliff Whiting recalled in 1986:

Two or three people said Maori art was dead; some of us had an exhibition in the 1960’s and a well known anthropologist said, “This is not Maori Art”. In actual fact what they were really saying is that what is hung in Museums and a few houses around was their idea of what Maori art should be.46

The ‘well known anthropologist’, Hirini Moko Mead, had been appointed assistant area organiser in art and craft for the East Coast and Bay of Plenty by 1951. He was familiar with the initiatives of Tovey and made a valuable contribution to the education of many predominantly Maori primary school students on the East Coast, although unlike his contemporaries who were teaching and making work of a modernist hybridised nature, Mead maintained an essentially traditional approach to art making.

The members of this generation were being overlooked as early as 1966, when MacLennan was declaring: ‘No Maori artist of stature has yet arrived. The process of integration has isolated the Maori of today from the living meaning of the arts of his forefathers, and his culture must, from now on, be one with that of his European neighbours.’\(^{47}\) This was at a time when Muru had exhibited in Auckland, Mataira had published on *The Arts of the Maori* and a major festival of the arts had been held during the Ngaruawahia Centennial including several of the artists already mentioned, and the first exhibition of contemporary Maori works had been held in Auckland in 1958. In the year MacLennan makes his claim, Buck Nin and Baden Pere declare:

...Maoris are in the forefront of New Zealand contemporary art. If a true New Zealand school of art emerges the rich inheritance of the Maori people, here interpreted in modern forms, may well provide a major source of inspiration for the future.\(^{48}\)

This first generation of modernist Maori painters and sculptors are well-recognised kaumatua members of the Maori art community, highly respected and vital for having maintained a foot in two worlds, significantly contributing to each, even if the balance has at times been questioned by Maori and Pakeha alike. They have been ‘largely dismissed by the establishment as producers of ‘hybrids’ or ‘airport art’ or ‘museum fodder.’\(^{49}\) The often large-scale works executed in fulfilment of commissions are monuments to a ‘national’ culture. The wisdom, leadership and mentoring presence, in the contemporary Maori art movement of this first generation has played a vital role in its survival; from their presence at the inaugural hui of New Zealand Maori Artists and Writers Association (Nga Puna Waihanga) at Te Kaha in 1973, through to their participation in numerous local, national and international exhibitions, they have inspired the generations who follow, living on in the present.

\(^{47}\) Stewart MacLennan. ‘Art in New Zealand.’ p.87.
\(^{49}\) This observation was made by Jonathan Mane Wheoki in *Hiko! New Energies in Maori Art*. Robert McDougall Contemporary Art Annex, Christchurch: 1999. Mane-Wheoki has contributed significantly to the rewriting of this particular generation of artists in the history of New Zealand art.
The Second Generation.

The profile and nature of the contemporary Maori arts experiences a distinct metamorphosis during the decade of the nineteen-seventies as the second generation of artists moved from creating works that represent a friendly synthesis between Westernised form and Maori kaupapa, generous and inclusive for the benefit of “New Zealanders”, to works that pack a political punch executed by the ‘patu’ paintbrush-wielding generation, the politically expressive expressionists. Emare Karaka, a second generation contemporary Maori artist, in response to being called a terrorist in 1987 by Member of Parliament Ross Meurant, replied: ‘I am armed with a paintbrush, if that is regarded as terrorism, then I am a terrorist. My artwork is my platform: My paintbrush is my patu.’

Maori filmmaker Merita Mita by contrast used a lens as her patu, documenting the events at Bastion Point and the Springbok Tour.

Ngahuia Te Awekotuku writes that political comment and protest through art have been an integral part of the Maori world. The powerful, riveting song-poems of the prophet-warrior Te Kooti, the intense vibrant wall panels of such great houses as Rongopai on the East Coast illustrate this tradition. Creativity was a potent weapon in the political battle and it has remained so. Mane-Wheoki states that ‘Maori art is highly political and after 1975 you cannot view contemporary Maori art outside its political context’ and goes on to say that:

…the whole creative endeavour of Maori functions within a political and ideological context – the dynamic of a resurgent Maori nationalism and culture….Mere formalist interpretation will not answer Maori needs so long as there are burning issues to address and potent messages to deliver.

Nineteen seventy five is a significant marker because it was the year of the Land March (hikoi) on Parliament, and it is also the year that the Treaty of Waitangi Act was passed into legislation, which created the Waitangi Tribunal whose jurisdiction was the prospective redress of grievances. This Act was later amended in 1985 to allow for the investigation of claims back to

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1840. During the decade of the ‘seventies young Maori political radicals formed a collective, gathering strength together: Nga Tamatoa.

The second generation of contemporary artists agitate around issues of Maori sovereignty and identity in the reassertion of their right to self-determinism conferred on the tangata whenua through the Treaty. The resurgence of Maori nationalism and culture was the backdrop for Maori art to play a crucial role in the ‘reclamation and affirmation of Maori ethnicity and identity’ 53, and was, at the same time, the institutional relocation of Maori art ‘from the margins to the centre.’ 54 The art is both relocated to, and ‘separate’ from the mainstream of art history that is in keeping with the philosophy of partnership, honouring Maori culture as unique within New Zealand. *Black Nation* (1983), by Ralph Hotere, representing an appropriately re-imaged black union jack, was created in the nineteen-eighties, which was for Maori a decade of political change.

Among the ranks of the political agitators the voices vary in volume Emare Karaka, Shona Rapira Davis and Diane Prince are clearly visible and audible, their work is raw, the marks they make are a reclamation of their birthright:

> My work is centred around the Treaty of Waitangi. It’s to do with rangatiratanga, our atua, our taonga, land rights, living rights arts and cultural rights. (Karaka) 55

The louder the voice the larger the protest in reply Keith Stewart, in assessing Karaka’s work insists that ‘her tumultuous career has often been infiltrated by excesses of political posturing.’ 56 Diane Prince’s anti-nationalistic gesture, that requested exhibition attendants walk over the New Zealand flag, created such an effective response that it was removed from *Korurangi: New Maori Art.* (1996). Shona Rapira Davis managed to get an entire city involved in the intricacies, both funding and practical, of her ceramic creation in Wellington’s Pigeon Park.

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53 Jonathan Mane-Wheoki. ‘The Resurgence of Maori Art: Conflicts and Continuities in the Eighties.’ p.3.
Robert Jahntke, another of this second generation, both in his art criticism and in his art work, deals with the waxing and waning of power, the ‘shadow and substance’ of issues related to the land, working from within the educational establishment at the College of Design, Fine Arts and Music at Massey University. Kura Te Waru Rewiri, who works alongside him in a teaching capacity lecturing students in Toi Atea: contemporary Maori Arts and Design, expresses her quieter, though no less insistent protests through beautifully executed expressionist works:

The initiatives of my people I see as a positive movement to reinstate the original intent of the Treaty, the principles of the Treaty. My role is to embrace these initiatives. (Kura Te Waru Rewiri.)

Robyn Kahukiwa, in a committed and peaceful way, explores her whakapapa. The search for her own identity as a Maori woman grew out of her interest in visually representation for the benefit of Kahukiwa’s own iwi. She states: ‘The artistic and cultural traditions of my ancestors are vital in the maintenance of the threads of the chain of our people – past, present and future.'

Kahukiwa shares the concerns of the later generations of contemporary Maori artists who, unlike the Tovey artists, are not secure in their Maoritanga. Raised in Australia, she was not brought up in it and has reclaimed her identity through her art that forms a document of this journey. The second generation of artists are essential links in the contemporary Maori art movement, visibly challenging, as they do, a monocultural account of a New Zealand history.

The korero surrounding Maori art in the ‘eighties reaffirmed the value of art for Maori by Maori. *Te Maori* opened in 1984 in New York, raising the profile and status of Maori art in an international context, causing Mead and others to ask the question: ‘What is Maori art? In answer to which he stated that it is ‘an art of the ancestors that focuses attention upon commemoration, remembrance, accomplishments, continuity with the past, and celebration of where we have been and what we have achieved. It is an art that is people oriented in one sense and ancestor oriented in another.’

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Mead’s view is and has consistently remained by its nature, essentialist. He is of the opinion that the artistic heritage of the people must remain ‘firm like an anchor stone.’ Essentialism conceptualises the culture as a ‘timeless, homogeneous and bounded “essence” common to an entire group, as a thing-like bundle of customs; beliefs and values handed down passively from one generation to the next through socialisation.’ In relation to the arts, Mead moves towards an increasingly particular and detailed definition:

- Maori art is essential to Maori culture.
- It enriches Maori lives through the traditions and canons of taste handed down through the generations.
- There is a continuity, which gives the work a distinctive wairua.
- Maori art is closely associated with identification by Maori as Maori.
- Its primary purpose is to satisfy Maori social, political, cultural and economic needs.
- It is a social art created within a cultural and social environment related to the tribal roots of the artist.
- Change is brought about by the introduction of new technologies acceptable to the Maori public.
- The owners of the cultural and intellectual property known as Maori art are the Maori people.

In short, ‘Maori art might be defined as art that looks Maori, feels Maori, is done by Maori following the styles, canons of taste and values of Maori culture.’

Robert Jahnke, espousing the philosophy of Nga Puna Waihanga, echoes some of Mead’s sentiments. He explains that: ‘It is a philosophy of whanaungatanga, one which encourages emerging artists to stand alongside their predecessors, their peers and their “kin”. It is also a philosophy that defines art from a cultural perspective.’ That particular perspective values the partnership that exists between art, nature and the spiritual world. The artist must respect the

60 See Definitions Compiled by Max Quanchi Lecturer in Humanities La Trobe University Bundoora, Victoria, Published in *PHA Newsletter.* 34.
Mauri or life force of the materials they are working with, as a vessel of change, a vehicle for the
genius of the gods, they imbibe another dimension to it, so it will be a living thing of beauty.
Ngahuia Te Awekotuku concurs:

Taha Wairua, the way of the spirit in matters Maori, permeates our world so profoundly
that to isolate and analyse it is almost like threatening the very fabric itself. Spirituality
and art making have formed an integral part of the Maori worldview from ancient times
until the present day.  

The difficulty, however, with maintaining an exclusively essentialist approach when seeking a
definition of Maori art and who qualifies to be called a Maori artist is that this response has a
tendency to be exclusive rather than inclusive. It does not acknowledge the dynamic of change,
the evolutionary process, and it risks ghettoizing itself because of its failure to confront society
head on. The view that 'there are Maori artists who have no grounding in their own culture and
training in Maori art now wanting to do art which they want to call Maori art. What they produce
is art of some poor quality...' seems to hail the 'extinction' rather than regeneration and
hybridisation of the Maori arts.

Rangihiroa Panoho declared W.A.R. on the notion of a homogeneous bounded essence in the
curation of Whatu Aho Rua (1989) in his role as Education Officer of the Sarjeant Art Gallery.
The exhibition set out to demonstrate that a continuum exists between the Maori past and present
and that traditional forms and visual symbols play a major part in the development of work by
Contemporary artists. Panoho stated that '...history shows that variety and an innovative
approach are often intrinsic to the survival of Maori art. Survival and pragmatism are present in
Maori culture.'  

Mane-Wheoki clarifies the position of Mead by stating:

His disquiet expressed in 1984, stemmed from a concern that through
their adoption of concepts, forms of expression, materials and technologies
unknown to the ancestral creators of taonga, participants in the
contemporary Maori art movement had threatened the continuity
of Maori culture.  

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64 Ngahuia Te Awekotuku. Mana Wahine Maori, Maori Women’s Art: Selected Writings on Culture and Politics.
65 Rangihiroa Panoho. 'The Development of Maori Art in a Contemporary Form and Content.' p.9.
66 Dr Deidre Brown & Jonathan Mane-Wheoki. Hikoi! New Energies in Maori Art. Robert McDougall Art Annex,
Christchurch, 1999.
Those 'threatening the continuity of the culture' have developed during the third phase of the movement that has been built on ancestral foundations and parallels the shift in the wider culture from the forms of Modernism which had collapsed and been transformed into a postmodern discourse. Postmodernism is an aesthetic and a critical practice and it assumes the end of history, the failure of meaning to close on form and the proliferation of the image. Postmodernism argues that a media-saturated society is governed by the endless exchange of images set free from a final signified that would fix states of play and establish a single meaning. The logic of postmodernity sees society as lacking in depth and subject to the constant interchange of multiple surfaces, spaces and meanings. The artists of the third generation are products of a postmodern age and they also deal with postcolonial realities whereas such critics as Habermas note the problems associated with politicising postmodernism, postcolonialism is far more explicit about its political project. Postcolonialism involves both a critique of colonialism and a reversal of colonial subject positions (colonise/colonised) in order to empower nativist cultures and respond to the hegemony of the metropolitan centre. As a consequence of postcolonialism, there has been an explosion of international interest in 'art on the margins'.

The concerns of the 1990s generation of contemporary Maori artists are centred on issues of identity as shaped by the forces of a bicultural reality. The third generation are not two cultural halves, but rather a combination of two complete cultural realities. They have been chosen, like their predecessors, for the purpose of representing New Zealand's cultural identity, effectively reinventing New Zealand art history. Peter Biggs, Chair of Creative New Zealand, declares the arts the 'heart and soul of our national identity'.

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1.3 Regeneration/The Third Generation

And, predictably, as the cultures of this land entangle, convolute, merge or parallel, new art forms and new art-makers rise to the surface from within the Maori world.\textsuperscript{69}

There is a collective of contemporary Maori artists, Lisa Reihana, Brett Graham, Michael Parekowhai, Shane Cotton and Peter Robinson; Ngati Arty,\textsuperscript{70} members of the ‘koru club’, who currently stake a claim in the dealer galleries and on the international scene. Those artists of Generation ‘X’, who ascended during the nineteen-nineties, have attracted a great deal of attention. They have drawn it towards themselves in their search for their own sense of Maori identity. Educated at either the Elam or Canterbury Fine Art Schools, their quest is framed by Western art ideology. It is an ideology that employs sophisticated technological ‘advancements’ that, coupled with the western economic and information change, has pushed the world towards a global culture. Supported by a wide theoretical base, these individualistic, self-conscious artists have grappled with image making, demonstrating a facility which has arisen out of an academic environment. Education is still the vehicle for cultural viability for this third generation of contemporary Maori artists many of whom work within secondary or tertiary institutions contributing to knowledge of taha Maori as did their predecessors.

These artists are \textit{beyond the veil} (ki tua o te arai) operating ‘at-or-beyond the margins of the Maori world.’\textsuperscript{71} ‘Insiders’ in a nervous culture with its ‘politicised oscillation between one theory and another...the very image of system itself slips out of the grasp of quick assumptions that associate culture with order and tradition.’\textsuperscript{72} Often the only aspect that distinguishes them from their Pakeha contemporaries is a whakapapa. However, as Mane-Wheoki articulates, being located at the margins places these artists in a difficult position:

\textsuperscript{69} Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, \textit{Mana Wahine Maori.} p.139
\textsuperscript{70} George Hubbard in conversation with Kura Te Waru Rewiri. ‘Brownie Points: An Interview With George Hubbard.’ \textit{Korurangi:New Maori Art} p.39
\textsuperscript{72} M. Taussig. \textit{The Nervous System.} New York, 1992, p.34
If they feel a belated obligation to claim their Maoritanga do they risk being reproached by seasoned Maori activist front liners ("Where were you?) or vilified for their "political correctness" by right-wing Pakeha?  

Mead, who has consistently taken an essentialist approach towards a definition of Maori art, would have this ‘progressive generation’, away from the margins and beyond the pae. It seems that within his definition, the customary and traditional arts have been extended from pre-contact activities to include the kaumatua artists of the previous generations, but it does not accommodate the hybridised seed, absent from his anthropological classifications.  

Essentialist debates are no longer exclusively relevant for these artists for whom a constructivist approach is more appropriate; culture is conceptualised as plural, contested, negotiated and continuously constructed and reconstructed as part of an ongoing symbolic human process. The defining tenets of contemporary Maori art that have emerged out of the nineteen-nineties are far more inclusive, the method of selecting contemporary Maori artists for *Aoraki/Hikurangi* (1994) held at the Robert McDougall Art Annex in Christchurch typifies a ‘nineties definition:

- national recognition as an artist
- regional recognition
- recognition from your own people
- a whakapapa

Mead is concerned with protecting a ‘threatened tradition of art’ that he feels, ‘belongs to the minority group indigenous to New Zealand’. In his view ‘Maori art cannot be opened to the majority culture unless there are clear cut rules which protect its essence, its Mauri or life principle and its very soul from being assimilated into the dominant Western Art of the Pakeha.’ The irony here is that much of the art of the generation in question derives from the majority culture. The third generation are fully aware that they are the catalysts creating a counter-hegemonic discourse. They are also conscious of the fact that hegemonic discourse has been internalised by them; they work within the institutional realities of the dominant culture and

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73 Jonathan Mane Wheok:i. 'The Resurgence of Maori Art:' p.15.
75 Jonathan Mane -Wheok:i. 'Korurangiffoihoukura: Brown Art in White Spaces.' *Art New Zealand*. p.44.
enter into its semiological debates through which claims to power can be expressed. It is this self-awareness that allows them to subvert the tenets of a Western institutional framework, a practice that in itself has come to define contemporary Maori art. These hardy art-makers who have become an integral part of Pakeha art establishment rather than ‘igniting new fires of destruction’ are ‘ensuring the long-term survival of [Maori] art forms by adapting them to the conditions and circumstances of our twentieth century environment’.77

The artists represented in this survey stalk the urban domain. The art that these urban Maori produce has been described as a treatise of ‘alienation and dislocation and [expressive] of the condition of being urbanised and detribalised’.78 Eugene Hansen accepts the ‘third generation, urbanised, detribalised’ label without question,79 however, artists such as Brett Graham are less than happy to accept that particular ‘criticism’, in the face of which he states: ‘My generation at least has learnt something, that we must maintain the concepts of our ancestors for on our shoulders resides the values and many manifestations of creativity we inherit.’80

Where this generation locate themselves is connected to the knowledge of themselves and their people. These artists are not dislocated, in fact they are constantly relocating themselves in relation to postmodern paradigms. The question of what constitutes contemporary Maori art is viewed from two mutually exclusive perspectives that is in reality a debate between the essentialists and the post modern/post colonial/constructionists. It is important to note, however, that any theoretical discourse and its complex abstractions are secondary to the issue of cultural concern.

The ‘Young Guns’ are a collective, or a tribe of like-minded individuals, striving to formulate artistic careers within the New Zealand art domain. A tribe can simply be ‘an association of people with current face-to-face contact, on a more or less regular basis, that provides the range of satisfaction’s humankind needs.’81 Tribal definition needs to recognise debate and dynamism

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and the process of change, just as Maori people themselves have adapted to the rigours of colonisation and urbanisation. Urbanisation may, as Ranginui Walker suggests, have led to a sharpening of Maori identity in relation to the dominant Pakeha group. Ngahuia Te Awekotuku discusses the Maoritanga problem, which she describes as 'the urge on the part of many Maori leaders both urban and rural, to freeze the culture, thus maintaining an impenetrable and continually reinforced wall of Maori being.' This tribe of urban Maori artists has invigorated contemporary Maori art just as the rise of urban iwi has provided a challenge to traditional notions of Maori life.

The artists in this survey 'negotiate' their own sense of identity by creating images that enable the process of cultural self-interrogation to begin anew within the context of their culture. Leonie Pihama notes that: 'within postmodern analysis we are encouraged to engage with a notion of the individual as a vessel of contradiction and conflicting subjectivities. We are asked to forsake arguments of essentialism; that is, those arguments that assume there to be an essential self.' ‘Decentring' the self is an increasingly confusing notion when considering the marginalisation of contemporary Maori art over the past forty years. Maori art writers are calling for new frames of reference in which fundamental belief systems are reconstructed, and Maori practitioners of the arts are relocated from the margins to the centre of their own analysis.

The third generation artists, these 'vessels of contradiction', became two waka, separately containing male and female artists at the Asia-Pacific Triennial (1996), which conveyed New Zealand's Pacific, Maori, Asian and Pakeha artistic tribe, demonstrating that a centralising motif can accommodate heterogeneous identities and practices. Roger Keesing raised the question: 'How does one get to be a member of this group?' He further asks: 'Who is left out?' noting that identity politics have so often been associated with conservative political agendas that I become

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85 Rangihiroa Panoho, ‘Maori: At the centre, on the margins’, *Headlands: Thinking Through New Zealand Art,* Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney 1992, p.133. Panoho states that: 'Given Aotearoa's geographical isolation from Europe and the presence of such a rich local tribal culture, the question to be asked is; shouldn't the idea of centre/margins be reversed'.

somewhat uneasy about the implications of all this community spirit.'

Perhaps true equality among those of differing cultural identities will only become possible when there is no centre.

The way in which identity is discussed and debated, poses some difficulty when using postmodern, postcolonial, or poststructural paradigms. These classificatory labels bend under the weight of cultural change as meaning rapidly shifts. Pihama further points out that attempting to apply these terms to Maori art criticism is problematic because: 'Frameworks that position identity as fragmented and multiple and shifting and complex do not provide for complex cultural ways of operating and therefore cannot fully provide for Maori discussion of identity'.

Recently both art writers and the members of this generation of artists have posed a number of questions. Mane-Wheoki asks whether or not these artists are 'the most appropriate artists to carry, collectively the mana of Maori art? Or are they the artists whom New Zealand’s non-Maori art establishment wishes to recognise as Maori artists, the artists whom it wants Maori to be.' Brett Graham begs a similar question: 'Do galleries bring the young ones in because our work is comfortable, safe and non-challenging, or is it that they’re truly concerned with biculturalism?' The writers of Mataora: The Living Face of Contemporary Maori Art, have taken a more extreme view noting that: 'public gallery practice continues to privilege Maori artists who are deemed to be mainstream, thus better able to be co-opted, judged and analysed. They remain beyond the reach of many Maori artists.'

Whetumarama Kelly Kereama of Te Taumata o Te Ra Marae reminded those attending the Massey University conference on Maori Art in 1996 that: 'What is contemporary today will be traditional tomorrow.' There is little to be gained by sharply delineating boundaries between the ‘traditional’ and the ‘contemporary’. It is perhaps more useful to look at the process of change and ask, ‘What is the nature of Maori art produced today and where is it going?’

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87 Leoni Pihama. 'Moving Beyond Colonial Impositions.' p.26.
88 Jonathan Mane-Wheoki. ‘Korurangi/Toihoukura: Brown Art in White Spaces.’ Art New Zealand. p.44.
Hansen in his summation of the Massey Conference address points to the useful definition proposed by Cushla Parekowhai:

She stated that Maori art is art where we can see ourselves in the picture. Whether we see ourselves included by virtue of the historical, the visual, and the conceptual or by association is irrelevant. If it talks to us, it is of us, it’s ours.92

The current generation of art school trained Maori artists are no different from their ancestors as they approach art with an ever-evolving and innovative outlook. They are the metaphorical fronds that have struck their filaments on a proud history, advancing forward as they, in accordance with Maori cultural values, look backwards to the future. The wairua will live on as ‘The good that is old is preserved and the good that is new will be added to it.’93. They must encounter a ‘newness’ that is not part of a continuum of the past and present. Producing a dynamic mixture of urban and tribal, traditional and modern art, Robert Jahnke confidently affirms his faith in this diverse, vigorous and committed generation of artists, all of whom were represented Korurangi: New Maori Art (1995):

While some of the threads hang tenaciously in the wind, the potency of their individual statements is very much an expression of their security as Maori, as Maori and Pakeha artists, as artists.94

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Section 2: Mana Wahine Maori

The first voice to be heard calling through the stillness on the marae is the clear sound of a woman performing a karanga, before any male voice can be heard from the pae, this protocol must be observed. The women artists set the scene for this dialogue, ‘one-to-the-other’, concerning the third generation of contemporary Maori artists.

2.1 Reveal the Tendrils of the Gourd so that You May Know Your Ancestors.

Working with my hands I become connected to all women, my mother, my mother’s mother, her mother’s mother and my father’s mother and so on. It spans time and geographical dis/placements.95

Lisa Reihana of Nga Puhi, Ngati Hine, Ngai Tu, English, Welsh and Jewish descent draws the inspiration for her art making from a whakapapa of weavers and Maori and Pakeha art makers who have gone before her. She utilises a range of mediums to explore issues relevant to Maori today and has been variously described as a multimedia artist, experimental film maker, animator, a video artist, an installation artist a textile artist and a weaver of tales. Reihana graduated with a BFA in both Sculpture and Film in 1987 from the Elam School of Fine Arts. She has woven an identity for herself that is often disarming and elusive as she draws together the threads of a heritage based on established Maori values and beliefs in relation to Maori art practice, contemporary Maori art practice, European institutional knowledge and Maori and Pakeha Feminist concerns all housed within a sophisticated urban ‘package’.

Maori art according to Mead is ‘an art of the ancestors’, that is ‘people oriented in one sense and ancestor oriented in another.’ Reihana is a contemporary Maori artist who observes the traditions of her ancestors, focusing her attention upon ‘commemoration, remembrance, accomplishment, continuity with the past, and a celebration of where [she] has been and what [she] has achieved.’96 Mead was referring to artists who still have a strong connection with their marae based culture and a highly developed community based consciousness, specifically the makers of ‘traditional’ taonga (national treasures), and the kaumatua (respected elder) artists who have sprung from a rural base. Inclusive within this are the mana wahine, the weavers of a past who

have come from Te Moananui-a-Kiwa (the Pacific). Lisa Reihana celebrates the whakapapa of her ancestry and extends the traditions of mana wahine, the prestigious female artists of the Aotearoa art establishment who ‘collectively’ have a ‘herstory’ that deals specifically with identity as a Maori woman.

A separate contemporary Maori art movement emerges through Maori women who have their own lineage based on the weft of ancient arts practice and the weave of political activism that subsequently led to Maori Feminism. Postcolonial critic and writer Mohanran Radhika ‘connects’ Maori feminists of Aotearoa to an acceptance of Maori Nationalism as a contextually specific origin and agenda for the movement; she also writes that: ‘The continuing tradition of burying the placenta represents Maori Nationalism as timeless and unchanging, whereas the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi suggests the opposite - their adaptability to new ways of constructing identity.’97 On the one hand land based concerns and a continuity with tradition are integral to Maori feminism; ‘the ‘black body’ identifies with the land and has a natural relationship to nature and the landscape as opposed to that of the ‘white body’ whose relationship is to knowledge.98 Maori feminism has several points of departure from Pakeha feminism; the traditional crafts of Maori women derived from the land, and in the pre-contact era, their arts existed alongside men’s arts and crafts as a necessary part of a whole: fibre on weapons is an integral part of the weapon, fur and feathers are designed to distract the opponent. Maori women’s pre-contact roles in relation to men were conceived of in different terms, and after colonisation they are exposed to the double bite of European contact and become twice dislocated as the ‘other, other.’ The obverse interpretation is an ‘essentially, essentialist’ theoretical underpinning Maori women’s arts fall within the realm of an ‘essentialist’ understanding because of the obvious connection to a traditional Maori ancestral past as well as being open to the argument that there are inherent ‘essential’ qualities specific to women’s expression that has informed much of feminist discourse.

In juxtaposition to an established continuity is the ‘tradition’ of adaptability which is intimately linked to the vital political roles individual women have played in reclaiming Maori Sovereignty which has been linked to the development of Maori feminism:99 the Maori Land March of 1975

98 Radhika, p. xv.
led by Dame Whina Cooper (Te Whaea o te Motu - The Mother of the Nation); the leadership of women during the Bastion Point Occupation in 1978; and the protests against the South African Springbok Rugby Tour in 1981. Looking beyond the context of influence ‘wahine toa’ (women of strength) politically active in the pursuit of Maori nationalism, have, the relevance of the leadership and the purpose underlying the Maori Women’s Welfare league is pertinent in light of Reihana’s identification of herself as an urbanised Maori woman. The League was organised in 1951 and it developed out of a need to support Maori within an urban sphere as a result of urban migration. One of the effects of migration was the erasure of tribal difference and the promotion of a unified sense of Maori nation, which in itself led to the possibility of a pan-Maori identity.

In the case of Reihana and her contemporaries the pan-Maori identity is urban; they have no sense of ‘dislocation’ from their rural roots, as they are well ‘located’ and supported by a whanau of artists in an urban context.

In an interview with Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, Reihana comments on the role of Maori women artmakers with specific reference to Kura Te Waru Rewiri, Emare Karaka and Robyn Kahukiwa. She says: ‘Women make the most exciting art, because unlike the men, they are not caught up in the power games and entangled with politics/resourcing/mana seeking/ and ‘authority stuff’.

Reihana describes their position as women artists as having ‘slipped through the cracks’.

Aware of tribal lore and the tapu placed on women who wish to carve, the second generation of contemporary Maori women artists have found other forms of expression, of protest in the case of Karaka, while Kahukiwa and Te Waru Rewiri carve in paint. They are willing to extend the boundaries for Maori women artmakers who addresses the issue of being both Maori and women, moving on with intensity and commitment:

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100 A significant phase in the work of Emare Karaka relates to the racial issues that ‘exploded’ in the face of our nation during the Springbok tour.
101 This extends an idea presented by Radhika, p. 228
102 Ngahuia Te Awekotuku. ‘He Take Ano: Another Take, Conversations with Lisa Reihana’. Art New Zealand, 68, p.85. I have referenced this particular interview frequently in order to allow Reihana’s voice to be included in the text. An interview between myself and the artist had been arranged, however, heavy work commitments on Lisa’s behalf prevented it from going ahead.
My Maoriness and my womanhood are my themes – my inspiration.

Robyn Kahukiwa

Out of the creative womb, I have emerged a Maori woman, proud to stand, proud to speak.

Emare Karaka

My paintings show my own rebirth in a way, I lost a lot of what I should have known about being Maori.

Kura Te Waru Rewiri

The role of parent in Reihana’s whanau of artists is taken up by women artists of the second generation of Maori women artists who express a Maori kaupapa through their work. Robyn Kahukiwa, an intensely committed artist, has achieved recognition within her own culture as an artist of considerable mana. Her search for identity as a Maori woman has grown out of representing the needs of the general Maori community and more recently, the needs of Kahukiwa’s own iwi. In the making of her work she follows rituals and takes cognisance of the tapus specific to her iwi. Lisa Reihana’s exploration of self is far more ‘conscious’ and wrought with irony; however, her contribution to the Maori community is no less legitimate.

In an exhibition of nine concurrent site-specific works around Christchurch, Tales Untold: Unearthing Christchurch Histories (1994), Reihana presented a community voice of history by editing together a series of video vignettes depicting pre-steel crafts and practices of Maori such as firemaking and basket weaving. The footage was taken at a hui held in Kennedy’s Bay on the Coromandel Peninsular, which is outside Reihana’s own tribal area. This meant that her process of working must necessarily be one of negotiation and liaison. An acknowledgment of all artists who contributed to the project and of the tribal areas was the result. The inclusive style of negotiation challenged the absolute authority of the western history maker and the consultative approach is indicative of the Maori principle of whaungatanga. This principle is one of inclusiveness that is a part of the Nga Puna Waihanga philosophy. Jahnke describes it as the practice of encouraging emerging artists to stand alongside their predecessors, their peers and

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It is also a philosophy that defines art from a cultural perspective therefore the western distinctions between ‘craft’ and ‘fine art’ become superfluous. What is important is that the people have come together on the marae as a celebration of Maoritanga, it is the ceremony surrounding the activity that is vital. Vivienne Stone, convenor of the South Island project writes: ‘It involves a spirit of cultural ownership and inclusion whereby Reihana’s work does not belong to one person, it is the work of many’.

Reihana, who broadcast the video footage on the local Christchurch television network, ‘Cry’ chose to share this cultural information as a gift to the people of Canterbury who had hosted Reihana as the Trustbank Canterbury Artist-in-Residence in 1993. Reihana’s practice of defining art from a cultural perspective has a precedent in a contemporary context, for example Whakamamae (1988), featuring the work of Shona Rapira Davis and Robyn Kahukiwa. The artists transformed the Wellington City Gallery into a marae context. The human-scale clay women ‘survivors’, Nga Morehu, stand at the entrance and welcome the visitors to the gallery as a mirror of the actual formal protocols observed at the opening of the show. The realignment of the usual transaction between the gallery and the artwork reflects the traditional relationship of artists’ work and its relevance to iwi in a Maori context.

Reihana’s inclusive working method in the South Island Project highlights the issue of who has the right to the cultural and intellectual ownership of art works pertaining to Maori. Cliff Whiting states: ‘Maori art belongs to and can be used by all Maori people, not just those who are called artists.’ Sandy Adsett echoes a similar sentiment:

An artist has an obligation to the art of his or her people. It’s the people’s art. It doesn’t belong to you. It must identify Maori to Maori if it is going to remain relevant to statements about our tribal beliefs, values and mana in today’s and tomorrow’s world.

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106 Ngahuia Te Awekotuku. p.85. ‘This later consideration was because Reihana was conscious of the sense of ‘reciprocity, the flow of ideas and resources that came my way’ and she wished ‘to give something back after being there a year.”
In a modern art gallery context the possession and therefore the ownership of the work usually resides with the establishment or with persons closely associated with it. The ownership of the skills demonstrated in Reihana’s video firmly rests with the community who utilise them. Gerard O’Regan has declared that the:

...reflected aspirations of iwi...are crucial in establishing the ownership of the art, for community ownership occurred not only in the sense of physical access but also understanding and empathy with the intellectual content and community history to be found in the work. ¹⁰⁹

He further states that the biggest problem facing museums and art galleries today is the attribution of the ownership of the work. Perhaps it is time to question what is generally considered to be an undisputed case of private ownership.

Lisa Reihana, a Ponsonby dwelling, café frequenting, immaculately turned out urbanite, is close to the aho tahu (sacred thread) of her whakapapa. Rangihiroa Panoho curated an exhibition entitled Whatu Aho Rua (1991) for the Sarjeant Art Gallery,¹¹⁰ his kaupapa was to demonstrate that a continuum exists between the Maori past and present and that traditional concepts, forms and visual symbols play a major role in the development of work by contemporary artists. Highly respected kaumatua fibre artist Dame Ragimarie Hetet¹¹¹ was represented in the show; her weaving is a tangible vehicle for the weaving together of the traditional practices of an ancestral past and a diverse contemporary present.

Bill Milbank, the director of the Gallery, described Whatu Aho Rua as waging ‘war’ on the traditionalist argument noting that, ‘Panoho was a fresh breath representing continuity.’¹¹² Panoho has made his mark on Maori art criticism by consistently maintaining that survival and pragmatism are present in Maori culture and ‘variety and an innovative approach are often

¹¹¹ Rangimarie Hetet was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Waikato in recognition of her contribution to the arts. In 1974 she was awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand Fellowship and in 1992 was honoured by the government as Dame Rangimarie Hetet.
¹¹² Interview with Bill Milbank the Director of the Sarjeant Art Gallery, Wanganui, August 27, 1997.
intrinsic to the survival of Maori art’. 113 Reihana’s contribution to the Korurangi: New Maori Art (1996) exhibition is indicative of the continuity Panoho refers to.

Korurangi denotes two koru forms ‘untouching’ on a facial moko. Instead the metaphorical koru holding Maori and Pakeha culture in suspension, has, in the work of Lisa Reihana, ‘sprung up’ in the same place; reflecting a predominantly Maori heritage. The appropriate Maori equivalent for this metaphor is the whakatauki: As one frond falls another frond rises.114 Both ferns and feathers are appropriate in Reihana’s heritage and the Pakeha equivalent is the fabulous female bird which according to ancient legend, builds herself a funeral pile of wood and aromatic gum, sets it alight and arises again from the ashes. Phoenix and frond threads of origin are fashioned together in Reihana’s cloak of cotton, feathers, satin and braid, Te Wao a Tane (1995). It has the appearance of a patchwork quilt, the fabric is recycled and transformed, ‘providing a new covering, it is warmth and regeneration’. Reihana further describes the cloak as, ‘a bridge for that unending want, a stairway fashioned from within its depths, it leads to a doorway, and from the doorway is a place to fly and a place to rest’.115 It is a bridge between the customary practice of korowai making and modern artifice. Robert Jahnke says of her work:

In the end, creative expression is a condition of heritage, a social production, an indictment of one’s negotiation of history. It is a perception coloured by the nuances of fabric, exotic or indigenous, and the multifarious strands of inheritance that bind cladding to core.116

The inheritance that binds Reihana’s work to the defining core of Maori art is an inability, on the part of the viewer, to attribute the superfluous labels of ‘fine art’ or ‘craft’ to this ‘patch’ work. The art must be defined from a cultural perspective that has traditionally integrated aesthetic form and practical function, it is both art and craft. Reihana transgresses the boundaries of art making, displaying her craft in a fine art space. Her work for Korurangi and the South Island Project dices with the same superfluities that are true of a Pakeha feminist history also, the domestic ‘crafts’ of women having been recontextualised to the status of fine art within a gallery framework.

114 Reed, p.24.
115 Korurangi. p. 22.
116 Korurangi. p. 44.
Reihana’s work looks both ways, towards the Maori and Pakeha worlds, and in that sense it can either be read as hybrid and disjunctive standing over a ‘break’ between past and present, tradition and modernity, or as walking in the footsteps of her ancestors. How the work is read all depends on the vantage point from which you look, and on the critical perspective you bring to the work; are you a Pakeha, feminist or Maori critic? Reihana is aware of the tensions that ‘play’ about the interpretation of her work. She loves mimicry and deliberately provokes the viewer and enjoys her chameleon-like identity whilst simultaneously subverting the female stereotype.

*Clouds adorn the sky and feathers show off the beauty of the birds.*¹¹⁷ Reihana ‘shows off’ the plumage of her culture in the 1996 Asia-Pacific Triennial, dancing delicate and lyrical feather strings across a pool weaving together traditional and contemporary artpractice. Erenora Hetet speaking of her role as a weaver says: ‘It is important to me as a weaver that I respect the Mauri (life force) of what I am working with. Once I have taken it from where it belongs I must give another dimension to its life force so it will be a thing of beauty.’¹¹⁸ Reihana’s ‘weaving’ work is an extension of that made for *Korurangi*, a thing of beauty that can be placed in the realm of an art ‘tradition’, which in Maori terms is ‘the step just taken’, of Maori women working with ‘established’ art making methods.

Reihana distends the ‘tradition’ utilising ‘the technological advancements of the Pakeha’, by transforming tukutuku (latticed wall panels) and taniko (a decorative weaving technique) into a fifteen-minute video designed for thirty-six monitors arranged in a grid format in a work titled *Tauira* (1991). The overall concept of the work is a journey through a whare nui (carved house) - It is a mirror of her artistic journey to the past to enrich the present, and it is a spiritual journey that describes a Maori experience, accompanied by an interwoven sound sequence of karanga, bird song, whaikorero and a single elongated note from a bone flute calling through the darkness.

Reihana’s work shares a close relationship with the practice of contemporaneous women artists, Jacqueline Fraser (Kai Tahu and Kati Mamoe) and Maureen Lander (Nga Puhi, Te Hikutu). Fraser, who graduated from Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland with a BFA in sculpture in 1977 and Lander who graduated in 1989 are considered to be second generation

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¹¹⁷ Reed. p.35.
artists although they often exhibit contemporaneously with the Young Guns. Frances Pound, in his efforts to come up with a ‘precise’ definition of contemporary Maori art, projected the concept of ‘Maoriness’ onto Fraser’s beautifully lyrical hybrid fibres. It would perhaps be as beneficial to inquire after the length of a piece of string, or in Fraser’s case of a length of electrical cable.

The degree of ‘Maoriness’ is irrelevant when investigating the work of either Lander or Fraser as both women significantly contribute to the kaupapa of women’s artistic achievements in the Pakeha sense of reframing domestic crafts as art and in a traditional Maori context. At the time Pound was discussing Fraser’s work, Lander was completing a Dome Installation, *Headwaters* (1991) (figure 7.) for the Sarjeant Art Gallery; a cascade of gossamer-thin fibres of muka and nylon lit by a Targetti Structura lighting system. The materials themselves provide a number of associative functions and the content can be read either literally or from a Maori mythological point of view. The Sarjeant Art Gallery is also the home of a work by Fraser, *The deification of Mihi Waka* (1995) (figure 8.), a ‘fibre’ work constructed out of plastic coated electrical wire that also had been installed within the Sarjeant’s Dome Gallery. The title of the work is a transliteration that refers to the artist’s ‘little mountain’; the mihi is similarly a means of self-identification and formal introduction; it is also a fictional character, Mrs Walker, a nineteenth-century European woman. The fibre arts of Lander and Fraser recall a past renewed through installation, ingenuity and experimentation in the present that draw together a history that Reihana and subsequent generations of women artists may add to.

119 Both women participated in *Korurangi: New Maori Art*, and Fraser was one of the artists included in *Nervous Systems*, with Michael Parekowhai, and *Cultural Safetey and Headlands: Thinking Through New Zealand Art*, with Peter Robinson. Fraser is a second generation artist by virtue of graduating in the 1970’s, however the lines become increasingly blurred with Maureen Lander (b.1942) who is older than the third generation, but who graduated two years after Reihana.

3.2 Patupaiarehe: The Construction of An Exotic Self.

She came in smiling. Gamin hair, huge eyes, her patupaiarehe\textsuperscript{121} face alight, casting out the greyness of that midwinter day. She was dressed for it.\textsuperscript{122}

Lisa Reihana, described here as a patupaiarehe, or pixie person, cloaks herself in a visible shroud of ‘exotic’ velour. Her exoticism is an outward projection of an identity, which is able to be invented and reinvented in the same way one may adorn a new cloak. It represents an assertion of her difference. Clothed in a cultural language that inscribes the body, Reihana’s exotic self appears reinvented in a number of stereotypical guises. A ‘stereotype’ is outwardly constructed, singular and fixed, however, by representing herself in a variety of stereotypical ‘costumes’ Reihana subverts this idea, promoting the possibility of fluid and negotiable identities. Reihana has stated: ‘Being a Maori artist is like a balancing act - so much depends on how you fit in - whether or not you conform...you remain conscious of being part of someone else’s agenda, while struggling to keep your own.’\textsuperscript{123} She evades the problems inherent in ‘fitting in’ by perceiving identity as a constantly renegotiable slate. As a woman artist it is also necessary to ‘sell yourself’ often before you sell your work. Reihana is evidently aware of this constantly ‘repainting’ and ‘reframing’ herself, appearing on television as a personal interest story for her home and her collections rather than as an artist working in her studio. Fraser also demonstrates an appreciation of the need for artifice in the presentation of self. Auckland based fourth generation contemporary Maori artist Kirsty Gregg, who appeared beautifully coiffured and seductively reclining next to a mirror emblazoned with the words ‘Looking Good’ in a photograph for \textit{The Press} (figure 9), comments on the relationship between how seriously the work is taken and how the artist is ‘turned out’:

I think there is quite a strong link because at openings the artist is often always extremely fashionably presented, it’s like a business, or going to a job interview and making sure you are dressed right. The dealer is always getting you to impress ‘clients’ as a businessperson and if you don’t do so then you are basically saying “don’t give me money, don’t buy my work because I may not be professional enough to be around here much longer”.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{121} ‘Patupaiarehe pixie people, my elders say, lived where it was high and cold, and impenetrable; occasionally, they came to tease the mere mortals with their tricks and cleverness; they sometimes left children behind.’ Te Awekotuku, N. P.85.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{124} Interview with Kirsty Gregg in Christchurch on March 2, 1998.
Raised in a market driven economy, the third and fourth generations of contemporary Maori artists are well aware of ‘marketability’. Reihana and Gregg have forged careers presenting themselves as ‘exotic’ fashionable artists in a manner reminiscent of Mexican born Frida Khalo. The men within the third generation are also aware that this season’s ‘brown is the new white.’ More magazine ran an article profiling these artists in a variety of sultry poses, while Robinson referred to the stylish behavior of some of his contemporaries as ‘adopting an identity off the rack and buying into a group identity.’ Gregg concurs that ‘Shane Cotton is handsome and its always made a big deal of, the same can be said for Brett Graham. They’re billed as stunning looking men. If you were thinking of them from a marketing point of view you could think of them as pop stars or super models, “We can do something with him, he’s got everything”.’

Reihana’s particular peacock plumage parodies the ‘exotic attitude’ toward feather adorned ‘native’ Maori women posed in glossy tourist brochures. Nicholas Thomas notes that this attitude ‘is not generally marked by an interest in understanding how other people see themselves, nor is it concerned with the range and complexity of ordinary life in a place.’ He further explains that it ‘fixes upon what is picturesque and esoteric...’ The attitude of Reihana is, in part, born of the traditional Maori practice of cloaking oneself in beauty, it was an assertion of one’s culture and identity and was not intended to satisfy the colonial voyeur’s fetishistic interest in the primitive. Traditionally whole bird carcases, particularly of huia, were worn suspended from the ears. Native Portrait (1997) (figure 6) commissioned for the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa explores the issue of representation and power; the power to represent oneself visually and the power of the colonising gaze that is a mark of ownership. The knife cuts both ways. The interest and subsequent representation of Maori in the 1770s during the first point of ‘white’ contact by artists and ethnologists, reporting back to an excited European Enlightenment and intelligentsia, was reclaimed by Maori entertainers for economic gain in a tourist market during later years, a form of opportunistic reverse appropriation.

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126 Kirsty Gregg.
Contemporary Maori artist Kirsty Gregg constructs her identity by appropriating and extending fashion culture for ‘effect’, although to the sometimes-hypercritical eye, her ‘Maoriness’ is less obvious as she ‘pales’ in comparison to her contemporaries. Gregg’s fetishistic, domesticised artistic ‘comments’ relate more appropriately to a feminist aesthetic and artistic practice; specifically it shares a close interrelationship with the work of Reihana. *Fluffy Fings* (1999) (Figure 21), is an installation of feathers, fur, lint, lead and crystal complete with ‘meniors’ - popular cultural comments, X-Generational pillow talk, that mirrors Gregg’s acculturated voice, that has, since 1996, captured a perspective on love, lust and booze. These women artists reference one another as a type of cross-generational fertilization that contributes to the overall richness, content and complexity of a contemporary Maori women’s art movement.

Reihana’s own sense of style has one foot in the past and one in the present, as it is also an outward expression characteristic of contemporary urban popular culture. Iain Chambers describes this particular aspect of society as having emerged from ‘subordinate cultures, from the inventive edges of the consensus, from the previously ignored and suppressed. It gestures through a widening democratisation of styles, sounds and images, to an important remaking, to new possibilities, new perspectives, new projects’. Urban ‘rap’ artist MC Allan ‘raps-up’ a definition of the current urban culture:

Contemporary urban culture, it ain’t no thing
it's more temporary like a vulture, just without the wings
but see the kiddies they’re all sucked in to that focus on
appearance a belief in what’s projected, that cosmetic interference
with their U.S.A. hoodies and skate propaganda, they’re all
slaves to the fashion, regardless of my slander.

*Wog Features* (1988) (figure 13), an eight-minute experimental film featuring live action, animation; pixilations and rap music. “Hey wog, heyhey wog, you, You’re a wog, I’m talking to you” reveals what is beneath the skin, beyond the exotic, whilst still flashing bejewelled fingers hiding the statement ‘ICON’, which emerges from ‘CON’ ‘$ CON’. Issues of racism, gender and

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130 In an interview with Kirsty Gregg she discussed the difficulty in identifying as a Maori artist when you don’t look particularly Maori, a factor which in itself discourages her from seeking funding opportunities under the label ‘Maori artist.’

131 The artist calls her work ‘women’s work’ from interview with Gregg.


133 MC Allan is an artist and musician who composed *Contemporary Rap* specifically for this thesis.
culture are addressed in a synthesis of mythological reference and popular cultural relevance. *Wog* is a display of stereotypical prejudice and it is necessary to deconstruct the playschool imagery and assess the reality of the societal tendency to stereotype race and gender because the film is inclusive rather than exclusive and it takes on a global sensibility. Reihana describes her intentions behind the film:

My strategy is one of quiet subversion. I use animation because of its universal appeal to children as well as adults. The graphic quirky quality on my films belies their serious undertone. The creation of positive female images is paramount in my work, as is the use of street music, so that the urbanized can identify themselves within our evolving culture.  

As a Maori woman filmmaker, Reihana utilises the ability one has to frame and construct notions of identity: 'for me as a Maori, film has no history, so there are no constraints. It's hard but exciting, and it's different.' By placing herself behind the camera she is able to reverse the 'expected' presentation of alternative cultures. ‘Alternative’ is a term frequently used to describe persons of ‘other’ cultures, the inference being that they are somehow outside the dominant hegemonic group. George Hubbard and John Reynolds, curators of *Cross Pollination*, for Artspace in Auckland (1991) cleverly point out that ‘upon close inspection, “alternative” can be granted new meaning as alter/native. The introduction of the European to Aotearoa can be seen as the first alter/native act of an/other culture.’ The products that result from cross-cultural fertilization are, like Reihana’s dancing skeletal black and white intertwined bones, of a hybrid variety. ‘The hybrid has no proper name or formal identity. It is a multiplication, not an addition - a process of outcrossing by which diversity is increased, difference maximized and the past recycled in differential recombinations.’ While the hybrid may have no ‘formal identity’, it is precisely

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135 Ngahuia Te Awekotuku p.85.
137 Ibid.
this inability to categorize identity, to cross cultures and reassess what lies behind the facade that informs Reihana’s work.

Take (1993), an interactive multimedia installation, extended the whare nui experience of Tauira (1991) in this case evoking the architectural facade of the marae with the projection of slides onto the ‘barge-boards’ of the Robert McDougall Art Annex. The title of the show refers to the verb itself, the projected images of land use, the politics of ownership and tapu relating to the land are elusive highly coloured images unable to be colonised. Spoken in the Maori vernacular the word Take presents a challenge, it also functions as a Pakeha pun. Reihana weaves through the past colonial action of mapping Maori land, ‘mapping’ out an existence. Language is used to define culture, however, the two dissimilar Maori and Pakeha translations lead to a blurring of classification and therefore that which cannot be clearly defined is unable to be owned. Art critic Justin Paton’s ‘take’ on the show demonstrates the difficulty some viewers have in classifying their viewing experience:

“Take”, then is an interesting slant on some volatile issues. But it gives little back to the viewer who gives it time. From its random sequences, its portentous and culturally charged imagery, its somewhat tricksy and distracting electronic devices, one takes little other than generalizations. 138

It is precisely this critic’s inability to clearly define the work and the importance of assessing the ‘general’ impetus behind Take that is the point.

3.3 Pacifika

Contemporary Maori artists are re-centering their world and placing themselves within a wider Pacific and indigenous community of artists. Rather than feeling the need to conform and be a part of a Pakeha New Zealand agenda they are accepting the reality that Aotearoa is a junction point on which Western and Polynesian worlds converge; Maori are a Pacific people and as such are a part of a larger tribe:

From this centre several Maori artists are retracing the paths of their ancestors across Te Moananui-a-Kiwa- the Great Sea of Kiwa (The Pacific Ocean) and rediscovering their commonalities with Pacific peoples and cultures, through dialogue with artists indigenous to the region or by engaging with their art. 139

Aucklanders look towards the Pacific basin for identification and reference, the tropical trope, while artists from the South who are geographically distanced from a Pacific position, locate themselves by looking towards the North. Like Reihana, who identifies as a ‘Pacific Sister’, an indigene of New Zealand as an island in the South Pacific, Lonnie Hutchinson (Ngai Tahu – Ngati Waea, Ngati Muruka. Samoan – Luafutu/Tuagaloa), a fourth generation contemporary Maori woman artist, oscillates between a Maori and a Pacific identity framing it for herself within an ‘inclusive’ definition of Polynesia:

In terms of my heritage I am Polynesian because I have Maori blood and Samoan blood and also Scottish, Irish and Portuguese ancestry. Because I was born in Aotearoa and I’ve grown up in the Pacific, my identity is stronger with my Polynesian side. When I talk about Polynesia I am really talking about Maori as well because Maori have come through the Pacific; our ancestors are the same. 140

Both women artists make continuing contributions to the growth of contemporary Pacific arts; globally, pan-Pacific identification is the genus while a specific indigenous identity is the species and is one of a multiple of identities that may be worn in conjunction with other identity apparel.

140 Interview with Lonnie Hutchinson November 15 1998.
Under the cloak of Pacific sisterhood Reihana presented a multimedia work *Ena and Tuna* (1996), at the South Pacific Arts Festival held in Apia, Samoa, took part in the second Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary art at the Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane (1996) and constructed *Hypergirls* in that same year drawing on her experiences of travelling in Samoa and Brisbane. Two years later in 1998 she participated in the Pacific Wave Festival as part of a citywide contemporary art project in Sydney. Hutchinson also has a rising profile as a ‘Pacific’ artist, which enabled her to gain funding in order to attend the opening of the *Biennale De Noumea: D’Art Contemporain* (2000) at the Tjibaou Centre. Commenting on her work she says, ‘I’m not as literal as other Pacific Islands artists...If I’m a Pacific artist they assume I’m weaving frangipani.’

*Can you see me* (1997) is a far cry from frangipani even though the performance piece was inspired by Polynesian protocols. The bound figure, Hutchinson, lay motionless in Queen Street while ghosted images of spectators stepping over the body were superimposed on the image – a mark of extreme disrespect within a culture that has a hierarchy of acknowledgment; you never walk past anyone who is seated physically lower than yourself with your head held high, walking over them is tantamount to an abuse of power not unlike the rendering invisible of Pacific cultures.

The ‘va’ or the ‘space between’ which is rich with creative possibility, could easily become ‘no space to be in’ for an artist who identifies as Polynesian, Maori, Female and lesbian. Five sites of ‘dislocation’ is certainly some kind of ‘othered’, however, Hutchinson draws strength from her identity constructed on the ‘fringes’, although ironically, along with Reihana she shares an increasingly well-established ‘insider’ position in relation to the arts establishment. Despite the multiple possibilities inherent in reconstructing identity from a range of positions, Hutchinson is also aware of her ‘essential’ self that goes beyond cultural identification:

> I’m more interested in hiding all identification, in paring down to the purest I can go with regard to male and female, getting rid of all those layers and getting back to the roots. It doesn’t matter what race you are, there are things that pertain specifically to whether you are a man or a woman.\(^{142}\)

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\(^{141}\) Tara Ross, ‘Pacific Remedy: In the Frame Lonnie Hutchinson.’ *The Press* Wednesday August 30 2000, p.34.

\(^{142}\) Interview with Lonnie Hutchinson, November 1998
Auckland has New Zealand’s largest population of Pacific peoples and out of this multicultural well of urban Polynesian, has sprung ‘Pacifika’, a locally distinct mixture of fashion, lifestyle and a heterogeneous state of mind. The ‘Pacifika’ phenomenon was described in a ‘popular’ periodical as ‘a little bit Maori, a little bit European. Add a spice of Asia. A vibrant splash of Polynesia. An injection of Californian smarts. It’s not born of one culture, it’s a collection of many. Therefore it threatens no one.’ For the urban dweller the traditional elements of both Pacific Island and Maori culture are inconsistent and inappropriate modes of expression in the face of contemporary life and its complexities, individualism and flux. ‘Pacifika’ is a conscious reinvention of identity, which takes into account the notion of hybrid identities, juxtaposed against the backdrop of hegemonic realities.

The Pacific Sisters are considered as the epicentre of ‘Pacifika’. They are a collective conglomeration of artists and street people who follow a multidisciplinary approach and who are involved in a number of flamboyant performance projects. Some of the key members of this group are Susan Tamaki, Rosanna Raymond (ex model), Ani O’Neill (artist), Lisa Reihana (artist), Fiona Wall (group manager). Often caught in the disparity between cultures these people have sown the seeds of a new contemporary culture on the fertile ground of their own artistic creation. Fiona Wall declares; ‘It would be naïve to think that culture should stay the same....for us, having the whole mix of cultures contributing to our New Zealand base means we can create some wicked magic’.

The ‘wicked magic’ often takes the form of ‘legendary’ performances, take for example Mika’s Tribal Hollywood New Zealand (2001), billed as a ‘one-man extravaganza’ Pacific Sister Mika ‘explodes onto the stage in a dazzle of powder-blue glitter like some fabulous exotic monster.’ The performances given by the Sisters are fashion shows of self designed pageantry, ritualistically inscribed and coloured with heavy doses of fetishism and exoticism. ‘Just as they play with notions of sexual identity, and gender, the sisters also play with notions of cultural identity sometimes verging on a kind of cultural drag.’ With its ‘playful, subversive mis-

145 ‘Wicked Magic’ was the title for the Seventh Pacific Festival of the Arts.
146 Christchurch Festival of the Arts catalogue ‘01.
147 Internationally acclaimed ‘drag’ artist and entertainer Mika is a contributing member of the eclectic tribal collective, the Pacific Sisters.
matches, their work could be described as carnivalesque. The question could be asked, do the Pacific Sisters endorse a contemporary form of ‘primitivism’? The West has always had a fascination with the ‘primitive’ which is as much about its own crisis of identity and the need to demarcate subject and object while simultaneously entertaining ‘other’ modes of being that satisfies an intrinsic cultural lack. Are the Sisters subverting this relationship with the power base or have they in fact internalised and amplified this construct of difference as a part of their identity and cultural perception? The Pacific Sisters are asserting their right to define themselves, they occupy a central position within the Auckland urban sphere born of confidence and artistic flair:

I say that indigenous people can have the best of both worlds provided that we are secure in our identities and traditions, our histories and hold the past in balance with the ever shifting dynamics of the present. We are central to ourselves.

Reihana has woven a place for herself in the history of Mana Wahine Maori; always in character, Reihana’s body is the canvas as she happily dances about the fringes of the mainstream maintaining an aesthetic ambivalence; is she Maori, Polynesian, Asian or an/other combination of difference? Mitigating identities with an easy facility she draws the threads of the traditional and the contemporaneous together; particular pixilations from a ‘pixie’ frame, revealing the tendrils of the gourd for the benefit of the next generation: ‘I create my own interpretations of traditional concepts and art forms, in a way that I feel comfortable with whilst still pushing the boundaries.’

Extending the kaupapa of the contemporary arts within experimental mediums, addressing and re-imaging ‘traditional’ concerns, Reihana provides a vital link for those artists who are a part of the ‘current’ wave of Maori artists, the ‘techno’ slick ‘Hotshots’ who resonate with ‘energy’. During five decades of urbanisation in which the contemporary Maori arts have negotiated the disparity between cultures, ‘the space between’ remains a challenging space to be in, in view of urban complexity, the pace of change, individualism, and an increasingly mass-media driven

global culture. Reihana performs the role of mentor amongst this group of late intellectuals, whose connection to 'essential' Maori cultural values and practices is becoming increasingly distant, moving with assurance between identifying as: an artist, a contemporary South Pacific artist, a Maori artist, and a woman artist; all labels which act as signifiers for present urban Maori artists constructing an identity for themselves.

Third generation contemporary Maori artist Eugene Hansen empathises with the position Maori women artists are in, located as the 'other, other' according to the current social ladder:

They have the worst deal because art is an elitist, exclusive and misogynistic institution. The lack of Maori women represented in a gallery context is indicative of this. The general belief in the 'boys club' is self perpetuating. Although you can’t look past someone like Jacqueline Fraser who spans two generations. There aren’t as many women at the top and once they are there they aren’t getting the breaks in the art institutions, there is less of a support network.\textsuperscript{151}

The karanga for contemporary Maori women artists has been extended, the voices korero a welcome to the male artists who contribute a whaikorero to the dialogue that follows. Mana Wahine hold a significant place within the contemporary Maori arts movement, forming a herstory inclusive and separate to, the history. ‘Kia Kaha Girly.’\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{151} Interview with Eugene Hansen in Auckland, 3 October, 1997. Further discussion on Hansen’s position within this survey occurs in section four, ‘Constructing Canterbury.’

\textsuperscript{152} Artist Kirsty Gregg recently exhibited a miniature rugby league ball emblazoned with this signed statement by Fiona Pardington in Prospect 2001: New Art New Zealand. City Gallery, Wellington, 2001.
Section 3: ‘Essentially’ Auckland

Identity is always constructed and negotiated within a given time and place, identities are partly shaped by our histories (the stories we project to the outside world), as they arrive and are received into a particular historical moment.\(^{153}\)

Ben Okri writes that ‘stories are either dangerous or liberating because they are a kind of destiny.’\(^{154}\)

The ‘destiny’ proposed here is the exploration of two cultures. This story weaves a map of shared identities in an “essential” sense, and it charts the individual journey of each of the artists reflecting distinctive, idiosyncratic concerns. The work of Brett Graham and Michael Parekowhai is mediated through a whakapapa, and expressed through a biculturally historical and cultural framework.

The histories of Graham and Parekowhai converge at the ‘gateway to the Pacific’. Auckland is the place of shared experience out of which their individual stories are told, both artists preferring to narrate their truths informally, relying on an oral tradition, and both artists respectfully requesting that these impressions they conveyed should be heard rather than ‘recorded’. Auckland is the ‘essential’ locale in which Graham and Parekowhai strategically place themselves. The north holds particular importance for Maori because the northern most tip of New Zealand is the last point of departure for the soul, moving between worlds, on its journey back to the sacred land, the place of origin, Hawaiki. Graham’s Waka Tumanako (1993) (figure 23) is the symbolic vessel that transports the soul back to Hawaiki, it journeys through the metaphorical liminal space, containing the spirits of the past and the promise of new life in the future; conveying an ancestral past to the contemporary present. It may also be perceived to be a waka huia, containing the treasures of one generation moving through to the next.

Auckland is the geographical marker (takiwa), informing the identities of these two artists. The time locating these two artists in this space was shared at Elam; Graham graduating in 1989 and Parakowhai graduating the following year, both artists work in a sculptural tradition that harks back to te toi whakairo (carving). Cutting across the ‘real’ boundaries, producing a more fluid understanding of identity, Graham and Parekowhai locate themselves close to the threads of their culture, and are drawn toward the integral

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\(^{153}\) Madan Surap. *Identity, Culture and the Post Modern World.* p, 18.

knowledge of themselves as Maori; their identity is therefore less of a strategic placement than an insider ‘essential’ construction. It could be said that they are close to the pae, Jahnke defines this as the threshold separating the artist as creator and the whakapapa of their art form, and he further explains that:

It is the pae that holds the key to genealogical sanction.
In affirmation of genealogy there is affirmation of heritage.
In affirmation of heritage there is an affirmation of identity as Maori. It is this affirmation that allows one to cross the pae, secure in the knowledge that one is not an outsider. 155

‘Expectations of wholeness, continuity and essence have long been built into the linked western ideas of culture and art’ 156, as James Clifford points out, however, within the framework of post-modernism these have subsequently been de-constructed. In Pihama’s opinion, de-centering notions of identity for Maori is undermining because they have already been operating from a position outside of a Pakeha central cultural construct. By maintaining taha Maori, an ‘essential’ Maori identity, based on te reo rangatira (the Maori language), spiritual beliefs, and identification with a particular tribe and geographical locality, the descendants of the tangata whenua have a solid platform from which they can advance into the future with the blessing of their past.

3.1 Essentialism

Of Ngati Koroki Kahukura descent, Brett Graham was born in Auckland in 1967. The ‘site’ where he completed his secondary education was the private establishment, Kings College. Exchanging one ‘institution’ for another, he went on to study at the Elam School of Fine Arts, and was the successful recipient of an Elam Art Scholarship and the Winiata Memorial Prize in 1987, graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Sculpture in 1989. That year he was awarded an East-West Degree Scholarship from Honolulu, which assisted his Master of Fine Art studies at the University of Hawaii from 1989 until 1991. As part of his MFA studies Graham studied under the sculptor Atsuo Okamoto in Japan. In 1991 he took up a position lecturing on Contemporary Maori Art in the Department of Art History at the University of Auckland and was subsequently appointed as one of three tutors working at Te Toi Hou, the Maori fine arts department at the University of Auckland.

Brett Graham received a privileged private education and now works within the University system, the same tertiary institution that helped to formulate his artistic practice. However, his experience is also informed by his Maori whakapapa and is closely related to a whakapapa of contemporary Maori artists. He is the son of kaumatua artist Fred Graham, who believes that ‘it doesn’t really matter what you become or what you hope for, your Maoriness is a very important part of you.’ Brett Graham’s ‘Maoriness’ is integral to his being and he was extremely reluctant to discuss the ways in which it influences him. In his view it is not something he is ‘doing’ but rather it is who he happens to be, and everything else is an expression of that truth. He was raised surrounded by the work of his father and other Tovey generation artists who sought to combine modernist teachings and recognised Maori carving conventions to produce work that often functions within a public realm for the greater good of the Maori community. Graham has worked alongside second generation artist Kura Te Waru-Rewiri, who infuses her painting practice with the subtle reminders of carving in relief, and is currently employed in a teaching capacity at the University of Auckland. His colleagues include Ngarino Ellis, contemporary Maori art historian and daughter of Elizabeth Ellis who is the current chair of Te Waka Toi, and art historian Rangihiroa Panoho. He has been rewarded by the art establishment and is working within its parameters and is also able to draw strength from, and is well supported by, a ‘tradition’ of Maori art educators.

The seed – Te Kakano, scattered from Rangiatea, has not been lost, it is instead regenerated through the vehicle of Graham’s artistic practice in a ‘hybridised’ form, which combines European traditional practices and the formative influence of his Maori heritage. The plant is less tender than hardy these days as it grows and multiplies in fulfilment of this generation’s destiny. Graham does not merely ‘expropriate’ Pakeha media, symbolism and technology but is a proponent of these practices that have been integral to his education. He received early recognition for his artistic talents, and his work greets students on the threshold of the Auckland Institute of Technology: Matariki (1994) flowers in the central court of the Waikato University Law School, and in the foyer of the Maidment theatre in the University of Auckland campus nine muses welcome the public. These works function as a public example, within the educational sphere, of the lineage of sculptural practice derived from the tenets of the modernist reductive works of Hepworth and Brancusi, and

158 Interview with Brett Graham in Auckland October 16, 1997.
subsequently guided, during his university education, by the teaching of contemporary New Zealand sculptor, Greer Twiss.

The *Maidment Muses* (1989) of classical literature, the ‘traditional’ diaphanous figures in contrapposto stance, are translated here through a Maori interpretation, bearing a closer relationship to the classic ‘idealised’ figurative forms of the ancestors in a whare rununga. These sculptural interpretations are not simply representative of Pakeha influence in addition to Maori cultural influence, formulating the bicultural hybrid, but are rather a cross-cultural multiplication. Re-working in the translation something is altered, something new from outside the two ‘old’ systems, the hybrid seed is perceived to be greater than the sum of its parts.

Graham’s hybrid off-shoot, *Rangiatea* (1995), a carved free-standing generic form emanating growth and containment, pays tribute to the loss of Rangiatea, the church at Otaki that burnt down one hundred and forty-eight years after its opening on the ninth of October 1995. The structure had been a unique blend of European religious iconography and Maori architectural design, and while the body of this sacred ancestor and taonga was destroyed, the charred remains being referred to as tupapaku (the deceased), the spirit of Rangiatea survives in everyone who bears its legacy. The seed not only survives but also flowers figuratively and literally in the work of Graham who explores the sculptural potential of impressive large-scale flowering plant forms that thrust their petals heavenward, symbolic of the quest for knowledge and cultural efflorescence, the blossoming, the increase.

Michael Parekowhai, like his Auckland contemporary, descends from two distinct artmaking traditions and the work he produces is of a ‘hybrid’ variety, although unlike Graham whose work relates to the ‘classic’ aesthetic of Maori and European cultures, timeless in their essence, Parekowhai relies more on the conceptual quotation and the open interpretation afforded by a Postmodern sculptural practice. Of Nga Ariki/Te Aitanga, and Rongowhakaata and European descent, Michael Parekowhai was born in Porirua and raised in Gisborne. Although the artist would tell you that ‘geography doesn’t mean anything to me, the whole of New Zealand is the centre of my universe.’ The youngest of five children, he did not speak until

159 Robyn Craw and George Hubbard’s *Cross Cultural Pollination*
he was four years old - why speak when there are four others to speak for you? Educational games and words from both the English and Maori language provided fertile ground to foster the talents of Michael and sister Cushla, who refers to herself as a writer, talker, teacher, librarian. The strong family relationships and the solid platform from which both artists have investigated their identities are apparent. Cushla tells the tale of a touching allegory, it is the meeting place for art and life and the place where Maori and Pakeha perception clash, in which her five year old father is the main character:

But my father did know about the beauty of the winter moon. He had seen it often himself on his way across the paddock to the privy in the middle of the night. So my father drew a picture of a starry sky with a thin moon in one corner and a black haired Maori boy in the other. He drew his picture very, very carefully and when it was done shyly took the picture to show his teacher. The teacher looked at my father’s picture and then leaning from her desk she said, ‘Why George, your stars are far too big.’

Michael Parekowhai’s story begins as Cushla Parekowhai’s ends, ‘STARS, MY FRIENDS, ARE NEVER TOO BIG.’ Art star, Parekowhai, emerged out of art school, and like Graham, who had received instant recognition by being selected to sculpt a public commission the year he graduated, he was immediately embraced by the arts establishment. Parekowhai was chosen by George Hubbard to exhibit in Choice! under the title of contemporary Maori artist alongside Jacqueline Fraser, Lisa Reihana and Diane Prince. Hubbard curated the show as an alternative ‘1990’ exhibition, and he argued that ‘the desire for a truly Maori, Maori art is denying Maori artists the opportunity to be any more than bearers of tradition and children of nature; representors of the land and the past.’ Parekowhai sees himself first and foremost as Maori, which is a perception that differs from simply seeing yourself as an artist of Maori descent, as Peter Robinson and Shane Cotton do, because it is a way of life that is central to his philosophy of identity rather than being an acknowledgment of shared histories. Parekowhai does, however, feel that his identity ‘is not fixed’ and that ‘at times there is a ‘struggle’ to find a balance between identifying as Maori or Pakeha; in some areas you are going to be Maori, and in other areas you are going to be part Maori or non-

Maori. He perceives that it is his ‘job’ as a creative person to find the balance between these shifting states.\textsuperscript{163}

The creative vehicle of expression chosen by both Parekowhai and Graham relates to carved ancestral taonga; the groove of Graham’s adze more apparent than the slick surface appearance of Parekowhai’s kitset look-a-likes. It is notable, however, that Graham, Parekowhai, Reihana, and Robinson have all chosen to express themselves in the sculptural medium. Christina Barton, curator of \textit{Art Now} (1994), reminds viewers of sculpture’s inclination, (more so than painting’s) to cast itself into the social world as both cause and proper location for creative work. She cites Jeffrey Deitch noting his observation that ‘sculpture is more concerned with an object’s cultural resonance, than with the internal logic of its form.’\textsuperscript{164} Sculpture is by its nature less esoteric and private than painting because of the ‘public’ space in which the objects are often located. Within this space a purity and faithfulness to tradition is more likely to be maintained because in a sense they serve the community for whom the objects are intended. Despite and sometimes in spite of their Pakeha education these artists are grounding their art practice in Maori culture.

Roger Neich has described Maori woodcarving as a ‘conceptual’ rather than a ‘perceptual’ art. He further explains that: ‘This non-perspectival representation of timeless ancestors set in ideal non-specified space accords well with Maori concepts of time and the role of the ancestors, continually recreating the timeless, ever-present world of the ancestors.’\textsuperscript{165} The non-specified space is informed by Maori cultural values that fill it in distinctive and characteristic ways while simultaneously ‘the space’ is particular to a Maori universal concept indicating the void before the moment of creation. Brett Graham’s sculpture accords well with the conceptual creation of a universal form of life. It inhabits a timeless space and is both presence and essence. Justin Paton reviewing the ‘best, brightest and latest in New Zealand art’ declares, ‘Graham hews warm-blooded, big hearted works from time-worn wood or porous stone – alive at the touch of the human hand. His sculptures are strong and silent types, robust, grainy and muscular, but with hidden depths. A carver in the old mould, Graham sculpts like he means it.’\textsuperscript{166} This sculpture is a hybrid creation that links back to the

\textsuperscript{163} Video, ‘Mike P, Sculptor: A Profile.


\textsuperscript{166} Justin Paton. ‘Reviews: Graduation Day, Justin Paton looks at the best, brightest and latest in New Zealand art.’ \textit{More.} p.124.
traditional Maori practices of adzed or carved taonga and embraces the modernist tradition represented by the return to an evocative form.

There is an aho tahuhu, the initial supporting thread of a cloak, that combines two genealogical strands that stress the foundation principle for Maori. It is a thread that ties Graham and Parekowhai to a tradition of Maori artmakers who are the conveyers of a ‘wairua’ or spiritual feel, within their work. The ‘artist’ values the partnership that exists between art, nature and the spiritual world and must respect the mauri or life force of the materials the artists are working with. As a vessel for change, a vehicle for the genius of the gods, the ‘artist’ imbues another dimension to the work so that it is a thing of beauty. *Kahukura*(1995) (figure 24), Graham’s contribution to the *Korurangi: New Maori Art* exhibition, a tribute to Rangimarie Hetet, proudly stood as both a metaphorical and aesthetic salute to nga taonga tuku iho, the treasures handed down. Rangimarie Hetet was in her lifetime a respected elder, a taonga of her people. She created cloaks for her people that were in themselves precious taonga; here Graham has woven a connection that cloaks the genealogical strands of the past that speak clearly in the present, *Kahukura* has a presence and a wairua that communicates with simple beauty the achievements of his tipuna.

When asked if he felt his work had a particular ‘wairua’ Graham explained that he didn’t think he could lay claim to imparting such a quality, however, felt that at the very least his stoic sculptures had a distinctive ‘presence’. A published statement by Graham acknowledges the role of the artist/carver, which is steeped in the traditional perception derived from the Maori cultural world:

> It is every artist’s greatest fear that his or her creativity is rendered impotent – that the well-springs of the imagination may cease to flow. This fear is only equitable in the hearts of Maori artists with the fear of losing one’s culture itself, for with this disappears the uniqueness of a world view, the ability to formulate thought from a rich vocabulary of visual and spoken language, and the joy of seeing the world through the colours of one’s own cultural perceptions.\(^{167}\)

Would Hirini Moko Mead recognise Brett Graham as being directly descended from an unbroken tradition of Maori artists? Or would the perception that he has ‘aligned’ himself with the ‘dominant group’ necessarily exclude him? The difficulty in assessing the work of Graham and the other artists

within this survey is that their cloak is of a technicolour; there are complex and interconnected threads binding them to a variety of artistic traditions. Like the kaumatua artists before them they are not simply the passive recipients of a specific set of socialised Maori values but unlike their kaumatua they are all without exception art-school educated and urban.

Parekowhai feels closely connected to his heritage, and he believes that being Maori gives him the opportunity to look to where he has been to discover the answers. He is the channel through which the ancestors speak, informed by the word sculptures of American artist Nancy Dwyer, and based on a European modernist tradition. Because he believes his work is gifted by the ancestors it is possible to conceive of it in terms of having a wairua, or spiritual significance for Maori. Parekowhai alludes to this particular connection:

The immediacy of my work is in its essence the almost intangible thing that one might call mauri. This is where it starts, this is where it happens. This is where it may change, but also where it will end.\(^{168}\)

There is continuity between the carvers and craftsmen of the past and the present ‘essential’ cultural philosophy of Parekowhai and Graham although the mode of expression is reworked through the introduction of new materials, and a theoretical perspective that is closely related to European art making methodology informs the work. Their emphasis is on the integration of cultural values rather than ‘carving’ a radical break with tradition, disjunct and discontinuous, their work must be referenced within a Maori world view because the artists declare this to be so, and because the mauri of the sculptures themselves weave a tale and speak to their own people.

3.2 The Space Between

From the nothing the begetting
From the nothing the increase
From the nothing the abundance...

The comparatively sterile contemporary Maori Art debate, the old chestnut masking the crux of the matter, ‘the essentialist versus the Post-Modernists’, \(^{169}\) has continued to rage since attention was drawn to the question of Maori artists working within a contemporary New Zealand art. Assuming they are ‘outside’ the mainstream looking in, the third generation of Maori artists have presented the establishment with a challenge because they clearly hold an ‘insider’ view, they claim the space to make contemporary Maori art and they also wish to name the space. It is ironic that Brett Graham who, according to some could fall outside a definition of contemporary Maori art, should join the number of Maori artwriters who are demonstrating an increasing willingness to define the tenets of their own artistic practice, readdressing a definition of Maori art that had previously slipped through the network of classification that would normally locate states of position in cultural space. Those aware of such constructs are conscious of how their work is expected to engage with a Maori worldview, representing a comprehensive cultural base that enables a holistic and inclusive approach. Graham, both sculptor and ‘commentator’, bemoans the new role that Maori have had to embrace: ‘We are constantly forced into the role of educator as well as commentator to the dominant culture, ignorant of Rangi and Papa, let alone the esoteric lore of the whare wananga.’ \(^{170}\)

The confidence with which Graham draws on his heritage is reflected in the ever-present cohesive stoic silence that cloaks his sculptures. The silence of the work is a contrast to the korero that Graham has woven into the ‘space between’, that unmapped space in which definition is negotiated and an oral navigation is made of the silence which of its very nature gives rise to language. ‘Silence is an ambivalent term within Maoridom. It can be both a sign of humility and a sign of self-consciousness, of insecurity, of unfamiliarity and even a sign of contempt.’ \(^{171}\) The silence that lives in the body of Graham’s sculptural works deliberately resists interpretation, and escapes the process of colonisation that occurs through the act of defining.


Graham’s appreciation of ‘silence’ is born not only of confidence but also as a product of the time spent under the tutelage of Atsuo Okamoto in his workshop in Japan during 1991 that resulted in the EWC Fieldwork Award for Graham. His work, while maintaining an ‘essence’ or maori, is intriguing because he has also appropriated the approach of the time honoured arts of the east. A Zen philosophy breathes beneath the surface producing an ‘essential’ hybrid. Te Pu (1993) (figure 25) was produced as a result of that visit and is hewn out of Oamaru sand stone, sliced into rough cubes, and reassembled into objects of religious contemplation. Graham also fashioned bowls, a font, and a lidded wine jar, which suggests a sarcophagus or cacoon. The stones, taken separately, can be compared to the stones traditionally thrown down at the entranceway to a Japanese teahouse in order to demarcate the threshold or liminal silent space through which the visitor must pass. In Maori and Japanese language this ‘space between’ is known as Wa. The Wa holds separate entities and things together in the ‘Unity-that-is-All’. Osho Zen instructs one to ‘fall into this silence between the words…watch this gap between the outgoing and incoming breath and treasure each empty moment of the experience – something sacred is about to be born.’

Graham continues to explore this notion of liminal space in Waka Tumanako (1993), a work created as the result of a Te Waka Toi grant for the 1492-1642 installation. The dark waka interior is reminiscent of the enigmatic silence of the work of Ralph Hotere it is a silence that is sensed and felt rather than heard. Hotere’s silent language has spoken to poet Hone Tuwhare, a conversation that was explored in Out the Black Window (1997):

I can hear you making
small holes in the silence
rain
If I were deaf
the pores of my skin would open and shut

Jahnke writes that it is ‘a silence that sustains the myth of the innate korero embedded within the work; it is a silence that offers ponderous potential in translation.’ The silence communicates possibility; it can be a kind of visual starvation, though if it is not a famine it’s a feast. It is also,

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173 Korurangi: New Maori Art, p.41.
in the eyes of Jahnke, a sign of Hotere’s humility. Wedde, a New Zealand poet who contributed to
*Out the Black Window*, suggests that the artist’s reticence may be ‘a way of leaving space in which
others can be heard’. This is very much a part of marae protocol, the ‘liminal space’ is respected
in light of its potential for ‘becoming’, as are the voices of those who care to define the tenets of
their own culture.

There is a spiritual connection to things Maori in the work of Hotere that is shared by Graham. The
two artists also shared the same physical space at the *Korurangi* show; Hotere exhibiting *If* while
*Kahukura* (1995) and *Te Kohao o te Ngira* (1995) were the contributions made by Graham. George
Hubbard remarked that Hotere’s presence in the show was important because it repositioned him in
the nineties and acknowledged the inspiration he has been to many artists both Maori and Pakeha:
‘Ralph is an anchor-stone, an inspiration. He really did open the way for a lot of younger artists to
explore mediums not traditionally associated with contemporary Maori art.’ It was also notable
that *Korurangi* is one of the rare occasions where Hotere has aligned himself with contemporary
Maori artists. The show was very reflective of a ‘group’ of individuals strongly identifying as
Maori, despite the tendency of some of the contributors to assert their right to be ambivalent about
‘Maoriness’ and the degree to which they speak from this platform. Hotere has always maintained
that his ‘identity doesn’t tie him to any single set of cultural co-ordinates or to movement in one
constant direction.’ O’Brien, the co-curator of *Out the Black Window*, remarks:

> Throughout his career, Hotere has painted requiems, producing elegies
> for individuals, tribes, for humanity as a whole and for the environment.
> In fulfilling this function, the paintings partake of, rather than simply
describe, a darkness common to all humanity.

The silence born of darkness that harks back to a universal essence ‘common to all humanity’
binds Hotere, the reluctant forefather of the contemporary Maori art movement, to artist Brett
Graham. The metaphorical phoenix rises out of the pyre of the New Zealand art establishment
reborn as part of a movement integral to, and necessarily separate from, the cannons of art
historical comment.

175 Gregory O’Brien. ‘Necessary Distances: Hotere and Maori Language’ *Hotere - Out the Black Window: Ralph
Hotere's work with New Zealand poets.* City Gallery, Wellington, 1997 p.11.
176 *Korurangi: New Maori Art*, p.37.
178 ibid. p.117.
3.3 There Are Words Attached to It.

The deployment of words in contemporary Maori art functions at several levels. Words offer clues to translation, they evoke poetic metaphor beyond image, and they generate dialogue over the essence of Maori art.179

The silent space of Graham’s work is given voice in the work of Parekowhai. My first conversation, with Michael Parekowhai was in the central dome of the Sarjeant Art Gallery. The korero was, in fact reduced to a single fundamental word, promising utopia. I savoured it, ‘what a jewel, it must be the real thing.’ The word lay scattered on the floor, Micah, a partial anagram of Michael, ‘a chatty little piece.’ ‘What a joker’, on close inspection the pounamu prophet was just formica – get it, for mica.180 (Figure 26) Several years later I met the ‘real’ thing, or at least gathered impressions from a series of stories told over three latte’s in a cafe on Ponsonby road. Cowskin-covered shoes, mustard shirt, outside under the veranda.

“What do you mind if I record this?”

“I am of Maori descent which is something that has been integral to my being since I was young growing up in the Gisborne area. There is a story that is told about the day of my father’s death, his name was Hori. A rainbow came up over the hill after the rain had cleared. There is a sculptural work of mine that is named after my father, the double generic meaning of his name is an important aspect of the way in which the play of words form a key to unlocking meaning in my work.

My sister Cushla is the wordsmith she is older than I am. I am the youngest and games have always been of paramount value in how I related to my family members. Cushla has some excellent commentary in the area of contemporary Maori arts but she has a tendency to polarise people and their views. Mum is a teacher and language was a pivotal point of departure around the home, she is bilingual. I like to provoke thought and let the meanings play lightly around the work.


180 The story of Michael Parekowhai is narrated in the first person because the artist requested I respect an oral tradition, and in my view this form of ‘myth-making’ is in keeping with that intent.
Did I tell you about my latest project? I plan to purchase a few Kaimanawa horses and stuff them, life-sized so they can roam about the gallery. I have work, my number plate series that is a collection of the great bastions of New Zealand art. You can purchase a plate, a Hotere or a Walters or even a McCahon, a Robinson or a Graham. They vary in price. I will be wearing a T-Shirt with a Parekowhai plate to the opening; it is also for sale.”

“Will the wellspring of work ever dry up, you ask?”

“No, I am always confident that I will put my faith in my history and that will in turn provide me with the next turn I ought to take. My work with secondary students allows me to keep a hand in the ‘game’. I draw from a vast history, the great modernist tradition that occupied my interest at art school - the Duchamp toilet seat, bicycle wheel and the like, I also dip into the New Zealand scene and respectfully quote McCahon and Walters, they made a vital contribution in their time. How do I feel about the issue of appropriation? Sometimes it is not appropriate to ask such questions, we are all the sum of the history that has gone before us and we cannot forget the context that artists such as Walters were working in. It is, however, important to be aware of such things and ‘appropriating’ images as a Maori artist puts me in a different position from that of a Pakeha artist.

Take what you will from this, it is a version of the truth in the same way as most stories surrounding art making are. Can I offer you a lift? Please contact me if there is anything else you would like to know.”

Taonga are said to be ‘clothed’ in words, he kupu kei runga; and there are words in and around the sculptural work of Parekowhai; stories are woven, myths are told, and words are physically ‘constructed’ by the artist, readable bilingual texts, deployed for the purpose of defining, whilst simultaneously escaping closure and remaining silent maintaining their intangible essence, their mauri. Cushla Parekowhai who speaks for her brother still, cloaks his sculptures in words woven from her stories. *Kiss the Baby Goodbye* (1994) (figure 27) is based on a line from a story of family antics with a go-cart, a hill and a

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181 Recollections from an interview with Michael Parekowhai, Auckland, October 17, 1997.
toddler in *The Summer of '69*—“Kiss that baby goodbye,” he said as our youngest brother leapt forward, laughed a lot and never looked back. 182

Text-messaging through the annals of a New Zealand art story, the use of text, apparent in the work of Colin McCahon, need not be culturally specific: ‘I will need words. Words can be terrible but a solution can be given. In spite of a message which can burn I intend painting in no way expressionistic but with a slowly emerging order...’ 183 Parekowhai ‘constructs’ ordered sculptural pieces, cloaked in historical verbiage, the letters form a frame of reference, with a twist, and the viewer is left to ‘assemble’ meaning for themselves. *The Indefinite Article* (1990) (figure 29) references the ‘I Am’ work of McCahon with the addition of ‘He’. The text refers to the divine being, the artist as creator (the words are an anagram of Michael), and in Maori language they are the inclusive indefinite article and can mean both ‘a’ and ‘some.’ The work was chosen for exhibition in *Headlands: Thinking Through New Zealand Art* (1992), an appropriate selection when considering that Parekowhai is thinking through the position of contemporary Maori art in relation to the previously accepted ‘text’ of New Zealand art history, although he refrains from ‘throwing the baby out with the bath-water’, creating instead a cross-cultural multiplication that is the product of biculturalism. According to Robin Craw, panbiographer and writer, this may be expressed as ‘a hybrid plurality of identities where ‘Who or what is Maori?’, What is Maori art?’ and ‘Who decides?’ remain open questions.184

184 Robin Craw. ‘Anthropophagy OfThe Other: The Problematic of Biculturalism and The Art Of Appropriation.’ *Art and Asia Pacific*, September, 1993, p.15.
3.4 Biculturalism and the Arts

Occupying the open border at which the same and the other interact with each other through strange affinities and symbolic replacements is the work of young, emerging, urban Maori artists. These artists expropriate Pakeha media, symbolism and technology and combine it with the heterological, the ‘irrational’ and the spiritual as a double-cocked way of getting behind the ideological façade of biculturalism.\(^{185}\)

Robin Craw points out that biculturalism is a spectacle which urban Maori art transgresses. Parekowhai light-heartedly extends the korero within the text of his own sculptural work while Graham takes a more serious tone, noting that the climate for discussing biculturalism is ripe indeed, and therein lies the responsibility and the challenge, for contemporary Maori artists practising today. Graham also states that ‘biculturalism assumes that two people have distinct identities yet for over a century the shadow of assimilation has passed over this land, insidiously deleting the language, observance of custom and tribal knowledge, cutting the very pulse of the Maori community and the reason for our art.’\(^{186}\) The cultural traditions of both Maori and Pakeha interact in the work of this generation and new forms have evolved that are subtle and sophisticated, exceeding the repertoires of each.

Biculturalism, both in theory and practice, has been an ideological concept that has developed in the work of contemporary Maori artists, beginning with the Tovey generation who embraced modernist methods of artmaking. Biculturalism in the arts has, from the nineteen-fifties onwards, been subject to modification and refinement since its initial inception as a New Zealand vision for the future which hoped to result in a third assimilative identity: the ‘New Zealander’. Gordon Tovey’s educational philosophy embraced a mutual cross-fertilisation of ideas and to some extent was a celebration of ‘sameness’ rather than difference. In an interview with Darcy Nicholas, Cliff Whiting, a notable artist and spokesperson for the Tovey generation of artists, reflected that while symbolically the cultures seemed separate, they were basically the same, their roots came from

legends, stories, myths and the subconscious mind. They also came from a response to the environment and to cultural conflict of exchange.\textsuperscript{187}

Brett Graham, working in a politically sensitive, post-sesquicentennial era, is less concerned about ensuring the survival of contemporary Maori art by embracing ‘sameness’ and is more concerned with negotiating the sites of contestability in an attempt to mediate between the spaces with equal facility and decorum. Robert Jahnke has interpreted the negotiation of the contested ‘site’ of New Zealand’s art culture as the articulation of a truly ‘bicultural’ voice.\textsuperscript{188} Alexa Johnston, previously the curator of the Auckland Art Gallery, describes the position of the third generation artists:

Their works are concerned with the questions of identity and history language and land, of what it is to speak from a position between two cultures — issues of the ‘nineties as New Zealanders face the complexities of biculturalism.\textsuperscript{189}

A work by Graham that deals directly with the bicultural facilitation is \textit{Te Kakano} (1995) the starting point for which is the whakatauki: \textit{There is but one needle through whose eye may pass all threads}. It represents a bicultural image, evoking Victorian needlepoint, the pastime of colonial wives, and the practice of traditional Maori weavers whose threads were twisted and handwrought and separated with awls. It is a metaphor of rebirth of unity, working together and of respect, that sews together strands of the past, however, this unity is derived from a position of ‘awareness’ of the previous colonising power relationships, assimilation and acculturation, the cloak of deceit.

Art critics and artists alike have recently discussed the complexities of biculturalism. Mane-Wheoki has declared: ‘Certainly we have biculturalism as an ideal. In practice, however, biculturalism is optional and voluntary for the power culture but compulsory for the indigenous other. The potential for misunderstanding on one side of this unequal relationship is therefore considerable.’\textsuperscript{190} Diane Prince echoes these sentiments: ‘The latest catch-cry, ‘Biculturalism’ represents a decision, little different from the old assimilationist policies in which the indices of progress have little impact on the wellbeing of Maoridom.’\textsuperscript{191}

\textsuperscript{188} \textit{Korurangi: New Maori Art}, p.41.
\textsuperscript{189} \textit{Korurangi: New Maori Art}, p.8.
\textsuperscript{191} \textit{Korurangi: New Maori Art}, p.28.
The problems inherent in constructing a bicultural nation through the process of assimilation and acculturation have been expressed in the art world as the ‘appropriation debate’, or, rather, the cultural ‘misappropriation’ of Maori images, and the subsequent commodification of Maori culture. The debate gained greater focus nationally as Maori became increasingly aware of their right to define themselves as owners of their cultural and intellectual property, made legally enforceable by the Treaty of Waitangi Act in 1975, and is a debate that is mirrored internationally as indigenous rights are increasingly an active matter of legal discussion. The Mataatua Declaration establishes the intent on the part of indigenous peoples to reclaim ownership:

[We] declare that indigenous peoples of the world have the right to self determination and in exercising that right must be recognised as the exclusive owners of their cultural and intellectual property. 192

In Parekowhai’s Kiss the Baby Goodbye (1994), large-scale geometricised forms hewn out of space are both vocal and silent, alluding to the bicultural black and the white of it reflecting two halves of a New Zealand whole, challenging the exclusivity of this right. The piece appears, at first glance, to reference the stigma surrounding the appropriation of koru motifs by abstract artist Gordon Walters, and the ‘inappropriate’ nature of having adopted the koru. However it is surprisingly a respectful acknowledgment of the achievements of Walters, commenting instead on the roles the artist is ‘cast’ in according to whether you are Maori or Pakeha. The koru is reinvented in the hands of a contemporary Maori maker for whom the reappropriation of cultural property is sanctioned. Parekowhai’s approach affirms the fact that cultural and artistic authenticity has as much to do with an inventive present as it does with the past.

The appropriation of Maori imagery is an issue that has, at times, reached volatile heights: ‘I am consciously aware, objectively and professionally, that I can’t stand up here and say ‘Now look here, honky! Look here, piss off. Which is very tempting! At the same time though I am mortified by the deliberate, and I think quite promiscuous and irresponsible plundering of Maori

motifs – designs, forms, and myths. Reconfiguring the history of New Zealand art forms, perceiving the use of Maori forms as an extension of a New Zealand wide assimilation of Maori cultural ‘proprius’ or property, Rangihiroa Panoho in *Headlands: Thinking Through New Zealand Art* (1992), clears a ‘space’, and stakes a claim in the centre: ‘In the cultural sphere – the arts – it is now essential for Maori to resume control, re-establish boundaries for appropriation and move taha Maori (things Maori) back to the centre.’ Within this central realm, in the opinion of Panoho, the work of McCahon is accommodated, because it draws on universal concerns and adds to the mana of Maori from a culturally sensitive advantage point. Walters on the other hand was found wanting.

The appropriation debate is a game of two halves, a game of chess, played out on the intellectual field. Parekowhai, discussing his own life sized sculptural chess-set, says, ‘its black on one side and white on the other, one of them is going to win – It’s ironic that white always goes first, they have the first punch.’ Francis Pound makes his ‘move’ and reclaims ‘the space’ from which to speak, although it seems as though he has less to lose, viewing the rules of the game as a level playing field. He defines the space as ‘an allegory of bicultural relations: as a perceptual interchange between a symbolic black and white – an ever shifting dynamic in which neither gains superiority as ‘dominant figure’ over ‘submissive ground’, and neither cancels the other, and in which unassimilated and unassimilable difference is always preserved.’

Parekowhai finally declares his actual more complex position by stating that the ‘debate that critics are involved with is a critical debate mine is the debate of showing you something, and you see what you want to see in it. You don’t just see one thing there is a possibility of opening more than just one door and walking through it.’ Lisa Reihana - affectionately labelled as a ‘pixie person’ by Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, has a male equivalent in Parekowhai, appointed court jester by Robert Leonard. He plays the part of ‘the fool’ and is often the mouthpiece for the most poignant of truths made all the more palatable by being delivered in jest, capable of cutting to the chase while

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195 Video. ‘Michael P, Sculptor: A Profile.’
197 ‘Michael P, Sculptor: A Profile.’
being equally both disarming and confusing, he opens a multitude of doors to meaning through which we can walk.

Within the international ‘court’, Parekowhai acting as jester, recognises that there are some games which come at a price, and issues of ownership are ‘appropriate’ within a wider context because culture is conceived of as a commercial commodity, enhancing international trade relations, a reality that is further complicated by the ubiquitous penetration of mass culture in a Postmodern world that decontextualises ethnicity by treating it as a commodity. Looking out towards the Pacific, in the recent Asia-Pacific Triennial, Parekowhai pastiches the touristic notion of the ‘singing dancing tour troupe’ and his paua-inlaid ten guitars rap out the familiar party piece, synonymous in international circles with Jake-the-Muss and his beer crate ‘bash’. Edward Soja is of the view that ‘Postmodern social transformations, in particular, involve a reordering of space: speed and accessibility triumph over distance, though the shrinking of the world can lead to strong barriers being placed between margins and centres from either side.’ Parekowhai has translated a stereotypical notion of Maori culture into an international context, providing a performance concertgoers would pay to see however, this commodification does not undermine the culture but instead exonerates it. The performance is slick, the guitars themselves are beautifully constructed, flawless artworks set against a backdrop of koru forms reminiscent of the waka of flight that transported Maori culture to the Asia-Pacific Triennial, ‘reappropriated’ by a contemporary Maori artist as a tribute to his people.

Section 4: ‘Constructing’ Canterbury

There are particular threads that bind Peter Robinson (Kai Tahu) and Shane Cotton (Ngati Hine, Nga Puhi) together, a complex cross-cultural interrelationship between the members of an artistic whanau, for unlike the northern ‘ngati arty’, Brett Graham, Michael Parekowhai and Lisa Reihana, for whom identifying as Maori is known and experienced and therefore unquestioned, Robinson and Cotton’s initial investigation of themselves as Maori occurred from an initial position of ‘dislocation’ from knowledge of their whakapapa. Their work forms a visual, and at times self-conscious map of their identity navigations, although their present destinations are ‘poles apart’: Cotton has moved closer to his turangawaewae while Robinson mirrors the aspirations of a migrant people and charts international waters.

One story common to Robinson and Cotton that informs their sense of identity as it relates to a group of kindred contemporaries is located at the School of Fine Arts at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch. Lara Strongman, previously curator of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery Annex, describes Christchurch as ‘inherently conservative’ and ‘deeply weird’. She draws attention to ‘the geographical isolation of what is New Zealand’s second biggest city [which] seems to breed an unusual preponderance of visible sidewalk eccentricities, as well as engendering sub-cultural extremes among its youth, desperate for an authentic voice in an invented place.’

There is an interconnected web of social and educational experience common also to Bill Hammond, Tony de Latour, Saskia Leek, Kristy Gorman, Seraphine Pick, Chris Heaphy, Kirsty Gregg and Eugene Hansen during the mid-nineteen-eighties and early ‘nineties. A cross-fertilisation, and sometimes ‘appropriation’ occurred among the artists who form a loosely defined social organisation as a consequence of sharing studios, both in and outside Fine Art school, influences, sources, images, art dealers, social encounters and rising high profiles, although it is issues of identity that binds them all to a central core. Sky Writers and Earth Movers (1998), an exhibition curated by Strongman’s successor, Elizabeth Caldwell for the Robert McDougall Art Annex, brought Cotton, Robinson, Heaphy, Hammond, Pick, and de Latour, together to illuminate the similarities between the work.

Artists have historically tended to flourish in the Canterbury ‘climate’ that has fostered close knit, supportive art communities that have provided fertile networks for painters who have subsequently developed aesthetic similarities. ‘The Group’\(^{200}\) has become a new ‘group’ of Canterbury graduates; an informal collection of ‘Pencil Case artists’, so named as a way of describing the spidery grafittied drawing style common to a number of Cotton and Robinson’s contemporaries. Strongman discredits the notion that Christchurch could have produced a ‘school of art’ grown out of an ‘organic local culture’ in light of ‘the global village of instantaneous communication.’\(^{201}\) However, there is no escaping the visual echoes particularly with regard to painting practice in the work of the ‘Pencil Case artists’. Christchurch College of Eduction art tutor Bronwyn Taylor feels that a ‘worm’s eye perspective’, where ‘individuals and small groups are encouraged to hold different values and beliefs about art, and to speak a language of art that is idiosyncratic to the school, art institution or group they identify with’, is problematic.\(^{202}\) Ironically Taylor has supported the development of a Canterbury School of thought in her role as the convenor of the secondary art education programme.

The visual echoes of aesthetically familiar stylistic tendencies amongst this collective include; the use of monochromatic colour fields, which form backdrops onto which emblematic imagery, is floated in a gravity-free space; the use of text; and a preoccupation with the landscape, personal history and popular culture. The teaching and painting practice of British tutor Riduan Tomkins, Senior Lecturer in Painting at Ilam from 1986, the same year Cotton, Robinson, Pick and de Latour began their degrees, is aesthetically recognisable in their work.

Tomkins had a formal approach towards teaching gleaned from his own training at the Royal College of Art in London. He also had a particular interest in the modernist movement and during his studies in Canada and America he had focused on colour field painting. He advocated methods of producing a series of paintings in which shared motifs are modified by colour, tone and composition. In his own painting practice he would work on several versions of one figurative image placed on an abstract ground, producing a collection of closely related work.

\(^{200}\) A collective of artists who exhibited together from 1927 until 1977, which included Rita Angus, Doris Lusk, Rata Lovell-Smith, Olivia Spencer Bower, R.N.Field and Colin McCahon.
\(^{201}\) Strongman references the ‘Pencil Case artists’ as common usage to describe this Christchurch group in ‘Degrees of Separation’, pp.34-35.
The tenets of Tomkins’s art practise echoes through the ‘ground’ of paintings by Robinson and Cotton, the painted media through which they mediate. This educational, social and geographical backdrop is the platform from which they investigate and identify their understanding of their own identities as artists, as Maori artists, as artists of Maori descent.
4.1 Reconnection 1964 - 1992

...most indigenous cultures today are striving both to re-examine and keep alive many aspects of their heritage, while also seeking reflexive and constructive ways of dealing with any aspects of the modern world.\(^{203}\)

Of Ngapuhi descent and based away from his tribal homeland, Te Tai Tokerau (Northland), Shane Cotton (Katene)\(^{204}\) was raised in Upper Hutt, attended Heretaunga College and was living and working in Wellington as a draughtsman for two years before relocating to Christchurch. He states: ‘My upbringing did not allow much involvement with things Maori, but I have always had a strong connection with my father’s family who are Ngati Hine and Ngati Rangi.’\(^{205}\) Robinson, by contrast, was less familiar with his ancestors or with urban life, growing up in rural Methven. The current image of third generation urban Maori artist Peter Robinson as a cosmopolitan sophisticate is altered by the artist’s own words:

> It is very difficult to negotiate your identity as a young man in that place having come from the city and then meeting sophisticated people from the cities. There was a huge cultural difference that took me years to get over, to get on to the same level.\(^{206}\)

Robinson studied sculpture as his major during the course of his Fine Arts degree, graduating from the University of Canterbury in 1989. He completed a diploma of teaching from the Christchurch College of Education the following year and went on to teach locally at Christ’s College. Shane Cotton, who was, and is, a close friend of Robinson, graduated at the same time, majoring in painting, and teaching for a year at Christ’s College (1990-1991), prior to receiving a Diploma of Teaching from the local College of Education, and taking up a position at Lincoln High School (1992). Robinson notes that during art school days Cotton was receiving recognition for excellence in painting and that he ‘appeared’ to his contemporaries to be consciously groomed for success.\(^{207}\) The year Cotton graduated he received the Wilkins and Davies/Auckland Society of Arts Young Artist of the Year Award he not only ‘appeared’

\(^{204}\) Cotton is the anglicized version of Katene.
\(^{206}\) Interview with Peter Robinson, Christchurch Boys High School, May 17, 1997.
\(^{207}\) Interview 1, Robinson.
successful but showed innate talent, and despite his early achievements, he was comparatively unaware of his talent and conducted himself with a great degree of humility.\footnote{The information here was gleaned from a number of sources whilst in conversation with Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, Bronwyn Taylor and Judy Gifford.}

Robinson had received two Maori Education Foundation grants while he was studying at University, gifts from his ancestors who whakapapa back to Robinson’s great-great-grandfather, whose marae is Takahanga in Kaikoura. He was encouraged to apply by Cotton, who had similarly received a grant, and Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, who was at that time, Maori Education Foundation Advisor to the University. Robinson had at first been resistant to the idea as at that time he had little notion of his historical tracings. Of Mane-Wheoki’s influence Robinson states:

\begin{quote}
Jonathan Mane was very encouraging, though he could see what these grants can do, they needle away at you and in a couple of year’s time we [Cotton/Robinson] thought it would be good to feed back into the community – and there was the personal thing of wanting to know a bit about our backgrounds.\footnote{Interview 1, Robinson.}
\end{quote}

Mane-Wheoki, Kaitiaki of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Senior Lecturer in Art History and Dean of Music and Fine Arts at the University of Canterbury has been absolutely instrumental in encouraging the talents of Canterbury’s contemporary Maori artists Robinson, Cotton, Gregg, Heaphy, and Hansen who all speak respectfully of his continued support and encouragement at a pivotal time in the exploration of their knowledge of self and their whakapapa - the mentoring equivalent of Tomkins? The nature of, and our informed understanding of, the contemporary Maori arts today would be virtually unrecognisable without the catalytic, mediating presence of Mane-Wheoki – who would the nation be pinning their current artistic hopes on had this caretaker of Maori talent not been present?

Cotton continued to explore the purity of the painted surface, art for its own sake, very much influenced by American painter Terry Winters, while Robinson, observing that the modernist methodologies of art school had, for him, run their course, commented that during his final year at art school overseas artists like Anish Kapoor - of Indian descent and living in London - were beginning to explore their own
heritage, reflecting a global trend towards identifying with one’s indigenous culture; a journey which both he and Cotton found appealing.\textsuperscript{210} Robinson and Cotton’s early work produced in the years following art school reflect a growing understanding of matauranga Maori (a Maori world view) that they expressed through an investigation of traditional pre-colonial and post-contact Maori forms. Their timing in launching artistic careers was impeccable, emerging in 1990 amidst the sesquicentennial celebrations of one hundred-and-fifty years of ‘protest and partnership’. Interest in their work at this time represents the culmination of curiosity about a reconfigured ‘ethnic’ art, a sense of obligation on the part of the arts establishment to fulfill bicultural agendas; and also as matter of supporting what was genuinely talented artistic practice.

Judy Gifford was quick to recognise the ‘marks’ of success and approached both Cotton and Robinson after viewing their work in 1990 at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery Annex. Of her first impressions she says, ‘fame can be a trap, but the work was good and interesting and very ‘New Zealand’\textsuperscript{211}. A New Zealand aesthetic, according to Robinson, in its ‘warmest fuzziest definition’ refers to a bicultural nation of ‘two cultures living side by side and trying to understand one another’\textsuperscript{212}.

In contrast to Cotton and Robinson’s immediate success was contemporary graduate Séraphine Pick who approached Gifford and was initially turned down, a decision that would have been made at the time based on the saleability of her work. Pick is of the view that gender was an issue for dealers, and she felt hampered by a lack of confidence that she attributes to being cast in a stereotypical pattern that prevented her having a conception of herself as a successful ‘career’ artist. In 1992 Pick stated that: ‘At present my interest lies in the domain of sexuality, image and identity within my own personal experiences as a woman.’\textsuperscript{213} Exploring the realm of the ‘other’, Pick was little different from her male peers but for the virtue of being of the ‘fairer’ sex.

Robinson’s reconnection to the pae was taken very seriously by the artist who had previously been involved in issues relating to land art that subsequently expanded to include a generic based

\textsuperscript{210} Interview I, Robinson.
\textsuperscript{211} Interview with Judy Gifford, Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, May 17, 1997.
\textsuperscript{212} Interview I, Robinson.
\textsuperscript{213} Information based on an interview with Séraphine Pick (partner of Robinson at the time) in 1992. This view is also echoed by other female voices trained at Canterbury whom I interviewed in 1992. For example, Kristy Gorman and Saskia Leek, and Valerie Neilson (partner of Anton Parsons at the time) all felt disadvantaged by the dealer system because of their gender.
sculptural form evoking the essential elements of a Maori cultural base. Bill Solomon from Takahanga knew Robinson’s whakapapa and was extremely supportive in those early years, as was Steve Gibbs (Ngati Porou) who was teaching art at Shirley Boys’ High School at the time. Reflecting back with some self-deprecation, Robinson said in interview:

I haven’t always been a Maori artist and I haven’t always identified with being Maori so when I started exploring those issues I felt very insecure and then I’d go up to the marae, my behavior was more Maori than Maori, instead of just being a person.214

Robinson may have felt insecure, however, his contribution to a body of contemporary Maori art was sincere. He stepped outside the official gallery context and contributed to Te Atinga; Contemporary Maori art in 1990 at the Uenuku Marae, Moeraki. The pouhuri, a simple, crudely shaped log – stripped of bark with a leadlined square hole, sat well in the marae environs as it referenced pre-Pakeha, pre-chiselled Maori form without the carving. These earlier forms prompted Gregory Burke to label the artist as ‘the first conceptual primitive’, inverting the idea that conceptual art was devoid of the mark of the artist’s hand.215 Nicholas Thomas extends this definition and writes that, ‘contemporary primitivism possess a good deal in common with earlier reifications and fetishizations of notionally simple ways of life, but have a distinct character that derives from the politics of identity in the present’.216

Robinson later mirrors the earlier interests of Arnold Wilson and Fred Graham, who had been investigating Aboriginal funeral posts. Primitivistic, modernist reductive tendencies and an international interest in indigeneity, all combine at the ‘site’ of Robinson’s early works whose totemic qualities reflect the investigations of the ‘Tovey Generation’ – his artistic whanau. Robinson contributed to the arts of his whanau wharenui, Takahanga, Kaikoura. Ngai Tahu had not maintained a tradition of carved houses and Takahanga now stands as a tribute to the contemporary Maori arts. Robinson worked collectively along with third generation contemporaries Heaphy and Cotton under the direction of Cliff Whiting and Sandy Adsett and many others. When asked how well received his work was within the context of his marae he

214 Interview 1, Robinson.
noted:’ Maori people on the marae can respond to quite abstract images without any problem whatsoever, even the kuia and kaumatua.  

1990 was celebrated by several exhibitions including Choice, a collection of Contemporary artists work at Artspace in Auckland, and Mana Tiriti: The Art of Protest and Partnership, at the Wellington City Gallery while the National Art Gallery hosted Kohia Ko Taikaka Anake (1990-91) a Nga Puna Waihanga exhibition representing, among others, three generations of contemporary Maori artists. Robinson was selected as a Ngai Tahu artist, and exhibited alongside contemporary and traditional Maori artists, as were Cotton, who was included in the Waitaha regional selection, and Hansen. Robinson was open about the importance of his artistic whanau and took solace in rediscovering a heritage he had previously been disconnected from:

It's a Maori-Renaissance thing and it's enriched my life like a religion in a way. We're getting over our colonial hang-ups and now we're starting to represent ourselves as New Zealanders.  

Cotton, unlike Robinson who investigated his heritage within the more public sculptural domain, privately explored his history initially by delving beneath the skin to a cellular level, producing painted poems of quiet contemplation. Figurative images of biomorphic forms ghost across the abstract ground in Celestial Nets (1991) (figure 34), seeking identity and origin beyond the individual, suggesting an essential universality of being: ‘A single cell divides, and divides again, setting in process a cycle of division and replication which will generate a human life.’  

These early works evoke poetic metaphor, they tug at the heart, and while they precede Cotton’s more conscious exploration of his Maori identity, they none-the-less exude a silence reminiscent of the work of Hotere and Brett Graham, their wairua sings softly to those who view them.

The work Cotton produced in 1991 with the support of a Te Waka Toi projects grant continued to explore biological structures, however, by 1992 painted canvas surfaces were exchanged for

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217 Interview 1, Robinson.
constructions referencing the architectural members and decorative forms of the traditional whare. Rib (1992) (figure 35), and other totemic 'pou' (supportive poles) containing tukutuku ‘scratchings’ of cellular and plant origin refer to the ‘tract’ of scientific philosophy, the ‘tract’ of organs within the body and a ‘tract’ of land, immeasurable and un-named. Robinson, also a recipient of a Te Waka Toi grant, constructed a number of large sculptures for Recognitions (1991) held in the McDougall Art Annex in Christchurch. The pieces were based on bone chests (waka koiwi) and spirit staffs (tiki wananga). The artist was interested in exploring myths, the origins of creation and re-interpreting and re-invigorating taonga and symbolism in an attempt to make the forms relevant to today. The wairua of the form was important to Robinson despite the absence of innate historical knowledge although his concerns were also very firmly entrenched in the importance of the form itself and the sensation of the object – how an audience responds to them visually and physically. Robinson located himself in the present through the past, promoting his Maori identity as a hybrid. The biomorphic, possum skin, phallic forms held a timeless enigmatic quality that transcended any specific cultural reference. Art critic and curator William McAloon writes a ‘tract’ drawing the work of these two contemporaries together:

These moments which occur in the works of Shane Cotton and Peter Robinson, are then, both timeless and ongoing, formed unto themselves and forming a passage in a larger cultural narrative, or narrative of cultures...Myth, science, art and time, which merge in the tracts that from Robinson’s and Cotton’s works, are all equally involved, too, in making a landscape, in making a body: creating, recording, constructing, developing it. 220

Aitua (1991) (figure 36) translated to mean god, is a piece subsequently purchased by the McDougall Art Gallery and was exhibited in Recognitions (1991), Kohia Ko Taikaka Anake (1991), and ARX3 (1992, Perth). According to a Maori model of the universe, the world of the atua (god or spirituality) is not separated absolutely from the world of the secular the symbiotic understanding is that everyday activity comes under the influence of spiritual powers, an awareness that typified Robinson’s early investigation into his heritage. Interestingly enough, Robinson himself is embarrassed by the work because of the apparent earnest, self-conscious quality of a person seeking to understand his heritage, which led to the defensive claim: ‘I was

more deceitful in the early days when it was honest’, perceiving that the ‘percentage’ paintings that followed were more his cynical ‘honest’ style’.221

Eugene Hansen (Ngati Maniapoto), and Chris Heaphy (Kai Tahu/Pakeha descent), are woven into the body of Robinson and Cotton’s text. All four artists were trained at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts and share an interest in investigating their identity as Maori and affirming their cultural origins, these threads draw them together into a distinctive and mutually supportive group that gives them individual strength. It is important that they identify with one another, for as Mane-Wheoki points out:

Unhappily the skills that university art school trained Maori artists acquire do not equip them to connect with the cultures and traditions of their iwi and whanau. The art school is not a whare wananga; a studio lecturer is not a tohunga; an art gallery is not a marae, nor is its wholly secular ambience conducive to an expression or experience of wairua Maori.222

Heaphy graduated with a fine arts degree in painting from Canterbury in 1991, and Hansen, who majored in sculpture, graduated in the same year, subsequently attending Christchurch College of Education in 1992, and maintaining an association with Steve Gibb through his teaching experience at Shirley Boys’ High School. Gibb, who wished to engender a sense of community223, was a touchstone for Robinson, Cotton, Hansen and Heaphy, all of whom exhibited together in A Survey of Contemporary Maori Art from the South Island (1993) at Te Taumata Art Gallery alongside Gibb. The four artists also chose to affirm their connection by exhibiting together at the Manawatu Art Gallery in Groundswell (1993).

Hansen, as a fellow sculptor, shares a close connection to Robinson. Unlike his contemporary, however, he has an easier relationship with te ao tawhito (the world of the ancestors), and as such is able to facilitate a path more smoothly between worlds. He aligns himself with a tradition of whare whakairo (carving), concerning himself with issues related to the land, the outward manifestation of which is less primitive than naïve in appearance. Hansen states:

My work is a visual investigation of the concepts of identity, whakapapa and taonga (whare whakairo). While making works

221 Interview 1, Robinson.
223 Interview with Eugene Hansen, Café in High Street, Auckland, October 17, 1997.
based in the narratives of my whakapapa it is my intention to work with the symbolism of whakapapa and iwi found in traditional and contemporary taonga.\textsuperscript{224}

Hansen identifies contemporary taonga as work produced by the Tovey generation of sculptors, and he perceives his work as a synthesis of traditional and contemporary Maori art traditions, ‘essentially’ related to the land, and of Euro-centric, Post-modern sculptural and installation based practices.\textsuperscript{225}

Identity can signify that a person has a ‘bounded’ core or ‘essence’ capable of being unveiled. Robinson, Cotton, Heaphy and Hansen, in their early investigations of his Maori heritage were attempting to uncover an unknown past, reveal themselves to themselves, by rediscovering their own cultural ‘essence’ – the language, myths, karakia, customs, and whakapapa, through the making of work, that was itself an expression of universally recognisable ‘essential’ qualities – totemic, formal, quiet and meditational. By reconnecting to the ‘essential’ elements of their culture the realisation dawned that out of this wholeness and continuity derived from a Maori worldview, some assumptions about authenticity can be made, although these are reconfigured through the experiences of post-colonialism, and the individual participating in contemporary indigenous life.

\textsuperscript{225} Interview with Eugene Hansen, Café in High Street, Auckland, October 17, 1997.
4.2 Identity In Focus: Shifting and Strategic 1993 - 1995

It is my belief that Maori identity is a matter of identifying yourself as Maori – belonging in terms of ancestral connections, as opposed to being a concept of how much Maori you are in terms of blood quantities.226

Peter Robinson

I wanted somehow to bring more prominence to [the] work, to comment on it and point out that the paintings weren’t simply naïve descriptions, that they had a strong conceptual basis tied intimately to identity.227

Shane Cotton

Identity can be described as being both socially constructed (non-essential) and implicitly actioned (essential) and it is defined through the conflict and play between these ‘states’ of being, weaving a web of truths. Identity may be ascribed in terms of labels and categories, as indicators of the singular, homogenous and fixed – essential Maoritanga markers, or in terms of post-colonial plurality, the constructed, strategic and mutable.

Cotton found his essential bearings, delving into the past as the result of being appointed, in 1993, to a lecturing position in Maori visual arts in the Department of Maori Studies at Massey University. He is of the belief that ‘the only way to move forward is to come to terms with what has happened in the past – revisiting can bring clarity to our existence in the present.’228

Working alongside prominent contemporary Maori artists and colleagues Robert Jahnke and Kura Te Waru Rewiri, teaching a four year degree that combines te reo (Language), tikanga (culture) and toi whakairo (visual arts), Cotton has increasingly gained competence in te reo and taha Maori, and in the process of researching his courses he discovered inspiration in the development of Maori folk art up to 1920. Pots, flags, battleships, cars, and planes appeared in meeting houses in the 1860s throughout the eastern tribal areas of the North Island as the result of the condemnation of Maori carving by the missionaries who proposed an alternative ‘appropriate’ art form.229 As well as studying these early forms Cotton made a trip to Rongopai,

one of the most highly regarded ‘painted’ houses situated near Gisborne on the East Coast. It had a lasting effect on him. *Diamond Line* (1995) (figure 37) typifies the work produced by Cotton that ‘grew’ out of this experience.

Combining newfound knowledge, selecting Maori folk art as the point of departure, and post-colonial realities Cotton developed a cache of symbolic imagery creating paintings that were distinctly different from previous scientific intercellular works, dealing instead with aspects of acculturation, appropriation, identity and history painted into deep solemn landscapes. Cotton says: ‘I think of my painting as landscape painting but not in the obvious way. The landscapes within these paintings are generic – they’re based on specific places but they are not depictions...There is also a theme of journeying in the work, which reflects what Maori, as a people, are still doing.’ 230

In contrast to investigating a broader Maori history, Robinson reveals his own essential marker of ‘authenticity’ which is 3.125 percent Maori, less than the necessary regulated amount required for ‘formal’ funding recognition, which was simultaneously in conflict and consent, with the identity rapidly being constructed for him within the arts establishment. Having ‘constructed’ a platform from which to stand, through greater knowledge of his heritage Robinson then set about ‘deconstructing’ the cultural politics of ethnicity and authenticity sanctioned and propagated by the art world – as a vehicle of careerism, he launched a counter-hegemonic attack. 3.125% can be taken to represent a ‘market added value’ on account of being biculturally ‘brown’ or in Robert Leonard’s words, a ‘guilt edged’ investment. 231 Cotton observes ‘pakeha have been buying into a “brown aesthetic” for a long time. Ralph Hotere, Para Matchitt and Robyn Kahukiwa, to name a few, have exhibited frequently in dealer situations, generating a high level of sales, often to pakeha buyers.’ 232

Robinson’s percentage series (1993) (figure 38) deliberately do not appropriate Maori imagery but rely instead, as earlier sculptural works did, on Robinson’s generic approach towards constructing a pictorial language, based as it is here, on the marks of rudimentary rock drawings from the Mid - and South Canterbury landscape and on naïve school-boy koru-ised forms.

Allusions to Gordon Walters, Theo Schoon and Colin McCahon are ‘appropriate’ at this juncture.

The stylised wakarererangi (aeroplane) is a recurrent figurative reference in Robinson’s work that transports him through his artistic career. It is derived, in part, from symbols used by the Ratana church, sharing with Cotton the re/membered historical reference of Maori folk art. The vessel of conveyance also transports him between cultures, negotiating the Spaces Between (1992), a shifting and contentious locale executed in a thick black bitumen ground; a transient material suggestive of the erosion of Maori culture. Discussing the impetus behind the percentage works, Robinson revealed how he had questioned his status as a product of tokenism and ‘political correctness’ and how others had been suspicious of his motivation for looking into his whakapapa, revealing the threads of his story:

They got very annoyed and they’d say “how much Maori are you?” I’d say a thirty-second Maori, and they would be pleased because I wasn’t very much Maori after all - people on the marae said it didn’t matter how much Maori you were, it was whether you were part of the family and whether or not you identified as being Maori. In the early ‘90s when I was getting into it I really staunchly believed I was Maori. 233

It is futile to use ‘bloody’ proportions to ascertain a person’s identity particularly within a Maori perspective. Maori have a history of inclusion, as Ranganui Walker points out, referencing the differing social attitudes towards children of mixed race, ‘half-castes’, who were socialised with taha Maori giving rise to the whakatauki: Behind the tattooed face is another man, his face is white. 234 Jahnke more succinctly states, ‘one is Maori because one has a whakapapa that is acknowledged and communicated with other Maori. 235 Cotton extends this truth within the realm of the art world, noting that the authenticity of Maori art needs to be answered by a Maori audience and ‘the need for justification is not coming from Maori quarters, but from those who seek to place Maori art in parentheses. We as Maori do not have to justify what Maori art is.’236

233 Interview 1 Robinson.
Tattooing his mark in signature, graffiti style on the arts establishment from a ‘white trash’ perspective, turning up the volume on the art debate at the same time was Tony de Latour. Informed by the ‘red-neck’ ‘white’ skinhead population of Christchurch, and the grungy low gutter appeal of a popular culture horror movie genre, de Latour scrawls ‘Bad White Art’ (1993) on gallery walls. In an ‘artistic- tag-team’ Robinson echoes these sentiments in Auckland’s K Road, *Pakeha have rights too.*

Bleached of any overt reference to bloodlines Robinson posted placard protests in a ‘sorry, sold out’ show, *New Lines Old Stock* (1994) at the Brooke/Gifford. Terms like ‘dirt cheap’ and ‘massive sell sale’ ‘many lines reduced by half’ maraud above the sub-text of the ravages of a post-contact era from a colonized perspective, in terms of bloodlines being depleted and land being sold very cheaply – effective economic and cultural disenfranchisement. Further ‘transactions’ illuminating a history of raw deals followed *New Lines Old Stock* (1994) declaring the art world a ‘container’ for cultural trade, the commercial juncture determining the ‘value’ of art, tradition and culture.

*Takeaways* (1995), a tall rectangular yellow vinyl bag with black handles and a vertical black zip which opens to reveal a sculptural piece by Hansen, addresses similar themes, commenting as it does on the commodification, packaging and increasing cultural portability of Maori art.

Robinson’s wool blankets are exchanged for tablecloths, and ‘dirt cheap’ signage becomes exhibition title *Dirt* in the work of Canterbury contemporary, Heaphy, executed during his Olivia Spencer Bower (O.S.B.) Fellowship in 1995. The award is granted from the trust fund of Canterbury ‘Group’ artist Olivia Spencer Bower, and it provides a salary and accommodation for a year to an emerging painter or sculptor who has a connection with the Canterbury region. The 2001 recipient of the award, Kristy Gorman, draws attention to the conscious or unconscious ‘appropriation’ of ideas and images of the artists within the ‘group’:

Within every family there exists a certain amount of sibling rivalry. Arguments do erupt when possessions are borrowed without asking, but there is no getting away from them, shared characteristics and resemblances are
undeniable and have continued to carry through into subsequent generations.237

One contemporary Maori artist unkindly refers to the phrase to ‘Heaphy’238 someone, meaning to appropriate an idea without acknowledgment, although the difficulty for Heaphy in following the track cut by Cotton in particular must be noted; he was initially destined to follow a path of self-identification already worn. He describes himself as taking a ‘middle view’, apparent in this statement of identity, ‘when I am on a Marae I’m Maori; when I’m in a gallery explaining my work I’m part Maori. That may sound hypocritical, but it is important for me to be seen as both.239

In an interesting twist on the appropriation debate, Heaphy acknowledges through his painting and via the vehicle of art criticism, some of the influential figures in the New Zealand art world, specifically McCahon and Walters. He struck up a special relationship with Gordon Walters, primarily because of a common interest in rock art and has ‘appropriated’ Walters with his permission.240 It is ironic that Walters own particular brand of abstract koru-‘like’ forms are considered by Panoho to have been inappropriately appropriative. Collaboration rather than appropriation between Walters and Heaphy occurred when they produced a work in partnership in the City Gallery for Stop Making Sense (1994), a show curated by George Hubbard. Eugene Hansen and sculptor Anton Parsons also worked together for the same show. Shedding new perspectives on the appropriation of cultural property, Shane Cotton reappropriated Dick Frizzell’s iconoclastic Grocer with Mako (1992) from his controversial Tiki series in Sold (1994). The copyright symbol at the bottom of the painting by Cotton’s signature reclaims cultural ownership. Cotton observes: ‘I am not interested in the appropriation debate per se but I am interested in a different way of viewing, a different perspective – which can sometimes be arrived at when the unfamiliar bumps into the familiar.’241 Picture Painting (1994) utilises Walter’s less familiar floral image Chrysanthemum (1944) to comment on the familiar notion of ‘hot’ property, a matter of hot debate.

237 Coupled with a conversation with the artist on the subject of Canterbury artists, this information is also sourced in the notes from a lecture delivered by Kristy Gorman to Elam students titled ‘Painting From the South’ in 2000.
238 Interview
240 Walters’s death marked a difficult time for Heaphy the extent of which is only indirectly touched on in the work dating from this period. In an interview in Christchurch on October 20 1998, Heaphy referred to the event as having generated a wellspring of ideas both personal and private that quietly inform his work.
Heaphy is satisfied with the direction he is taking in his current work and feels it has a much ‘clearer’ motivation and aesthetic.\textsuperscript{242} The Rua Kenena inspired imagery, playing cards, and prosthetic devises that had previously informed Heaphy’s work have been placed aside and he now, in typically post-modern fashion, builds on the history of images produced by New Zealand’s artists. Heaphy’s participation in \textit{Skywriters and Earthmovers} (1998) at the Robert McDougall Art Annex marks a shift away from contemporary ‘borrowing’ towards increasingly confident landscape-based work held together by a cohesive compositional design element from acknowledged sources. The McCahon quotation is evident in the ashen palette and white strokes across one hundred sheets of linen paper in \textit{Merri} (1998) (figure 39). The work was produced while Heaphy was on a three-month residence at the Melbourne Institute of Technology, having taken leave from his lecturing position, teaching painting and contemporary Maori art, at the Waikato Polytechnic. The subject of the paintings is a stream, named Merri located on the outskirts of Melbourne, from whose occupation Aboriginal inhabitants were unceremoniously forced out. The individual pieces, subsequently translated to large-scale abstract works to journey past, evoke familiar McCahonesque poetry and power.

\textsuperscript{242} Interview, Christchurch, October 20, 1998.
4.3 Careerism – The International Artist 1995 and Beyond

Fame's lens stands still for no one, not even art starlets.243

Robinson’s success has come under the microscope and has been found wanting by a number of monocultural eyes. The authors of Mataora: The Changing Face of Maori Art, note how ‘he has been heralded ‘heretic’ by the Pakeha art fraternity’.244 Art critic and curator Tessa Laird declared that ‘Robinson, [had] gone just about as far as he possibly [could] with 3.125% gas in his tank’, and was switching to a different fuel, branded “KKK.”245

Robinson takes his place within the arts establishment according to how he is seen, and is shaped into a more fluid ‘space’ by the words and perceptions of others. Too pale to be a considered a ‘real’ Maori artist, Laird declares that Robinson brandishes a ‘bogus Maori identity’ similarly seen to be too confrontational and career oriented to be ‘authentically Maori’ she states, ‘turn back the clock a little more, and we see a much more earnest representation of what a Maori artist ought to be and produce.’

Robinson is perceived by Laird as a protagonist, an ‘enfant terrible’ protesting to gain greater visibility within the art world, however, in an effort to advance her own career Laird ironically misinterprets some of the ‘essential’ elements of a pragmatic Maori history that encourages challenge (a haka in the face of complacency), confrontation, individualism and a politically active approach – the familiar patu-wielding paintbrush.

‘The New Zealand art world...would love nothing more than a Maori McCahon, an artist on whom the hopes of the moment might be pinned.’246 The art establishment’s response to Peter Robinson, to whom this statement by Justin Paton relates, has pivoted on a double-edged sword. Boy Am I Scared (1998) (figure 41) demonstrates Robinson’s awareness regarding his newly cast role. Critics have deemed him to be ‘every curator’s ideal a (Clayton’s) Maori artist’ the ‘bad­boy of the art institution’ and ‘a stroppy and none-too-willing candidate for the role of Maori art star’. Labels stick to Robinson like possum fur nailed to native timber, as this artist is both

elected and admonished for a role he is not entirely responsible for creating. Paton’s decree that ‘we will know ourselves better when we conduct an anatomy of that response’ may well expose an institutional body more ‘dazed and confused’\(^{247}\) than Robinson himself. Robinson is, ironically, increasingly ambivalent about being labeled as a Maori artist at a time when he is being embraced by an international art market for the markers of indigeneity in his work and is nationally revered for his success and his Kai Tahu people are honoured by the growing mana of their whanau member.

The shifting, contestable site of identity for the individual is also ‘determined by their anchoring within particular bodies or countries’\(^{248}\) as Kirby points out, which in Robinson’s case up until 1995, was Christchurch, New Zealand a physical space that is an essential reference point defining who he is within a perceptively ‘real’ geographical location. Robinson transported himself into an international context that year and his usually fixed national boundaries had to be renegotiated within an international forum the artist stated he initially found himself ‘at sea’. Developing his own touristic picture postcard of inverted European iconography and multilingual graffiti, *Return of the French Letter* (1996), a work belonging to the University of Canterbury collection, has the marks of alienation angrily inscribed: ‘They call me primitive but you don’t see me shitting on their back door step!’

Robinson’s participation in *Cultural Safety* (1995), his selection for a residence in Aachen, Germany, coupled with taking up a residence at the Goethe Institute in Dusseldorf, Germany (1996) was both an exciting and difficult time for the artist.\(^{249}\) The biggest difficulty he faced was that in ‘transporting’ culture across the continents something was lost in the translation. German critic Astrid Mania, who later married Robinson, comments on the reverse of a Eurocentric tradition, the inherent difficulty of dragging foreign culture to Europe, reflecting that, ‘it took us some time to believe in the irony of Robinson’s work…we were trying so hard to be culturally correct.’\(^{250}\)

\(^{247}\) Clayton is considered the appropriate term to define the unsatisfying and the artificial. Robinson was labelled as such by Tessa Laird, ‘2 Cents, Cultural Hasty’, 25 August 1997.


\(^{249}\) Second Interview with Robinson, Christchurch, August 27, 1997.

As a migrant body, emigrating to Germany and returning again, Robinson transferred the swastika, testing the political temperature of the waters within a New Zealand context. They were apparently 'boiling' the KKK criticism relates to *Pakeha Have Rights Too*, a series of paintings that were an artistic comment on issues of racism, the under-class backlash to positive discrimination, and anti-immigration rhetoric delivered by Winston Peters and John Banks; and *NaZi* (1997), purchased by the Dunedin Art Gallery, revealing Maori support for nationalism as politically supportive of 'fascist ideals – biculturalism as the creation of a pale race.' Laird's heated comments ironically have overtones of racial intolerance, conceiving as she does, of a homogeneous Maori culture embraced within a nationalist rhetoric.

Robinson has gained an increasingly international reputation as an indigenous artist who is prepared to voice his political protest through his work. He has an intuitive sense of the political pulse and how best to display this for maximum effect, recently attacking increasingly macrocosmic concerns of a postcolonial nature that relate to an international audience. He was included in the Johannesburg Biennale (1997), and describes *The Great Plane Race* (1997) as a comment on the 'processes of colonisation and turning the whole colonial process on its head.' Robinson has taken a pro-active stance, representing the rights of indigenous peoples and contributing to the international debate concerning the rights to intellectual and cultural property within South African, Australian and South American contexts, negotiated while he was either in residence or exhibiting in these countries.

Tracking Robinson's career is a case of 'watch this renegotiated space'. In reply to a question concerning possible directions he states: 'I think people in the cultural world will get very tired of the identity thing - myself I can't stand world art, global art and the melting pot effect... I think people will think it is trite. There have been a whole lot of shows about global culture and post-colonial ideas and ethnicity and the center existing on the margins and I think people will get tired of that debate.' Replete with irony, these are the very thematic fodder of Robinson's artistic success, albeit transported through a filter of individual ambivalence that keeps the art world on its toes and the artist in work. In 1999 he was selected for representation in the Sao Paulo Biennale, he received a Kunstlerhaus Bethanien Scholarship for a residency in Berlin he was among the New Zealand group of fourteen artists showing in *Toi Toi Toi* in Kassel, Germany and he has recently been asked to exhibit at the Venice Biennale.
In a continuing process of negotiation and re-invention, signposted by a growing cache of graffiti style signs and figurative images, colonised for their political poignancy, executed in a range of media that mediate between sculpture, painting, signage and installation Robinson successfully constructs a navigational path between cultures. His latest popular-cultural products do, as During suggests, 'have positive quasi-political effects' that operate 'independently of education and critical discourse.' At this juncture of Robinson's art story are his own words they follow a lay-line already traveled by Ralph Hotere, who argues that in the end it is the artist's right to define their own history:

*Are you a Maori artist?*

*Do you think I am a Maori artist?*

*I don't think I like to call myself a Maori artist any more, I think I like to call myself an artist of Maori descent.*

251 Interview 2, Robinson.


253 Interview 2, Robinson.
Conclusion: Journey Without End

This is a tradition that looks back and looks forward, it looks inward and it looks outward. It is a journey without end.\textsuperscript{254}

The third generation of contemporary Maori artists have interrogated the past and drawn the threads of their heritage towards themselves in their search for - in the case of Canterbury graduates Robinson and Cotton - or in their assertion of - in relation to Auckland graduates Reihana, Graham and Parekowhai - their identity. They investigate their cultural identity within their own framework of understanding as ‘products’ of a postmodern, postcolonial age, addressing issues of authenticity, racism and gender in the process. At the heart of their art lies their whakapapa that gifts a \textit{mauri} that is the ‘breath’, ensuring the survival of the contemporary Maori arts.

Tipene O’Regan writes that ‘I and my tribe are the present expression of our tupuna and the source of our uri, our descendants. We are both past and future, as well as ourselves...I am the primary proprietor of my past.’ His view represents a Maori world view of the past, living on in the present to fulfil the aspirations of Maori people in the future:

Most important of all, there is whakapapa – the key to who we are. It carries both the past and the present and is the vehicle of our future. Nothing has changed the values that surround it. In my view, nothing will. It is the testament to our sense of being indigenous. It lends possessiveness to our view of our past. It lays claim to the old bones buried in the landscape of Aotearoa, which it declares Maori.\textsuperscript{255}

The third generation all lay claim to a whakapapa and within an inclusive understanding of Maori art that is all that needs to be known. Visiloni Hereniko writes that ‘cultural identities are always in a state of becoming, a journey in which we never arrive; who we are is not a rock

\textsuperscript{254} Witi Ihimarea, Robert Jahnke \textit{Mataora: The living Face of Contemporary Maori Art.} p.52.
\textsuperscript{255} Tipene O’Regan. ‘Who Owns the Past? Change in Maori Perceptions of the Past.’ \textit{Te Ao Marama} 2. p.338-339
passed down from generation to generation, fixed and unchanging.256 The contemporary arts have been transformed at the hands of this generation who convey new ‘hybrid’ realities, products of a cross-cultural fusion, to the generation of contemporary Maori artists who follow, carving out a path wellworn with the marks of national and international success.

Peter Robinson and Shane Cotton have both enjoyed national and international ‘art-star’ status, rising in meteoric fashion through the ranks of the New Zealand art institution. A decade after receiving Creative New Zealand grants, these two artists have fulfilled the intent of the Te Waka Toi brief which sets out to ‘encourage promote and support the arts in New Zealand for the benefit of all New Zealanders.’257 Justin Paton describes the effect of their rise to fame within the art world in his familiar ‘urbane’ tone:

Along with his unrulier contemporary Peter Robinson, Cotton has emerged in the last few years as a boy wonder of New Zealand painting, and his comet-like flight to fame has passed into art-world folklore. Audiences swoon: curators beat a path to his dealers’ doors: herds of panicky punters queue for his work, check books aflutter. Hell, he is even doing a mural for the Auckland casino.258

The hauntingly poetic, historical works by Cotton, immaculately painted and beautifully drafted, plot a personal journey that has become a pilgrimage to the past reconfigured in the present. Cross (1996) (figure 43) is a work that is both intricate and dense with layered ‘texts’. Using painting as a platform from which to investigate his identity as Maori, Cross ‘marks’ out the change and disruption visited upon Cotton’s ancestors brought about by colonial occupation to the left of the painting, while on the right the artist explores images of a renewed re-evaluation of his Maoritanga that asserts the centrality of land as the anchor for history and life. In the six years since the completion of this work Cotton has emerged as a ‘major presence in New Zealand art,’259 and was rewarded by the arts establishment with the Frances Hodgkins Fellowship at the University of Otago (1999). He now exhibits on the international stage, and was included in both the successful exhibition at Mori Gallery in Sydney and the opening show at the Centre Cultural Tjibaou in New Caledonia, and won the Seppelt Art Award at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

258 Justin Paton. ‘For Tangled Times.’ Listener, July 8 1995, p.44.
259 William McAloon. ‘Stirring the Pot: Recent Painting By Shane Cotton.’ Art New Zealand 90, Autumn 1999. p.70.
in Sydney (1998). Shane Cotton has a special gift with which he honours his ancestors, it is the seed that sits comfortably in his being – a seed that gives life to pure talent.

Fellow Canterbury graduate Chris Heaphy has emerged quietly out of the shadow cast by his peers and gains an increasingly respected reputation as a contemporary Maori artist in his own right. His contribution to *Parihaka: The Art Of Passive Resistance* (2000), *Stereo (Tohu and Te Whiti)* was described by Peter Simpson as ‘the largest and most majestic of the commissioned works’\(^\text{260}\). More recently he has received recognition by his Kai Tahu iwi, and is one of a number of artists in the 2001 Christchurch Arts Festival exhibition *Haumi E! Hui E! Taiki E!* ‘draw together, affirm!’ The Arts Festival catalogue describes the show as one, which ‘highlights the relationship between artist/individual and iwi and represents an alliance, a coming together, a meeting, an entering into relationship and affirmation of Kai Tahutaka.’\(^\text{261}\)

‘We seem to be entering a new world era of regionalism and even tribalism where regional and local identity is a vital factor in the face of attempts to find or force a commonality,’ writes Caroline Turner.\(^\text{262}\) At the risk of ‘forcing’ the Auckland hapu of ngati-arty to comply with a singular ‘essential’ understanding, it is apparent that their close connection knowledge of themselves as Maori has offered them a freedom within their creative sphere. Lisa Reihana, Brett Graham and Michael Parekowhai all regularly exhibit in the Asia-Pacific Triennials, looking out to the North, a pan-Pacific understanding of indigeneity informs their art practice. In the central court of the Tjibaou Cultural Centre is a sculpture by Graham, testimony to the status of Maori artists as artists of the Pacific. The 2000 biennial brief for *D’Art Contemporain de Noumea* (2000) defines the particularity of being an ‘Island Country’, knowing no frontiers – united by ocean, the Pacific arts speak a common language. The three Elam graduates have been less plagued by accusations regarding authenticity by critics and ‘punters’ alike. Graham has been free to investigate the universality of his sculptural form without fear of ‘appropriating’ traditional motifs, Parekowhai and Reihana negotiate the mass-cultural urban domain in ‘high spirits’, secure in their whakapapa, they are free to ‘play’ with all the media and technologies available to them.


\(^{261}\) ‘Haume E! Hui E! Taiki E!’ *Arts 01*, p. 35.

\(^{262}\) Caroline Turner. *Internationalism and Regionalism: Paradoxes of Identity*
There is new life-blood pumping through the veins of the contemporary Maori art movement that was celebrated in *Hiko! New Energies in Maori Art* (1999), ‘hosted’ by the Robert McDougall Art Gallery Annex, Christchurch. The show represented urban artistic talents, and co-curators Jonathan Mane-Wheoki and Deidre Brown drew the most pivotal members of this fourth generation of contemporary Maori artists together. The artists gaining increasing recognition are Darryn George, Kirsty Gregg, Olivia Haddon, Eugene Hansen, Lonnie Hutchinson, Keri Whaitiri and Grace Voller. Other fourth generation ‘Hot Shots’ who deserve to be mentioned are Rueben Patterson, Saffron Te Ratana, Isiaha Te Rangatira Barlow, Nigel Borell (student of Michael Parekowhai from the Elam School of Fine Arts), Hemi McGregor, Dion Hitchens, Melaina Newport-Karaitiana and Fiona Ngahuia Osborne, all of whom were selected to represent New Zealand at the Biennale of Contemporary Arts in Nouma (2000).

**Hot Shot Views**

*It’s like a bandaid really isn’t it – Maori Art.* Ralph Hotere says I am an artist first; well I’m probably a mother first and then I’m an artist because of my genealogy certain things are going to come to the forefront and if people want to say I’m a Maori artist then fine. If people want to call me a Lesbian artist, fine, but I think the important thing is for the artist to know who they are and what they are doing and if you want to put us in a box then put us in a box but I feel it’s all just art Academic rhetoric that goes on and on.

Lonnie Hutchinson.264

*I’m an artist. It took me a long time to get a clear picture of myself as such. I am not simply a contemporary Maori artist, these categories should not be exclusive, and it is not necessary to be only one thing.*

Eugene Hansen.265

*I do identify as Maori, in so far as I mention my Ngati Mahuta descent and if anyone is writing about my work is always referred to, but content-wise it is more about experience that I feel is relevant.*

Kirsty Gregg.266

There is an easy self-acceptance that typifies this generation, no longer do they feel the need to prove their bloodlines they are their bloodlines and they make art. The question of identity is less pressured for these individuals who clearly have a ‘tribal’ affiliation of artists from whom they

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263 I use the term ‘hosted’ here because as Deidre Brown points out ‘The art gallery can be interpreted as being a wharenui (meeting house) when it is occupied by the work of Maori artists. Deidre Brown, ‘Te Whare Mahi Hiko – The Powerhouse’. Ibid.

264 Interview with Lonnie Hutchinson in Christchurch on November 15 1998.

265 Interview with Eugene Hansen in Auckland October 17 1997.

266 Interview with Kirsty Gregg in Christchurch on March 2 1998.
gather collective strength. As recognisably economically viable, contributing members of the contemporary arts establishment they are no longer required to produce ‘proof’ of ‘Maoriness’ and are free to explore the creative possibilities of their arts.

Aware of the importance of the support of the generations who have preceded her, ‘Hot Shot’ artist Lonnie Hutchinson accounts for their influence in the artistic practice of the current generation of Maori artists:

The new wave has been influenced quite a lot by the Young Guns. And before that with the likes of Fred Graham, Arnold Wilson and Robyn Kahukiwa and artists like that – I think basically each group is laying a platform that is getting bigger and wider in breadth and we’ve been able to hop on, they have been there to basically tautoko us and bring us on and I think that’s really important.267

As with the Tovey generation and the second generation of artists who have gone before them the ‘Young Guns’ have all been educated in the Western institutions and continue to be educators in that same world, education continues to assume a key role within the survival of the contemporary Maori arts:

Education has a lot to do with it, Maori have come into the cities, Polynesian people have been supported more and have trained in art schools and design schools and even though they are the minority in there, there has always been at least one other or another two and hopefully a tutor. I think it has been more accessible to actually become an artist.268

Like their predecessors, the ‘Young Guns’269, the ‘Hot Shots’ are tertiary educated although with an increasing tendency away from the ‘pure’ painterly and sculptural arts towards design-based media that employ increasingly sophisticated technologies. Unlike their predecessors, they have not necessarily attended an art school within the university system but rather they encompass a range of tertiary institutions available to them. They are urban-based, however, they are no longer ‘dislocated’ in the sense that they have their own ‘iwi’ of urban artists dividing into two distinct hapu, predominantly of either an Auckland or Christchurch location, and they have a

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267 Interview with Lonnie Hutchinson in Christchurch November 15 1998.
268 Ibid.
recognisable whakapapa of artists with whom they identify who work within an almost exclusively urban sphere.

Among the Auckland ‘blues’ were reconscripted Canterbury graduates Eugene Hansen, currently lecturing at the Unitec School of Design, and Kirsty Gregg, fashion guru of ZFA clothing outlets, who now resides in Auckland, Olivia Haddon (Ngati Wai, Ngati Ruanui) graduate with a Bachelor of Design from the Unitec School of Design and Lonnie Hutchinson, originally from Auckland, who recently moved South to complete a year of training at the Christchurch College of Education, and was subsequently awarded a Pacific residency at the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of Canterbury. While in residence Hutchinson cast a fresh eye on the Canterbury art scene from an Auckland’s perspective and found the South wanting. Hutchinson is accustomed to the cosmopolitan inclusive and Pacific lifestyle of the North and she states: ‘Island countries know no frontiers – they are united by the ocean. Art has no nationality: it is a common language that fosters understanding.’ Re/membering the vocal echo protest of artist Emare Karaka, Hutchinson declared that ‘despite the diversity of the Christchurch population the art institution is ‘middle-class and white’, and went on to say that the ‘agents of the art world ignored Maori and Pacific artists’ and ‘the arts establishment down here rests its laurels on artists like Rita Angus, W.A.Sutton and Bill Hammond’ whom she believes no longer reflect the community of Christchurch.

Aware of the benefits of pursuing a career in the north, Gregg, who originally graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Canterbury in 1993, appeared recently ‘reframed’ under the label ‘Auckland artist’ on One National news at the opening of the latest contemporary collection Prospect 2001: New Art New Zealand, Wellington City Gallery. Gregg, ex-Canterbury Crusader, is aware she is a contemporary Maori artists conscripted to the nationalistic cause. Within a postmodern framework irony is a commodity of trade, and Gregg, presently the equivalent of a blind-side flanker in the contemporary Maori art world, co-opts the rugby ‘culture’ of our nation to fulfil this purpose.

Modernist colour field paintings are also rugby fields, the Maori artist is couched as a ‘team player’. Rugby also functions as a metaphor of inclusion in Gregg’s work that spirals towards

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270 The Letter was referred to in an article by Tara Ross, Pacific Remedy: In the Frame Lonnie Hutchinson. Wednesday, August 30, 2000.p34.
the advice of Ngata who encouraged rugby as a way of relieving iwi tensions. Historically the European ‘game’ was adopted by Maori for their own benefit, and it is one context in which New Zealanders consistently embrace and worship the achievements of Maori on equal terms. Maori are still the ‘winners’ as history repeats itself in an ‘art game’, whose key players represent a nation and fulfil the aspirations of Maori.

As the cultures of New Zealand ‘convolute, parallel and merge’ the contemporary Maori visual arts continue, as has been our nation’s tradition, to remain separate, providing New Zealanders with a visual picture of our world. The contemporary Maori art movement is flourishing, spreading regenerative filaments onto fertile artistic ground: survey exhibitions are planned for Auckland, Porirua and Wellington, and a number of publications on Maori Art are about to be added to the written histories of this land. Contemporary Maori art is now central to New Zealand’s art story, and Jaqueline Fraser and Peter Robinson, the country’s first official representatives of the 2001 Biennale opening in Venice, are at the forefront of our country’s burgeoning international profile.

Reihana, Graham, Parekowhai, Cotton and Robinson are acceptable to the art establishment because they have become an integral to a New Zealand Art Story. They have well and truly moved ‘from the margins to the centre’, reconciling Maori concerns and concepts within a western construct, upholding established ideals for an inclusive but ‘indigenous’ artistic identity. The ‘Young Guns’ have been valorised, their individual talents have been parallel to New Zealand’s internationally recognised ‘greats’, Ralph Hotere, Colin McCahon and Gordon Walters. The artists are endorsing a cultural space whose lineaments are recognisable, we can historise the aesthetic and identify with the quest of those seeking an identity.

In the context of a postmodern, pluralistic conceptual model and the ‘politics of survival’, the indigenous people of New Zealand have ‘learned the trick of standing upright here’271 They subvert an ‘essential’ understanding, and the whakatauki Clay will not cling to iron (e kore e piri te uku ki te rino) is disproved, the clay sticks. There is a Maori he/art in a Pakeha

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organisation. The spiral draws inwards and outwards, the spiralling binary bites of Robinson’s *Divine Comedy* (2001) a happy reminder of the extent to which the third generation of contemporary Maori artists have fulfilled Sir Apirana Ngata’s ohaki:

Grow up and thrive for the days destined to you
Your hands to the tools of the Pakeha to provide physical sustenance, your heart to the treasures of your Maori ancestors as a diadem for your brow, your soul to your God to whom all things belong.

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272 Gerard O'Regan stated that ‘You can’t put a Maori heart into a Pakeha organisation, see *Bicultural Developments in Museums of Aotearoa: What is the Current Status?’* Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa. Wellington. 1997.
Appendix

Contemporary Maori Art Chronology

1926 Apirana Ngata organised the Rotorua School of Carvers to work on Wharenui Tukaki under the instruction of John Taiapa. (By an act of Parliament)

1927 School commenced in Rotorua. Six Arawa carvers mainly from Ngati Whakaue.

1940 Centennial Exhibition of New Zealand Art
Oriwa T Haddon, the only artist of Maori descent represented in the survey.

Whare Runanga opened at Waitangi.

1943 ‘May I be permitted to draw attention to one aspect of Arts Crafts where practically nothing has been even attempted much less accomplished? We have in Auckland Province 60,000 Maori people who have a rich artistic culture of their own; but this Society of Arts does nothing to encourage them to develop and strengthen it. Is a renaissance, a new flowering of the Polynesian genius for sculpture and painting, so unlikely that we need do nothing about it, or is our outlook so insular, so parochial that we cannot find interest or duty outside the narrower outlook of the European arts?’ – R. O Ross, President, Auckland Society of Arts

1946 Gordon Tovey appointed first national Supervisor of Art and Crafts for the Department of Education (1/2/46 until retirement in 1960)

Te Puoho Katene a student at the ‘Canterbury University College School of Arts’

John Scott enrolled in the Auckland University College School of Architecture – the first Maori architectural student

1947 The word ‘native’ was replaced by Maori in all official use

1948 Studio, April 1948: special issue on New Zealand art – no contemporary Maori artists represented

1949 Hirini Moko Mead was appointed assistant area organiser in art & craft, East Coast (and Bay of Plenty, 1951)

1950 Death of Sir Apirana Ngata

1951 Maori Women’s Welfare League founded

1952 Hotere’s first solo exhibition, Dunedin Public Art Gallery
First issue of the magazine Te Ao Hou is published by the Department of Maori Affairs, which gave a voice to Maori interests.
Selwyn Wilson – the first Maori fine arts graduate from a university art school, Elam School of Fine Arts
1954  Arnold Wilson graduated Dip FA with Honours in Sculpture, Elam School of Fine Arts

1955  First Exhibition of Contemporary Maori Art, Auckland

1961  Hotere awarded NZAS Fellowship to study in London

Publication: *The Arts of the Maori*
Advisory Committee: Marewa McConnell, Maud Isaacs, Mere Kururangi, Sidney Mead, Whare Isaacs, Pine Taiapa, Murray Gilbert

*Paintings from the Pacific*, Auckland City Art Gallery – no Maori artists represented

1962  Selwyn Muru: first solo exhibition, Ikon Gallery, Auckland
Paratene Matchitt, Arnold Wilson included in *Contemporary New Zealand Painting and Sculpture*, Auckland City Arty Gallery

Katarina Mataira article, ‘The Arts of the Maori’, *Te Ao Hou*, 38

1963  Ngaruwhaia Exhibition

1966  Exhibitions in Hamilton at the Maori Arts Festival and in Christchurch, *New Zealand Maori Culture and the Contemporary Scene* was held at the Canterbury Museum.

1969  Festival of the Arts held at the Ngaruwhaia centennial and included work by:
Paratene Matchitt (Whanau-a-Apanui)
Arnold Wilson (Tuhoe)
Selwyn Muru (Ngatikuri, Te Aupouri) as well as Theo Schoon

The New Zealand Maori Council organised the first public gallery exhibition of contemporary Maori art at the National Art Gallery Wellington. It was the first time Maori had attempted to use such a venue to showcase their work.

1975  Britons voted to enter the European Economic Community. New Zealanders British subjects no longer. Enforced independence new trading opportunities sought, new political and economic alliances forged, increasingly with countries outside the English-speaking world. These external developments were to have far-reaching cultural consequences for New Zealand.

The New Zealand Maori Artists and Writers Society held its first hui (meeting), at Te Kaha.

1975  Treaty of Waitangi Act passed acknowledging the compact that had been entered into in 1840. The Act repositioned New Zealand as a bicultural nation; and enabled a Tribunal to be established to consider Maori grievances of longstanding against the Crown.

The out-going Labour government created the Waitangi Tribunal to investigate Maori land grievances. Maori protesters marched from the far North to Parliament in Wellington, evidencing a new militancy.
1976 *Art New Zealand* begins publication.

The New Zealand Maori Artists and Writers Society held its first exhibition at the South Pacific Festival of the Arts, Rotorua

*Contemporary Maori Art, Waikato Art Museum*

"Clearly the museum profession has a duty to present the Maori artist in a different light and this is certainly what this Waikato Art Museum exhibition aims to achieve. It is largely the creative spirit of present day Maori art that we see here and not the degraded remnants of a once virile art form". – Ken Gorby, Director

Artists: Sandy Adsett, Fred Graham, Rangimarie Hetet, Ralph Hotere, John Hovell, ‘Mana’ [Arnold Wilson], Katarina Mataira, Paratene Matchitt, Albert McCarthy, Selwyn Muru, Darcy Nicholas, Buck Nin, Hone Tāiapa, Benjamin Pitman, Digger Te Kanawa, Inia Te Wiata, Tony Tukaokao, Te Hau Tutua, Cliff Whiting

1977 *Contemporary Maori Artists, National Art Gallery*

Ralph Hotere, Matt Pine, Cliff Whiting

1978 Protests continued over the alienation of Maori land. Police evicted Ngati Whatua protesters from Bastion Point.

1982 *Contemporary Maori Art, Manawatu Art Gallery*

Included: Paratene Matchitt, Matt Pine, Arnold Wilson

New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, Wellington – experimented with traditional taonga and contemporary Maori art [Hotere]

1984 *Te Maori: Maori Art from New Zealand Collections*. Metropolitan Museum, New York (and subsequently in Saint Louis, San Francisco and Chicago)

‘Primitivism’ in Twentieth-Century Art opened at the Museum of Modern Art

*Seven Maori Artists* [New Zealand Maori Artists and Writers Society]

Rangimarie Hetet, Diggeress Te Kanawa, Puti Rare, Pakariki Harison, Tuti Tukaokao, Para Matchitt, Buck Nin, Fred Graham, Arnold Wilson, Selwyn Muru, Ralph Hotere

1985 Publication: Ken Adams, *A Survey of Contemporary New Zealand Sculpture*

Maori artists included: Jacqueline Fraser, Fred Graham, Maori Arts and Crafts Institute, Paratene Matchitt, Matt Pine, Arnold Wilson

1986 *Content/Context: A Survey of Recent New Zealand Art, National Art Gallery*

Maori Artists included: Shona Rapira Davies, Jacqueline Fraser (no profile as a Maori artist at this stage), Paratene Matchitt, Matt Pine, Arnold Wilson

*Sculpture 1986: Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art, Auckland City Art Gallery*

Maori artists included: Jacqueline Fraser, Selwyn Muru

*Haonga Te Taonga, Centre for Contemporary Art, Hamilton*
Publication: Darcy Nicholas and Keri Saa. *Seven Maori Artists*

Publication: Patricia Grace/Robyn Kahukiwa, *Wahine Toa*

*Karanga, Karanga*, City Gallery, Wellington

1987 Maori Language Act; Maori Language Commission

1988 *Whakamamae*, City Gallery, Wellington

[Shona Rapira Davies, Robyn Kahukiwa]

Rangihiroa Panoho, ‘Paratene Matchitt’, MA thesis in art history, University of Auckland


1990 *Mana Tiriti: The Art of Protest and Partnership*, City Art Gallery, Wellington, 18 April

Five Pakeha artists; Maori artists included: Haecate Collective, Robert Jahnke, Robert Pouwhare, Diane Prince, Irirapeti Ramsden and Paparanagi Reid, Kura Te Waru-Rewiri

*Kohia ko Taikaka Anake*, National Art Gallery, Wellington

1992 *Headlands: Thinking Through New Zealand Art*, held at Sydney’s Museum of Contemporary Art. Of the thirty eight artists represented, eight were Maori: Sandy Adsett, Shona Rapira Davies, Lyonel Grant, Ralph Hotere, Rangimarie Hetet, Paratene Matchitt, Michael Parekowhai, Cliff Whiting

*Te Waka Toi: Contemporary Moari Art from New Zealand*

Artists Included: Sandy Adsett, Shona Rapira Davies, John Bevan Ford, Fred Graham, Lyonel Grant, Ross Hemera, Rangimarie Hetet, Robert Jahnke, Robyn Kaukiwa, Emily Karaka, Riki Manuel, Albert McCarthy, Selwyn Muru, Manos Nathan, Darcy Nicholas, Erenora Puketapu-Hetet, Buck Nin, Kura Te Waru-Rewiri, Baye Riddell, Emily Schuster, Digger Te Kanawa, Cliff Whiting, Arnold Wilson

1993 *Te Waka Toi* toured the United States, included works by Marae-based carvers and weavers working with traditional materials and techniques.

First *Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*. Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

Seven New Zealand artists represented, of whom two were Maori: Robyn Kaukiwa, Selwyn Muru and Robin White

1994 Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Act 1994. Act set out to ‘encourage, promote, and support the arts in New Zealand for the benefit of all New Zealanders’; recognize the cultural diversity of the people of New Zealand’; recognize in the arts the
role of Maori as tangata whenua (people of the land, indigenous); recognise the arts of
the Pacific Islands’ people of New Zealand’ and ‘promote the development of a New
Zealand identity.’

Ngata Centenary, University of Canterbury, Christchurch

Toihoukura, School of Fine Arts Gallery, University of Canterbury, Christchurch

Aoraki/Hikurangi, Robert McDougall Art Gallery Annex, Christchurch
Artists included: Cath Brown, Jacqueline Fraser, Ross Hemera, Peter Robinson, John
Scott, Areta Wilkinson, Steve Gibbs, Robert Jahnke, Robyn Kahukiwa, Baye Riddell,
Ngapine Tamihana Te Ao, John Walsh

The First Art Now: Biennial Review of Contemporary Art, Museum of New Zealand Te
Papa Tongarewa. Of the thirty-one artists represented, six were of Maori descent:
Jacqueline Fraser, Brett Graham, Maureen Lander, Michael Parekowhai, Matt Pine, Peter
Robinson

Movie: Lee Tamahori’s Once Were Warriors

1995 Cultural Safety: Contemporary Art From New Zealand, Frankfurt Kunstverien/City
Gallery, Wellington. Of the seven artists represented, a great deal was made of the fact
that four were of Maori descent: Jacqueline Fraser, Fiona Pardington, Michael
Parekowhai, Peter Robinson

Symposium of indigenous artists, hosted by Maori in Rotorua, drew practitioners from
Japan, Papua New Guinea, Australia, New Caledonia, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Tonga,
Vanuatu, Hawai’i and the West Coast of North America.

Toihoukura, Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt

Korurangi: New Maori Art, New Gallery, Auckland City Art Gallery
Artists included: Shane Cotton, Jacqueline Fraser, Brett Graham, Chris Heaphy, Ralph
Hotere, Emily Karaka, Maureen Lander, Barnard McIntyre, Michael Parekowhai, Diane
Prince, Lisa Reihana, Peter Robinson

1996 Patua, City Gallery, Wellington

Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
Twelve New Zealand artists of whom several are of Maori descent, including Brett
Graham, Ralph Hotere, Lisa Reihana, Peter Robinson

1997 Opening of Centre Cultural Jean-Marie Tjibao, Noumea, New Caledonia
Collection of contemporary Pacific art to include works by Maori artists

1999 Hiko! New Energies in Maori Art, Robert McDougall Art Annex, Christchurch

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Robinson, Peter, Christchurch 17 May 1997

27 August 1997
Illustrations

‘Journey Without End’

1. *Divine Comedy* (detail) 2001 ____________________ Peter Robinson
2. *Black Phoenix* 1984 ___________________________ Ralph Hotere
3. *This is a Black Union Jack* 1983 _____________ Ralph Hotere
4. *Divine Comedy* (detail) 2001 _________________ Peter Robinson
5. *Lisa Reihana*
   Courtesy of the Sarjeant Art Gallery
   Wanganui
8. The Deification of Mihi Waka 1995 _____________ Jacqueline Fraser
   Courtesy of the Sarjeant Art Gallery
   Wanganui
9. *Photograph of Kirsty Gregg* 1998
   Courtesy of *The Press*
10. *Portrait of Jacqueline Fraser* 1986
    Photographer, Adrienne Martyn
    Courtesy of the Sarjeant Art Gallery
    Courtesy of the Artist
    (detail)
    Courtesy of the Artist
14. *Window, Door, Path* 2001 ____________________ Lonnie Hutchinson
    Courtesy of the Artist
15. *Window, Door, Path* 2001 ____________________ Lonnie Hutchinson
    Detail behind the Photograph
    The Artist Courtesy of *The Press*
Kirsty Gregg
Courtesy of Jonathan Smart

Kirsty Gregg
Courtesy Of Jonathan Smart

Kirsty Gregg

Lisa Reihana
Courtesy of Lonnie Hutchinson

20. *Shoal (detail)* 2001
Lisa Reihana
Courtesy of Lonnie Hutchinson

Lisa Reihana

22. *A Demure Portrait of the Artist Strip Searched* 2001
Jacqueline Fraser

23. *Waka Tumanako* 1993
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24. *Kahukura* 1995
Brett Graham

25. *Te Pu* 1993
Brett Graham

Michael Parekowhai

27. *Kiss the Baby Goodbye* 1994
Michael Parekowhai
Courtesy of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch.

Gordan Walters

29. *The Indefinite Article* 1990
Michael Parekowhai

30. *Beverley Hills Gun Club* 2000
Michael Parekowhai
Courtesy of Jonathan Smart

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32. *Liberty Davis* 2000
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Courtesy of Jonathan Smart

33. *Bohemian Rhapsody* 2000
Michael Parekowhai
Courtesy of Jonathan Smart
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<td><em>Aitua</em> 1992</td>
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<td><em>Diamond Line</em> 1995</td>
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<td>&quot;<em>Untitled</em>&quot; 1993</td>
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<td><em>Comet</em> 1974</td>
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<td><em>Divine Comedy</em> (detail) 2001</td>
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Illustrations 1-44 on the print thesis have not been included due to the copyright issues.