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KIWA

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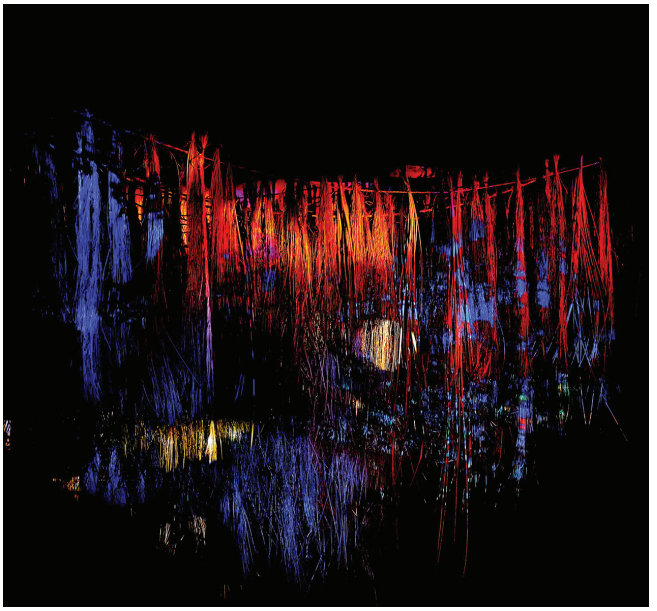
Ko Taranaki te maunga.
Ko Waitotoroa me Tangahoe ngā awa.
Ko Kurahaupō me Aotea ngā waka.
Ko Taranaki me Ngāti Ruanui ngā iwi.
Ko Ngāti Moeahu me Hāpōtiki ngā hapū.
Ko Parihaka me Taiporohēnui ngā Papakainga.
Ko Isaiah Okeroa tōku ingoa.

Kiwa embodies a journey of self-discovery and cultural revitalisation through mahi toi. As a takatāpui Māori navigating a conservative upbringing, this project explores my connection to Taranaki and Ngāti Ruanui while grappling with colonial and religious influences. Through mahi raranga, taonga pūoro and the moving image, *Kiwa* signifies a transformative process of reclaiming cultural identity and healing intergenerational disconnections. Drawing from indigenous methodologies like wānanga, this essay reflects on the impact of tikanga Māori in shaping personal and communal narratives, ultimately contributing to the preservation and revitalisation of Māori knowledge and practices.



"Hokia ki tō maunga kia pūrea ai e koe ki ngā Hau o Tāwhirimātea."
– Return to your mountain to be cleansed by the winds of Tāwhirimātea.

HE URI AHAU NŌ TARANAKI ME NGĀTI RUANUI

– I am a descendant of Taranaki and Ngāti Ruanui

Although I was born and raised in Waihōpai, Murihiku, I whakapapa to Taranaki and Ngāti Ruanui, located in the west of Te Ika-a-Māui in Aotearoa. As a takatāpui Māori growing up in a conservative context, who was mostly guided by Catholic faith and values, it was challenging for me when it came to exploring the multiple aspects of my identity. My cultural heritage differed from my personal beliefs, which meant that it was easy to allow the cultural identity of my whanau to fade behind colonial and religious scaffolding. Tertiary study has helped me address my generational disconnect to Te Ao Māori and has allowed me to find solace within my art practice. I believe my mahi toi is a pathway for self-discovery and healing.

During my upbringing, art in any form has been a remedial outlet; I have always had a strong relationship with my creative instincts. This connection comes from observing how my mother would apply her creative and artistic abilities to any aspect of our lives. As we moved around a lot in Waihōpai, I was always surrounded by sculptural elements and forms in our whare, ranging from tribal masks to impressive copies of Goldie paintings. My mother would express her relationship with Māoritanga through the art she would select for our home. This made me realise that art has a way of visually representing and reflecting our values, beliefs and cultural connections. Through her actions, my mother created a meaningful domestic environment, allowing art to be the sole space of expression for our cultural identity, especially in a context where ancestral links were absent.

Kiwa incorporates Te Ao Māori elements such as tikanga, mahi raranga and taonga pūoro. Together, these components expand, elaborate and visually demonstrate the emotions and thoughts that fuel this journey. My engagement with these elements has allowed me to further investigate and interpret my cultural identity through a meaningful dialogue and thus contribute to wider cultural revitalisation. Thus I am building on the foundation that my mother established in my youth.

TE WHĀINGA O TE AO TIKANGA

– The purpose of Te Ao Tikanga

Reconnecting with my cultural identity is an ongoing and lifelong journey. *Kiwa* has been instrumental in revealing that my most profound understanding of my whakapapa and Māoritanga occurs through creative processes and active participation within the Māori community. Therefore, my contribution to the revitalisation of Te Ao Māori is through mahi toi, guided by tikanga.

Taking the course, Toi Maruata Level 3, through Te Wānanga o Aotearoa has been a fulfilling experience and has been the backbone of my research process. Toi Maruata is an introductory level course where tauira learn the many modes of mahi toi such as whakairo, mahi raranga, mahi rongoa, waiata, kowhaiwhai patterns and peita kiriaku, while following tikanga and kawa.

Entering and navigating Te Ao Māori spaces through the indigenous methodology of wānanga has provided an immersive practice. Wānanga is a space that encourages the transmission and construction of Mātauranga Māori through the use of whakapapa performance, pōwhiri, waiata, karakia, whakataukī, kai, pūrākau and relationship building. It is in the space of wānanga that the genius of tupuna Māori is nourished and shared as a collective.

In their article "Wānanga as a Research Methodology," Nēpia Mahuika and Rangimārie Mahuika describe wānanga as a culturally grounded research methodology that positions the needs, priorities and knowledge base of Te Ao Māori. This method aligns with the core value of wānanga, which strives to empower and support the collective production of knowledge; it also disrupts and decolonises traditional Western research methods by centering Mātauranga Māori. *"Wānanga provides a unique methodological framework for the regulation and governance of collective*

knowledge construction, maintenance, and decision making."[1] This approach to research methodology requires a focus on knowledge translation, going against the Western paradigm of generating knowledge only for academic or intellectual purposes. This is achieved *"[b]y positioning the collective production of knowledge as central, including knowledge translation, rather than just relying on research outputs and a repositioning of researcher/researched relationships."*[2] This approach also allows the knowledge gained to be applied practically, in ways that benefit the community, ensuring that the research outcomes are accessible, meaningful and useful.

Through my course, Toi Maruata, every aspect of my hinengaro was stimulated as the result of being encouraged to enter a state of deep thought and reflection. Toi Maruata cultivates an atmosphere that encourages participants to express themselves and share their thoughts and perspectives without the fear of being judged or rejected. This sense of safety promotes a sense of unity and inclusivity, which aids participants in fully engaging with their cultural heritage, deepening their understanding and harnessing a rich sense of connection to Māori culture.

Through immersing myself in wānanga, I have been able to draw on the wisdom, experiences and techniques of my kaiako, classmates and tupuna, gifts which I could only receive kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face) and which are valid and credible because of the transmission of knowledge. Direct personal interaction and connection is highly valued by Māori and contributes to the authenticity and legitimacy of the Mātauranga being passed down. *"At a wānanga level, we can take the courageous space to not depend on the approval of established thought alone … This recognises that in some quarters this work is counter-hegemonic and counter scholarship."*[3] In a Te Ao Māori worldview, wānanga can range from the formal classroom setting to a relaxed one-on-one interaction; it is about uniting and passing on knowledge in a non-transactional way. It is about acknowledging information as taonga, and as something we earn instead of something we have a right to. Grounding my research in wānanga spaces allowed me to listen, respond and share my experiences. These moments of transmission confirmed the validity in my lived experiences; being born and raised away from my tūrangawaewae is a valid way of existing as a Tangata Māori. Through wānanga, the coming together of many forms and walks of life reinforces the culturally grounded pedagogies that coordinate with our ways of knowing and being in the world.

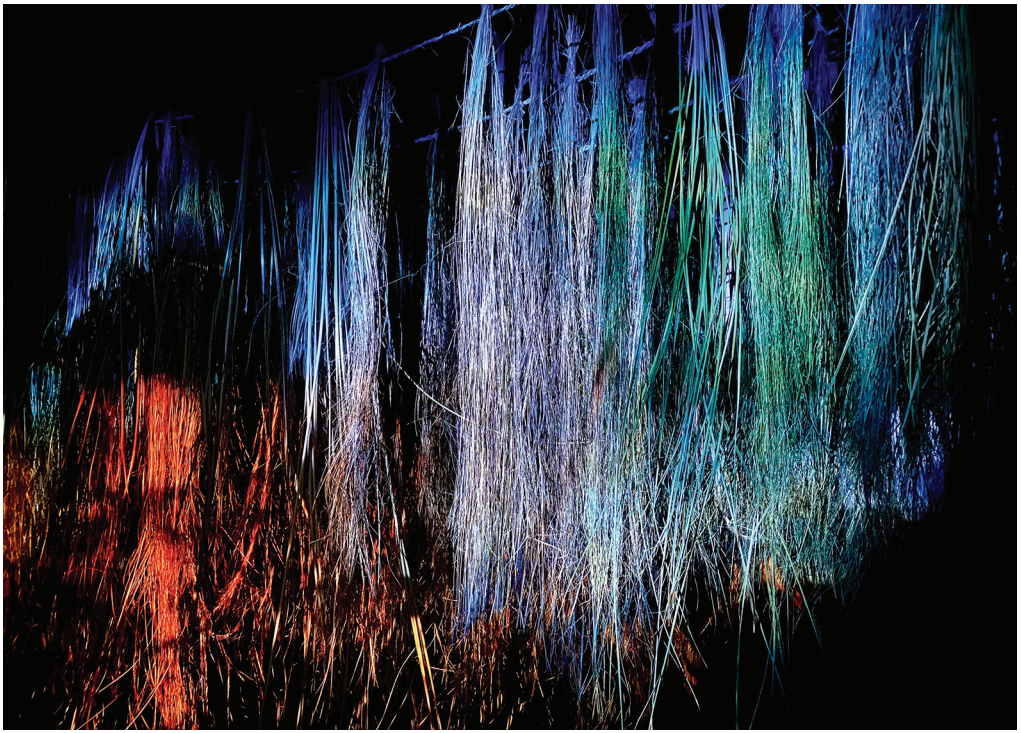
KEI TE WAENGANUI AU I TE PŪ HARAKEKE

– I am between piles of harakeke

Kiwa is enriched by sacred boundaries known as tapu. *"Thinking about whakapapa, it is fundamental that we remember where we came from. Thinking of Tapu is how we preserve our bodily and mental autonomy – our sacredness – [and] means we adapt to where we are now."*[4] I understand that my tinana is tapu, and in today's society it is imperative to carefully maintain the sacredness of my wairua and cultural identity.

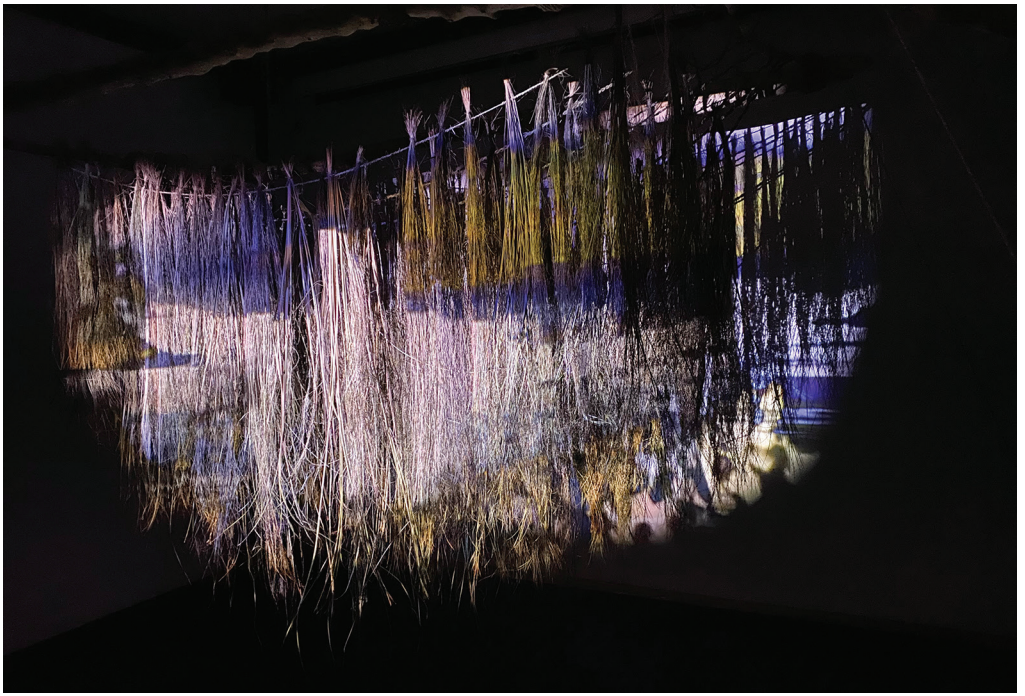
This project delves into the sacred principles of tikanga Māori concerning the harvesting and preparation of harakeke, (New Zealand flax) and explores how this process mirrors my personal journey of self-discovery. In a tangible form, *Kiwa* embodies these concepts through the creation of a handmade structure resembling a drying rack. This structure, measuring around three metres in length, is crafted from driftwood and bound together with taura harakeke (flax rope). Additionally, harakeke rau (flax leaves/ blades) are meticulously processed, including stripping, shredding, boiling, dyeing and bundling, before being suspended from the drying frame as they dry. This method of boiling the harakeke and letting it dry preserves the whenu (strands) for future use. The whenu can be stored away for a long time and, once re-hydrated, they can be woven again.

The traditional Māori art of weaving harakeke and other natural fibres serves as a means to connect with my tupuna and cultural heritage. The process of harvesting from the land and preparing the harakeke to be woven establishes a direct link to the whenua and Te Taiao: this practice reinforces the reciprocal relationship that Māori have with the environment. Mahi raranga allows me to tap into the genius of tupuna Māori and continue their legacy into the future, and therefore allows me to uphold and preserve tikanga Māori.



In her PhD thesis, Donna Campbell (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Ruanui), a Waikato-based weaving artist, explores theories based on kaupapa Māori and mana wāhine that are organic to Aotearoa, descending from Papatūānuku and Ranginui. Campbell evaluates these theories together with notions of raranga and whatu and how, together, they enable a cultural transformation. *"Mātauranga Māori is reflected and drawn upon in a transformative relationship, one that transforms the experience of the maker as much as the maker transforms the materials."*[5] The physical processing of flax under the guidance of tikanga as protection serves as a continuation of this ancient practice. When the maker is actively present and engaging with mahi raranga, this transformative power extends beyond the tangible final result – it resides in the process. The process is the whole point; it is what I take away from the project instead of the outcome. This has been my mindset when progressing through this project. Gathering Mātauranga that serves a purpose for the soul and is then visually translated through my mahi – harvesting and preparation to drying – reflects my self-explorative journey. The bundled harakeke remains suspended in a transitional state, eagerly awaiting the next stage of being woven together. This process reminds me of how it feels to be disconnected from Taranaki, longing to be reconnected with my whenua and learn the stories of my tipuna, yearning to weave myself, my memories, my experiences within the soil of my turangawaewae. I am responsible for advancing the harakeke through each preparation phase and through this interaction, the mauri within both the harakeke and myself are activated, intricately, intertwining and weaving together our shared essence of life.

Mahi raranga represents a reciprocal exchange of mauri, and the interaction between harakeke and myself is a deep-seated hononga (connection) rooted in our shared whakapapa. In *Kiwa*, the focus is placed on the domestic activity that precedes the weaving of harakeke. Campbell also emphasises how the theoretical praxis of Kaupapa Māori is embedded in Māori culture and philosophical traditions and how Māori research affirms our cultural ways: *"The plant is dormant in the winter, until the spring when the putiputi flower attracts the Tui, then the renewal cycle begins. Kaupapa Māori theories and methodologies make provision for a nonlinear approach, such as the lifestyle of the harakeke plant, to the research."*[6]



Using the analogy of the life cycle of the harakeke plant responding to its environment, I understand that Kaupapa Māori embraces a fluid research process that recognises nonlinear approaches. Engaging with the materials, while keeping an open mind, allows access to new ideas that arise through physical 'doing' in response to my environment, a natural process of creation and research. While being in the present, connected to the past and creating taonga for the future, the harakeke screen is permeated with my present realities. The screen integrates the past, present and future into a palpable form of expression. It is a testament to my journey of self-discovery and cultural exploration, and carries the mauri of personal growth, acknowledgment of my tupuna and aspirations for the future.

Tikanga Māori provides me with a framework for handling harakeke, from plant to whenu to woven, guided by principles such as manaakitanga (hospitality and kindness), kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and whanaungatanga (relationship building), all rooted in preserving Mātauranga Māori. All the harakeke used in the project has been sourced from significant places and gifted by whānau and friends, enhancing the project's mauri through communal involvement and contributions. Navigating this project without compromising my personal tikanga was challenging, specifically when it came to collecting natural resources, especially because I have no ancestral links to the environment around me. Often, my intuition played a crucial role, guiding my decision-making process when collecting materials from specific areas.

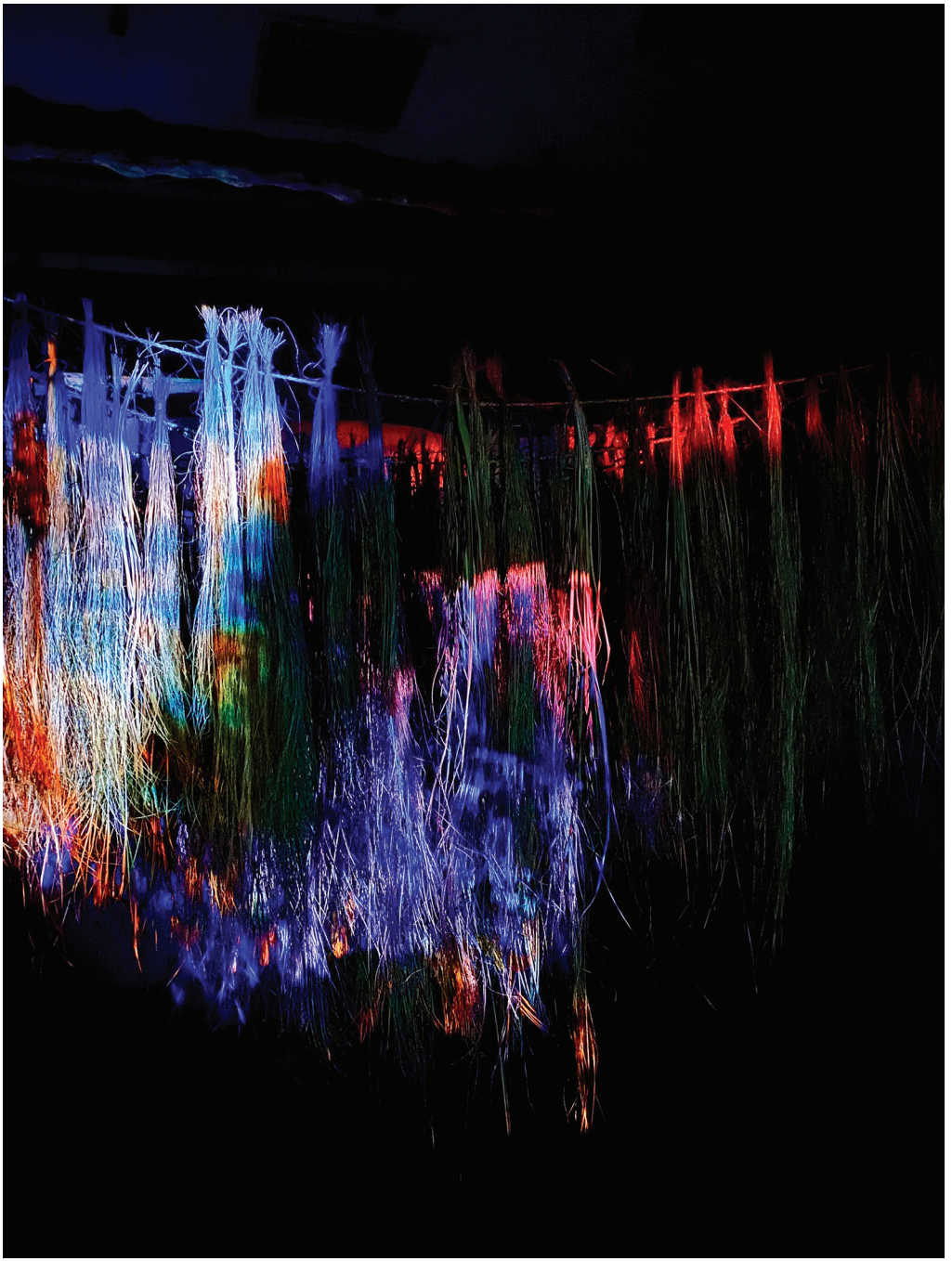
For example, while looking for driftwood, I initially searched Brighton beach in Dunedin, a reputed hub for driftwood. However, I found nothing after hours of searching, until I stumbled on four long, slender pieces positioned near an entrance to the beach in a way that seemed intentional. This is when my inner voice came into play, initiating an internal conflict about whether to retrieve the wood. While it would have been easy to take the wood, it didn't feel right and because of this, it would have disrupted the mauri of the project with an unsettling energy. It wasn't worth compromising my tikanga or the mauri of *Kiwa* just to fulfil a task and check it off the list. On the same day, a dear friend, Jennifer Cattermole, informed me about an abundance of driftwood that had washed up at the end of Portsmouth Drive in South Dunedin, right across from the Rongo Memorial rock, which commemorates the imprisonment of political prisoners from Parihaka. I strongly believe that there were powers beyond my control at work in this instance and that it was a tohu (sign) from Atua Māori, if not my Tipuna, guiding me back to Rongo as a clear passage to my Taranaki whakapapa. These events made it emotionally significant to gather the wood I needed.

TE IRIRANGI O TAONGA PŪORO

– The spirit voice of taonga pūoro

Combined with found/field recordings, traditional Māori instruments, taonga pūoro, construct the soundscape of *Kiwa*. The incorporation of taonga pūoro in a compositional context serves as a means to stimulate multiple senses and to evoke emotional responses, nostalgic memories, reverence and awe. The use of traditional instruments mixed with contemporary found sound enriches the auditory aspect of *Kiwa* and adds a layer of cultural authenticity and spiritual significance. The purpose of the soundscape is to communicate and celebrate my journey of reconnecting to Māoritanga, and therefore enhances the transformative experience, inviting myself and the listener to travel through time, space and cultural landscapes and ultimately inviting us to reconnect to Te Taiao and the ancestral realm. The soundscape serves as a whakatau for the space, settling the mauri of the project as well as lifting the veil between the living and the dead, further enforcing the tapu boundaries that *Kiwa* embraces.

Carrying the values of wānanga, mahi raranga and tikanga, the process of creating my taonga pūoro instruments is just as valuable as their final form. Like the art of weaving, I only work with native natural materials such as rimu, kauri, hue (gourds), native bird feathers (ethically sourced), rocks, pounamu and muka, figuring out how different forms produce different sounds, as every taonga pūoro instrument has an individual voice. During 2023 I attended a taonga pūoro group wānanga hosted by Jennifer Cattermole at the University of Otago's music department. Through these wānanga sessions, Cattermole offers a unique opportunity to observe and learn from her extraordinary taonga pūoro collection. *"Learning from live demonstrators has, in my experience, been very effective as a teaching–learning*



method. I'd try to impart what I knew about various playing techniques to the rest of the group by verbally describing and modelling them."[7] These sessions allow all participants to learn the histories, purpose and symbolism of taonga pūoro, as well as how to play these instruments. This up-close interaction with the instruments informed me of their construction procedure, from how the kōauau has been hollowed out to the cord binding of the pūkaea or pūtōrino. Having this special access to these instruments helped my research process astronomically. Cattermole also taught us the correspondence between the instruments and the natural world and how interconnected this relationship is, from using the shapes of oceanic waves to the indescribable noises of the ngahere, all harnessed for taonga pūoro to respond to.

In his master's thesis, taonga pūoro practitioner Rob Thorne (Ngāti Tumutumu) describes the traditional methods of making kōauau rākau by experimenting with different ways of hole-making. *"The rationale for reconstruction and re-enactment as valid research methods is defined and emphasised by the importance and relevance of these techniques as vital to revitalisation."*[8] Thorne's research, filling in the information gaps that have been lost or eroded over time, encouraged this project to follow in his footsteps; through the making and playing of my instruments, I am contributing to revitalising cultural practices and to preserving cultural knowledge. *"As the work progressed, I gained a greater understanding of myself culturally, while the learning and application of practical traditional skills unlocked connections from out of the past that empowered newly discovered strategies for how I might exist as a Māori in a modern world."*[9] These techniques play a significant role in accommodating a sense of identity and challenging dominant hegemonic narratives. In his conclusion, Thorne notes that the sound is the passage for the viewer's immersion into the work being performed and is a bridge to help navigate and carry them through the performance.

I have collected recordings of my closest friends singing harmonies, embedding their voices in the soundscape in order to enrich the communal mauri of *Kiwa*. The mixture and involvement of field recordings ranging from bird calls, crashing ocean waves and whistling whanau members to random candid recordings, along with structured vocal harmonies, constructs a dissonance in the soundscape, further reinforcing the theme of disconnection in *Kiwa*. This un-melodious element aligns with the fluidity of tikanga Māori insofar as it rejects static Western systems of music and embraces flexible shifts of sound, allowing the space to be open to change and adaptation.

THE MOVING IMAGE

"Ka mua, Ka muri"

– Walking backwards into the future

The moving image serves as a platform that continues the teachings and values of mahi raranga and taonga pūoro into the contemporary future, bridging the gap between traditional practices and the present day. The moving image, used as a medium to convey storytelling through the non-absolute lens, allows the viewer to insert their own experiences and perspectives into the work's narrative through visual prompts. *Kiwa* recognises the contribution of moving images to the movement and fluidity of tikanga Māori. Nonetheless, the use of digital media should be treated with sensitivity when assimilated into a tikanga Māori space or context. Understanding the original narratives, values and protocols associated with the taonga is crucial to ensure that their representation in the moving image remains aligned with the principles of Te Ao Māori. Tikanga is meant to adapt and evolve along with the changing needs and circumstances of Māori. It is deeply rooted in tradition and ancestral knowledge – it is not a static set of rules or practices.

The topic of the Māori moving image has been less well documented than the Te Ao Māori practices discussed above. *"Over the last forty years, Māori artists have utilised moving image to centre complex ideas, lived experiences, and radical hope."*[10] With the advancement of technology since the 1980s, the moving image urges Māori artists to push its boundaries. *"The ability to record motion and time is at the heart of moving image. This capacity to explore a time/space continuum applies to Māori aspherical notions of time, starting from the centre and moving in any direction."*[11] The technology of projection and film engages with my materials and extends their materiality into new possibilities for

interpretation and storytelling. *"Digital media celebrates material culture in an abstract way where the mauri or life force of the taonga exists but is no longer bound by the original narratives."*[12] Digital media allows for the representation and exploration of material culture in a non-physical and abstract manner. It can display the taonga by capturing the essence and significance beyond its physical form. By liberating the mauri of taonga from the constraints of specific narratives, digital media opens up discourse and pathways for reinterpretation and reimagining, pathways which ultimately lift the work into new avenues and narratives.

The moving imagery that composes the visuals of *Kiwa* includes footage filmed in Waihōpai, featuring my mother and sister, as well as myself, captured during both staged and candid moments. These clips range from footage of me performing in a Victorian-style skirt I crafted during my second year of study to a segment from the screen used in my work *Katarina*, worn as a cloak in different locations. Additionally, there's footage of my family wearing some of the same attire, as well as moments capturing them amid their day-to-day activities. Together, these elements weave a visual narrative unique to my whanau and me, evoking our fragmented connection to our Māoritanga. The filming process brought to light the disconnect I observed within my family's daily life in Waihōpai, trapped in an unending cycle or hamster wheel that obstructs avenues for cultural rejuvenation or change. This is a significant factor contributing to our disconnection from Taranaki and Te Ao Māori. This project has revealed many layers of understanding of my mother's relationship with her Māoritanga, further reinforcing my commitment to cultural reconnection so that, one day, I will be able to encourage or help my whanau with their journey.

When my grandfather was young, he fled Taranaki and moved down south to work. Growing up, this was a super-sensitive topic that we never discussed. My whanau knew practically nothing of my grandad's upbringing and had to piece it together over the years of his life; even today we are still piecing it together. My grandad's pain associated with Taranaki has impacted my whanau's sense of cultural identity. All of us have responded differently to the ripple effect created, sparking divergent priorities. This phenomenon is very common in Māori communities, and can be summed up in a single word: urbanisation – the relocation of Māori from tribal areas to urban centres. This movement has diminished the value of iwi, hapu and whanau, resulting in 'the tribe' no longer being the sole focal point of Māori identity.[13]

Māori have not yet been fully able to adapt to these changes. In my experience, this has led to whanau forming their own understanding of tikanga unique to their whare/space, understandings which could differ from their hapu tikanga and or their iwi tikanga. Undertaking *Kiwa* has enabled me to recognise that the tikanga my whanau practices is flexible, even disjointed. Despite this disconnection, the way we express our Māoritanga is distinctively our own. *Kiwa* demonstrates the validity and authenticity of this cultural representation by revealing our individual responses to Te Taiao, taonga pūoro, mahi raranga and, more broadly, Te Ao Māori. This project celebrates the differences in my whanau and comprises all of our stories, brought together through a visual language. *Kiwa* opens the portal and connects me to tupuna Māori, deepening my understanding of my cultural identity as well as Māori culture. I believe my work expresses the importance of self-expression and self-healing and contributes to the transmission of Mātauranga Māori.

Kiwa is a testament to my great-grandfather, Kiwa Okeroa, and is dedicated to my niece, Kiwa Bates.

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9 Ibid.

10 Melanie Oliver and Reweti Bridget, *Māori Moving Image* (Christchurch Art Gallery, Te Puna O Waiwhetū, 2022), 7.

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