

AWA HQ

Aroha Novak, Angela Lyon, Charlotte Parallel

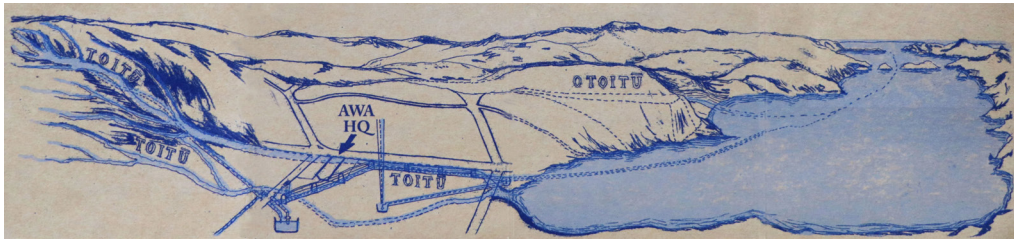


Figure 1. The course of the Toitū awa and AWA HQ. Image credit: Angela Lyon 2017, Rizo print by POINT.

AWA HQ is a collaborative project about the Toitū awa (stream) involving three Ōtepoti multidisciplinary artists, Angela Lyon, Aroha Novak and Charlotte Parallel, that ran from October 2017 to March 2018. AWA HQ is an Envoy project commissioned as part of Te Ao Tūroa – Dunedin's environment strategy delivered through the Urban Dream Brokerage initiative. AWA HQ invited people to find, respond and connect with the Toitū awa in three public events, each concluding with a picnic.

The year 2017 was an important one for water in New Zealand. Not only did the media present the nation's water resources in terms of crisis, but there were public protests seeking to protect water at every level: against water bottling and trade, agricultural use and pollution. This year also saw the Whanganui River attain legal status as a living entity through Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement Act 2017). We were inspired by this legal recognition and the protection of the awa that the change of legal status ensured. This motivated us to acknowledge and reconnect with water's status as a living entity, beyond the abstract turning of the tap. With that, AWA HQ found its purpose – to see and acknowledge our urban waterways and the drains that flow beneath us as living things.

Turning to Ōtepoti Dunedin, our subject became the Toitū, the little stream that once ran through the centre of Ōtepoti Dunedin into the harbour and, in more recent years, rushed the gutter outside the Crown Hotel every 20 minutes. The Toitū awa is now mostly invisible, piped through a series of Victorian tunnels and rerouted through reclaimed land that today makes up much of the city's industrial area.

Dedicated to understanding, recognising and acknowledging its condition, history and relationships, our research on the Toitū became a personal exchange of information, stories and mysteries. These pivotal and generous conversations guided our search to get to know the Toitū awa, both as a community and through a series of public events – a quest that shared the search to meet the Toitū, one that would consider the state of water now and, finally, one that acknowledged the Toitū as a living entity.

AWA HQ OPENING: SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2017

This event began with a water-divining hikoi in the Town Belt with Stephen Kilroy and Taonga Pūoro artists Jennifer Cattermole and Jessica Latton. Dowsing rods were provided to help participants learn the art of water dowsing and together trace the uncovered Toitū awa down to AWA HQ on the former Toitū riverbank, at 175 Rattray Street, for a picnic. AWA HQ OPENING: SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2017



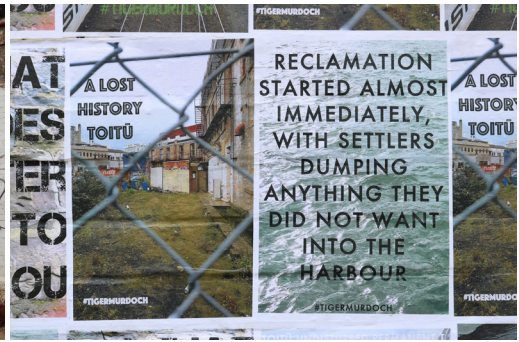
Figures 2-3. Water-divining hikoi in the Dunedin Town Belt with Stephen Kilroy and Taonga Pūoro artists Jennifer Cattermole and Jessica Latton.

MURKY WATERS: SATURDAY 9 DECEMBER 2017

Murky Waters was held in the empty lot at 175 Rattray Street where the Toitū riverbank would once have been and where the Toitū now gurgles below ground through manmade culverts and stormwater drains. Artists known for their blurring of the line between activism and art were invited to continue the conversation about the lost history of the Toitū awa and to address current environmental, political and historical concerns about New Zealand's water in 2017. Artists involved included Ruth Evans, Fresh & Fruity, Tiger Murdoch, Chris Schmelz, Rubbish Film Unit, Metiria Turei and Tao Wells.



Figures 4-13. Top: Murky Waters, featuring artists Ruth Evans, Fresh & Fruity, Tiger Murdoch, Chris Schmelz, Rubbish Film Unit, Metiria Turei and Tao Wells. Image credits, from top to bottom: Rubbish Film Unit/Chris Schmelz & Kerian Varian; Tigermurdoch; The Activists Handbag/MetTure.



FINAL PICNIC

AWA HQ's final project started off on the lawn between Serpentine Avenue and Māori Road where, with the help of Moana Wesley and Te Rōpū Waiata O te Kaunihere-a-rohe o Ōtepoti, we learnt the Toitū waiata together. We then walked up the road, and scrambled down the bank where we could see, smell and touch the water. Here we sang to the past, present and future of the Toitū awa.



Figures 14-16. The final picnic. Photography: Ted Whitaker, 2018



The AWA HQ project invited the community to connect with the Toitū, including many who never knew that it flowed beneath our streets. This new connection involved a sense of timelessness, permanence and security – because, of course, the Toitū still flows, as it always has, from the mountains to the sea.

HEARTFELT THANKS FOR YOUR TIME AND GENEROSITY TO:

Moana Wesley, Te Rōpū Waiata O te Kaunihere-a-rohe o Ōtepoti, Mark Cain, SCANZ – He Punawai Hohourongo – Peace, Water, Power 2018 Hui, Parihaka, Ian Clothier, Claudia Babirat, Alishea Dench and the Dunedin Town Belt Education Initiative, Otago Community Trust, Keep Dunedin Beautiful, Tahu McKenzie, Rosemary Clucas, Fresh & Fruity, Rubbish Film Unit, Chris Schmelz, Tao Wells, Metiria Turei, Ruth Evans, Log, Sam & Jones Chin, Taste Nature, Veggie Boys, Morning Magpie, Mandy Mayhem, Al Halstead, Blue Oyster Project Space, DCC Small Projects Grant, Port Chalmers Pioneer Hall, Rachel Wesley, Natalie Karaitiana, Seán Brosnahan, Bill Dacker, Jen Cattermole, Jessica Paipeta Latton, Stephen Kilroy, Rua McCallum, Paul Pope, Huia Pacey, O, Carmela & Tigerlily, Waitati Hall, Katrina Thomson, Urban Dream Brokerage, Dunedin City Council Environment Strategy, Gilbert May and everyone who has been open to having conversations about the Toitū. Most importantly, we would like to thank the Toitū awa itself. xxx

Aroha Novak is an Otepoti based artist working in multiple mediums. She completed a Master of Fine Arts in 2013 from the Dunedin School of Art.

Angela Lyon is a visual artist from Dunedin. She graduated with a Master of Fine Art from Dunedin School of Art in 2007. Currently she works as a Lecturer of Photography at Otago Polytechnic's School of Design.

Charlotte Parallel is based in Koputai Port Chalmers. As a practicing artist she works in the fields of sound installation, collaboration, and performance.