

firstdraft

Gallery 3
2-25 Oct 2019

Opening,
Wed 2 Oct, 6-8pm

Artist Talks
Thu 24 Oct, 6-7pm

Kōhanga

Chevron Hassett (artist) and
Robert Laking (curator)

About the work

Māori have a long and rich history with Australia. In the early years of colonisation, Māori frequently travelled across the Tasman Sea to engage in trade and labour. In the centuries that followed, there remained a contingent of Māori residing in Australia. In the late 20th Century more and more Māori began to emigrate to Australia in search of a better life. Wages are higher and jobs are more abundant. Our exhibition is largely focussing on the experience of migration, and the establishment of new community.

About the artist and curator

Chevron Hassett, born in 1994 in Lower Hutt, Aotearoa is of Māori and Pākehā heritage. He is currently based in Wellington city.

In 2016, he graduated with a Bachelor of Design (Hons) from Massey University Wellington. Shortly after graduating he was awarded the Ngā Manu Pīrere award from Creative NZ, The Arts Council of New Zealand. He was the 2019 Wellington City Council Visual Artist Residency at Toi Pōneke Gallery.

Chevron is an artist whose practice expands into many mediums and narratives, exhibited in public and gallery spaces. However, at the heart of his practice is an essential spirit of whanaungatanga (sense of connection and relationships within communities) and he believes it is important to build a sense of connection to home and identity with those around you.

His recent works reflect these values and conversations, weaving into his practice themes of social and cultural identities, Polynesian diasporic communities, and peoples' connections to place or home.

Robert Laking, of Māori, German and Pākehā descent, is an artist, writer and curator based in Wellington. He graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Hons) from Massey University Wellington in 2017. Over the past two years, he has been interested in the collaborative potential of curation.

Gallery 1&2
and on the eyes, black sleep of night
Curated by Sarah Brasier

Gallery 4
Push it, push it (real good)
Bruno Booth

Firstdraft acknowledges and pays respect to the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which Firstdraft is built and operates.

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THE VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFT STRATEGY



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Acknowledgements

Tihei mauri ora! We would like to acknowledge the immense love and support that we have received during the six months bringing this work to light. We realised during the installation that over 100 people have contributed to this achievement.

First and foremost, much love to those who connected with the kaupapa and offered to contribute your mauri and mana to the mahi toi, as well as the whānau of Te Korowai o Te Reo and Te Wairua Tapu for being welcoming and allowing us to incorporate your beautiful waiata in Tū Ramarama. Without your contributions, the toi would have no mauri of its own.

Secondly, the Peachey-Fetoai whānau for your manaakitanga during the entirety of our time in Sydney. Orchestrating this installation in the space of two weeks would have been an impossible task without your investment of time, patience and support.

Thank you to Firstdraft for hosting this work.

Last but not least, a big thank you to all of the people who so generously donated to our crowdfunding campaign, which gave us the financial means to travel to Sydney and produce this work. We were very humbled and have been motivated to honour your investment.

List of works

Tū-ramarama

Two-channel A/V installation

Duration: 8:25

tū – to establish, or to stand

ramarama – to gleam

tūramarama – to bring to light

Tū-ramarama is a series of portraits which nurtures the identities and generations of Māori occupation within Sydney, bringing together both migrant and Australian-born Māori. The portraits are interwoven with historic sites for Māori. Waiata (songs) from Te Korowai o Te Reo in Mount Druiitt and himene (hymns) from Te Wairua Tapu in Redfern sing in support of the documented individuals. Powerful feelings of home and faith are conveyed, while also reinforcing valuable cultural connections and traditions that transcend the physical world.

Each individual had dialogue with Chevron prior to the camera being set up. Some were initiated prior to his arrival in Sydney, while others reached out after he landed. All people involved within this work offered their courage to stand on behalf of the many others in the Māori diaspora who share similar narratives of migration.

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Te Manawa Ora
CNC routed plywood, wood stain, steel hinges,
soil and harakeke
Dimensions: 2.4m x 2.4 x 2.4

te manawa – the heart
ora – to be alive
te manawa ora – the hope, or the breath of life

Te Manawa Ora is the second instalment to Chevron's trilogy of heart-post sculptures, after exhibiting Te Manawa Tapu earlier this year. Past and present histories are woven into the concept and physicality of Te Manawa Ora. It is based on a triangular weaving pattern called 'Niho Taniwha' which symbolises whānau (family) and whenua (land). The installation supports the life of the sacred harakeke plant, which is a further symbol of family, representing the process of planting new life and nurturing family within a new land.

The work highlights important connections between Māori and Australia. It is establishing representation for the spirit of contemporary migration, and the strong faith and determination that is entailed. The sides of the planter boxes feature designs derived from tukutuku (woven harakeke panels) which line the interior walls of Marae, traditional Māori complexes.

These designs depict three distinct patterns, each of which relates to one of the three stages of migration. The first design is Aramoana. It depicts waves which symbolise the traversing of the Tasman Sea in the pursuit of new life. The second features Ringa Tiki (tiki hands) which represent community, and Niho Taniwha. This conveys the challenging task of building a new home in foreign lands and establishing community. The third is the Poutama design. It is a stepped formation symbolising the upwards journey to success, wealth and greater development. These stairs are reached after accomplishing the first two stages.

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Kōhanga

Exhibition essay by Robert Laking

E kore au e ngaro, he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiatea

I will never be lost, for I am a seed sown in Rangiatea

Australia is regarded as a land of opportunity for many New Zealanders. With a larger economy, jobs are abundant and often pay better than their equivalents in Aotearoa (New Zealand). There has been a steady increase in the number of New Zealanders emigrating to Australia over the past four decades, with many being Māori. This is not a modern trend, as the history of trans-Tasman migration is interwoven throughout the entire history of Australasian colonisation.

Migration requires a lot of sacrifice. There is inherent stability in calling a place home as family, community and geographical location form the core of one's identity. It can take years to feel settled in a new city or country. Paradoxically, moving away from these induces instability while at the same time strengthening these ties to home; no longer is the normalcy of life at home taken for granted. Migration is certainly not a decision made lightly, and many factors are entailed in the commitment.

There are many pull factors for migrating to Australia. These include opportunities for a better life, joining friends and family, and a better climate. However, in some cases, there are also push factors. Moving to a different country is sometimes the best, or only, means of improving quality of life. Those who move across the Tasman Sea are considered to have "cracked it".¹

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Māori have strong spiritual connections to their whakapapa (ancestry), their iwi (tribe/s), and their tūrangawaewae (ancestral lands). These are some of the roots of one's Māoritanga (Māori identity). Members of the same iwi are kindred; they share whakapapa. Thus, meeting someone from the same iwi is akin to meeting a distant relative. This same familial connection is experienced with one's tūrangawaewae, which are rich with history and a multiplicity of experiences. Tipuna (ancestors) who occupied these lands for centuries are often also laid to rest in them.

The leaving behind of many cultural ties is one such sacrifice of external migration. For Māori living in Aotearoa, even if far away from their tūrangawaewae, there is a tacit understanding that their ancestral lands are a mere road trip away if desired. For those living abroad, return visits are not so easy as they require time and money. Furthermore, unscheduled return visits for events such as tangihanga (traditional funeral ceremonies) are more difficult to organise, requiring time, money, and flexibility. These are factors which may pull people to remain in or return to Aotearoa.

However, there is a large contingent of Māori living in Australia. Although a lot is left behind in Aotearoa, Māori communities are already well established. There are many kaupapa Māori centres such as churches, and classes teaching te reo (the language) and kapa haka (cultural performances). While the majority of Māori living in Australia moved from Aotearoa, there are tens of thousands who have been born and raised here. These centres facilitate cultural immersion for those who may not otherwise have the opportunities to establish or strengthen their Māoritanga. This is significant as it exemplifies a pull to learn their culture as well as spiritual connection to home in Aotearoa, and Chevron sought to acknowledge and bring these experiences to light.

Although migration to Australia is not a contemporary phenomenon, the depth and breadth of Māori history and lived experiences in Australia is relatively unaddressed. Māori living abroad are worthy of acknowledgement for their unique perspective of the world as indigenous people preserving their cultural ties in far away lands. The early history is important for New Zealanders and Australians alike. It gives insight into how vulnerable and reliant the British were on indigenous knowledge and provides further context for many historic events in Aotearoa. It is a panacea for the colonial narratives which continue to be perpetuated as steadfast fact.

¹ A colloquial term referring to having had a breakthrough.