



TOI TŪ TE WHENUA:
A STUDY OF MĀORI
VISUAL ARTS AS DIALOGUE
WITH PAPATŪĀNUKU

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ABSTRACT

This article expands on ideas developed in *Ngā Taonga Tuku Iho Māori Visual Arts and Cultural Fusion. Studying Authentic Engagement* (Wrightson & Heta-Lensen, 2013). In it we discussed the integrated nature of ngā toi ataata (visual arts) to Māori life and the connectedness to people, places, things and time. In this article we demonstrate how ngā toi ataata dialogues with histories, values and locations across time, place and space.

Authentic engagement in ngā toi ataata in the context of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand is critiqued through a socio-cultural and socio-political lens. Through the examples that we present, stories emerge that demonstrate a growing relationship with Ranginui (Sky father) and Papatūānuku (Earth mother) which contribute to developing student teachers' own working theories, stories, and understandings about the world and their place in it. Employing the visual arts in this way provides opportunities to deepen understandings of indigenous world views and develop a sense of connection to the natural world. It engages student teachers in understandings of arts-based teaching and learning practice from both an educational and a cultural perspective. It provides an opportunity to reflect on multiple perspectives held about the world and how different peoples express their relationship with it. The article also explores how the incorporation of Māori visual arts in an initial teacher education programme supports teachers to meet the requirements of the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki. He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa. Early childhood curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2017).

INTRODUCTION

Universally, people have a relationship with the arts which captures our histories and provides social commentary past, present and future. In Aotearoa, Māori visual arts descend from Ranginui (the sky father) and Papatūānuku (the earth mother), the co-creators of all living things on this earth. Ngā toi ataata refers to Māori visual arts and the word for 'arts' in te reo Māori (the Māori language) is toi, which is also translated as source. Ataata refers to shadow or reflection. In that sense the source of all inspiration for Māori visual arts (ngā toi ataata) reflects relationship and connectedness with

Ranginui and Papatūānuku and their many tamariki (children) who preside over the domains of the earth and sky.

Visual arts education is a critical domain for learning in early childhood. Young children learn to express ideas and tell visual narratives as they engage in visual arts experiences. This is particularly important in an early childhood context, as children are gaining mastery in oral language, in addition to other traditional literacies (Pelo, 2007; McArdle, 2016; McArdle & Wright, 2014; Sunday, 2012).

The early childhood curriculum document for Aotearoa New Zealand, *Te Whāriki. He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa. Early childhood curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1996) was this country's first curriculum document. It was conceptualised and authored in partnership between Māori, the indigenous people, and tauīwi, other nation New Zealanders. The revised and updated edition of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) maintains a strong commitment to partnership. Consideration of Māori ontologies is embedded throughout the document. The expectation is that teachers will provide learning experiences that reflect Māori views of the world.

This article explores how the incorporation of Māori visual arts in the initial teacher education programme at Te Whare Wānanga o Wairaka Unitec Institute of Technology supports teachers to meet the requirements of the early childhood curriculum. It is structured into three main sections. The first section locates and explains ngā toi ataata Māori visual arts within a Tiriti (Treaty) based framework in the context of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand (Skerrett & Ritchie, 2017). Following that we discuss the role of visual arts in the early childhood curriculum as a medium for enhancing Māori pedagogies and developing children's awareness of dual heritage in Aotearoa New Zealand. In section two critical concepts aligned with relationality in visual arts are investigated. Notions of authenticity, relationship and identity, and respectful collaboration are discussed. In the third section we discuss how student teachers at Te Whare Wānanga o Wairaka, Unitec Institute of Technology engage with ngā toi ataata to explore their own origins and whakapapa – genealogies through an arts-based assessment that also develops their content and pedagogical knowledge.

LOCATIONS ACROSS TIME, PLACE, AND SPACE

Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) was signed between Māori chiefs and British representatives of the crown in 1840 as an agreement between indigenous tribes of Aotearoa New Zealand and representatives of the British crown in Aotearoa New Zealand. This treaty ostensibly guaranteed rights of both Māori and British settlers into the newly formed nation of New Zealand. However, despite the expectation held by Māori signatories that Māori sovereignty over their customary rights and cultural norms would be retained, a long period of colonisation and assimilation of Māori language and culture ensued. Assertions of Māori rights and status as tangata whenua (the indigenous people of the land), included Māori resistance initiatives in education. This shaped and influenced accountability to uphold the intent of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*.

Today, early childhood education in Aotearoa commits to a partnership between Māori and the crown. Working within this framework has come to be defined as bicultural

practice and has located Aotearoa New Zealand in time and space as a bicultural nation. However, we are also a multicultural society. Therefore, teachers need skills to build inclusive learning environments and curriculum for tamariki (children) that fosters their family cultures and knowledges (Chan & Ritchie, 2016). This is particularly relevant at a time when Aotearoa New Zealand is experiencing rapid growth in the population through migration. For instance, there are now over 160 different languages spoken in Aotearoa (Chan, 2019) and multilingualism is a growing trend, indicating increased diversity of languages and cultures in Aotearoa New Zealand. This country is now officially recognised as one of a small number of culturally and linguistically superdiverse countries which brings with it a level of complexity previously unseen (Skerrett & Ritchie, 2017). Superdiversity is a term that is related directly to global migration and the issues that come with it (Ritchie & Chan, 2019). However, as a superdiverse country with an indigenous population, critical multiculturalism alone will not support the imperative in early childhood education that Māori knowledge will be an integral part of the curriculum.

Skerrett and Ritchie (2017) challenged us to consider a move towards 'Tiriti based' practice. This prepares teachers to be better equipped to respond to superdiversity. Their work drew on Sir Eddie Durie's model of the *Tiriti o Waitangi* which is based on an inclusive framework of tangata whenua (Māori as indigenous people of the land) and tangata Tiriti (people who have settled in this country subsequent to Māori occupation). Durie's model moves away from the binary notion characterised by 'biculturalism' to a Tiriti based approach to inclusion, which is more compatible with superdiversity. This view is supported by Māori elders and kaumatua such as Matua Haare Williams (in Heta-Lensen, 2005). He held the view that *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* is the korowai - prized cloak - that wraps around everyone who inhabits Aotearoa. It provides them with an understanding of whanaungatanga (the close connection between people, or kinship) acting within in a pattern of right relationship with people, place, space and time.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF VISUAL ARTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD?

Engagement with visual arts invites exploration and manipulation of materials that invokes discovery and representation of symbolic ideas that are representative of cultural understandings held by tamariki. For young children, their symbolic ideas may be articulated more effectively through visual, rather than verbal language (Danko-McGhee, 2016; Malaguzzi, 1993; McArdle, 2012; McArdle & Wright, 2014; Roy, Baker & Hamilton, 2015; Vecchi, 2010). Alternatively, the preferred mode for expressing ideas and feelings may be a combination of visual and verbal representation (Coates & Coates, 2006; Sunday, 2016; Wright, 2007).

Historically, in relation to time and space, advocates of the arts recognised that children could be encouraged to creatively depict ideas that demonstrated their experience, feelings and engagement in the world (Altschuler & Hattwick, 1947; Bresler, 1993; Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 1996; 1997; 2002; Kellogg, 1979; Lowenfeld, 1947; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1975; Malaguzzi, 1993; Rosenblatt & Winner, 1988; Veale, 2000; Zimmerman & Zimmerman, 2000). Current researchers continue to conclude that endeavours with visual arts medium provide optimum opportunities for children to express their thinking by using creative and symbolic means (Cole, 2012; Pelo, 2007; Tutchell, 2014; Vecchi,

2010). Emphasis, however, needs to be on relational pedagogy, that is, social relationships and interactions with people, materials and the whenua (the land). This is suggested by Lysaker and Furuness (2011) who studied relational space as being transformative and emphasised relational orientated pedagogy that was dialogic. Consequently, how tamariki and teachers participate, engage with others, the materials and the environment contributes to an effective visual arts space.

AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT IN MĀORI KNOWLEDGE: ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The following section considers engagement in ngā toi ataata - Māori visual arts as critical pedagogy. Concepts aligned with relationality in visual arts are investigated as well as notions of authenticity, relationship and identity, and respectful collaboration.

Ngā toi ataata as cultural practice – tikanga

There are tikanga or cultural practices associated with ngā toi ataata that need to be considered in selecting the correct way to teach ngā toi ataata. All cultures have a scaffolded approach to the acquisition of higher order learning and knowledge. For example, in the Western world higher order learning is accessed via studying at University. Within te ao Māori, however, the pursuit of knowledge and the appropriate care for it begins at a young age where myths, legends and stories have deep significance.

Appropriate care for knowledge was modelled to us through the deeds of Tāne, the great ancestor who separated earth (Papatūānuku) and sky (Ranginui) and brought us from Te Po (the darkness) into Te Ao Marama (the world of light). Much blood was spilled in the separation and the blood of Ranginui can be seen in the sky at sunset, whilst the blood shed by Papatūānuku ran in to the earth and formed red clay. The colours created by this event are attributed to some of our most sacred arts media. Kōkōwai, literally 'red water' is the name for the earth from which kura (red ochre) is produced. Kōkōwai and kura are highly revered. Their origins reside in the creation of heaven and earth, during the time of the separation. We are reminded of this feat by the colours we see and use in ngā toi ataata.

The colour red represents the separation period and coming into being – Te Whai Ao. It also symbolises Papatūānuku, sustainer of all living things. The colour black is symbolic of Te Kore – where the realms of potential reside. Te Kore was the period of an intense void from which the earth emerged. Te Ao Marama refers to the separation of Ranginui and Papatūānuku when light flooded the earth. Te Ao Marama represents light and form. It is associated with the colour white (French, Fordyce & Tolland, 2009). Gaining these understandings through ngā toi ataata is a further way to develop understandings of the interconnectedness of all things. The need to care for and respect resources can also be introduced. Observation of nature and the different colours of Ranginui and Papatūānuku creates an understanding of the composition of the natural world. Gratitude and care, manaaki whenua – care and protection of the land is fostered through these means.

After Tāne separated Ranginui and Papatūānuku he climbed to the highest realms and there retrieved Ngā Kete Wānanga - three baskets of knowledge. He did this to improve living conditions on earth. From this deed we learned that the pursuit of knowledge develops our understandings of how to live and thrive on earth. Some knowledge was

considered common knowledge that was accessible to all. It was the knowledge of daily life and survival. Other knowledge resided in the higher realms; there were rites of passage into these higher orders of learning. And so it is with knowledge of the arts, particularly indigenous arts that carry with them genealogies and cosmological connections. The first and most appropriate place for tamariki (children) to develop that foundational knowledge is in the natural world, because most of our patterns in ngā toi ataata are inspired by nature. The richness and depth of ngā toi Māori is therefore understood by close observation of nature.

Ngā toi ataata as identity – whakapapa

All children are endowed with whakapapa (genealogy) that supports their growing awareness of their place in the world and connections to people and place. For the Māori child (and the Māori word for children is tamariki, referring to their line of descent), identity is built up through the stories and symbols of their culture; it is in their language and in their artwork. Through their whakapapa tamariki learn that they are connected to the divine source (Pere, 1997). This idea is reiterated in the curriculum in relation to Māori learners. *Te Whāriki* states that “kaiako need an understanding of a worldview that emphasises the child’s whakapapa connection to Māori creation, across Te Kore, Te Pō, Te Ao Mārama, atua Māori and tūpuna” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 12).

An example of this is seen in Figure 1, and the associated narrative which depicts the young Māori artist’s early attempts to connect to his tūpuna (ancestors) through ngā toi ataata. In this illustration the artist, Te Kahurangi, was making sense of his whakapapa as he created his first pou – in this context referring to the representation of his tūpuna – ancestors. He was careful to replicate in the pou his understandings of the symbolic meaning of the patterns. This is an example of how ngā toi ataata is also a form of literacy that teachers need to have some fluency in in order to know how to support arts as literacy in the curriculum.



Figure 1 – Te Kahurangi Heta-Lensen

*Te kōrero (conversation) between Te Kahurangi and his mother:
Titiro Mama – Ko Rangatira tēnei. Look Mum I drew a chief!*

*Ka pai e tama. He aha te kaupapa o tōna pūkana? He Rangatira
tino kaha a ia pea? That's good son, why is Rangatira doing the
pūkana? Is it because they are strong maybe?*

*Kāhore! – He Rangatira kōrero Mama! No – they are a talking
chief Mama!*

The young artist Te Kahurangi had perhaps heard stories of his great grandmother who was known for her ability as a speaker. At the very least he was beginning to show emerging visual arts literacy in how he understood to depict someone who had a gift for oracy in ngā toi Māori by elongating their tongue. He drew on his reo Māori to impart information about his whakapapa, showing that he clearly understood the link between language and culture. Heta-Lensen notes “and I was therefore required to draw on my limited reo Māori to respond. Many times since, Te Kahurangi has attempted to kōrero Māori to me and I have not always been able to respond appropriately to scaffold his language in the way a native speaker of te reo Māori could. The more fluent he becomes, the less able I am to do that. But I had enough in his early years to support his growing understandings of his connection to te ao Māori”.

This was critical because, once Te Kahurangi left the safety of Kōhanga Reo (Māori early childhood language learning nest), he quickly reverted to English as his dominant language. Experiences like this have reinforced to Author A the fact that an understanding of te reo Māori me ngā tikanga Māori is imperative for teachers in order to assist young Māori learners to develop literacy in their own cultural art forms and language. Added to this, all children residing in Aotearoa New Zealand should be able to access te reo Māori in their early childhood education setting, as “kaiako weave te reo Māori and tikanga Māori into the everyday curriculum” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 12).

Te Whāriki states that *tamariki* (children) “learn by engaging in meaningful interactions with people, places and things – a process that continues throughout their lifetimes” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 12). Ngā toi ataata can challenge student teachers to deepen their understandings of indigenous world views, make connections with the natural world and replicate their understandings through visual arts experiences. This may enhance their understandings of Māori relationship and connection to the earth as Papatūānuku. In doing so student teachers may also develop further understandings about praxis and how to support children’s meaningful engagement in ngā toi ataata experiences.

Ngā toi ataata is a medium we draw on in the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) programme in Te Whare Wānanga o Wairaka, Unitec Institute of Technology to enable student teachers to explore Māori cosmologies. Students of diverse backgrounds can grapple with Māori views of creation and the various elemental forces that preside over the domains of the

natural world through ngā toi ataata. Through this course they gain an insight into the whakapapa connection tamariki Māori have to the natural world that they may not yet have the verbal language to articulate.

Māori hold that relationship with the land is fostered by immersion in and interaction with it. This aligns with Pacini-Katchabaw, Kind and Kocher's latest (2017) research on children encountering materials. They challenged the concept of traditional art studios, instead recognising that a forest or a riverbank could be the studio. They referred to this type of studio as evolving, allowing for listening, and enabling tamariki to pause and attend, to experiment and to encounter nature.

As the following visual image and connected narrative by artist Issa Wrightson in Figure 2 demonstrates, engagement in the natural environment stimulates depiction and replication of ideas. This series of images – a precious moment in time between grandmother and her mokopuna (grandchild) highlights the holistic way that children learn. Issa demonstrates that she is exploring and interpreting her world, making connections between people, places and things through a process of whanaungatanga – developing and maintaining a pattern of right relationship across space and time. Cooks Beach provides her backdrop for her explorations of the whenua – land, moana – sea and her whakapapa – genealogy.



Figure 2 – Issa Wrightson

Issa's engagement with a range of media to depict her understandings of whānau and whakapapa. Sand drawings of

her Mama were completed with hairstyles of seaweed that had been tossed onto the beach. Later she shared her drawing on card of me (Wrightson, author A), her Nanny, whilst still on holiday. She can whakapapa (connect her genealogy) to Cooks Beach as her great grandparents resided there.

Nga toi ataata as part of Initial Teacher Education

Te Whāriki states that “learner identity is enhanced when children’s home languages and cultures are valued in educational settings and when kaiako are responsive to their cultural ways of knowing and being” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 12). Early childhood teachers therefore need an understanding of how to support children to feel a sense of belonging to this land. They need to recognise the diversity of their histories, languages and cultures, whilst recognising the unique position of Māori as this country’s indigenous people. In the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) at Te Whare Wānanga o Wairaka Unitec Institute of Technology, this is achieved with student teachers through a range of experiences including arts-based assessments. One such assessment requires student teachers to explore their own origins and whakapapa (genealogies). They dialogue their histories of settlement in Aotearoa and they demonstrate, through *ngā toi ataata* their relationship with the *whenua* (land) they now inhabit. The following visual image and connected narrative by artist Paula Bituin-Pita in Figure 3 demonstrates this.

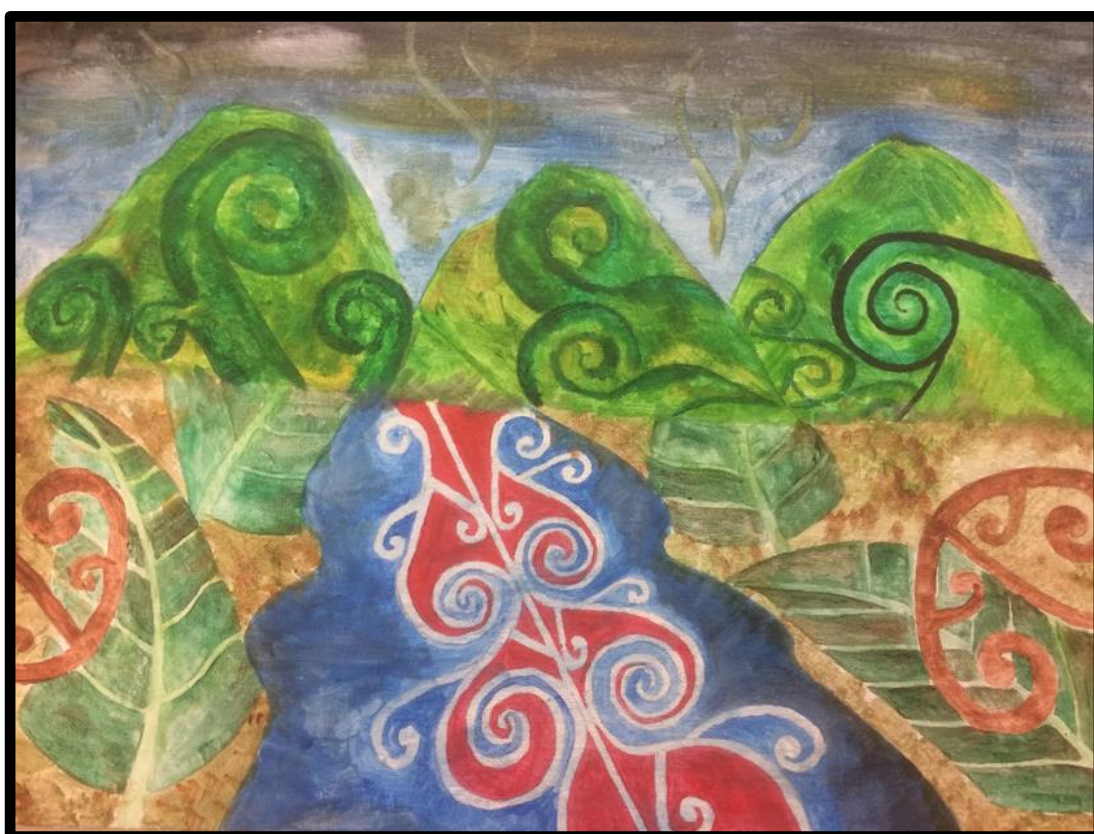


Figure 3 – Paula Bituin-Pita

Narrative for Figure 3: Creating a visual representation of her pepeha (recited genealogy of origin) the artist, student teacher

Paula Bituin-Pita, incorporated elements of Māori art to dialogue both the histories of Māori occupation in her area and of her own culture and migration. She used the mangōpare (hammer head shark) pattern to depict the strength of the iwi (tribe) who inhabited the area she was resident in. The koru (spiral shape of the fern frond) depicts the continuous supply of resources available in the area. She placed the ngaru (river) pattern in the river to show how it was a main highway and portage for waka (canoe) in the area and, also to depict how she journeyed across the ocean to get here. The leaves on the sides are a tribute to the leaves gathered for the dye used in batik in her own country.

Te Whāriki affirms how Māori visual arts experiences support kaiako to develop increasing proficiency in the use of te reo and tikanga Māori, which “can be promoted through the exploration and incorporation of ngā toi ataata (Māori visual arts)” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 59). However, there are a range of opinions surrounding whether and how mātauranga Māori – Māori knowledge – should be implemented in education. *Te Whāriki* legitimates and normalises Māori knowledge through its strong commitment to the Māori learner and Māori aspirations in education. However, in terms of ngā toi Māori (Māori arts), there are commentaries about the appropriation of Māori knowledge. Some people question whether the modern use of kōwhaiwhai, popularised in the 1900s was indicative of Aotearoa New Zealand’s post-colonial desire to forge greater bicultural identity as a nation, or a sign of a shift in kōwhaiwhai to a more contemporary stylised art form (Thomas, 1995). Hiine (2016) looked at this issue from a range of angles. He was cognisant of the fact that cultural context influences art. None the less, although we are surrounded by indigenous art influences, he expressed concern about the harm people without a Māori worldview may cause to Māori culture. In the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) programme we take a team approach to the delivery of ngā toi ataata, working closely in Tiriti-based partnership to mitigate this danger.

In our course, it is acknowledged that one of us holds early childhood visual arts expertise (Helen Wrightson) and the other holds memories of ngā toi Māori and knowledge of Māori pedagogies (Yo Heta Lensen). It is true that you cannot “slap a koru on something and call it Māori art” (Hiine, 2016). But from an arts education perspective, there is much that can be learned about the whenua (land) it’s people and resources and your place in it by exploring ngā toi ataata as a way to build a relationship with the whenua. (see Figure 4).

In Figure 4, artist Jade Johnson explored the use of space and dimension whilst at the same time learning the history of her area. There is a combination of creative process and repeated patterning evident. The swirling winds of Tāwhiri-mātea (the wind in the sky) are depicted using and reversing a basic koru (fern frond pattern). The artist employs creative licence to tell the story of the resources in her area. The pātiki pattern is symbolic of the flounder which was once abundant in that area. It is used as a symbol of abundance and generosity and was deliberately placed in the maunga (mountain) to represent the generosity of its inhabitants. At the foot of the maunga is the story of the natural resources that once flourished there. The harakeke (New Zealand flax) in the

middle tells of replanting in the area. The artist incorporated the ngaru pattern at the forefront as a reminder of the strong waka tradition and how critical this area was as a main highway between coasts. Although we see here a variety of iwi patterns, this in itself tells a story of how many different iwi have inhabited the area.



Figure 4 – Jade Johnson, student teacher

Narrative: Jade reflected on the learnings that occurred as she experimented with ngā toi ataata, stating "By learning and researching for this paper I was able to become more aware of the stories and the lives that came before me in the Mangere area. By discovering how the iwi sourced for food, kept shelter and found ways to just do and be, has given me a great insight to their hardships and struggles but also their successes and feats. Te Kete Manaaki Whenua has also helped me as an early childhood teacher when helping our tamariki in understanding how to care for Papatūānuku and supporting and guiding our next generation of kaitiaki."

Visual arts as a tool for reflecting on practice (ataata)

Research shows that teacher preparedness can impact on how children experience and are exposed to visual arts opportunities (Garvis & Prendergast, 2011; Stott, 2011). Further, that self-efficacy is a factor in teacher willingness to develop their own subject content, and/ or visual arts pedagogy. Reflection on personal views of the visual arts is considered to be an important tool for understanding how teachers' socio-political views of the visual arts impact on arts spaces and therefore arts education in early childhood settings (Donahue & Stuart, 2010). In the following section the authors reflect on their own arts backgrounds and how it informs their current teaching practice. The reader will see how inextricably linked the artists' cultural backgrounds are to their praxis.

KŌRERO ATAATA – REFLECTIONS ON PRACTICE FROM HELEN WRIGHTSON

I am fourth generation Pākehā with origins from Northern Ireland, Wales and Cornwall. My experience with visual arts developed mainly as an adult, although creating with crafts through wool and fabric was encouraged from a young age, and mostly alongside my grandmother. Craft classes including quilting, embroidery, hardanger, and pottery, as well as painting classes quenched my thirst in understanding more about the arts. I recognised that these skills and knowledge were also transferable to my work as an early childhood teacher. Pottery and clay work were visual art forms I engaged in as an adult and in my teaching. I remember an authentic engagement with the whenua in gathering clay for the children with a potter friend along the banks on the shoreline at Te Atatū Peninsula. The dialogue with the children extended to where it had been gathered and connections to our local place.

Young children's artwork, including my own children's, and now my grandchildren's art always fascinated me and inspired how I could develop this dimension of my teaching. In the late 1990's I completed a range of visual art teaching papers to develop my skills and knowledge further. It was here that I recognised the importance of the teacher's role in supporting young children's visual arts and that this was influenced by my own subject content knowledge as well as pedagogical knowledge. The papers included an introduction to visual arts, art history, clay in the classroom, printmaking and Māori visual arts. This included exploring the symbolism of Māori patterns, and the stories told in kōwhaiwhai panels – painted panels seen on marae ceiling and pou whakairo – wooden ancestral carvings.

All of these have influenced who I was as a teacher and am now as a lecturer, as all required my own explorations of visual arts medium, but also application for teaching and learning. The most influential has been the work I now engage in as a Tiriti-based partner with Yo Heta-Lensen in teaching in our Te Kete Manaaki Whenua course. Taurira – students are encouraged to connect to the whenua – land from the moment the course commences, observing, recognising and replicating patterns from nature before investigating their own stories. I am on a journey and learn something new every time I have the opportunity to work on this course with my Tiriti-based partner and with our taurira.

KŌRERO ATAATA – REFLECTIONS ON PRACTICE FROM YO HETA-LENSEN

Whilst I do not purport to be an expert in ngā toi Māori, I spent my young years following my father, himself a Dutch migrant who learned to carve from the great Tohunga whakairo, the late Pakariki (Paki) Harrison when he was the principal in a school in Manurewa. I recall Matua Paki as a man of keen observation and great stature, calm and sometimes playful, a teacher who commanded respect! If I was with my father, I knew to watch and stay away from the chisels! I was always allowed to be around though and was never precluded from conversation. Through my father's and my own interest, I learned many of the names of the patterns and, over time I began to be able to identify a few of the different tribal styles. I never picked up a chisel however, until much later in my life. Monin (2016) recounted the words of Matua Paki at the opening of the wharenuī Rakiora, at Harataunga marae in his native Kennedy Bay in 1996.

Me āta whakaakohia ōu nei tamariki kia whai uri ai mōhio ki te mau whao, ki te karawhiu toki, ki te tuitui tukutuku, ki te kanokano ngā kowhaiwhai me ērā atu. (Carefully school your children in these skills, so that you will have descendants who have the ability to wield a chisel, or swing an adze, weave tukutuku panels, paint kōwhaiwhai or carry out other related skills)

Many years later, as a university student, I studied under Matua Paki for a brief period. I was fortunate to be able to spend some time at Harataunga. He showed me a chisel he still had that my father, long since passed, had given him. I picked up a chisel for the first time! I took what I learned there and added it to my kete. I went to my brother in law Bill Marsh, himself a contemporary carver and he showed me a few ‘tricks’ with wood. However, without ever being told, I instinctively felt my time was not now, and it may never be. There are other ways that women of my lifetime can be involved in ngā toi Māori and I chose instead to learn to care for whakairo rather than create them! I continue to learn and understand the tikanga, whakapapa and the sacred nature of ngā toi ataata.

I have experimented with many ways to pass this knowledge on to tamariki precisely because, as Matua Paki reminded us, we need to pass these skills on, and because we have over 92% of Māori children in non-Māori educational settings (Skerrett & Ritchie, 2017). Although there is still much I need to learn before I can call myself an expert in this field, I am passionate about ensuring the appropriate transmission of ngā toi Māori. One of the ways I achieve this through the implementation of appropriate Māori visual arts education in collaboration with my hoa mahi – colleague, Helen Wrightson.

NGĀ TOI ATAATA AS RESPECTFUL COLLABORATION – NOHO TAHI

Te Noho Kotahitanga (Te Whare Wānanga o Wairaka, Unitec Institute of Technology, 1999) constitutes our organisation’s commitment to upholding *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* through its (1999) partnership agreement between Māori as Tangata Whenua on campus and Te Whare Wānanga o Wairaka, Unitec Institute of Technology. Underpinning *Te Noho Kotahitanga* are the following values:

- Rangatiratanga – Māori authority: Rangatiratanga acknowledges Māori expertise in Māori knowledge
- Whakaritenga – Legitimacy: Whakaritenga acknowledges the rights of all participants on campus
- Kaitiakitanga – Guardianship: Kaitiakitanga acknowledges our shared duty of care as the critic and conscience of our environment and society
- Noho kotahitanga – Cooperation: Noho Kotahitanga acknowledges respectful relationship in working together to achieve shared goals
- Ngākau Māhaki – Goodwill: Ngākau Māhaki acknowledges the spirit of kind heartedness and humility

Nonetheless, sometimes Māori pedagogies are at odds with Western pedagogies. As Tiriti based teaching partners we call upon *Te Noho Kotahitanga* to guide discussion about tensions and issues and defer to the expertise of each other to mediate shared and sometimes new understandings. The tikanga that we follow are cultural practices

observed since childhood. As an example, to honour the sacred nature of learning and knowledge associated with ngā toi ataata, no food or drink is consumed around art pieces. Karakia is always spoken over art pieces before and at the completion of work. This is now becoming part of our programme's shared understandings. Pedagogical approaches are also discussed and we learn from each other.

Recent work has seen the exploration of arts as storytelling (pakiwaitara) through the medium of shadow puppetry. In these experiences the tikanga addressed above are observed. This demonstrates the principle of Rangatiratanga in *Te Noho Kotahitanga*, where Māori have authority and responsibility over all dimensions of Māori knowledge. It also demonstrates the principle of Noho kotahitanga as we work together to ensure a balanced curriculum that challenges and inspires understandings of te ao Māori (the Māori world).

Students work collaboratively within rōpū (groups) selecting and writing their stories, creating their puppets and sets and deciding on music, the actors and storytellers. This has provided further opportunities to explore ngā toi ataata to extend literacy experience through appropriately selected pakiwaitara. The stories were shared with peers and lecturers and many have been performed in early childhood centres as part of Matariki (Māori New Year celebrations).

The images in figure 5 and figure 5a are examples of the resources created by the students and gifted to us. This seemingly simple act of gifting follows tikanga practice whereby the artist gifts their first art-piece. This is an example of how indigenous practices can be explained and demonstrated through the arts.



Figure 5



Figure 5a

NGĀ TOI ATAATA AS NATURE: FOSTERING KAITIKITANGA (GUARDIANSHIP)

There is a global imperative for sustainable environmental education. The planet is under huge stress. Māori elder and world-renowned social scientist Rangimarie Turuki Rose Pere reminds us that "Maori tradition emphasises the need to live as closely as possible with nature, to learn about it, to understand it" (Pere, 1997, p. 22). The need to pass this world on in a better condition than we found it has become crucial to our survival. The planet is changing at a rapid rate. So, it is even more important that we live closely with nature to understand how to adapt with the changes, what the impact of change is on the natural world, and how that will affect human habitation.

Ngā toi ataata can assist with caring for the natural world in many ways. Immersion in the natural world will help the growing child to develop a relationship with their environment, an ability to observe nature and an ability to identify threats and changes to nature. Māori approaches to the visual arts "must include knowledge and an appreciation of the impact and influence of Ranginui me Papatūānuku on how Māori experience, interpret, appreciate and represent the world through visual arts" (Wrightson & Heta-Lensen, 2013, p. 15).

In figures 6 and 7, Rhian Karnation interprets the stories and whakapapa of her area using her own artistic approach, painting in rotation, which can be seen by flipping her art piece to show the essence of 'ataata' or reflection in her work. Whilst Māori visual arts conveys whakapapa, and carries with it stylised form, there is still scope for artists to pursue their own interpretations of the natural world. Rhian incorporated multiple shades of blue in her artwork. Blue can represent Ranginui and also represents the vast ocean spaces that are characteristic of her area. For Rhian, however, this was also part of her own unique style. She commented that "...art is without rules. I have always painted predominately in blue with splashes of green or red, my blue phase has lasted for 26 years." At the same time, it is clear from her narrative accounts that her art expresses her relationship with the whenua, which includes a deep commitment to caring for it.

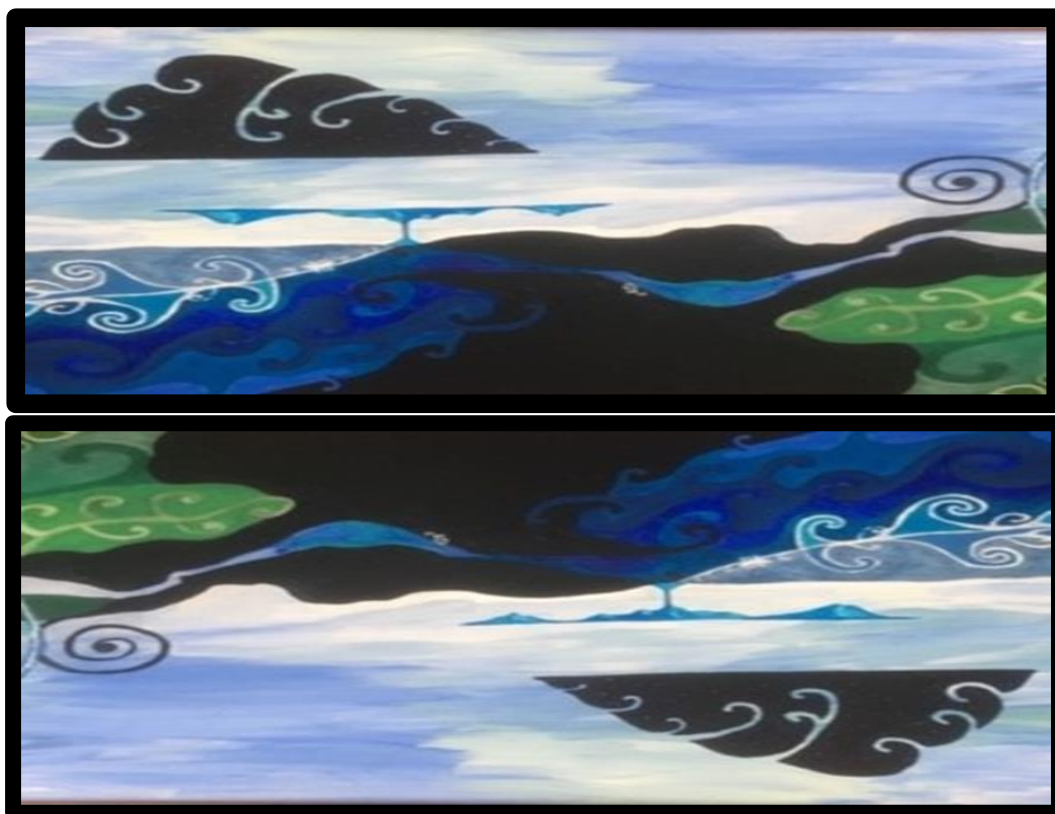


Figure 6 – Rhian Karnation, student teacher

Rhian's narrative for image 6: "I was raised to have great respect and aroha for Papatūānuku, to try and give back more than we take from the whenua. To me, Papatūānuku is the first teacher. Humanity has forgotten that we are animals too and that we rely on Papatūānuku for our existence. Humanity's impact on the whenua is clearly destructive; rather than co-existing with nature, we destroy it for the purpose of consumerism. For me, to have an aroha for Papatūānuku and knowledge on how to care for her is the most important lesson I can give the next generations".

Depicting the natural world through ngā toi ataata can act as a documentation of resources that are found in an area, that may one day be under threat. Certainly, in the area the artist Rhian is depicting, this is the case. There are constant threats to the black sands, a prominent feature of the area as seen in figure 6, as well as to the vegetation and water. The scene in figure 7 contains numerous references to the whakapapa of the people of the area Rhian is referring to in her art work. On the top right Matariki is clearly visible whilst the far left depicts the takarangi pattern, symbolic both of the separation of Ranginui and Papatūānuku and of the genealogies of the original inhabitants of her area. As you examine the art, reference to the patupaiarehe – fairy people who dwell in the forests – can be found embedded in the very earth.

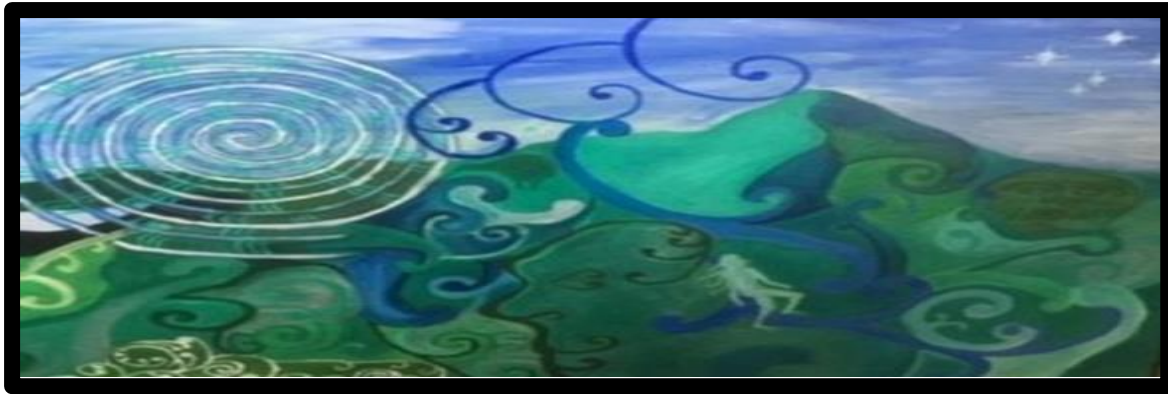


Figure 7 – Rhian Karnation

Rhian's narrative for Image 7: "Through art, I can express the beauty of the whenua, that which I see, and that which is unseen. I try to give tamariki art experiences that use natural resources given to us by the whenua, and that can be returned to the whenua. I carried out an extensive research into the iwi, whakapapa and the whenua of the area where I live and work, I expressed my knowledge gained and vision through painting. My paintings are never really planned I just follow my intuition".

Kai Tahu based creator and designer of *Te Rau Tiaki – The circle of care*, (2019) Carl Wixon reminds us of the circular nature of Māori DNA – whakapapa which shows that we are one and the same with the land. We therefore have an obligation to consider how our actions impact on and show tiaki taiao (care for the environment), tiaki takata (care for people) and the tiaki kaika (care for the community). Explorations of the stories of the land through ngā toi ataata, such as those illustrated in the art work of Rhian Karnation in figure 7, help to preserve the whakapapa of the people of that land. Immersion in nature helps to build a relationship with the land and its people. This is also how children learn what resources can be found in their area, and how they can be used sustainably. Children learn young to become kaitiaki – caretakers of the land.

NGĀ TOI ATAATA AS SPIRITUALITY (WAIRUA)

Pere (1997) has observed that children who get involved with the feeling of mother earth can experience the wonder of nature. Wixon (2019) pointed out we are one and the same with the land. The evidence can be found in te reo Māori (the Māori language) itself.

Iwi = Tribe ↔ Kōiwi = bone/s	Demonstrating the connection between the individual and the people from whom they descend
Hapū = Tribal grouping ↔ hapū = pregnant	Demonstrating that from conception the child is part of a community

Whānau = Family ↔ Whānau=birthing process	Demonstrating the lifegiving qualities and connectedness between people, place, space and time
Whenua = land ↔ Whenua = placenta	Demonstrating the circular nature of our relationship with the land. This is further evidenced by the practice to returning the placenta to the whenua once the child is born.

And so, we come full circle to understanding that the child and the land are one in the same. It is a spiritual connectedness that helps to keep the soul grounded, whilst enabling the confidence to explore te ao turoa, the wider world. From a Māori perspective relationship with Papatūānuku is established at birth, maintained throughout our lifetimes and reinforced when we return back to her at death. Ngā toi ataata provides the ability to dialogue that relationship. It enables communication across time, space and place.

CONCLUSION

Ngā toi ataata Māori visual arts invite the artist into the natural world as experienced through a Māori lens. This article has highlighted the multiple ways that ngā toi ataata supports a growing appreciation and awareness of our relationship with the land. We recognise the critical role of the visual arts curriculum and have outlined how engagement in ngā toi ataata is incorporated in the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) programme at Te Whare Wānanga o Wairaka Unitec Institute of Technology.

Through the examples and narratives provided we demonstrated how ngā toi ataata dialogues with Māori histories, values and locations across time, place and space. In so doing, we highlighted how ngā toi ataata Maori visual arts learning and teaching provides opportunities for tauira (students) in order to deepen their own understandings of Māori indigenous knowledge and develop a sense of connection to the natural world so they are in a position to share these experiences and knowledge with tamariki.

This article concludes with the concept of ataata, by posing a set of reflective questions that invite personal contemplation of the key themes that have emerged and how relationship with people, place, space and time converge in ngā toi ataata Māori visual arts.

Reflective questions

1. How do you express your relationship with the natural world?
2. What stories have emerged for you that may inspire your further exploration of Papatūānuku – Earth mother – and Ranginui – Sky father?
3. How might Māori visual arts ngā toi ataata support your own dialogue with nature?

Toi tū te whenua, toi tū te tangata. Tihei mauri ora!

The essence of the land, the essence of the people.
Behold, the breath of life!

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Rhian Karnation. Student teacher at Te Whare Wananga o Wairaka Unitec Institute of Technology for generously sharing her artworks created in the Te Kete Manaaki Whenua class. Te Kahurangi Heta-Lensen. Yo Heta-Lensen's son, for kindly consenting for us to use an artwork he created as a child and the accompanying narrative.

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