

ARTIST INTERVIEW

Paemanu

** after reading Huata Holmes in Scope Kaupapa Kai Tahu 3. 2015**

Artist Tahī: For me that was an interesting piece. What Huata was talking about, pretty much what we were saying here about place names and storing the history in those place names. Storing the history and the people and the journey in those place names. He talked about subsequent waka coming down after Uruao etc. And in particular when the Takitimu waka come from its journey from the Heretaunga, and how it got hit by a rogue wave and turned over and came to rest in those beaches and areas of Western Southland. The story of how the people of that boat stayed for a while and build relationships and shared stories and as a result had an influence on a layer of the naming of those areas, you know for example Te Rua O Te Moko, and even Tamatea himself in Dusky. There is a place down there now known as Otemita, which should read O Tamatea! The naming within the landscape refers to that nohoaka, to that occupation in that place, that assisted occupation.

Artist Rua: Kind of like an enforced occupation?

Tahī: Yes, but what also interested me in that piece was the kōrero around tohunga. He describes them as being the knowledgeable people, where sometimes we look at those as being the holders of the incantations that told the whakapapa and make a link to some form of higher spiritual being, which of course may have been the case. But he talked about the tohunga were the people that knew the toi, toi marama

Toru: Yeah of course. The ones that make the rongoa, they're tohunga, the ones that weave, they're tohunga, the ones that carve they're tohunga, you know, he tōki a rātou mahi... Cos, you're a master and they get you to carve their houses and they treat you like a king when you are there, a woman a night hahaha ... a different woman every night!

Rua: SO are you talking about tohunga in relation to this one, to this nohoaka?

Tahī: Well the inference that I got to the connection that Huata was making on there, particularly with the inland space talking about the rock art ki uta and he talked about them naming and the moving through and then nohoaka, the staying in. He was talking about the people telling the story and leaving the story behind.

Rua: I like the idea of stories. Yeah... Weaving. I think the sharing of stories is integral to what we are doing here eh? I really like the idea of stories activating spaces like what we're doing here under Lonnie's piece. Cos Lonnie's talked about activating space.

Tahi: Yeah its quite cool laying under here, thinking about Lonnie, and looking up at her work. Even though she's not here, she is eh?

Rua: Yeah, But I think, like, in as far as making art goes in this space, making art makes it easy to share stories, like through this sort of thing, making this tangible thing...

Pause...

Tahi: When you are doing something like this are you thinking of the story?

Rua: No you're not, you're just engaging with the material. I guess if I was sitting by myself I would get carried away thinking about things like I did with the idea of middens and creating something with midden and that idea of tukutuku, giving and taking.

Tahi: I love midden. The idea of the discarded, the waste from back in the day, actually meaning something now, being important! Did I ever tell you that story about Whenua Hou, about finding that pipe stem in the midden and, and thinking, "shithouse, this could have been Newton's pipe". And the DoC ranger saying show me that and putting it in a baggy in her pocket???

Laughter

Toru: Real?

Rua: Yeah I remember that story. Funny. Midden versus artefact!

Tahi: I tell that story quite a bit. When you are, well for me when I'm working I am always conscious of the story that I'm telling of the, of the audience of the message that I want to get across and is it the same...

Rua: Like when you are making kai, that sort of thing?

Tahi: Yeah kai or telling stories, teaching. Same thing eh. It would be great if people connected with kai the same way they do with stories, but for me the process is often the same. Is it the same for you fellas? Like for you when you're work on a piece or conceptualising a piece are you conscious of a story or a set of stories...

Rua: Yeah thats me... I dont know...

Toru: I paint narratives, that what I do. I paint stories for those peoples. For the next generation so that they don't lose the stories eh. And it buzzes me out when people talk about it. I did a book of [tupuna names deleted] and the story was my Nan's story, my Nana's story, and I recreated it and I painted it and they wont forget it when they see it like that. So yeah, I just make books, yeah, that's what I want to do. Cos I enjoyed all the narratives when I was growing up. My Koko would take me to places all around the back of Waitotara, and to help us remember he would walk up the hill backwards, and I would always remember where certain places were Mahi ta tupuna tawhito, you know those stories. I always painted the pictures in my head. I was quite intuitive, I saw them as we were cruising around. And that's how I find pictures for art when I'm doing art.

Rua: I really liked this process. This for me will have a great impact on my practice. As far as exhibitions go this has had the greatest impact on me, more than anything else. It's that idea of working collectivelyAnd the eating and sleeping and sharing stories and laughing..