

JAMES COLIN BELLANEY

**The Four Pillars: #space #form #tribal #flow  
#waveforms**

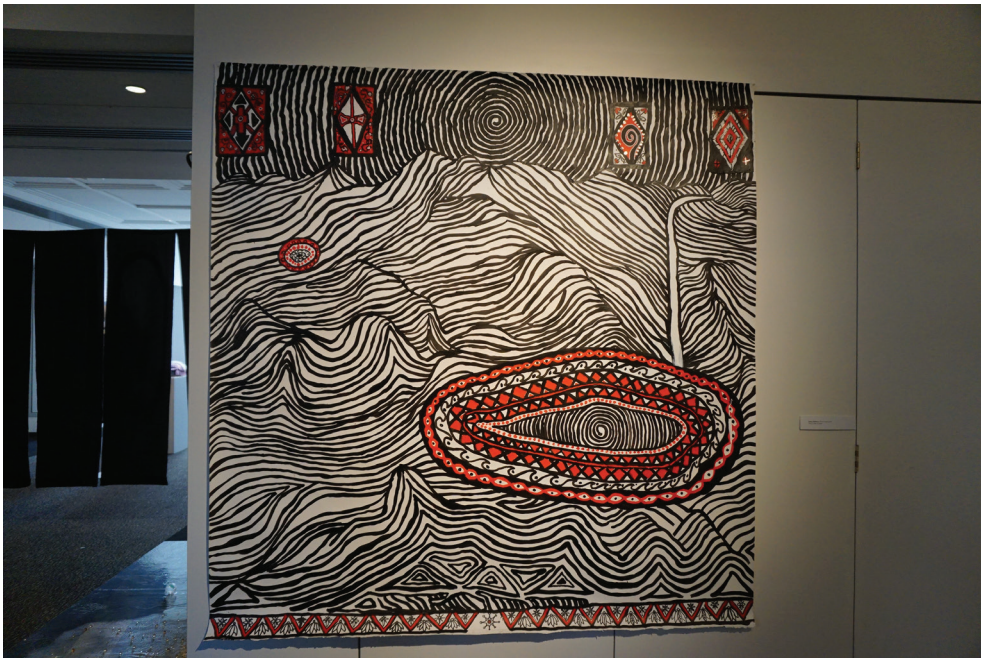


Figure 1. James Colin Bellaney, *Looking for a Wave (A Wave in Time)*, 2016, acrylic on paper, 150 X 150cm.

*Looking for a Wave* explored notions around space and form, cosmogenesis wave forms and flow in time. In the work the red of the earth is our origin and represents life. The contour lines of the land are topographical and metaphorical. The four emblems at the top of the painting represent the four pillars holding up Rangī.

In Māori cosmogony Rangī and Papa were the primal parents, Sky Father and Earth Mother. In the

beginning their embrace was so close that only a feeble glimmer of light could reach the children of the earth ao taruaitu. The separation of the Rangī from Papa (Sky and Earth) tells the next chapter of the story;

Tane and his companions succeeded in forcing the heavens up on high, and supporting them in that position by means of four poles used as props, the names of which are the names of the four Winds. In order to bring light into the world, Tane went forth in search of the Whanau Marama, the light-giving ones, the Children of Light, whom he found in charge of Te Ikaroa (the Milky Way). These he placed in position on the breast of Rangī, the Sky Parent, which they still adorn. They are the sun, moon, and stars.<sup>1</sup>

This whakapapa continues, to tell the stories of the stars, the children of the heavens, and is common to many Pacific stories, as the basis of traditional astronomical concepts and way-finding, for example on the Hawaiian and Gilbert Islands;

The cardinal points. The four directions on the horizon were associated with the four kukulu, or supporting pillars of heaven, with the diurnal motion of the sun, and with the motion of the trade-winds. In the names of the cardinal points, kukulu evidently refers to the four great pillars, supporting the dome of heaven at these points.<sup>2</sup>

Once thought of as “merely” the stuff of tribal fireside tales, these stories are the treasured baskets of knowledge of mātauranga Māori, recognised as one of the great astronomical resources. They have been unpacked and validated through modern scientific observations and are once again valued as astronomical knowledge and form the basis of traditional Oceanic navigation.<sup>3</sup>

**James Bellaney** has been exhibiting locally and nationally since completing his BFA at the Dunedin School of Art in 2011. His work includes painting and drawing as well as performance art. He exhibits in galleries, and in artist and community spaces. James was a finalist in the Clifton Art Awards, 2012, and the New Zealand National Art Awards in Waikato, 2013, and has received commissions for public artworks in Dunedin. His work explores narrative through the process of painting, using symbolism, marks and Māori culture to express universal stories.

1. Elsdon Best, *Some Aspects of Māori Myth and Religion, Illustrating the Mentality of the Māori and his Mythopoetic Concepts*, Dominion Museum Monograph No.1, Published by the Dominion Museum, Wellington, New Zealand, under the Authority of the Hon. The Minister of Internal Affairs, 1922. <https://www.knowledge-basket.co.nz/kete/taonga/contents/taonga/text/dm/dm1.html>
2. Maud W. Makemson, *Hawaiian Astronomical Concepts I: Instructions in Ancient Astronomy*, Polynesian Voyaging Society, [http://pvs.kcc.hawaii.edu/pdfs/Hawaiian\\_astronomy\\_1.pdf](http://pvs.kcc.hawaii.edu/pdfs/Hawaiian_astronomy_1.pdf) [accessed 28 November 2016], from a paper in 1939. Kukulu also appears to have the derived meaning of circle, as in the phrase for horizon, probably coming from the idea of a circular wall surrounding the earth and holding in the ocean.
3. Pauline Harris, Rangī Matamua, Takirirangi Smith, Hoturoa Kerr, Toa Waaka, “A Review Of Māori Astronomy In Aotearoa-New Zealand,” *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage*, 16:3, 2013, 325-36. <http://www.maoriastronomy.co.nz/resources>. Alongside their work in cultural preservation, SMART (Society of Māori Astronomy Research and Traditions) is also revitalising tātai arorangi. One aspect of this revitalisation is the combining of tātai arorangi with current astronomical research. The 2012–2013 waka hourua voyage of the Waka Tapu from New Zealand to Rapanui closed the Polynesian triangle. This confirmed that it is possible to travel successfully and deliberately great distances by canoe while navigating without modern instruments.