

## SIMON KAAN

Review: *wānaka... learning in the dark* paintings & sound, an exhibition of paintings and song by Moana Tipa and Marahia Te Kahika, Dunedin School of Art Gallery, November, 2016.

Three bodies of work reflect the voices of two generations: *Whakatātūtū* (Navigating Depth) 2015, *Wānaka* (Learning in the Dark) 2016, and the waiata and lyrics of *Aku Moutere*.

The exhibition is a poignant collaboration between Moana Tipa and her son Marahia Te Kahika. A multimedia work, exchanging vibrations of sound and rhythms on canvas panels. This is a powerful and moving body of work that provides us with a deep look into who we are and how we may position ourselves within Te Waipounamu, Aotearoa and as a Pacific Nation. The exhibition provides us with a rare opportunity where we can uncover our histories from both spiritual and political perspectives.

There is a line that drops down into the room that references the concept: *Whakatātūtū* – navigating depth. The line is bound tightly of woven harakeke soaked in red. It is a connection point, which anchors us both to the artwork physically and also acts as a reminder of what ties us to this land... *whakapapa*. The line has strength in its bindings.

The exhibition is about history. It provides a strong and robust platform that reframes a history, which even now is only visible in the dark shade of our post-colonial present. It is about landlessness. It describes an undermining constitution that is still driving land legislation today. The works enable us to view very important events from the past and highlight an on-going and highly relevant discussion around grievance, that for many of us is an everyday consideration. The line is blood red.

There are six paintings that hang vertically. The works could be read as *waharoa* (gateways), spaces we walk into and be transformed to a

time which is both past and future. The velvet blacks in each work suck in light and the viewer simultaneously, allowing one to be pulled into and then released again to float through the soft mid-tones in the canvas. These six works act as a meditation, a pause allowing us to reposition our thoughts.

On a long running wall there are three paintings that are tied together by another red line, this one horizontal, under which are marked significant points in the history that have led to confiscation. The paintings have a fluid nature. They echo the *whenua* and its rhythms, which seem to move with the soundscape *Aku Moutere*. The combination of the paintings and the music provide a seamless harmony, together asking us questions of who we are, where we are from and where we may be heading.

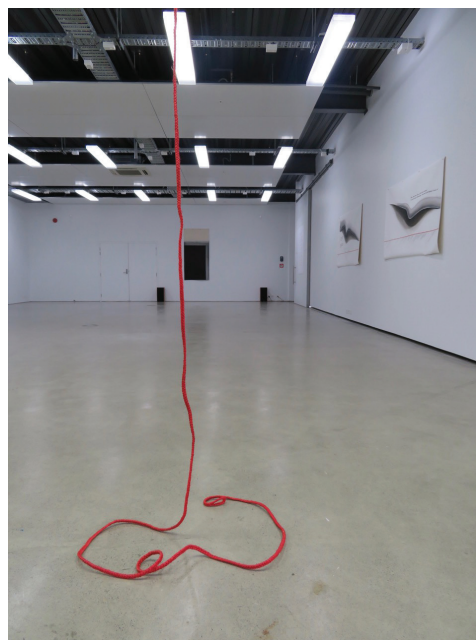


Figure 1. Moana Tipa and Marahia Te Kahika, *Appeal to Heaven, release the curse*, plaited harakeke, dye, 5m.

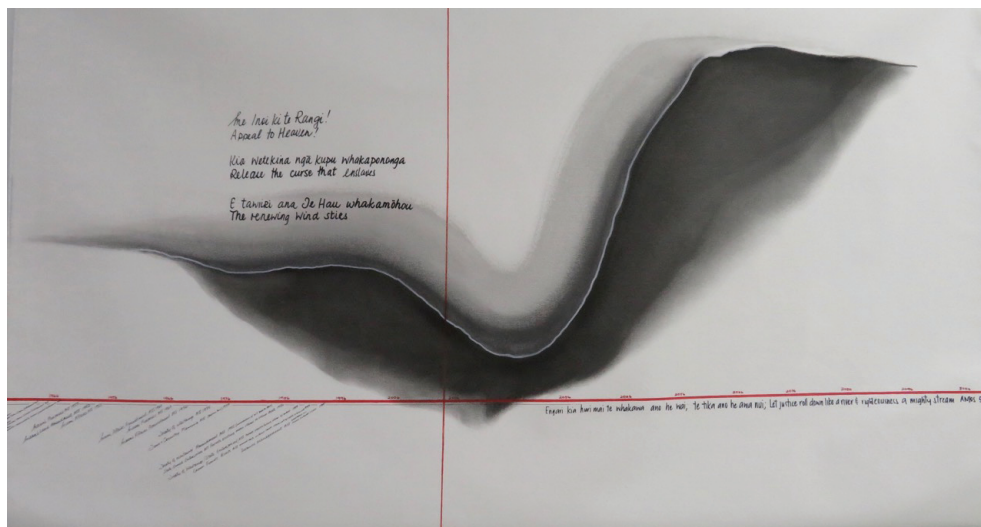


Figure 2. Moana Tipa and Marahia Te Kahika, *Appeal to heaven*, oil stick, acrylic wash, 2m x 1m.



Figure 3. Moana Tipa and Marahia Te Kahika, *For generations, the land cries out*, Charcoal wash / oil stick / untreated canvas.

*aku moutere — my islands*

mara tk / vincent olsen-reeder / mark vanilau /

Kei hea aku moutere?                      Where are my islands  
i tauwhiro ra i ahau                      that nurtured me?  
Taku waka te whiua                      My canoe has been cast  
ki te koro Parata e                      into the throat of the Parata

E te Kaihautu                      O great Captain  
Whatungaro te whenua i a taua                      The land is lost to us

Kia mahara ki te wa o te ora                      Remembering the times I was alive  
Titaha ki tai                      Now, swaying at sea  
Pae ki uta                      whilst the land is stable

Ua ia tagata ese                      There's a stranger  
I o'u laufanua                      in my home  
Ua tulia i matou i a'au                      I've been outcast into the ocean  
Ma ua fai o'u matafaga                      sharks inherit these shores

E kore te uku, e piri ki te rino                      Clay doesn't stick to iron  
Engari te uku e mau ki te kiri                      But it does stick to skin

Kia mahara ki te wa o te ora                      Remembering the times I was alive  
Titaha ki tai                      Now, swaying at sea  
Pae ki uta                      whilst the land is stable