

Kōpata¹

Tohu (marks and signs²) are a form of literacy and are boundless within “te ao toi” (the art world), but there are particular tohu that encourage story telling or interpretations of the different forms, or even the personifications, of wai. This artwork is an attempt at a figurative description of what happens when water falls. Beginning from the top, the pūhoro (design) represents the acceleration of water caused by gravity. The tohu within the pūhoro are the koru, the hae hae (rows of carved ridges) and the pākati (carved toothed pattern).³

The koru expresses the necessity of wai to all life, while not forgetting that although water can take on many shapes and seem almost weak, it can also be strong and unyielding. The haehae and its spaces simply shows that water acts as if it has a skin. And the pākati, while representing whakapapa, acknowledges the multiple deities to do with water, including but not limited to, Tangaroa, Kiwa, Kaukau, Te Wainui, Parawhenuamea, Hine-moana, Hine-kohu, Hine-wai, and Hine-te-Ihorangi, or Te Ihorangi.⁴

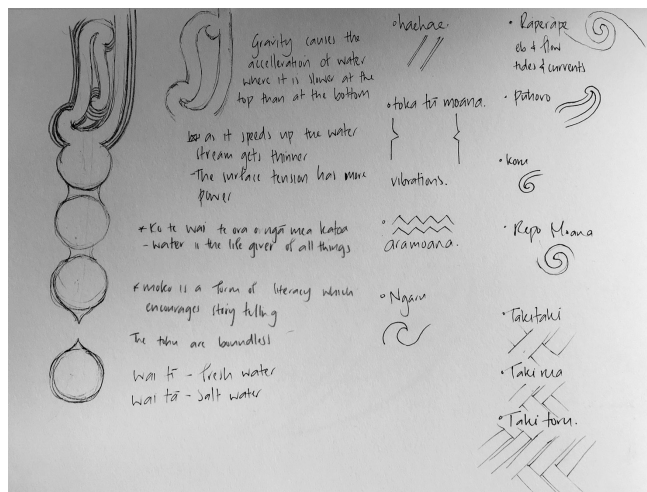


Figure 1. Heramaahina Eketone, sketch pad – work in progress, 2019.

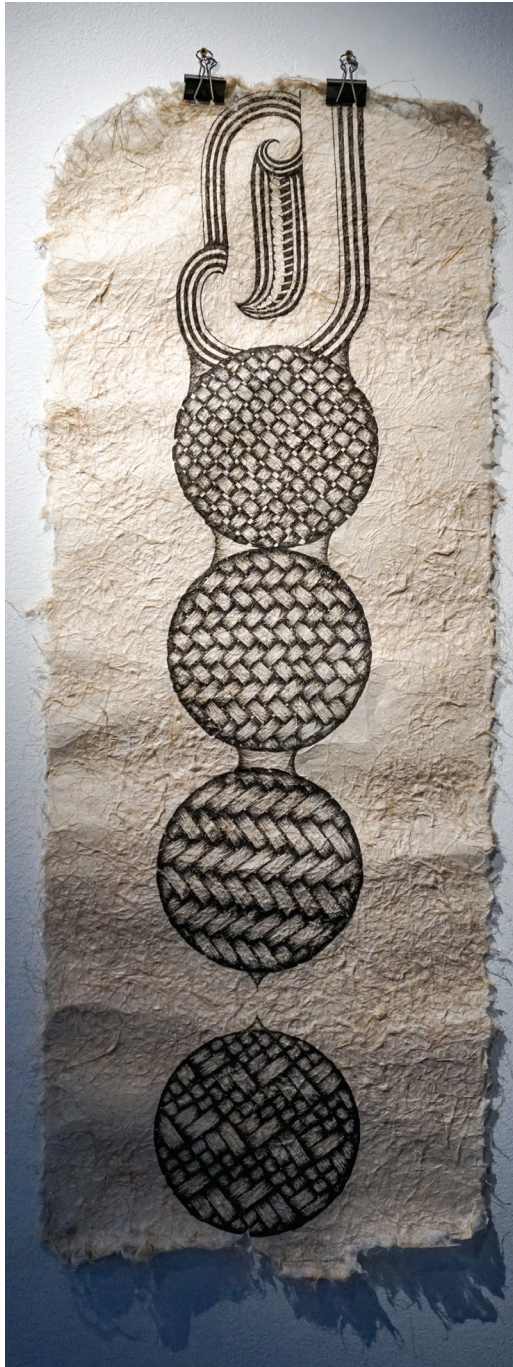


Figure 2. Heramaahina Eketone, *Kōpata*, 2019.

Towards the bottom of the pūhoro, the stream has reached a point where it has become thinner. By this time the surface tension has more power and as you travel down the image, the stream is indented due to vibrations resulting in the wai snapping off. Each droplet has been given a different technique of raranga (weaving). The first being takitahi shows that water can expand, thus the loose weave. The second droplet is takirua, reinforcing that water is almost incompressible. The third droplet is takitoru and acknowledges the three forms that water can be in: solid, liquid, and gaseous. The final droplet has broken away from the forces holding the stream together. This encompasses all whakapapa, knowledge, and wonders of water.⁵

Ko te wai te ora o ngā mea katoa

Water is the life giver of all things

1. *Kōpata*, (dew or drop).
2. Referring explicitly to carved marks, *tohu* also mean a sign or proof; Tiaki Hikawera Mitira, "Tohu and aitua. — signs, omens, tokens and superstitions," in *Takitimu* (Wellington: Reed Publishing Ltd, 1972), 255, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-MitTaki-t1-back-d1-d5-d1.html> (accessed 29 June 2020), koorero with tā moko artist and kaiako / teacher, Stu McDonald, who told me that *tohu* are boundless. He also told me stories about the personifications of the *atua* (ancestors/deities) of the different waters. Heramaahina is currently an apprentice to Stu McDonald of Moana Moko.
3. Hirini Moko Mead, *Te Toi Whakairo: The Art of Maori Carving*, (Auckland, Reed Publishing (NZ) Ltd, 1999).
4. Elsdon Best, *Māori religion and mythology: being an account of the cosmogony, anthropogeny, religious beliefs and rites, magic and folk lore of the Māori folk of New Zealand*. (Wellington, Te Papa Press, 2005); *Volumes 1 and 2*; Elsdon Best, *The Maori*, (Wellington: Harry H. Toms, 1924); koorero with Stu McDonald as above (personal communication - Heramaahina and Stu McDonald).
5. M Pendergrast, *Raranga Whakairo: Maori Plaiting Patterns*. (Auckland, Reed Publishing (NZ) Ltd: 2003) weaving designs – *takitahi*, *takirua* and *takitoru*.