

Hiria Anderson-Mita

*Te Hokinga Mai*

Michelle Raurahu

Noa is an underrated word. It implies freedom from obstruction, but is also a commonplace word meaning *only, solely, just, merely, quite, until*. Noa is a state of being that might also be symbolised by a plastic chair in the doorway of a backroom, forecasting future arrangement and the imminent shepherding of people, as in the painting *Whare setup and mattress shed*. In *Karakia* a set of sneakers, boots and a lone cup is strewn across the room, communicating a diverse gathering of people. In *Te Pō Roa*, an empty, dark set of seats with a small roof, suggests the night ahead won't bring rest. Noa acts as a tether to pull us down from the abstract and spiritual realm that resides in the world of Te Poo, like the string on a helium balloon.

*Te Hokinga Mai* translates as *The Return* and is an ode to noa, to the space between the big events and the magic in that waiting space. To the rituals that ground us back to put whenua, the place our pito lay buried. As tangata whenua, I look at each piece with a sense that I've been in these spaces before, even though they don't represent places I have actually visited. The feeling I get triggers the cultural core of me, these are spaces that ask something of me; they ask me to be quiet at certain times then use my voice in others, but most of all they ask me to bind myself to others. To move in time with them, to hold hands, to break apart when we need to. It's a conversation where nothing much needs to be said, but everything is communicated.

*Kia ora cuz ...where u living now?*

*Up north. How u been?*

When I see a marae, I know it represents a place of rest after a long, frantic drive, a place where I must look after others, a place where we are again, locked in the business of maintaining a community. I know what it smells like. I know that, inevitably, as I step through the threshold of these spaces, someone will ask if I've eaten already. And that at some point, I will ask someone else the same question. Each object in Anderson-Mita's work is an important signifier of both the toil and rest associated with being together in this spiritual home, the necessity to care for one another and the spaces in which we can find information, solace, or contemplation.

*Did you get those chairs from the whare?*

*Ae.*

*Love you.*

*Love you too aunty.*

To go back home, is to spend time. Time that is hard-won from a job that demands much from you and is split in thousands. You hustle hard for that time and accrue it and hold it so that you can come home after months, years, to sit in companionable silence, gaze out the window, count the shoes strewn on the porch. It is your most valuable taonga and yet, it is difficult to communicate how precious spending time in the mist under your creaking ancestors is in words. It does much better in Anderson-Mita's dreamy palette that presents the minutiae of home from the blurred vision of someone who has yet to blink and bring it fully into focus.

*Good seeing u*

*I will be back to learn more :)*

*You know where home is love*

*We are always here. Much love xx*

The segmenting of these *noa* moments, reveals its relationship to its twin, *tapu*; that sacred element and space that we navigate together. It is a sad reality that what often brings us home is tragedy, loss, death. Tapu rears its head in pieces like *Whakaako* representing kawakawa combined with ferns on a dark background. Kawakawa is adorned for tangihanga because of its medicinal properties, as well as ferns. If we follow the winding tendrils of this symbol, this could be interpreted as falling into the tapu category, but if we follow further, this medicinal purpose, along with the ways in which fern and kawakawa are consumed, is tethered to noa. The normal, the stable, the grounded. We wear these adornments so that, in our mourning, we can brush our fingertips against the other side, with the knowledge that the noa will pull us back.

*Sorry to hear uncle passed away*

*how are you coming along?*

*It took us all by surprise I think*

*it happened so quickly*

Darkness does not always hold the end of life, it can unfurl new growth. In *Hangareka*, two young shadows are painted with the illusion of light streaming from their mouths. It reveals how a full spectrum of emotion can be extracted from the time we spend together, no matter the purpose for meeting. Our rangatahi are closer to this playfulness. They run through the wharenui at inappropriate times, they scream over the whaikoorero, they hide in the mattress room or skip out on their cleaning duties. They emblemise the ways protocol can be broken in the process of swimming in the margins of tapu / noa.

In *IO Karaiti*, a challenge is delivered to us as the audience, to look at the representations of Christianity and how it is interwoven into the fabric of our traditions. Here, protocol is represented again with tapu and noa bound together. Tukutuku panels are distorted by the glass decanters that hold the proverbial blood of Christ but nonetheless, the symbols of intersecting religions are present together. It provokes thought, that even though there may be ways those two sets of kawa or traditional can be in opposition as well as in harmony. To drink the blood of Christ is to interact with the sacred and invite it into your body, making it normal.

*Wharemoē* is the piece that lingers for me the longest. Ultimately, it is the resting of one's head under a familiar roof that is the culmination of what it is to be home, after a long day's work. It is the most routine part of our every day and yet, it exposes us to the divine. To meet kanohi ki te kanohi is a practice many may be familiar with though many might misinterpret. The reason to meet in person is so we can be reminded of the humanity in the people we speak to. To sleep under the same roof has the same purpose. When we rest together, we sit in silence, listening to the haa move through you, understanding innately that we are vessels that contain breath, for now, but soon we will be in the ground that lays under us. Tapu, noa, they are elements that fold in on each other always but it is the noa that leads us in the dark, offering stability in a turbulent world.

Tihei Mauri Ora.

*E moe e te tau*

*Kia pai too moe*

\*Note: The writer uses Tainui dialect which uses double-vowels rather than the traditional macron/tohuto. Where the writer has referenced titles of the work, the macron has been left in place.

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