

# HOMESICK/SICKHOME

*Hana Pera Aoake* responds to  
*Jade Townsend's* exhibition

HOMESICK/SICKHOME shown  
at Page Galleries post rāhui 2020

I

Our tuupuna were always travellers who existed over large bodies of water. Our bodies literally tell the stories of journeys across water, navigating by ships and carved wooden canoes.

Jade's tuupuna came from the Taakitimu canoe, which was sailed from Hawaiki by Tamatea Arikinui. Tamatea settled in the Tauranga area and many of his descendants journeyed along the east coast. Command of the Taakitimu was given to Tahu Pootiki who travelled to the south island, where he became the founding ancestor of Kai Tahu. Tamatea's great grandson was Kahungunu, who was a cunning, talented and dynamic leader. He travelled south fathering many children, building villages and irrigating papatuunuku's souls. His descendants now form Jade's iwi Ngaati Kahungunu.

In 2017, Jade's awa tupua gained legal personhood, when parliament passed legislation declaring Te Awa Tupua is an indivisible, living whole, and henceforth possesses "all the rights, powers, duties, and liabilities" of a legal person. Maaori have always insisted that the river is a living being, their ancestor. Based on the Whanganui precedent, 820 square miles of forests, lakes, and rivers, a former national park known as Te Urewera - also gained legal personhood. Soon the volcanic mountain, Taranaki, will become the third person.

**Ko au te awa  
Ko te awa ko au.**

Tangaroa spits mucus coated sea foam onto the shore. The sea foam wobbles like jelly, but on closer inspection appears like heart tendons snapping. Sprinkled across the sand appear fishing ropes, soft plastics, straws, streamers, cigarettes, smoothed glass, bottle caps and so forth. Tourists with obtusely phallic cameras swinging like fresh fish dodging a chef's knife. Dancing, in perpetual motion. Cliffs carved through Ruuaumoko's rumbling beamed the sea. Standing on shorelines of shared violence, where the sea like a wheke connecting bodies through movement through space and time. Violence is visible, invisible, divisible. Global capitalism demands a system of labour. Buy and sell. Once in Ghana, while staying at a resort, I woke up at dawn and watched two young boys paddle out in a canoe and clear all the rubbish out of the sea before any of us, the tourists, woke up. Ports for the trade of bodies, or the extracted labour of other bodies that pass through systems of trade, of capital, of expansion and needless affixation of the terms 'property' and 'discovery'. All objects have a relation, all matter is interconnected to our bodies in terms of labour, capitalism and colonialism. Tourism, gentrification and the refusal to acknowledge that the planet's resources are dwindling.

## II

In Charles Taylor's essay Politics and knowledge: Kaupapa Maori and Maturanga Maori, he describes the multitude of meanings that are carried in the term 'Maaori. Maaori can simply mean 'natural', for instance in the word 'waimaori', which means fresh water. <sup>1</sup>According to Hoane Nahe of Ngaati Maru it can be linked to our tuupuna from Hawaiki's first meeting with the Patupaiarehe, the original inhabitants of this land.<sup>2</sup> Although used interchangeably Kaupapa Maaori and Maturanga Maaori are two distinct terms. Kaupapa Maaori is expansive.

- 1 Te Ahukaramuu Charles Taylor, "Politics and Knowledge: Kaupapa Maori and Maturanga Maori" in New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, vol 47, no.2, 2012, 31
- 2 Ibid, 32

Maturanga Maaori is the study of a body of knowledge arising from our polynesian ancestors, and although it exists only in fragments, due to colonial-social relations, this could be for instance te reo rangatira, the Maaori language. Kaupapa Maaori involves pulling different or new knowledge systems to better understand the historical and contemporary dimensions of power structures within New Zealand.<sup>3</sup> Kaupapa Maaori is henceforth a dynamic approach to constructing new subjectivities, while Maturanga Maaori overlaps to form a poi-like bridge connecting our bodies to the earth and to the sky, always ebbing and flowing between different modes of being.

- 3 Ibid, 36

In this hybridisation of bodies we can extrapolate a potentiality for new modes of being that exist solely in the plural.

III

Wealthy english leather retirees  
sip smoothies  
while sitting on their laptops.  
Old women with tired feet and animated eyes,  
standing out on their balconies,  
gazing at the stillness.

*Castles.  
Fortifications.  
Poster for huge club nights.  
Lip around beach to beach to beach.*

Christmas lights.

Bitter orange on lips,  
red driveway  
hidden stone beach  
wild rough winds.

Slowly collecting  
materials.

Pull rope  
out of sand and

pull off stereophome  
To make something beautiful  
that expands  
like  
a  
jellyfish  
like  
a  
breath



Breathe in and breathe out

## IV

I watch you beading. Slowly, carefully, but somehow you can still continue to chat and watch the baby and drink a cup of tea. I think about how I'd spill the tea on myself and I'd prick my finger. My hands are rough, indelicate and cramp easily due to my poor circulation. I talk to you about growing babies and think about the words 'tangata whenua', tangata being 'people' and whenua of course being both 'land' and 'placenta'. I wonder out loud to you if swimming underwater is the same sensation as being in the womb.

Wine, laughter, truths, and cheeky cigarettes under the fireplace.

While you work I watch Taakaro Tribe with Hayes and think about Mierle Laderman Ukeles's work, Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969! In 1969, Ukeles wrote a three-and-a-half typewritten document divided into two parts of what she calls basic systems, 'Development and maintenance'. She explicates these two human drives by defining, Development, as being about "pure individual creation; the new; change," while maintenance means to "keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new; sustain the change."<sup>4</sup> The latter is tied to "life instinct," which involves "the perpetuation and MAINTENANCE of the species, survival systems and operations..."<sup>5</sup> She states that "Maintenance is a drag; it takes all the fucking time..."<sup>6</sup> I think of how hungover I am, but that you woke up with Hayes at six and it's now eleven and you have already showered, eaten, cleaned and are on your second cup of tea unpicking stitches. Nobody sees these unpaid acts of care or maintenance, which are performed constantly in domestic spaces.

Time feels nonlinear and you are familiar as though are bodies form a relation that neither of us could ever quite comprehend.

4 Mierle Laderman Ukeles, The Maintenance Art exhibition: care!, exhibition proposal, 1969, [https://www.queensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Ukeles\\_MANIFESTO.pdf](https://www.queensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Ukeles_MANIFESTO.pdf)

5 Ibid

6 Ibid



I watch you unpick. Your portable studio is made of materials that are stumbled open and collected like an archive of places our bodies have been. At art school my tutors wanted us to work on a bigger scale and in what seemed to me a very unsustainable and classist mode of thinking and making. To have a studio, to have space to work is an enormous privilege, so you live with your work. Each time you put the work down to attend to something else, you will, unless it's urgent, pause for just a moment. Perhaps you are considering how what you're working on lives in this house, which is not your house or even a permanent space, it is an impermanent, transient space, that you inhabit. Soon you will fly to Liverpool, then Dubai, then Thailand and then home to Te Ika a Maui.

Being of this place and being of many, being made of tiny atoms, being made of bones that are up breakable, being made by distance, being made of bacteria, being made of existing in multiple forms, being porous, being slippery, being misread, being of labour that is stretched out, being mounds of seaweed drying in the sun, being in the orange trees, being unable to speak a language, being not of here, being in other people's homes, being in Uber's, being in air bnbs, being a sunset, being a freezing swim, being the salt in the mouth, being a toy rabbit, being colours and textures, being Ranginui's skies, being Papatuanuku's clay, [being the Moana](#).

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*Matilda Fraser* responds to  
*Jade Townsend's* exhibition  
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Would you like to hear some  
cute facts? Here are some I  
prepared earlier:

They say that your body replaces all of its cells every seven years, so you're a wholly different being today than you were in 2012, but they also say with every breath you're taking in oxygen atoms that Shakespeare also breathed. Also, about 90% of the plastic ever produced is still with us here on Earth.

It's a tenacious substance, polymer, and many of this family's members resist change. Plastic collects in gyres – large systems of circulating ocean currents. It's an inert substance, it can't oxidise, or become waterlogged, or necessarily sink below the waves.

These works might have been fished up – woven by the waves. They're not organic, but they grew in the ocean, coalescing like the islands we've heard about. It's not really so accurate, by the way, the stories about gigantic atolls of plastic waste. In fact, much of it sinks, and what doesn't becomes more of a soup, an agitated morass of bodies and particles rubbing against each other. Thirty years from now, there'll be more plastic in the ocean than fish, more packaging than sustenance, more trap than prey. In the future, we might be pleased to find a single-use plastic bag – and it won't be single-use anymore. Imagine a Tesco carrier-bag, having stood the test of time, that can be carefully washed and used to carry potable water, or to wrap precious

food to protect it from spoiling, or woven into something beautiful, unnecessary, vital, to be taken out and looked at when in a safe place of rest. Another cute fact, but this one's not true either: that frogs don't feel it when they're boiled gradually in a pot. By the way, they absolutely do, and they'll jump to safety once the water hits about 25 degrees. Will we?

I'll admit that it's hard, to consider this particular apocalyptic scenario while yet another plays out around us at the time of writing. We live in interesting times, and all this seems a bit beside the point, doesn't it? We're all at home, so our homes don't get sick.

It's a privilege to move across the earth, to travel the world freely as many of us have for some time, and the flipside of this is climate refugees, forced to move from one island to the next as the waters rise. Those who travel carry all kinds of things with them – the works in this show have seen more of the world than most, carried like treasures and brought out into the light to be worked on. I often dream that I am packing a bag, to go away or to return home from somewhere else, but my things multiply and I can't hope to fit it all in. I'm going to miss my plane. I'm going to miss my boat. I realise that a therapist might have something to say about this. In waking life, perhaps as a side effect of too much dystopian fiction or simply as a natural consequence of being an anxious person, I think often about escape routes, about the bare minimum of items needed to move from one place to another. What will we carry with us in the future? How quickly do your priorities shift?

What do we bring when we are away from home? Things physical, microscopic, intangible, immaterial. A spare pair of gloves, or phrasebook, or warm jacket. Maps for navigation, postcards to remember a time when we were in a different place, exchanged with those who stayed behind. If we can manage it, we carry our homes with us. Words and songs and stories, atoms from home, sharing breath with our ancestors: these things are resilient, portable, and thankfully weigh nothing at all.

