

Lily – Artzone.

Questions:

Your painting regularly engages with figures from your own tupuna, as well as art historical and archival imagery that examines issues around Maori representation. In a few words, how would you characterise your practise?

My practice attempts to re-locate and re-define the power relationships within Maori representation. My practice attempts to re-think how Maori have been represented within a tourism context and within the context of nation making and how these two areas of social phenomena come together to create ideology around Maori and Maori culture. I am interested in how these things (tourism and national identity as intangible ideas) are acted out as tangible performances and how power structures operate within these phenomena.

You use flat planes of colour in your work, which arguably lends it quite an illustrative feel. How would you describe your painting style?

Yes, my paintings are very flat. Perhaps in this way my paintings lend themselves to a pop-culture feel, and as a result Maori representation is able to leave the confines of historical representation.

A recent work at Artspace reproduces a watercolour by Tupaia using acrylic on vinyl on a grand scale. Was this work made specifically for this exhibition? What was your thinking around this work and how does this painting style echo your own? The work is titled 'For Hine', what is the significance of this?

Artspace work - was it made for the exhibition?

Adnan was aware that I was creating this piece and then asked me to be a part of this exhibition project. It wasn't made specifically for the exhibition.

What was the thinking around this work and does his painting style echo your own?

Tupaia's work acts as documentation and represents many layers of / different forms of exchange. Given our status as a bi-cultural nation his work can act as some sort of founding representation of our bi-culturalism – (and of course New Zealand's bi-culturalism is extremely problematic, which is something that I was thinking through). I think shifting this painting, in scale, material and its presentation in today's context, allows for a new reading. I can elaborate:

Firstly Tupaia's work is a documentation of exchange between two subjects and now sits within a historical context. His work as a historical document can be used to think through the relationships between Maori and Pakeha and how this relationship has been performed over time.

My work – the copy – situates these historical politics into a contemporary time, whereby the material and scale allows for a new reading; whereby the idea of exchange (as a performance, as economic, as an allied and reciprocal relationship) shifts to become a form of advertising and in this way becomes a form of branding. And then to un-pick it even further: capitalism

profits from this idealized relationship, our bi-culturalism, whereby maori culture is used to create an idealized nation, as opposed to actual equality, an actual bi-culturalism.

What I mean is: Our national identity is created with the aid and appropriation of Māori symbols, as opposed to full Maori inclusion

Secondly, the style of painting, flat watercolour, is something that Tupaia learnt from Banks, so again, there becomes an exchange of western representational style and knowledge. In exchange Tupaia aided Cook and Banks navigationally and as an interpreter and translator.

For Hine – what is the significance

Hine is my Great Grandmother. My art work is always for my family and is my contribution to my family, our history, our tupuna and our tamariki. Hine also translates in English to daughter or young girl, in this context the work looks to the past while considering the future.

Can you tell me about the Seagers Walters Prize? What were these works? As a result you were awarded a residency in Rarotonga? Can you tell me a bit about this? And now you're traveling further afield?

Can you tell me about the Seagers Walters prize:

Sam Thomas and Po Tanner had invited myself and four other artists to present work for the Seagers Walters prize, which would be judged by Adnan. The prize was a case of Seagers Gin and a one month residency in Rarotonga at Te Arerenga, which Sam and Po, of Mirage Gallery, also run.

What were these works?

The paintings are copied from the two portraits Lindauer made of Renata Tama-ki-Hikurangi Kawepo in 1885, in one image Kawepo has lost one eye (which he lost in battle) and the other of Kawepo at a younger age. I painted them from images I found online. Kawepo is my tupuna. In making these works I was thinking around the relationship between the 'original' and the 'copy' and thinking through how the meanings made (e.g stereotypes about the noble savage etc) through historical representation can potentially be undone if copied in a non-colonial gaze.

The paradox found within the Lindauer paintings is interesting, at one point they are settler portraits of Maori people – the othering happens here, Maori become the dying race, the exotic other, the noble savage. However in the same instance the images hold extreme mana and are a way that we can connect with our tupuna. I was attempting to think through how these paradoxes work, and wondering how my copies would act within that paradox.

Rarotonga residency

Yes, I have been awarded a residency at Te Arerenga in Rarotonga. Te Arerenga is a residency programme offered by Sam Thomas and Po Tanner of Mirage Gallery. They have been amazingly supportive, kind and generous.

Elaborate

I will spend 1 month in Rarotonga and have been given the freedom to spend the time working on an art project. I will be using my time there to read and to work with ceramic groups. My interests lie in tourism, so this is something I will be researching, perhaps I will be doing some form of amateur anthropology.

Traveling further a field?

I have spent the last month in Thailand house sitting my friends mothers guest house. I am currently in Canada for my brothers wedding. I will be leaving for Rarotonga at the end of June. It is my first time traveling as an adult and has been a lovely experience.

A practical question. You often paint on a grand scale, where do you work?

Yes I usually paint on a large scale. I have tried painting smaller, but find that my ideas don't translate on a smaller scale. I like the works to be large enough that they impose.

I share a space on K'rd. It isn't tiny, but it's not massive. I was lucky enough to use a larger space over the summer period to complete *For Hine*.

What are you working on at the moment? / Do you have any upcoming exhibitions scheduled?

Yes, I have work in an upcoming group exhibition at the Malcolm Smith Gallery, Curated by Zoe Hoerberigs. Due to open early September.

In also have a solo exhibition early next year at Corbans Estate Art Centre, curated by Cora-allan Wickliffe. Both of these projects I am currently working on.

Further Info:

Window Exhibition 2015 - <http://windowgallery.co.nz/exhibitions/for-karetoki>

Radio interviews - <http://95bfm.com/bcast/artbank-april-30-2017>

Rarotonga Residency - <http://clubmirage.co.nz/te-arerenga.html>

Seager Walters - <http://clubmirage.co.nz/seager-s-walters-prize.html>