

ARTIST EDITION

The Origins of Table Manners

Ayesha Green

Edition of 5

In *The Origins of Table Manners*, from the solo exhibition *The Spirit of the Thing Given (Māori)*, artist Ayesha Green draws an uneasy diagram. With the use of local clay Green invokes the body of Papatūānuku, yet she crafts this material into a replica of Saint Edward's Crown. A holy relic of the British monarchy, Saint Edward's Crown is a key component of the royal coronation regalia and central artefact of the Crown Jewels of the United Kingdom. As such, in the context of Aotearoa, it is an object that symbolises hierarchical power and the ontological hegemony of the British Empire. In stark contrast, Green's use of clay summons Emilie Rākete's conception of Papatūānukutanga; a framework which emphasises an ecological, whakapapa-based system of relationality and political ecology in which;

'Everything exists in deep fundamental relation to everything else, and while functions of the ecology may interact with one another, no relationship of sub-superordination can be established within them¹.'

By sealing these two images of sovereignty into an uneasy alignment – quite literally through the transformative process of fire – Green directs our attention to the ongoing incompatibility of these two models of sovereignty.

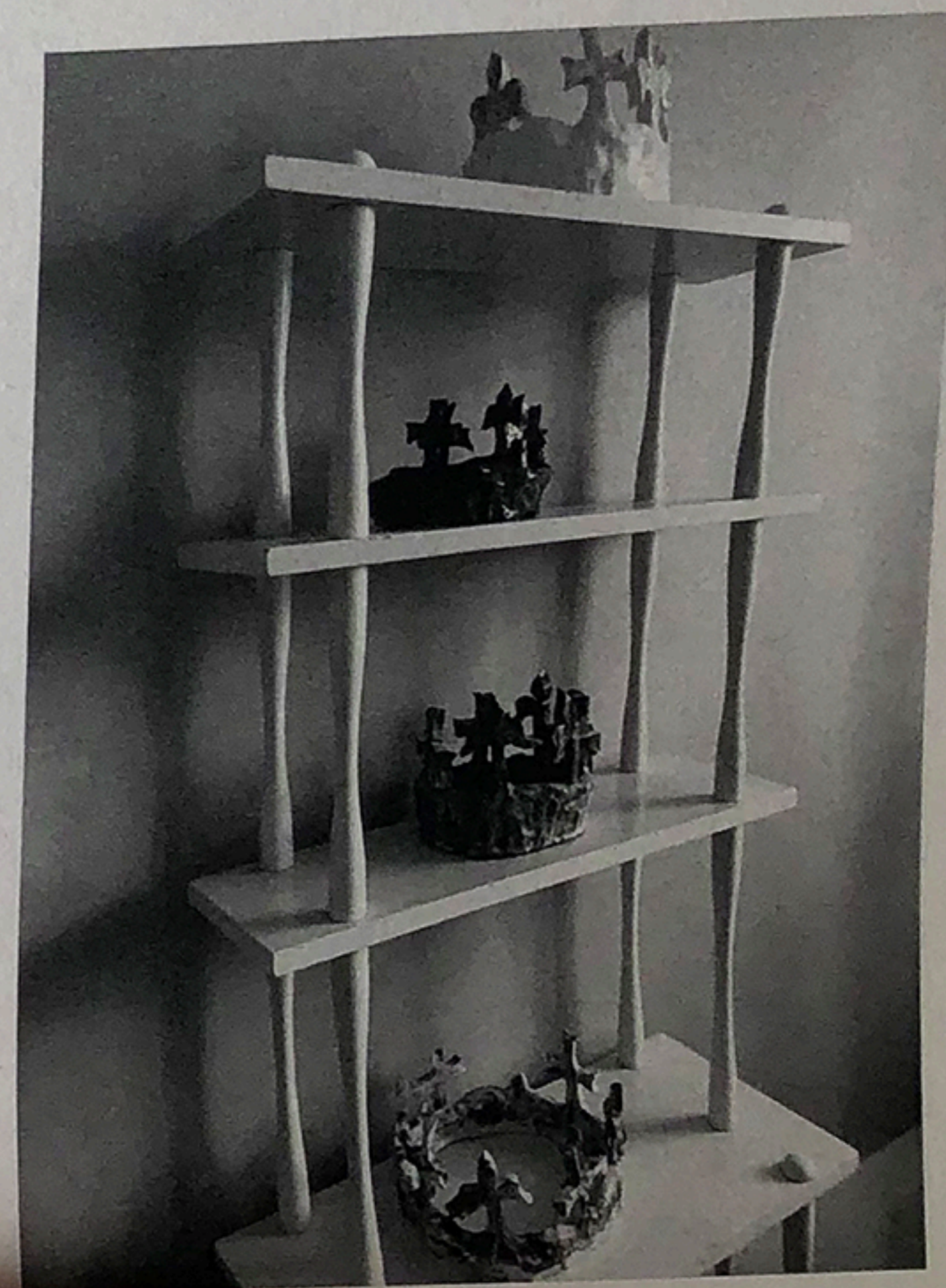
In her studio-based practice, Green sustains a provocative engagement with processes of reproduction. By her own admission, Green utilises mimicry and copying to undermine the authority of symbolic objects, questioning the authenticity of their claims to power. While giving precedence to source material from the era of first contact between Māori and Pākehā, Green continues to draw on a wide range of references. Attempting to transmute the power of inherited objects and images by establishing new readings, Green thus pushes back at European-centric practices of anthropology and classification, and the demonstrable military and cultural domination of our shared colonial history.

With *The Origins of Table Manners*, Green presents an

object-situation in which a sacred object, symbolic of hereditary British rule, is consummately devoured by the sacred matter of ngā tikanga Māori. Glazed in Kōkōwai (red ochre), a reference to the blood of Papatūānuku spilt during her separation from sky-father Ranginui within Maori creation cosmology, Saint Edward's Crown, like the carvings of pre-European whare whakairo, is covered in the blood of the mother of all. In this way, Green's intended material, poetic and political resonances are fused, provoking an image of the British crown as subsumed within an embodied, situated and sovereign Māori cosmology.

Ayesha Green (Ngāti Kahungunu, Kai Tahu) is an artist based in Ōtepoti. She graduated with a Master of Fine Arts from Elam in 2013 and completed a Graduate Diploma in Museums and Cultural Heritage in 2016. Recent exhibitions include *(Un)Conditional*, The Melbourne Art Fair, The Physics Room and The Suter Gallery (2018), *Alma Venus*, Corbans Estate Art Centre (2018), *Summa Pete*, Papakura Art Gallery (2017), *The Spirit of the Thing Given (Māori)*, RM Gallery (2017), *Biographies of Transition*, *To Busy to Think*, ARTSPACE (2017), *On the Grounds*, Starkwhite Gallery (2017), and was the 2018 Blue Oyster Art Project Space winter resident.

Text by Elle Loui August



1. Emilie Rākete In *Human: Parasites, Posthumanism, Papatūānuku*, Perspective: Journal of The University of Auckland Art History Society, Issue 3 Parahistory, 2015. Pg 12