

Ayesha Green, *For Hine*, 2017. Acrylic on vinyl, 3200 x 5700mm. Installation image from *Biographies of Transition: Too Busy To Think*, Artspace (2017). Photo: Sam Harrett.

What happens when you make a new version of an artwork? **Lily Hacking** talks to **Ayesha Green** about value and meaning.

Greener pastures

Ayesha Green's billboard-sized painting *For Hine* (2017) was included in the recent group exhibition *Biographies of Transition: Too Busy to Think* at Artspace. It wasn't simply the grand scale of the work that was arresting. Black outlines and flat planes of acrylic colour against a vinyl background lent the figures a highly illustrative, almost pop sensibility; and there was something else, a strong sense of the familiar.

In fact the work is a stylised version of an original watercolour that would be recognisable to many students of New Zealand art history – A Māori man and Joseph Banks exchanging a crayfish for a piece of cloth (1769) – by Tahitian navigator and arioi Tupaiā, who voyaged with Joseph Banks on Captain Cook's *Endeavour*.

Here, remade, rescaled and reinterpreted in modern materials, the painting offers an acute commentary on both historical and contemporary representations of Māori, specifically in the context of the creation of a national identity and tourism industry. The work comes to embody various notions of exchange, including the complex ongoing settlement process between Māori and the Crown.

"Given our status as a bicultural nation the work can act as some sort of founding representation of our biculturalism (and of course New Zealand's biculturalism is extremely problematic, which is something that I was thinking through)," says Green.

Green's practice regularly explores the relationship between the original and the copy, and what happens to the value of an object or image with the creation of a new version. At the time of writing, Green is en route to a residency at Te Arahanga in Rarotonga as the recipient of the Seager's Walters Prize. Her winning entry was her interpretation of a pair of Gottfried Lindauer portraits.



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Sourced from images found online, both paintings depict Māori leader and missionary (and Green's tūpuna) Renata Tama-ki-Hikurangi Kawepo.

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", Green said. "However in the same instance the images hold extreme mana and are a way that we can connect with our tūpuna. I was attempting to think through how these paradoxes work, and wondering how my copies would act within that paradox.

2. *The Spirit of the Thing Given (Māori)* at RM Gallery included a table full of ceramic crowns based upon the British coronation crown.

"My practice is generally thought of as a painting practice, but I am trying to push that out, to think beyond the painting plane, and to think about how other materials and objects have representational value and meaning."

Accompanying the crowns was a portrait of Makereti Papakura (b.1872) — also known as Guide Maggie,

Margaret Thom, Margaret Dinnan, or Margaret Staples-Brown — who was at one point a guide at Whakarewarewa, the Māori village in Rotorua. She was made famous as a result of a visit to Whakarewarewa by the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall in 1901, and came to embody the romantic colonial notion of an idealised and assimilated Māori.

"My practice attempts to rethink 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 Māori and Māori culture," Green said.

Ayesha Green (b.1987, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngai Tahu) is based in Auckland and is co-founder of Haporiproject.com. Other recent exhibitions include *Summa Pete*, Papakura Art Gallery (2017); *On the Grounds*, Starkwhite Gallery (2017); *Seagers Walters Prize*, Mirage Gallery (2016); and *For Karetoki*, Window Gallery (2015). Green has exhibitions scheduled at Malcolm Smith Gallery and Corbans Estate Arts Centre. ■