

BELOW
Tangi Te Korowhiti, Kāwhia Harbour

BOTTOM
Northeast corner of Te Nehenehenui,
Maungatautari ecological island

COVER
Rare huia feather symbol
of Rangatiratanga



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Published on the occasion of the exhibition *Ki te kapu o taku ringa / In the palm of my hand*,
Tom Roa & Rodrigo Hill 30 JUN – 07 NOV 2025



Tom Roa
Rodrigo Hill

30 June to
7 November 2025

Ki te kapu o taku ringa

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Ki te kapu o taku ringa – In the palm of my hand

Ka matakitaki iho au ki te riu o Waikato
Ano nei hei kapo kau ake maaku;
Ki te kapu o taku ringa,

I look down on the valley of Waikato,
As though to hold it
In the hollow of my hand.

The title *Ki te kapu o taku ringa* is taken from a line of ‘Maioha mō Waikato’ by Kingi Tāwhiao. Ejected from their homelands he and his Waikato brethren took refuge with their Maniapoto relations in Te Nehenehenui. The maioha was composed expressing Kingi Tāwhiao’s love for his homelands, and his solastalgic holding fast to those lands ‘...in the palm of his hand.’ The words from the song-poem were used as guide to our research and photography practice.

The project acknowledges that photography and photographic practices are surrounded by politics, discourse, power and representational dynamics. Photographers own their photography and may do with that photography whatever they wish. An indigenous lens, however, provides for a recognition of the mana of the spaces and places; in particular the mana of the kaitiaki of those spaces/places, notwithstanding the mana of the photographer. The ethical and informed photographer explores through ‘wānanga’ with the kaitiaki of the spaces and places their indigenous perspectives. This project traverses that indigenous/Māori/Maniapoto perspective examining how the portraiture might reflect the indigenous/Māori/Maniapoto worldview; thus maintaining ‘mana Māori motuhake’.

The name Te Nehenehenui was first conceptualised by Polynesian ancestors who were impressed with the beauty of the land and the vast verdant forests of the region known today as the King Country. As a result of colonisation as well as intensive logging, farming, and land exploitation the forests of this area have been severely depleted, almost destroyed. In acknowledging a foundation in indigenous Polynesian systems of knowledge, we have reflected on those views as part of nuanced and holistic ways of understanding places. Ancestral Polynesian views and ways of understanding Te Nehenehenui provide a foundation that has evolved and expanded over time into place-based narratives informing unique Māori systems of knowledge about the King Country native forests and fauna.

Wānanga and Photography

This exhibition is part of a wider research project funded by the University of Waikato and titled ‘Te Nehenehenui — The Ancient Enduring Beauty in the Great Forest of the King Country’(2023–2024). The project promotes and advances the use of wānanga (forums and meetings of focus groups) through and within which knowledge is discussed, sometimes dissected, and then disseminated. During 2023 we organized a series of wānanga, engaging with mana

TOM ROA

Dr. Tom Roa (Ngāti Maniapoto, Waikato) is a Tainui leader and Manukura / Professor in the University of Waikato’s Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao – Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies. Tom’s PhD examined questions about the theory and practices of Māori to English language translation and interpretation. Tom is one of the founders of Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori movement in the 1970s.

RODRIGO HILL

Rodrigo’s photography practice explores the relationship between photography and place-making and the intersection of lens-based and documentary approaches in which photography plays the role of representing layered place-imaginaries.

Rodrigo is an exhibiting artist engaged with lens-based practice, gallery installation, and photobook publication. Rodrigo holds a PhD and is a Lecturer in Media and Creative Technologies at the University of Waikato Te Kura Toi School of Arts.

Ngāti Hinewai wānanga participants
at Tārewānanga Marae

⑨ I'll do as you say

⑥ Cowboys outside the Tavern.



⑧ Fah LeSt Just Get this over with

⑬ All the Chiefs came together for a meeting I didn't want to sit down!

- Rangitira
- looks scripted

⑩ Looks posed/scripted

⑭ From Photographs
- looks posed
- Rose d

whenua (guardians of their places) to ensure the indigenous/Māori/Maniapoto perspective guided the photographic work. This was fundamental to the project as it helped with the shaping of an informed, indigenous, decolonised lens. The concepts of manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga, promoted by wānanga participants, were central in reassuring those participants’ mana-enhanced presence in the photographic work. This allowed for the work to move away from Eurocentric photographic conventions and models of landscape and place representation, leading to a space in which Mātauranga Māori was proclaimed and reclaimed before, during, and after the wānanga. Mana whenua Mātauranga, accounts, memories, whakapapa, and kōrero were all accorded a privileged position at the intersection of Mātauranga-a-iwi and photography practice.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith posits wānanga as “thought spaces”.¹ We assert and use in our research the term wānanga as essentially ‘a sharing of thought spaces’ where our participants were invited to reflect on, in, and for our research project, and, in so doing, were accorded an ‘ownership’ of it. This is a base tenet in Kaupapa Māori research, i.e. that Māori research is by, with, and for iwi/

Māori. We took pains to ensure that tenet was observed throughout the development of our photographic approaches. Consequently, wānanga participants valued the use of photography to (re-)tell shared stories and critically reflected on how instrumental the medium and discourse of photography has been in asserting colonial and imperial aspirations. We used photography and wānanga practices as overlapping processes. There was also a spontaneous element to those wānanga through which it could be asserted a ‘wairua’ guided series of encounters, kōrero and photography practice.

Finally, we highlight the climate crisis element of our project by offering a critique to exploitive views on land and places. The severity of the current situation is such that vast land areas in the central North Island of Aotearoa have been depleted, almost completely destroyed. In this sense, our Te Nehenehenui Project in its foci proffers a form of reclamation of Mātauranga Māori views as a way to regain and assert place mana.

There is still time to revitalise the physical places and spaces, forests and rivers; and our humble efforts we offer here to reassert and reclaim Māori knowledge and stories is a part of that process.

1_ Smith, L., Pihama, L., Cameron, N., Mataki, T., Morgan, H., & Te Nana, R. (2019). Thought Space Wānanga – A Kaupapa Māori Decolonizing Approach to Research Translation. *Genealogy*, 3(4), Article 4. <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy3040074>

List of Works

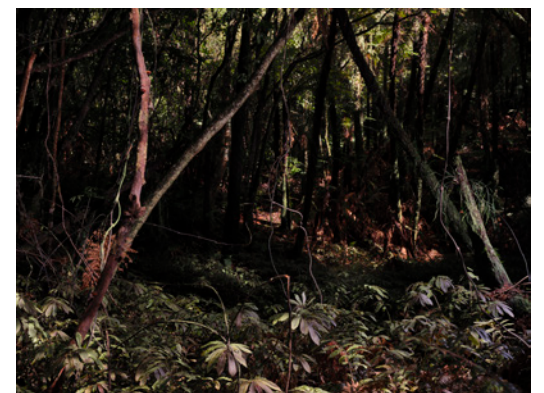


Wētā, Ōtorohanga Kiwi House
Mōkau harbour

Native bird feather floating on the
Waikato River

Rare Huia feather in waka huia carved
by an descendant of Kingi Tāwhiao
Rare huia feather symbol
of Rangatiratanga
Puna / pool in Maniapoto's cave,
Te Anaureure

Pūkeko, Ōtorohanga Kiwi House
Te Puna o Te Roi Mata, where Ngāti
Maniapoto pledged the support of
Te Wherowhero and the Kingitanga
Maungatautari ecological island,
remnant of Te Nehenehenui the great
verdant forest



Interior of Te Tokanga-nui-a-Noho, Te Kūiti Pā.
Te Rohe Potae, the region of the hat
Interior of Te Koha A Rua, Maniaroa Marae

Kākā, native parrot on Maungatautari
Kō Wiwi, Ko Wāwā, Kāwhia Harbour
Tangi Te Korowhiti, Kāwhia Harbour

Tawharau-kai-atua bridge over the Waipa River, northern boundary of the King Country
Native birds sanctuary, Ōtorohanga Kiwi House
Northeast corner of Te Nehenehenui, Maungatautari ecological island

Kiwi egg, Ōtorohanga Kiwi House
Kākāriki / teretere / gecko, Ōtorohanga Kiwi House
Northeast corner of Te Nehenehenui, Maungatautari ecological island