

A black and white photograph of a hand holding a feather. The hand is positioned in the lower-left quadrant, with the thumb and index finger gripping the base of the feather. The feather is dark and extends upwards towards the top-left corner. The background is a dense, out-of-focus pattern of fern fronds, creating a textured, organic backdrop. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin and the barbs of the feather.

Ki te kapu o taku ringa

In the palm
of my hand

Tom Roa
Rodrigo Hill

Kupu Aumua
Peter J Douglas
Chairman
Te Nehenehenui Trust

When photographs were taken in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th there were only a handful of cameras in the country.

These days, photography is simpler, and it is magnified by the advent of digital cameras and mobile phones. No doubt, these too will be superseded one day. Photographs are taken by millions of people every day. Some precious few will be good or topical enough to be stored or saved, but most will be discarded, deleted, lost. It is possible that many mediocre photos will still receive great fame. Modern computer applications allow for the alteration of all sorts of elements in photos these days by all sorts of people for all sorts of reasons, this is not new, photography has always been capable of manipulation.

Those early photographers carried bulky equipment that had limited application. They would pose the Māori subjects in their photographs, and then compose the titles or descriptions days or weeks later after they were developing the film. Once a photograph is taken the description and context is left to the photographer, not the subjects of the photo. Their description becomes the definition. When those old photos eventually emerged thousands of miles away in Great Britain or elsewhere, the definitions became the popular and/or academic understanding. Great Chiefs might be lauded, or described as barbarians and savages; faintly, possibly even feared, by a description written days or weeks after the photograph was taken.

Context is important. Were those descriptions accurate? Were they fair? Generations later we still rely on those descriptions for context.

The collection in this publication with its accompanying exhibition marks the completion of substantial work and a depth of thought intended to match the significance of the subjects of the photography.

As a young man I spent hours amongst the photographs of our tupuna in the Turnbull Library in Wellington. I would wonder what they were like, and what they hoped for and what promise their world offered. I marvelled at the work of the photographers and the effort involved in travel, taking and developing their photographs. I gave no thought to the descriptions; I took them for what they were. Martin Luther King, Jr reminds us, "We are not makers of history. We are made by history." The past happened whether it was written down or not, it becomes history when it is recorded.

This work goes some way to recording our history in a way that provides a different context, and maybe that context will provide an outlook that accounts better for their circumstances. I am grateful for the labours of these earlier photographers.

I thank goodness that those few historical remnants were saved. And now the work of this group of scholars who through this project have compiled a record intended to reflect the contexts and experience of their subjects, the people and places, flora and fauna, and issues pertinent to their time.

Wharake akei Whanake akei

Tahina te kawa

Ko te kawa nui

Ko te kawa roa

Ko te kawa o Arahina

Ko Ruanāiti, ko Ruanāikā

ko Rangotāngō

Ko te wai hi o Wāpā

Ko te wai ha o Wāhaka

Ko te reo te tu eihana

o runga o Orāhiri

ko te hārakeke nā Māui

o ko o Ororohanga

Tūturu o Wāhi

Whakamau kāi tika—

Tikai Hui e! Tika!

Tenei ngā whakakōrunga, Tenei ngā whakakōrunga,
Tenei ngā whakakōhinga—

O te mauri tū, te mauri tau, te mauri ora

He whakaho i te mana, te wehi, te tapu

O te Nehenehenui

O te rohe i pōtaenga e Kingi Tawhiao ki te pōtae

o te Kāwana

Tenei kōwhiri Tenei kōwhiri Tenei kōwhiri

Kei ngā taonga i maku hōu i ngā māhira-tūpuna

He aka raukura nūka; he aka raukura rangi—

He ururu tupua; he ururu rawhira

Tawhio te rangi— Hōu!

Nō reira e wehi ana ki te Ana, māna nei ngā mea
katoa, e whakahoore ana i Te Kingi Māori, i ana
Whare Kāhui Ariki; ngā tikanga e mānūtū ana,
e tohaha ana; ngā kīri mate e ngoko nei i te
kākahu taratara o Aina— Tenei kōwhiri.

Kei te nui te mihi ki ngā tangata katoa i whai
wāhi mai ki tenei rangahau, i tauoko mai,
māna tenei kaupapa i tauwhihia mai— (Tā rāwa
ani kōwhiri katoa)

Heoi anō ko te karāmihi nui whakahaaraha o te
ngakau ki ngā tohu whemua, tohu āwai tohu moana,
ngā kīrihe kolona, ngā tūmatau otaota whemua,
huri nei —

Nō kōwhiri te mana o nanana, o tenei rā, nō nananaki
Heoi anō ko tā māua he tauoko, he manaki,
he manawa tika kia kīria, kia rangona, kia
pāpāhōngia ana māua ki te whē-ao, ki te
ao-māramai

Tihē mauri ora!

The Nehenehenui —
 The Ancient Enduring Beauty in
 the Great Forest of the King County
 Tom Roa
 Rodrigo Hill

This publication accompanies the launching of our exhibition *Ki te Kapu o Taku Kinga — In the Palm of My Hand* at the Otorohanga Museum in June 2024.

The title is taken from a line of King Tawhiao's song-poem 'Maioha mō Waikato'. Ejected from their homelands he and his Waikato brethren took refuge with their Maniapoto relations in Te Nehenehenui: parts of which are mentioned in the song-poem. The 'maioha' was composed expressing King Tawhiao's love for his homelands, and his solastalgic holding fast to those lands ... in the palm of his hand.

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 County. 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 County forests and fauna.

Wānanga and Photography

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 whānua (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



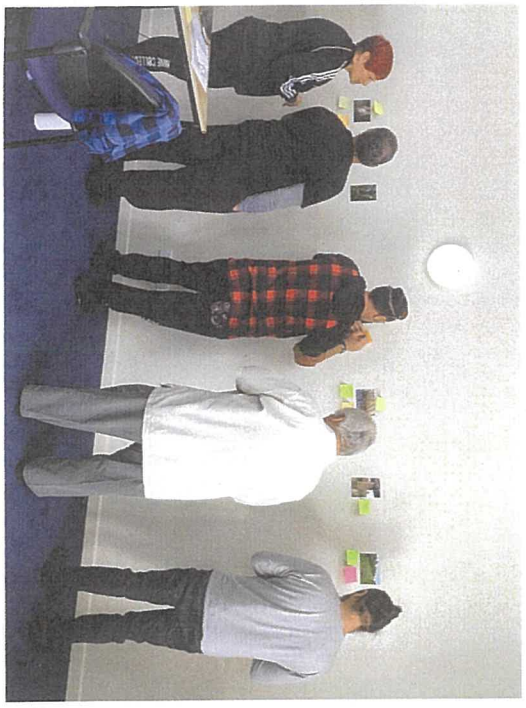
informed, indigenous, decolonized lens. The concepts of manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and whanungatanga, promoted by wānanga participants, were central in reassuring those participants' mana-enhanced presence in the photographic work. This allowed for the work to move away from eurocentric photographic 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.

The project focused on wāhi mana (places of significance) such as Maungatutari Mountain Sanctuary, Pirongia, Ororohanga, Te Kuiti, Mōkau and Kawhia. Motifs explored included the forests, indigenous animal life, historical places and spaces. Each photograph has been contextualised within the local Waikato-Maniapoto context reasserting, reclaiming, and reproducing Waikato-Maniapoto mana over ancestral knowledge and their links with physical places of moment to Waikato-Maniapoto.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith posits wānanga as "thought spaces". 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. Following Linda Smith's and others' Kaupapa Māori and decolonizing pedagogical tools, we incorporated and prompted discussions on specific forms of Mātauranga Māori and concepts related to Te Nehenehenui, proposing a framing, and reframing of the discipline of photography and its discourses. 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 'wānana' guided series of encounters, kōrero and photography practice.

Finally, we highlighted the climate crisis element of our project by offering a critique of Eurocentric and colonial 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 exploited, 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 reassess and reclaim Māori knowledge and stories is a part of that process.



TOM ROA
Dr. Tom Roa (Ngāi Hīrōwai, Waikato) is a Tainui leader and Hamuturo / 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 the implications of the findings of Te Whāriki o Te Pua 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-imagines.
Rodrigo is an exhibiting artist engaged with lens-based practice, gallery installation, and photobook production. Rodrigo holds a PhD and is currently engaged in research technologies at the University of Waikato's Te Kura Toi School of Arts.

Our maverick yet fond friend, the camera. Natalie Robertson

In his 1990 book, *Our Own Image*, filmmaker Barry Barclay (Ngāti Apa) asked “How do we take that maverick yet fond friend of ours — the camera — into the Māori community and be confident it will act with dignity?”¹ Barclay argues for the camera in Māori hands, to tell our own stories. At the very least, the camera must be manuhiri, an invited guest. Yet, the history of photography in Aotearoa begins otherwise, with images of the land and of Māori, so often ‘taken’ by the invader, the missionary, the settler, the doctor, the soldier, the citizen, the mayor. Susan Sontag’s 1973 famous declaration that ‘a camera is a sublimation of the gun’² unites the camera-weapon with the martial language of photography — lead, aim, shoot, take, capture.

In the nineteenth century, the colonial project was underscored by the widespread application of photography to demonstrate the power of military might and the subjugation of Indigenous Peoples. As an early Waikato example, in February 1864, when the Colonial Defence Force Cavalry mounted a targeted attack on the unfortified village, Rangiaowhia, a military doctor William Spencer was there with his cumbersome wooden plate camera. No battle scenes, nor dramatic aftermath photographs exist. Instead, there is single photograph showing a wide landscape with figures — armed soldiers, some in uniform — occupying mid-field.³ This is a scene of victors, where military powers harness the gun and camera, working hand-in-glove to control the narrative. With the photograph’s ability to travel far beyond 1864 and Rangiaowhia, it reinforces the perspective of the invaders. The camera was not only an uninvited guest, but an obtrusive one, an accessory to colonial brutality.

At present, photographic technologies are widely available and accessible, the camera has become more stealthy in entering into Māori communities, and the question persists: how do we maintain our processes of encounter? Do we invite the camera as welcomed guest, in order to be confident it will act with dignity? Since Barclay’s question, more than ever, we are telling our own stories. If we are to de-colonise the camera, we must remain alert to its presence amongst us, and as Tom Roa and Rodrigo Hill do, position the camera ‘in the palm of our hands’.

¹ Barclay, Barry, 2016. *Our Own Image: A Māori Ethnographic Film*. University of Minnesota Edition, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

² Sontag, Susan, 1973. *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

³ Spencer, William Isaac, 1864. Rangiaowhia, February 1864. Spencer Collection, Hawke’s Bay Art Gallery and Museum (Inc.), Napier. Reference number 5997. <https://collections.hawkebay.govt.nz/handle/2022/2016/rangiaowhia-february-1864>

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Tēhā koutou, tēhā koutou, tēhā koutou katoa

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SCHOOL OF ARTS
TE KURA TOI



⑤ I'll do as you say

⑥ Lamborgs outside the Tavern

③ All the Chiefs came together for a meeting I didn't want to sit down!

~ Rangiaowhia
~ looks scrippled

⑦ Presents were brought