



Embodied  
Mana Wahine

# Kura

20 Feb - 1 Mar 2019

Donna Campbell



# Tension, tenuousness, release and revisioning: Ko te mana motuhake o ngā kairaranga.

Dr. Tāwhanga Mary-Legs Nopera  
Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāti Wāhiao, Tūhourangi

I will admit that when it comes to the mahi raranga and mahi whatu of Donna Campbell, I am perhaps quite biased, however, I don't believe that impartiality can properly honour the work Donna creates. In terms of raranga, without a constant 'bias' edge, it is almost impossible to weave. For Māori weavers, the bias edge is referred to as the ara, or pathway. It is the edge of weaving from which woven forms are built. I need to be biased to reflect and write of the work Donna has been constructing over the duration of her PhD research, because in her works it is extremely difficult to find the ara by simply looking. To find the pathway Donna follows to create her works, you have to know Donna and understand her passionate desire to assert the mana wāhine that has been integral to the survival and resurgence of Māori culture.

The expertise it takes to weave the garments that Donna has created for this show is unparalleled, because although the techniques used are part of a collective vocabulary, Donna's use of these are innovations beautifully unique to her identity as Māori woman of the Hokianga. It is as though by often weaving without an ara, Donna is able to envision trajectories for her works which are alternatives to what is expected. Donna is in the process of creating new boundaries for weavers, by evolving the knowledge and mastery of tūpuna Māori. This process is regenerative, adding new knowledge to very ancient traditions and shaping Māori futures that we can neither yet see nor experience. However, in Donna's revivication she is imagining healed places for our bodies which have been both traumatised and denied through colonisation. Through her advancement of techniques, new forms create protections that nurture our ability to have mana through our connection to whenua.

"Proactive strategies are about long-term sustained change. They are not an emergency-type response; they are well-planned and thought out strategies that are aimed at change over time" (Penehira, Green, Smith and Aspin, 2014: 104). It cannot be denied that the work of weavers, is both symbolically and tangibly integral to this planned for strategy for change. Through the use of materials that come to us directly from Papatūānuku, weavers patiently observe our

surrounds, internalising our observations through practice to materialise functional forms necessary for the survival of our communities. Rangimarie Mahuika (2008) writes how from the 1970s in Aotearoa the reality of Māori resistance to colonial state oppression became a tangible aspect of daily life, stating; "[f]ighting against the reality of their position as the colonized, and impassioned by the desire to prevent the further loss of our language, knowledge and culture, Māori began to fight back" (p.35). To me, the art of Donna Campbell embodies the fight-back of our generation, but in a way that moulds the shape of hope so that we may occupy futures determined by ourselves. Yes, I am biased in my writing about Donna, I have to be to hold fast to our shared vision for change.

Mahuika, R. (2008). *Kaupapa Māori Theory is critical and anticolonial*. In, L. Pihama, S.-J. Tiakiwai and K. Southey (Eds.). (2015). *Kaupapa rangahau: A reader. A collection of readings from the Kaupapa Rangahau workshops series*. Hamilton: Te Kotahi Research Institute.

Penehira, M., Green, A., Smith, L. and Aspin, C. (2014). *Māori and Indigenous views on R & R: Resistance and resilience*. In, A. Boulton and H. Gifford (Eds.). (2014). *MAI Journal: A New Zealand journal of Indigenous Scholarship 3(2)*. Auckland: Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga.



Donna Campbell  
Hinenuitepō I  
(back view)  
Modelled by  
Nadia Jones  
Ngāti Ruanui,  
Ngāti Maniapoto,  
Ngāti Pāoa, Ngāti  
Tamatera ngā iwi  
2018

## Ngā Kura a Hineteiwiwa

"Since I was a child, I have always made things. I was taught how to sew, to knit, to crochet, keeping the hands busy and productive. I always enjoyed the transformation of thread to textile, and the practice of making of creating was as gratifying then as it is today. My experience was one of creativity and practicality and I am forever grateful to my mother passing on these skills to me as her mother did for her. However, the fact that I was taught these European arts and not our Māori arts indicates to me a wider issue of the

marginalization of Māori knowledge. This is a key impetus for this PhD project. For me, the learning of these art forms established the colonial arts/crafts as more accessible, acceptable and preferred to Māori arts, demonstrating disruptions in the passing on of Māori knowledge, language and culture. This exhibition re-presents the Māori practices of raranga and raranga whatu as reclamation, cultural affirmation and resistance to the marginalisation and assimilation of the Mātauranga Māori knowledge embodied in these practices."

—Donna Campbell



Donna Campbell  
**Mahuika**  
 Modelled by Wini  
 Waitoki, Ngati  
 Whawhakia, Ngati  
 Mahuta, Ngati Hako,  
 Ngati Mahanga  
 2018

Donna Campbell  
**Hinetitama**  
 Modelled by  
 Waikaremoana  
 Waitoki, Ngati  
 Mahanga,  
 Ngati Hako  
 2018



“My academic life has grown from my artistic practice and I have been privileged to teach through the practice. Through engaging in this PhD through creative practice I have the opportunity to weave together my artistic and academic careers in a whakairo<sup>1</sup> that reveals the tacit indigenous knowing within raranga and raranga whatu. When I refer to tacit knowledge, I am meaning the intuitive and experiential knowledge that arises within the praxis of raranga and whatu. I claim that by engaging with the tikanga and practices of the raranga and whatu arts the creation of implicit or tacit knowledge—non-verbal, or otherwise

unarticulated and intuitive forms of knowledge is experienced. Through the engagement of all the senses, an internal understanding of self, otherwise unarticulated, can be brought forth. Through the feel, the sound, and the smell of the harakeke with the opportunities and sometimes challenges of creating taonga that your tūpuna has made before you, involved in this expression of being Māori has transformative power. Raranga and whatu are active processes on an essential level. These practices unite mind and body, ‘embracing the totality of our sensual perception and experience rather than

intellectual activity alone’ (Schneider and Wright 2006 p.16). Accordingly, experience can become knowledge, you know because you have been in it. These practices are taonga which is defined by Tūhoe tohunga Rose Pere (1994) as ‘the highly prized practices and beliefs of our forebears, our ancestors’ (p.69). Putting these beliefs into practice is to manifest Mātauranga Māori drawing on every experience of life. As the

practices of raranga and whatu are passed on to us from our ancestors, they are imbued with Mātauranga Māori. As Pere (1994) illustrates the knowledge of our ancestors is valued in the present, and through creative practice in the fibre arts we can maintain and pass on these treasures.”

—Donna Campbell

1. To ornament with a design, or to carve, or sculpt. In this context I use the term as a pattern or design.

# Reclamation and regeneration

Associate Professor  
Leonie Pihama PhD  
Te Atiawa, Ngāti Mahanga,  
Ngā Mahanga a Tairi

Ngā Kura o Hineteiwaiwa has been created as a part of a process that Donna has described as a creative praxis where “artistic engagement with Te Pā Harakeke physical, spiritual, and cultural layers of meaning come together in a synergy of theory and practice that encapsulates Māori creative practice” (p.10). Those theories come in the form of Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wahine. At the centre of both of these theoretical frameworks sits the articulation of te reo and tikanga Māori within which we position our “ways of being” as a critical part of our reclamation and regeneration of Māori creative forms such as mahi raranga. Throughout the writing of the thesis and the creation of this exhibition Donna has privileged the relationship between the kairaranga and the practices of raranga and whatu as forms of reciprocal transmission of the embodied knowledge that comes to be through the creative process itself. Such knowledge transmission requires a belief in the sacred relationship between us as tangata and all living things. It requires us to remember that our atua have gifted to this world all that we require to create those things that will support our wellbeing. The Pā harakeke is a prime example of this, where the sensory relationship is clearly expressed through the ways in which the kairaranga works with harakeke to shape and give form. It has become more clear to me, the idea that Donna has spoken to consistently, that the harakeke itself has a memory that holds form and shape. What this means is that where we embody knowledge, so too do harakeke and other plants that provide the resources for the creation of these taonga. These understandings are a part of the cultural and spiritual knowledge and approach that is Te Whare Pora, the

weaving house, and as such it is appropriate that Te Whare Pora was the methodology through which Ngā Kura o Hineteiwaiwa was created. Te Whare Pora has many manifestations. As Donna reminds us, Te Whare Pora can be both a physical and a conceptual physical house. It can be a place of weaving and it can be a space of weaving ideas. Either way it is a space that brings forth the gifts of Hineteiwaiwa. Ngā Kura a Hineteiwaiwa is an exhibition that explores the embodiment of knowledge, of ancestral knowing and is a cultural expression that can and does support cultural revitalisation and reconnection to our environment and all of our relations that are a part of our wider world. This exhibition and the doctoral thesis that accompanies it is the culmination of five years’ work that has built on many years of creative endeavour. It is one part of a journey of innovative creative practice that has seen Donna draw upon the mātauranga Māori<sup>2</sup> that is embedded within raranga and whatu. To watch both components of this work emerge over this time has been an honour.

2. Māori knowledge—the body of knowledge originating from Māori ancestors, including the Māori world view and perspectives, Māori creativity and cultural practices.



Left to right:  
Donna Campbell  
**Hinenuitepō II**  
Modelled by  
Tāwhanga Nopera  
2018  
Donna Campbell  
**Hinenuitepō I**  
Modelled by  
Nadia Jones  
2018

Donna Campbell  
**Te Whatukura  
ki Oraurangi/  
Hineteiwaiwa**  
Modelled by  
Waikaremoana  
Waitoki  
2018  
Donna Campbell  
**Te Whatukura  
ki Oraurangi/  
Hineteiwaiwa**  
(detail) Modelled  
by Nadia Jones  
2018



Donna Campbell  
**Te Whatukura  
 ki Oraurangi/  
 Hineteiwaiwa**  
 Modelled by  
 Waikaremoana  
 Waitoki  
 2018

Donna Campbell  
**Murirangawhenua**  
 Modelled by  
 Tāwhanga Nopera  
 2018



### He Atua, He Wahine

“The creative works in this PhD study are reflections of the goddess within us: they are with us wherever we are, we can commune with them drawing strength and mana wahine guidance. The term mana wahine is inclusive of all identities, as well as the essence of the feminine and the masculine. Expressed in a merging of creative energies and consciousness which in actuality is a merging within our own selves, that transcends hetero-normative conventions. Atua wahine, therefore encompass the Divine feminine, the Divine masculine and the Divine that is ourselves. This exhibition represents the embodiment of all of the elements of the PhD thesis, the praxis of raranga and raranga whatu encompasses making and thinking, responding to, and resolving design issues all the while keeping in mind the original vision. I like to make work that challenges me in technique, form and design. The process is very much a dialogue between the materials, Te Ao Māori and me. It is a reciprocal relationship where the material responds, the maker responds, in a cyclical interchange. These pieces are named for aspects of Atua wahine and are designed to represent their Mana Wahine. Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou scholar Aroha Yates-Smith (1998) writes that ‘atua wāhine held

powerful positions in Māori cosmology, their roles complementing those of their well-known male counterparts and providing a balance within the pantheon’ (p.1). This body of works acknowledges the Atua wahine in our pūrākau, as catalytic forces vital to the creation of the Māori world.”

—Donna Campbell

Pere, R., & Te Kohanga Reo Trust. (1994). *Ako : Concepts and learning in the Maori tradition*. Wellington, N.Z.: Te Kohanga Reo National Trust Board.

Schneider, A. and Wright, C. (2006), *Contemporary Art and Anthropology*, Oxford: Berg.

Yates-Smith, A. (1998). *Hine! E Hine! Rediscovering the feminine in Māori spirituality*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Waikato, Hamilton. New Zealand.

Cover image: Donna Campbell  
**Mahuika** Modelled by Wini Waitoki, 2018.  
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Tuesday–Friday  
 12.30–4pm  
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