

LEGEND! Myth and Allegory in Aotearoa: A Suite of Exhibitions

13th August – 14th October 2012



Image: Te Rongo Drummond, *Whakaturanga- The Midday Life*, 2011, kiln-formed cold-worked glass, flax fibre, cotton cord. Courtesy of artist. Weaver: Tina Wirihana.

Titokowaru's Dilemma. Etchings by Marian Maguire. Courtesy of Exhibition Services

Aesop's Kiwi Fables. Paintings by Ray Ching. Courtesy of Artis Gallery

Norm Heke OMG's: Maori Gods in the 21st Century. Digital photography by Norm Heke.

Ka Awatea: A Journey of Life through Light. Glass artworks by Te Rongo Kirkwood.

Conversations on Kowhaiwhai. Paintings by Andrea Hopkins.

Also Including works by Pauline Kahurangi Yearbury, Adele Younghusband, E. Mervyn Taylor and John Walsh kindly loaned from Waikato Museum, Russell Museum, Gow Langsford Gallery, University of Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts Library, private and artist collections and the Whangarei Art Museum collection.

In contemporary society, myth is often regarded as outmoded or antiquated. However, many cultural studies scholars are now beginning to explore the notion that myths and legends have immersed themselves into modern discourses. Modern formats of communication allow for a wide spread of idea-exchange across the globe; consequently enabling mythological discourse and discussion among larger audiences more so than ever. Diverse elements of myth can now be found in popular culture including cinema, television and videogames. Art has always been a vehicle for communicating ideas and storytelling maintaining a strong lineage of narrative; from Greek mythological statues, allegorical painting to esoteric myths and legends carved into the architecture of culture. The locus of this new suite of exhibitions at the Whangarei Art Museum centres around Aotearoa and its *Maori* mythos.



Titokowaru's Dilemma shines light into the murky world of myth making. Marian Maguire's beautiful lithographs and etchings explore Taranaki history, challenging simplistic readings of the past by taking Riwia Titokowaru and placing him with the gods and philosophers of ancient Greece, showing him in debates that have a timeless significance.

This exhibition asks 'What is myth?', 'What is history?' and 'Who decides?'.



Norm Heke OMG's: Maori Gods in the 21st Century exhibition features several large-scale portraits depicting pivotal characters in the foundational stories that underpin Maori and New Zealand culture as they have never been seen before. Using 3D and flip effect (lenticular) technology, narratives are presented simultaneously in the past and the present day. "I wanted to give Maori Gods a renewed presence in contemporary culture, by modernising the characters and contextualising the stories, in order for them to remain alive and vibrant in our society,".

Currently an imaging specialist/photographer at The Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, Heke's work has featured in numerous publications and exhibitions throughout his expansive career. A former commercial photographer and a forensic photographer, Heke was the first photographer to receive the *Toi Iho* trade mark acknowledging quality in Maori Art. "I chose photorealism as the medium to build each of the *Atua* a stage as grand as any of the Greek Gods. These are our indigenous super heroes and they deserve to be celebrated."

Image: Norm Heke, *Māui and his Brothers, 2011*, digital photograph. Courtesy of the artist.

Ka Awatea: A Journey of Life through Light, Te Rongo Kirkwood's exhibition, is a personal exploration of the Maori Cloak form, taking it from a ceremonial garment to a sculptured art object, where it is used to depict a spiritual journey through the cycle of life. Her works are complemented by sound and light installation fusing traditional garbmentry with contemporary materials. Kirkwood is a full time artist and her speciality is kiln-formed cold-worked glass. (For images see title page above).

Also included in this exhibition are four untitled **Maori Mythological Studies by Adele Younghusband**, from 1936 held in the Waikato Museum of Art and History, that depict stories of *Maui* and the *Journey of Tane* and are exemplary examples of a consummate design sense and an abiding interest in cultural design. Younghusband gifted these works to the Hamilton city the same year and it is possible that they were inspired by the subject of lectures that the Waikato Society president Dr Tim Rodgers gave that year. If we are to view these *Maori* mythology transcriptions from only within our time-context, these might be viewed as appropriation or cultural assimilation. With a little understanding of the artist and her spirituality, it is hard not to see the works as anything but a sincere acknowledgement of *wairua*.

The fables of Aesop have a constant appeal that has kept them popular as book illustration from the fifteenth century, to the present time. From Francis Barlow (1687), Jean Baptiste Oudry (1755), Thomas Bewick (1784), J. J. Grandville (1838), Gustav Doré (1868), to Arthur Rackham (1916), Marc Chagall (1920) and Alexander Calder (1931), the fables have never fallen from view.

In **Aesop's Kiwi Fables** Ray Ching has re-worked them yet again, but for the first time their stories are played out in the Antipodes, in the islands of New Zealand. Here, the familiar Fox, Crow, Tortoise and Lion are replaced with their counterparts in Aotearoa; domestic cats must jump to the grapes, Tui are smarter than crows, the ancient Tuatara is every bit as dogged as the Tortoise to win his race in time over an idle possum, and kiwi can be both very smart and very foolish.



Ray Ching, *The Falcon, the Hawk & the Pigeons, 2010*, Courtesy of Artis Gallery.



Conversations on Kohwhaiwhai, selected paintings by Andrea Hopkins from private collections. Andrea Hopkins first exhibited with the Whangarei Art Museum in the exhibition the *Out of the Provincial Blue*, curated by Maree Saunders, which toured to Auckland, in 2005. Since that time Andrea has established herself as one of Northland's leading contemporary artists. As TJ Mc Narmara, stated in a review of her work "Andrea Hopkins takes everyday identities and makes them tightly organized symbols of duality and strength by using Maori motif against delicately brushed landscapes. In her work a soaring kite becomes a spirit in flight." – TJ McNamara | *NZ Herald*. This exhibition presents works created in the last two years that embody the powerful and distinctive artistic style that Andrea has consistently developed, one which continues her journey to be a master New Zealand artist in every sense.

For further information and images contact us on 09 430 4240 or e-mail us at: whangareiartmuseum@wdc.govt.nz. or visit our website : www.whangareiartmuseum.co.nz

