

Let's NOT Celebrate Cook: Robyn Kahukiwa's Confrontational 2020 Exhibition

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“[*Let's NOT Celebrate Cook* is] the most racist, derogatory, dishonest, divisive and ignorant thing I've ever seen in a gallery.” (Anonymous Waikanae resident, *Waikanae Watch*, 27 February 2020.)

Abstract

This article examines the provocative exhibition *Let's NOT Celebrate Cook*, a selection of paintings by Māori artist Robyn Kahukiwa (Ngāti Porou, Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti, Ngāti Hau, Ngāti Konohi, Whānau-a-Ruataupare) at Mahara Gallery, Waikanae, near Wellington, in 2020.¹ Employing a decolonial lens, it explores the extent to which Kahukiwa's artistic intervention disrupts the hegemony of Western historical discourse and reclaims an Indigenous narrative. It considers how, in foregrounding an Indigenous perspective, her artworks encourage candid discussion regarding the legacy and impacts of British colonisation in present-day Aotearoa New Zealand.

Introduction

In 2002, critic and poet David Eggleton wrote that Robyn Kahukiwa's art “sparks and ignites at the point of cross-cultural collision, where historical revisionism generates howls of feedback, theatrical platforms of dissent and media sensationalism.”² Almost two decades later, Kahukiwa's solo exhibition, *Let's NOT Celebrate Cook* (2020), is testimony that, even as an octogenarian, she continues to make work which fits Eggleton's description. Coinciding with the 2019–2020 250th anniversary commemorations of Captain James Cook's first voyage to Aotearoa New Zealand, Kahukiwa's provocative exhibition *Let's NOT Celebrate Cook* was staged as a protest against the government-funded Tuia 250 commemorative programme. Refusing to condone or participate in events she perceived as continuing to heroicise Cook and perpetuate false narratives of discovery, Kahukiwa's artworks for this exhibition reinterpret historical events from a Māori perspective to expose the impact of colonisation and its ongoing racist legacy. Presenting Cook as a criminal invader, they depict the violence of early encounters and the cultural erasure resulting from British colonisation.

This article argues that *Let's NOT Celebrate Cook* was an important exhibition which illustrates the role that the arts have in stimulating crucial conversations about Aotearoa's culture and history, especially during moments of dissension.³ It investigates the intersection of protest art and commemoration, scrutinising the artist's role as both activist and provocateur. Employing a decolonial lens, I will explore the extent to which Kahukiwa's artistic intervention disrupts the hegemony of Western historical discourse and reclaims an Indigenous narrative. I will also consider the controversies and polemical discourse that emerged in response to the exhibition, where both artist and gallery faced accusations of racism and distorting history.

Before discussing the exhibition, I will define how the term “decolonial” is applied within this study, and the criteria used to assess the intention and impact of the artworks. I will then briefly outline Kahukiwa's artistic career within the context of protest art and discuss the Tuia 250 programme of events that provoked her response. I will explain the distinction between this programme and previous Cook anniversary celebrations and examine the opposition to it. The

study will then focus on an in-depth exploration of the exhibition *Let's NOT Celebrate Cook*, including an overview of the polarised reactions to it. I will analyse the various artistic strategies used by Kahukiwa to advance a decolonial agenda. Ultimately this study highlights the crucial role of protest art in disrupting commemorative narratives, championing Indigenous viewpoints, and facilitating thought-provoking conversations about colonial legacies.

A Decolonial Lens

Curator Megan Tamati-Quennell has described Kahukiwa's artworks generally as "decolonial responses to the specific colonial legacy of New Zealand."⁴ The terminology of decoloniality, in its many variations, is widely—yet rather inconsistently—used in contemporary, academic discourse. Therefore, it is critical to articulate what is meant by it and how it will be applied within the context of this article. The decolonial lens I adopt here aligns with the scholarship of Argentinian semiotician Walter Mignolo and New Zealand Māori researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith, who advocate the ongoing decolonisation of knowledge and the creation of "a space of possibility of other [non-European] truths."⁵ Mignolo supports acts of "epistemic disobedience" that intentionally "delink from the illusion of the zero point epistemology."⁶ Here, he references Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gomez's notion of "the hubris of the zero point,"⁷ which critiques the Eurocentric assumption that a knowing subject operates from a detached and neutral point of observation. A decolonial approach is therefore understood as one that seeks to undo the impacts and influences of colonisation in the present day by breaking with Eurocentric modes of knowing and being. Smith notes that revisiting history has been a significant part of decolonisation, as reclaiming and retelling stories from the past is a "powerful form of resistance."⁸ She maintains especially that "Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes."⁹ This may involve acts of "decolonial insurgency" that challenge Western historical discourse, or assert Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies previously marginalised or erased by colonialism.¹⁰

This article will apply two questions to assess the extent to which the artworks can be considered as examples of decolonial praxis. Firstly, how do the artworks disrupt and critique the hegemony of Eurocentric colonial epistemologies? Secondly, how do the artworks showcase an alternative voice by reclaiming an Indigenous narrative?

Kahukiwa—A Lineage of Protest

Robyn Kahukiwa is of Māori and Pākehā heritage, tracing her Māori ancestry through her maternal lineage. She was born and raised in Australia and, after a brief career as a commercial artist, relocated to Aotearoa New Zealand in 1959. Without formal artistic training, her journey into painting began as a young mother, residing in Greymouth, and evolved alongside rediscovery of her Māori identity and culture. During tenure as an art teacher at Mana College in Porirua in the early 1970s, she witnessed the challenges facing young Māori in urban Aotearoa New Zealand and this informed the subject matter of her early works. Reflecting on this period thirty years later in 2004, she explained: "the alienation of the rangatahi [young people] was in my face daily; the struggle with identity and racism. I began to experience the consequences of colonisation alongside my own journey to understand and affirm my identity."¹¹

Amidst the growing counterculture in Aotearoa New Zealand throughout the 1970s (including the feminist movement and a revival of political activism among Māori), Kahukiwa continued to draw inspiration from her own experience and that of her people. She achieved national recognition in the early 1980s with a series of eight large-scale paintings, collectively titled

Wahine Toa (1979–1983), which celebrated female presence in Māori mythology. At the time, the title was considered provocative by some Māori men for intimating that women might be described as toa (warriors).¹² Additionally, as the late art historian Jonathan Mane-Wheoki observed, the artworks were critiqued for having a somewhat unsophisticated technical appearance, though with time became “canonised” as “icons” of New Zealand art.¹³ From 1983 Kahukiwa transitioned out of teaching and into full-time work as an artist and, as her connection to Māori culture deepened, she began incorporating painted versions of traditional carved art forms in some of her work. Over the following two decades Kahukiwa continued to produce works that foregrounded inequities for Māori resulting from British colonisation, and she participated in collaborative shows including the Wellington City Art Gallery exhibition organised to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, *Mana Tiriti: The Art of Protest and Partnership* (1990). Her work has consistently explored themes including mana wahine (authority, influence and power of women), Māori sovereignty as tangata whenua (first peoples of the land), treaty breaches leading to alienation from land and culture, and pervasive institutional racism that disadvantages Māori—especially women and young people—in areas such as health care, education, law and general quality of life.

Kahukiwa strategically employs an illustrative style of painting, challenging notions of the “aesthetic attitude” and elitism, prioritising immediacy and clarity and leaving little room for ambiguity. Seemingly uncomplicated compositions bely potent messages designed to leave a lasting impression on the viewer. Just as Colin McCahon (1919–1987) did, Kahukiwa frequently includes written language to make her message more explicit. This, as Mane-Wheoki noted, is entirely appropriate given that Māori kōrero (stories) have always been used to describe taonga (treasures).¹⁴ Primarily known for her paintings, Kahukiwa’s artistic endeavours span various media including printmaking, poster design, children’s books and occasional explorations into sculpture. Committed to her kaupapa of making work first and foremost for Māori, she has also established Facebook sites to make her work more accessible and to reach the broadest audience possible.¹⁵

Since 2004 Kahukiwa’s work has become more overtly political, suggesting that the passage of time has heightened her urgency to share her message and effect meaningful change.¹⁶ Her art has resonated with other Indigenous communities struggling with persistent injustices from colonisation, resulting in invitations to participate in numerous international exhibitions, including the selection of 19 of her works for the 2023 Sharjah Biennial 15.¹⁷ As Māori art writer and academic Jo Diamond remarked, her work resonates globally, “questioning the right and power of all oppressors, and offering a powerful critique of the adverse effects of colonisation on all Indigenous peoples.”¹⁸

According to curator and art historian Aindrea Emelife, protest art makes “apparent the deep inequities, injustices and truths of our time and appears when the social contract has been violated”.¹⁹ It is a powerful tool for social and political change, providing a creative form for challenging established norms and raising awareness of specific causes and discriminations. Successful protest artworks leverage emotions to effect change. They typically address uncomfortable and unsettling subjects to inspire reflection, stimulate conversation and mobilise individuals to act. Uniting those already aligned to the cause and aiming to persuade those who are not, protest artworks serve as a catalyst for change. Kahukiwa’s artistic approach is consistent with this tradition. Her practice has been described as one that “exemplifies the power of art as a form of political activism, a catalyst as much as a mirror.”²⁰ A self-described “late warrior”²¹ of sorts, she has dedicated more than five decades to creating artworks that blend art and political activism. Promoting mana motuhake (self-determination) and tino

rangatiratanga (Māori sovereignty), her works advocate Māori survival and well-being. She is committed to uplifting and empowering her people, declaring “I do all my work for Māori people. That is where it is aimed and that is where I put all my energy.”²² Her artworks are candid and unapologetic. Whether overt or subtly persistent, their messages are clear. They convey her resolute determination and commitment to share her truth, challenging viewers to directly confront the history of colonisation in Aotearoa and its legacy effects on Māori. Mane-Wheoki described political activism in Kahukiwa’s work as ranging “from quietly insistent assertions of indigenous identity and status ... to aggressively confrontational outpourings of anger and indignation.”²³ The works in *Let’s NOT Celebrate Cook* instantiate these diverse degrees of activism.

Tuia—Encounters 250

Tuia—Encounters 250 was a programme of events funded by the New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage to mark the 250th anniversary of Cook’s first visit to Aotearoa New Zealand in October 1769. The Māori term “tuia” means “to weave” or “to bind.”²⁴ This word, alongside the Māori whakataukī “Tuia te muka tangata ki uta”—a proverb emphasising the intangible connections that can form when people listen, unite and collaborate as one—was adopted to reflect the intention of Tuia 250 to foster positive relationships between Māori and non-Māori by including both cultural perspectives.²⁵ In unspoken acknowledgement of the historical violence inflicted upon Māori during initial encounters with Europeans, the Ministry’s website declared Tuia 250 “a national opportunity to hold honest conversations about the past, the present and how we navigate our shared future.”²⁶ Carefully avoiding centring the programme around Cook, the events were framed as commemorating “250 years since the first onshore meetings between Māori—the tangata whenua of Aotearoa New Zealand—and Pākehā.”²⁷ The language on the website diplomatically emphasised “commemoration” rather than “celebration,” refrained from using the term “discovery” and employed neutral descriptions such as “encounters” to characterise initial meetings—a convention popularised by anthropologist Dame Anne Salmond.²⁸ Cook’s presence is scarcely acknowledged. Instead, the 2019 programme articulated multiple themes, including an emphasis on Aotearoa New Zealand’s rich dual heritage, recognising non-European voyaging expertise, examining the enduring impact of first meetings on today’s society, considering the innovation and proficiency of Indigenous cultures in tandem with European skills during the eighteenth century and the common bond all present-day New Zealanders share of having journeyed to Aotearoa from various origins.²⁹

Tuia 250 marked a significant departure from previous anniversaries that had enthusiastically celebrated Cook. A first-hand account of the week-long Cook celebrations for the bicentennial in 1969, written for the *Royal Society Journal of the History of Science* by eminent scientist Charles Fleming, noted “The enthusiasm with which the Government and people of New Zealand celebrated the bicentennial of the *Endeavour*’s landfall and the first landing of Europeans on 9 October 1769, at the site where the city of Gisborne now stands, has firmly established James Cook as the outstanding national hero in the history of this young country.”³⁰ Comprising more than 50 official projects and a comprehensive nationwide education initiative, achieved through the mechanism of the Tuia 250 fund, the New Zealand government allocated monies to museums, galleries and community groups to support conferences and exhibitions which resonated with the programme’s overarching goals. A key event was a flotilla of six vessels: three tall ships (among them an *Endeavour* replica from Australia), complemented by two waka hourua (Māori canoes) and one va’a tipaerua (Tahitian sailing canoe). The fleet journeyed to various locations throughout Aotearoa New Zealand between

October and December 2019, with the Māori and Tahitian vessels using celestial way-finding techniques as a tribute to the navigational prowess of their Pacific forebears.

Although Tuia 250 adopted a more inclusive approach, it did not receive universal acclaim, encountering resistance from some who refused to participate in the events. Four iwi from Tūranganui-a-Kiwa (Gisborne) united to perform a pōwhiri (welcoming ceremony) to greet the Māori and Tahitian vessels on their arrival.³¹ However, they did not extend this courtesy to the ships they associated with colonisation that arrived a few days later.³² In the far north fishing town of Mangonui, the *Endeavour* replica was prohibited from docking. While this stand was primarily determined by the fact that Cook had never visited that community, Ngāti Kahu Chief Executive Anahera Herbert-Graves voiced the broader objections of her iwi: “He [Cook] was a barbarian. Wherever he went, like most people of the time of imperial expansion, there were murders, there were abductions, there were rapes and just a lot of bad outcomes for the indigenous people. . . . He didn’t discover anything down here, and we object to Tuia 250 using euphemisms like ‘encounters’ and ‘meetings’ to disguise what were actually invasions.”³³ This sentiment was echoed by others throughout the nation who objected to the programme, and specifically the funding of over \$20 million for the events.³⁴ The most vociferous and enduring criticism emerged two years prior to the events during the planning phase, and was led by Indigenous rights activist Tina Ngata. Advocating for a complete boycott of Tuia 250, Ngata presented her concerns in person to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York,³⁵ and authored a series of essays critical of the government’s decision to commemorate Cook’s visit.³⁶

As a close friend of Ngata, Kahukiwa shared the same disdain for the Ministry’s proposed programme. In May 2017, she collaborated with Ngata to establish a Facebook page titled “Resist250—STOP celebrating Cook,” as a platform to communicate their anti-Cook message and connect with like-minded others. The page declared itself “a space for critical discussion around the planned 2019 events to commemorate the arrival of Captain Cook to Aotearoa.”³⁷ In addition to providing a forum for almost two thousand followers to share their views, it promoted an alternative programme of events, including a trial for Cook “laying out the entire case of evidence for crimes of genocide, germ warfare, murder, torture, abduction and theft from Indigenous Peoples across Te Moana-nui a Kiwa.”³⁸ The Facebook page also contained a link to a toolkit of supporting material and an assortment of posters designed by Kahukiwa to disseminate the group’s message and encourage resistance.³⁹ Kahukiwa’s poster *Let’s NOT Celebrate Captain Cook* (2017) became the group’s Facebook profile picture, and a limited run of prints were sold to followers for \$25 plus postage to raise funds for Resist250 activities. Although Kahukiwa had consistently protested the impacts of British colonisation on Māori, as for example in *Colonisation Painting* (2017), this poster marked the first of many anti-Cook works that Kahukiwa felt compelled to create, in the two years preceding the 250th anniversary, to express her vehement opposition to the upcoming commemorations.⁴⁰



Figure 1. Robyn Kahukiwa, *Let's NOT celebrate Captain Cook*, 2017. Acrylic on paper, 594 x 420 mm. Private collection. Courtesy of the artist.

Exhibition Overview

Let's NOT Celebrate Cook was a solo exhibition by Kahukiwa revisiting the Cook narrative through an Indigenous lens.⁴¹ The exhibition, proposed by the artist, took place at Mahara Gallery, a small public art gallery in Waikanae, 60 kilometres north of Wellington, close to where Kahukiwa lives. It was on display from 21 February until 12 April 2020.⁴² I argue that this exhibition provided an “oppositional gaze” which directly challenged European interpretations of Cook’s visits.⁴³ It showcased seven artworks completed between 2017 and 2019, and represented Kahukiwa’s personal effort to make art which would counter Tuia 250. As she explained in her artist’s statement, “The invasion of Captain James Cook and his claiming of Aotearoa began the British colonisation of the sovereign Māori nations of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Many Māori are distressed and angered by this celebration and memorialising of Captain James Cook. I am one of them.”⁴⁴ While fully supported by Mahara Gallery, director/curator Janet Bayly acknowledges that the concept for the exhibition was Kahukiwa’s. The artist not only curated the selection of artworks to be displayed, but also meticulously specified their sequence and placement within the exhibition.⁴⁵

The exhibition drew its title from Kahukiwa’s earlier 2017 work, *Let's NOT Celebrate Captain Cook*. The first three words on the A2 sized poster, rendered in prominent, hand-drawn uppercase letters, succinctly encapsulate the artist’s position and the exhibition’s purpose. It is an overtly political work of decolonial defiance, simultaneously challenging Eurocentric Cook narratives while articulating an alternative Indigenous perspective. Posters are a highly democratic art form, offering a cost-effective means for mass distribution of political messages. The flatness of the work, characterised by a monochromatic palette, strong, central image and accompanying lines of text, reflects Kahukiwa’s background in commercial design and effectively communicates her message to a broad audience. In addition to its adoption as the Resist250 logo, the artwork was selected as the signature work to promote the group exhibition *A Bloody Encounter*, held at Pātaka Art + Museum, Porirua, in 2019.⁴⁶

The United Tribes flag (Te Kara), which dominates the upper portion of the poster, is a recurring motif in Kahukiwa’s oeuvre, seen in *Hikoi* (2004) and *Environmental Product* (2011). Designed in 1839 for the New Zealand Company, it is widely regarded by many Māori as an early acknowledgement of Aotearoa as an independent nation. Consequently, it honours the enduring presence and mana of Māori as tangata whenua.⁴⁷ The solemn countenance of a young Māori woman occupying centre stage, where the quadrants of the flag converge, creates a balanced and central focal point for the image. The moko kauae (tattoo) adorning the woman’s chin and the sacred, white-tipped huia feather in her hair signify her mana and leadership. Her confronting gaze compels the viewer to attend to her message, the striking black and white relief of her face evoking the resolute wahine of Kahukiwa’s earlier works, such as *He Kakano Rangatira* (1994) and *Nga Whawharua* (2001). In the same way that propaganda posters were used to rally the public during times of war, this work is a call to action. Its message is unambiguous, with the prominent letters of “NOT” underlined for extra emphasis. The poster employs minimal text, in a diverse array of fonts and mixed case, offering supplementary details to reinforce the overarching message. Cook is explicitly named, accompanied by a list of his alleged transgressions, while a banner (reminiscent of other Resist250 posters) stretches across the bottom of the page, quantifying the ongoing years of displacement. The content of the work challenges the heroism of Eurocentric Cook discourse, proposing him as the antithesis of a hero—a man guilty of multiple, heinous crimes.

Polarised Reactions

Associating criminal charges, including murder and rape, with the first visit of Cook to Aotearoa New Zealand inevitably provoked controversy. Within a week of opening the exhibition began to elicit polarised responses. While some appreciated the Indigenous perspective, others considered the exhibition provocative and found the artworks upsetting. A long-time friend of the gallery withdrew her membership in protest and an elderly volunteer expressed discomfort, feeling the exhibition was a misrepresentation that did not reflect the truth.⁴⁸ The *Waikanae Watch*, a local online news and opinions forum, received an email from a local (unnamed) resident describing the exhibition as “the most racist, derogatory, dishonest, divisive and ignorant thing I’ve ever seen in a gallery.”⁴⁹ This vitriolic reaction catalysed writer and former history teacher Roger Childs to write his own critique, which was published by the *Waikanae Watch* under the title “Dishonest political art exhibition at Mahara Gallery causes upset.”⁵⁰ He wrote: “Artistic licence is to be expected of painters and cartoonists, but they should not falsify history and make up stories to suit their art. Unfortunately, Kahukiwa gets the history and consequences of Captain Cook’s visits to New Zealand deliberately wrong to suit her prejudiced views.”⁵¹ Childs further criticised the title artwork, asserting that it unjustly labelled Cook “a ‘British Invader, Thief, Murderer, Kidnapper, Rapist.’ There is no evidence that he was any of these things.”⁵² While the literal interpretation of many of the descriptors may be debated, there is substantial evidence within Cook’s own journals that, as commander, he took responsibility for the deaths of local Māori.⁵³ The diaries also clearly show that Cook favoured kidnapping as an effective strategy to force compliance among local populations he encountered throughout his voyages. In Tahiti, to ensure the return of two deserters, he noted, “a resolution was taken to seize upon as many of the Chiefs as we could, this was thought to be the readiest method to induce the other natives to produce the two men.”⁵⁴ Similarly, he took hostages to secure the return of stolen items explaining to them “that there remained nothing more to be done to regain their liberty but to deliver up the Arms the people had taken.”⁵⁵

Childs’ article quickly garnered online responses from local residents. One reader—who did not indicate whether they had personally seen the exhibition—expressed indignation, perceiving Kahukiwa’s work as part of a broader, persistent campaign to attack European heritage without regard for facts. Defending Cook, who they described as “a working class lad made good by his own bravery and intelligence,” the reader went further, declaring that “the actual history of New Zealand ... is conveniently obscured by anti-white obsessions” and that “Kahukiwa surely has a very shallow sense of heritage if she cannot honour it without disparaging others.”⁵⁶ Not everyone shared the same view. A subsequent response to Childs’ article from “William” challenged his censorious stance: “many of the world’s artwork [sic], including Titan’s [sic] mythological stories, the Renaissance painters’ religious portrayals, and military art from the middle of the 19th century, would never have been shown in art galleries if all galleries had to censor their displays.”⁵⁷ Addressing those who insisted on interpreting the works literally, he went on, “Art is not an historical treatise, it is a personal view or interpretation of a subject, and should be appreciated as such.”⁵⁸

Kāpiti mayor Gurunathan Krishnasamy’s decision to officiate at the event may suggest that the content of the exhibition was not as extreme as some reactions suggest, and that those opinions cannot be taken as representative of the sentiments of the visiting public as a whole. Bayly defended the gallery’s stance, noting its obligation to exhibit artists with genuinely held perspectives who are esteemed for their artistic contributions, irrespective of the controversial nature of their viewpoint.⁵⁹ Upholding the critical role of the arts, she explained, “It’s not for us as a gallery to agree or disagree with these interpretations. It’s our responsibility to ensure

that people in Kāpiti have the opportunity to view the artworks and come to their own conclusions.”⁶⁰ Regarding Kahukiwa’s artworks specifically, Bayly noted, “She is committed to telling what she regards as the true story of Cook’s visit in contrast to what she and other Māori consider to be a skewed or incomplete narrative.”⁶¹

An Indigenous Perspective

I turn now to the other artworks Kahukiwa included in *Let’s NOT Celebrate Cook* and propose that they advance a decolonial agenda through the use of diverse strategies that unsettle and reframe colonial narratives. Although the seven artworks collectively embrace a shared theme and present an Indigenous perspective, some openly declare their decolonial intent while others employ more nuanced methods to gently persuade or shift the viewer’s mindset. Whether bold or subtle in their approach, each fractures the façade of European universal truth.

Three of the artworks eschew directly challenging Cook narratives, instead prioritising and centring a Māori world view. In this way, they reflect what Indigenous Studies researcher Soenke Bierman describes as “the active unravelling of assumed certainties.”⁶² *Mana Māori Motuhake* (2019) presents a distinct declaration and celebration of Māori sovereignty. The precisely drawn lines of the two-dimensional graphic, along with its uncluttered visual composition, offer a sharp and easily reproducible image. The red, black and white palette (derived from the colours of the Tino Rangatiratanga flag developed in 1989 and unveiled on Waitangi Day 1990 as a symbol of Māori resistance) amplifies its impact as a powerful statement.



Figure 2. Robyn Kahukiwa, *Mana Māori Motuhake*, 2019. Acrylic on canvas, 1500 x 500 mm. Private collection. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Kyla Blennerhassett.

At one and a half metres high, this work is a variation of a recurring form employed by Kahukiwa in works such as *Ihumatao* (2019) and *We Will Not be Silenced* (2021). In each, multiple layers of tupuna (ancestor figures) are arranged beneath the land's surface, symbolising the enduring interconnectedness of whakapapa (genealogy) as a source of strength for those who are living. These forms draw inspiration from the carved figures found on Māori meeting houses. The distinctive use of tilted heads, as seen in Māori hei-tiki (ornamental pendants), is another familiar device in Kahukiwa's work and infuses the figures with a sense of vitality and active engagement with the viewer. Forms extend beyond the confines of the frame, expressing their connection to unseen others. The sacred markings adorning the face, and the white-tipped huia feather on the head of a warrior emerging from the land, hold profound significance as sacred symbols of authority and mana (high status), directly alluding to the artwork's title. "Mana Motuhake" signifies self-determination and independence, and the phrase is widely recognised within Aotearoa New Zealand. In the 1980s this phrase was used to name a political party and activist movement that promoted Māori autonomy and the restoration of Māori land. *Mana Māori Motuhake* emphatically declares its decolonial intent by asserting Māori sovereignty, which predates British colonisation and was never ceded, and privileging an Indigenous world view.

Similarly, *Erasure* (2019) features layers of overlapping text to remind viewers of Indigenous place names that existed prior to Cook's arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand. This work directly confronts the European practice of claiming and naming territories and the consequential displacement of Māori language descriptors from the whenua (land). "Erasure" suggests the complete removal of all traces of that which existed before. Cook, as a cartographer, was particularly diligent at assigning names to designate specific locations on his charts. While he occasionally made efforts to understand and record local place names,⁶³ more frequently he assigned names to commemorate his superiors and contemporaries, as seen in examples such as Queen Charlotte Sound and Banks Peninsula, or to describe events encountered during his voyages, as with Cape Kidnappers and Bay of Plenty.



Figure 3. Robyn Kahukiwa, *Erasure*, 2019. Acrylic and oil pastel on canvas, 1000 x 760 mm. Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. Courtesy of the artist and Season, Tāmaki Makaurau.

Executed with a limited palette, the artwork features black and white pastels scraped over a base of rusty-brown acrylic. Expressive hatched lines cover the surface creating a rough, abrasive texture. Lines of uppercase text densely fill the space. While a few Māori place names in black lettering are discernible, the white text documenting the English place names predominates. A male head emerges at the centre, depicted with economical black lines and a surrounding halo of denser white pastel hatchings that accentuate its presence beneath the text. Although almost obscured by the superimposed text, the figure quietly affirms a persistent Indigenous presence, despite efforts to obliterate it with the English names. As with *Mana Māori Motuhake*, *Erasure* firmly underscores the presence of a history in Aotearoa New Zealand that predates Cook's first visit.⁶⁴

A third work that advances a decolonial agenda by articulating an Indigenous perspective is *Death Ship* (2019). A profoundly moving piece designed to evoke strong emotions, it is an acrylic painting in warm, earthy tones on a square canvas and portrays a solitary Māori kuia (old woman) in an idyllic, sandy cove. This hunched figure projects forward of the picture plane, toward the viewer, vividly conveying the raw intensity of her despair.



Figure 4. Robyn Kahukiwa, *Death Ship*, 2019. Acrylic on canvas, 760 x 760 mm. Private collection. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: *Ōtaki Today*.

Tears escape her downcast eyes, cascading over her cheeks. Her grief is palpable. A *pare kawakawa* (mourning wreath) adorns her head, its vibrant, emerald foliage contrasting with her silvered, white hair. The diagonal black fringing of her cloak and the soft, vertically brushed strokes of mustard and black that blend to form its drapery are interrupted by the horizontal line of her left forearm, extending across her body. Her left hand grips a sharp shell, which she uses to score her exposed right breast until scarlet blood spills from her wounds. A testament to her deep anguish, *haehae*, named after a pattern of grooves found in Māori carving, are ritual lacerations made spontaneously in response to intense grief, the resulting scars serving as enduring reminders of who, or what, had been lost.⁶⁵ This is a practice that Kahukiwa portrayed in previous works, notably in *Haehae* (2012), which conveyed her profound sorrow at the high incidence of child fatalities from abuse in Aotearoa. The silhouette of a cliff behind the lone figure in *Death Ship* bears a striking resemblance to the profile of a face. Cracks of sorrow manifest as dark lines across the surface, as if the very land itself shares in the woman's mourning. Kahukiwa frequently personifies Papatūānuku, the Earth Mother, in her work, capturing her rich, reddish-brown hue using *kōkōwai* (a pigment derived from iron-rich clay or sandstone that is associated with sacred rituals),⁶⁶ seen in *Hine Kōkōwai* (2021) and *Papatūānuku me Rūaumoko* (2019). On the left-hand side of *Death Ship*, serene, steely-blue waters gently lap the sand in the cove, their tone intensifying as they reach the point where a ship anchors just offshore. The ship proudly displays the Union Jack, signifying British sovereignty. Above, smoky-grey clouds are beginning to form. Is this an embodiment of “the calm before the storm”? Clearly identified as Cook's *Endeavour*, the vessel is the “death ship” denoted by the work's title. This term was introduced in 2019 by University of Waikato research fellow Arama Rata, who spoke of “the replica death ship ... literally on the horizon ... arriving any day now to re-enact the invasion of Māori whenua.”⁶⁷ Kahukiwa's painting counters the prevailing European narrative of colonisation as a means of bringing salvation and improvement to Indigenous peoples. It symbolises the intense sorrow stemming from the loss of land and culture in the wake of Cook's visits to Aotearoa New Zealand, and the pain and trauma revisited on Māori during the replica visits during Tuia 250. Kahukiwa articulates an Indigenous perspective by focusing on the *kuia*'s profound grief, while effectively leveraging our common human experience of loss. Employing empathy as a decolonial strategy, *Death Ship* is more nuanced than other works in the exhibition—a subtle and hauntingly memorable intervention in contemporary debates about Cook's legacy.

Challenging the Hegemony of Eurocentric Cook Narratives

In addition to the title poster for the exhibition, three other works directly confronted Eurocentric Cook histories, seeking to expose what Kahukiwa saw as entrenched false narratives and the power relations they upheld. These works present as anti-histories, oppositional readings that dispute conventional accounts by exposing and centring on the violence that they frequently omit or downplay.⁶⁸

One of these works, the most visually complex in the exhibition, is the mural-like *INVASION* (2019). Colonised nations have long regarded their colonisers as invaders—unwelcome outsiders who forcefully seize and assert control over lands and resources that rightfully belong to others. *INVASION* confronts the European myth of a peaceful colonial settlement in Aotearoa New Zealand, offering a reframed portrayal from an Indigenous perspective. In contrast to the singular focus of the other works, it presents a narrative that unfolds over time, akin to a cinematic portrayal, recounting events spanning from a past that predates Cook to the present day. Multiple, disparate scenes overlap, packed within the shallow pictorial space to create what curator Ngahiraka Mason refers to as a “mindscape.”⁶⁹ While the various individual

elements appear to compete for attention, collectively they provide a storyboard-like depiction of the event declared in the emphatic upper-case letters of the title.



Figure 5. Robyn Kahukiwa, *INVASION*, 2019. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 1190 x 900 mm. Fletcher Trust Collection. Courtesy of the artist.

INVASION is a history painting, though it does not tell a Western history and it is not in the Western tradition. Descendants exist alongside their ancestors and gods, reflecting a Māori world view in which the past, present and future merge seamlessly in a perpetual continuum.⁷⁰ Kahukiwa has previously orchestrated this temporal collapse in, for example, the major narrative work *Ngā Tipuna Kei Mua, Ko Tatou kei Muri* (1996), emphasising the interconnectedness of events and their impacts across time. *INVASION*, like other densely populated works, moves the viewer's gaze from one scene to another, to absorb each individually while contemplating their contribution to the overarching narrative. The complexity of Kahukiwa's narrative contrasts with conventional portrayals of Cook "discovering" Aotearoa New Zealand.⁷¹ Rather than centring Cook, at the heart of this composition a young Māori mother nursing her child gazes outward, her sorrowful eyes beseeching the viewer. "This is my story," she seems to say. A pare kawakawa adorns her head and her exposed chest reveals haehae—indications of mourning and loss as seen in *Death Ship*. The sacred red marks on her forehead and cheeks offer further proof of her grief, but the child she cradles symbolises new life and continuity despite what has been lost. To her left, a skull dripping kōkōwai blood represents an ancestor figure.⁷² To her right is one of Kahukiwa's tupuna styled figures, modelled on the carved figures she studied during visits to meeting houses on the East Coast. In the background a female ancestor is carried aloft. She displays the same visible symbols of grief and wears an array of white-tipped huia feathers in her hair. The feathers, from the sacred huia bird that features in the top right of the painting, symbolise her authority and mana.⁷³ Beneath the huia the silhouetted figure of Captain Cook, brandishing a raised gun, leans aggressively towards a Māori man he has just shot. This depiction vividly recalls the violence and Māori fatalities during first encounters at Tūranganui-a-Kiwa. Kahukiwa references the body count by stacking the dead on top of one another. Although Cook recorded this event in his diaries, many accounts of his voyages have omitted or

downplayed this unpalatable incident, and the scene is shocking for many.⁷⁴ The contrast of Cook's crisp blue and white uniform with the rich, earthy palette of the painting further underscores his foreign presence on the land. In the lower right quadrant of the frame, a fair-haired young rangatahi from the present wears a black hoodie with the Tino Rangatiranga flag prominently displayed over her heart. It serves as a counterpoint to the symbol of British sovereignty represented by the Union Jack in the top centre of the painting. *INVASION* directly criticises the assumed neutrality of Western archival histories, foregrounding the violence of early interactions between Cook and Māori, as well as the displacement Māori have experienced since British colonisation. It contests Eurocentric narratives by reframing events to show Cook and subsequent British colonisers as invaders employing violence to annex Aotearoa New Zealand for the British empire.

Monument (2019) candidly confronts the Western practice of venerating colonial heroes, addressing the contentious topic of public statues and who should be commemorated. Since the murder of African American George Floyd in 2020, and the subsequent worldwide rallies that have led to the defacing and toppling of statues honouring colonial and racist figures, monuments are no longer regarded as benign. Kahukiwa's artwork predates this activity, although Aotearoa New Zealand has a lengthy history of attacks on statues that she would have been well acquainted with and which serve as appropriate precursors.⁷⁵ *Monument* is the antithesis of the numerous Cook statues throughout the world, and "removes the fictions that shroud colonial monuments."⁷⁶ It stands as a counter-monument that, instead of revering the navigator, showcases a less honourable aspect of his character and actions.



Figure 6. Robyn Kahukiwa, *Monument*, 2019. Acrylic, water colour and ink on paper, 594 x 420 mm. Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.
Courtesy of the artist and Season, Tāmaki Makaurau.

Monument is crafted on paper in a combination of acrylics and watercolours with a notable division into two sections. In the lower section, four individuals stand in a neatly manicured public space contemplating the centrally positioned monument and its accompanying plaque. Their crisp forms are simply rendered using fine lines filled with blocks of bright colours. The gaze of the woman in cobalt blue directs the viewer's gaze to the familiar content of the inscription printed neatly in black text. In contrast, the upturned face of the woman on the right directs attention to the monument raised aloft by a central solid black pedestal. In a departure from the conventional depiction of Cook as a solitary, upright figure, celebrated as an exemplar of the Enlightenment, this monument presents a startlingly violent symbolic tableau: Cook in the act of fatally assaulting a Māori man, an image uplifted from Kahukiwa's own *INVASION*. Sombre, monochromatic, silvery-pink watercolour tones, shaping the sculpture's volume and contours, are a striking contrast to the vibrant acrylics below, as well as to the more stylised forms of *INVASION*.

Kahukiwa frequently employs the motif of a mother and child as a narrative device to emphasise the enduring consequences of past and present on future generations.⁷⁷ The presence of the child prompts us to consider the stories we tell our children. Which version of the story should the child believe: the inscription her Pākehā mother is reading, or the violent version that her Māori father gazes at above? Art writer and curator Cameron Ah Loo-Matamua has proposed that the sculpture's ephemeral quality conveys Kahukiwa's intention to present it as her imagined monument and invites the viewer to envision what their personal version of a Cook monument might look like.⁷⁸ Recognising the broader, fervent and contentious discussions that have arisen on this topic in recent times, if given physical form, Ah Loo-Matamua asks, "would it invite the curious contemplation shown by Kahukiwa's drawn spectators, or would it incite rage?"⁷⁹ Indeed, *Monument's* inclusion in *Let's NOT Celebrate Cook* underscores its ability to provoke powerful reactions, even while contained on the page as a watercolour sketch. An unconventional and unfamiliar representation of a Cook monument serves as a powerful critique of existing Cook statuary, provoking questions about whose history is celebrated, who controls the historical narrative and whose interests it ultimately serves.

Undoubtedly the most confronting and inflammatory work in the exhibition, *Captain Cook Rhyme* (2018), provoked the most intense reactions. A black painted canvas covered in white uppercase text, it is reminiscent of McCahon's writing paintings from the early 1980s, such as *I considered all the acts of oppression* (c. 1981–1983) and *I applied my mind* (1982). However, while McCahon's works were inspired by biblical text from Ecclesiastes, this painting details Kahukiwa's version of Cook's arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand, written in the form of a child's nursery rhyme or bedtime story.⁸⁰ An innocuous beginning, "There once was a Captain called Cook . . .," belies the dark content that follows. Rhyming couplets progressively document Cook's sins, from his role as an invader of Indigenous lands acting on behalf of the British crown, to his arrogantly invented names for places that were already named. Casualties of the first encounter at Tūranganui-a-Kiwa are quantified, and the rhyme concludes by asserting that this is the true narrative and Cook should not be celebrated as his legacy was "colonisation—the heavy load that we bear." Kahukiwa's account stands in stark contrast to Eurocentric versions, yet her presentation carries a sense of familiarity. The text in *Captain Cook Rhyme* is neatly presented, adhering to faintly ruled white lines across the canvas. This format, mirroring the style of history lessons written on school blackboards of old, ascribes the narrative a semblance of authenticity, like conventional taught histories which were once assumed to be unquestionable truths. By using upper-case lettering, typically associated with shouting in today's electronic communications, she further asserts the importance of considering this

radically different perspective. Cook's opaque form lurks beneath the text, his blurred presence offset by the stark white face of a Māori man. With full facial moko and a huia feather in his hair, the light directed onto the side of the man's face illuminates his bold, gazing eye as if literally revealing the one-eyed historical narrative of the past. Reinforcing the violence in the text is a singular splash of scarlet blood on the man's face that interrupts the monochromatic scene, and an ancestor skull behind text referring to the deaths of Māori by Cook's hand. As previously noted, Kahukiwa frequently combines text with imagery to make her message explicit. Her works have been described as images with superimposed "veils of polemic text."⁸¹



Figure 7. Robyn Kahukiwa, *Captain Cook Rhyme*, 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 1200 x 910 mm. Private collection. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Jodie Donald.

The confrontational text in *Captain Cook Rhyme* aimed to provoke a response, and it succeeded. In addition to disputing the content of *Let's NOT Celebrate Cook*, Childs mounted a defence against the claims presented in *Captain Cook Rhyme*, systematically addressing each of what he termed “utterly dishonest” statements.⁸² He resorted to semantic distinctions to bolster his arguments, took issue with Kahukiwa’s “Cook shot 9 Māori,” declaring “Cook personally shot nobody,” then proceeded to engage in victim-blaming, rationalising the fatalities that transpired in the first few days of Cook’s arrival as a consequence of “attempts by the natives to steal things or because of their aggressive behaviour.”⁸³ By denying Cook’s culpability in the fatalities, Childs once again ignores the written evidence of Cook’s own journals. As commander, Cook took responsibility for the actions of his men who, on most occasions, were following his orders. His journal account of the second day ashore at Tūranganui-a-Kiwa notes, “I order’d the man who had taken the hanger to be fired at, which was accordingly done and wounded in such a manner that he died soon after.” Later that same day, during an encounter at sea that he interpreted as an attack, he said “this obliged us to fire upon them and unfortunately either two or three were kill’d.”⁸⁴ Criticism of the exhibition and its artworks subsequently turned into personal remarks about the artist. Further commentary by Childs, one week later, stated, “The comfortable lifestyle the painter enjoys today is a legacy of Captain Cook. If she had lived in early 19th century NZ, she would very likely be killed and eaten after a battle or raped and enslaved.”⁸⁵ This notion that Kahukiwa, as a contemporary Māori woman, should consider herself fortunate is a sentiment echoed by another *Waikanae Watch* reader, John Robinson, who commented: “How on earth a woman, claiming to be a feminist, could celebrate the brutal treatment of women in traditional Māori society is beyond me. There are so many reports of their life of drudgery in periods of peace, with rape, death and cannibalism, or slavery (as a concubine, described as ‘taken for a wife’) following any of the many inter-tribal battles.”⁸⁶

Kahukiwa’s advanced age may have shielded her from more aggressive, personal attacks. Award-winning poet Tusiata Avia, who is younger than Kahukiwa, faced intense backlash for her poem *250th anniversary of James Cook’s arrival in New Zealand*,⁸⁷ which, like Kahukiwa’s work, holds Cook responsible for wrongs against Māori perpetrated during his visits to Aotearoa New Zealand. Furiously detailing how she and her “car full of brown girls” would seek retribution,⁸⁸ Avia uses incendiary and explicit language which deeply offended some. In addition to complaints filed with the Human Rights Commission, hate mail and even death threats were sent to Avia and her family.⁸⁹ Similarly, Kahukiwa’s decolonial approach in *Captain Cook Rhyme* proposes a counter-reading, an Indigenous account that directly challenges Eurocentric Cook narratives. The incensed response from some individuals indicates that, for them, this work is not simply radical but confrontational and highly contentious.

Conclusion

This article has considered the extent to which Kahukiwa’s artworks in the exhibition *Let's NOT Celebrate Cook* propose a decolonial agenda. They seek to disengage from and challenge the dominance of long-standing European narratives. I have described how the exhibition provided a platform for her to articulate an Indigenous perspective on her own terms, in the hope of affecting viewers’ engagement with and understanding of Cook’s role in the colonisation of Aotearoa New Zealand. I have emphasised the direct and confrontational nature of the artworks, intentionally crafted to provoke strong viewer reactions, aligning with Kahukiwa’s commitment to broach sensitive and challenging topics.

Let's NOT Celebrate Cook effectively rewrites the “doctrine of discovery,” aiming to challenge what Kahukiwa regards as historical misunderstandings. In doing so, it illustrates the critical role of art in stimulating important conversations about the culture and history of Aotearoa New Zealand. I suggest that the controversy and polemical discourse surrounding the exhibition underscores the ongoing tensions in present-day Aotearoa New Zealand regarding sovereignty and the legacy effects of colonisation. The exhibition intentionally provokes viewers to reconsider history and confront uncomfortable truths. In this way, it is a bold reminder of the importance of artistic interventions for engaging with diverse voices and perspectives to shape our collective understanding of history and culture.

¹ Following an eighteen-month closure for extensive redevelopment, Mahara Gallery reopened in October 2023 under the new name of Toi MAHARA.

² David Eggleton, “Earth and Spirit: Robyn Kahukiwa’s Mauri Ora! Exhibition,” *Art New Zealand*, no. 105 (Summer 2002–03): 58.

³ It is curious that, despite Kahukiwa’s high status as an artist (the Auckland Art Gallery website describes her as “one of Aotearoa New Zealand’s pre-eminent female Māori artists” (“Robyn Kahukiwa,” Auckland Art Gallery, accessed 15 October 2023, <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/explore-art-and-ideas/artist/1268/robyn-kahukiwa>), there has been little written about this exhibition. This could be attributed to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic midway through the exhibition, which prompted the cancellation of numerous commemorative events and necessitated the transition of this exhibition to an online format.

⁴ Megan Tamati-Quenell, “Thinking Historically in the Present: Robyn Kahukiwa, Kahurangiariki Smith and Sharjah Biennial 15,” *Contemporary HUM*, 17 April 2023, <https://contemporaryhum.com/writing/thinking-historically-in-the-present/>.

⁵ Te Tuhi, “Delinking Across Indigeneity: Walter Mignolo and Linda Tuhiwai Smith,” 29 August 2019, Vimeo video, 1:23, <https://vimeo.com/356752108>.

⁶ Walter Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, nos. 7–8 (2009): 160, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276409349275>.

⁷ Santiago Castro-Gomez, “The Missing Chapter of Empire: Postmodern Reorganization of Coloniality and Post-Fordist Capitalism 1,” *Cultural Studies* 21, nos. 2–3 (2007): 428–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162639>.

⁸ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2021), 38.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁰ Catherine Walsh and Mignolo, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 34.

¹¹ Robyn Kahukiwa, Angela Vreede and Helen Pearson, *Touching the Sky: The Art of Robyn Kahukiwa* (Whangaparaoa, NZ: Interactive Education, 2004), 9.

¹² Hinemoa Hilliard, “Mana Māori: The Art of Robyn Kahukiwa,” in *The Art of Robyn Kahukiwa*, by Robyn Kahukiwa, Hinemoa Hilliard, Edward Lucie-Smith and Jonathan Mane-Wheoki (Auckland: Reed, 2005), 15.

¹³ Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, “My Ancestors are With me Always,” in *Robyn Kahukiwa: Works from 1985–1995*, by Robyn Kahukiwa, Anne Kirker, Jonathan Mane-Wheoki and Roma Potiki. (Wellington: Bowen Galleries, 1995), 12.

¹⁴ Mane-Wheoki, “He Wahine Toa: Robyn Kahukiwa, Artist,” in *The Art of Robyn Kahukiwa*, 27.

¹⁵ The sites are made accessible to both Māori and Pākehā through English commentary (peppered with te reo) and strong visual content referencing Māori issues and Māori culture. For Kahukiwa’s personal Facebook page see <https://www.facebook.com/robyn.kahukiwa>. A second Facebook page, with Hinewehi Mohi, is Kai4kids (<https://www.facebook.com/KAI4KIDS/>), where Kahukiwa provides posters at a low cost to raise funds for providing meals to children in low decile schools.

¹⁶ Janet Bayly, interview with the author, 25 September 2023.

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- ¹⁷ Tamati-Quenell, “Thinking Historically in the Present.”
- ¹⁸ Jo Diamond, “Robyn Kahukiwa: Nurturing Māori Identity,” *ArtAsiaPacific*, no. 33 (2002): 78.
- ¹⁹ Aindrea Emelife, *A Brief History of Protest Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2022), 13.
- ²⁰ Cameron Ah Loo-Matamua, “He Kupu Kei Runga—There are Words Attached,” *Art News Aotearoa*, no. 197 (Autumn 2023): 61.
- ²¹ Gail Bailey, “Warrior for Māori Rights and Identity,” *New Zealand Herald*, 16 November 2004, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/warrior-for-māori-rights-and-identity/4APS3NFE75JNFSUKB56RZ3ODYM/>.
- ²² Te Waka Toi, *Robyn Kahukiwa, Ngāti Porou* (Wellington: Te Waka Toi, 1992).
- ²³ Mane-Wheoki, “He Wahine Toa,” 37.
- ²⁴ “Tuia 250,” Ministry for Culture and Heritage, accessed 12 October 2023, <https://mch.govt.nz/tuia250>.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ See Anne Salmond, *Two Worlds: First Meetings Between Māori and Europeans, 1642–1772* (Auckland: Viking, 1991) and Anne Salmond, *Between Worlds: Early Exchanges Between Māori and Europeans, 1773–1815* (Auckland: Viking, 1997).
- ²⁹ “Tuia 250.”
- ³⁰ Charles Fleming, “James Cook Bicentenary Celebrations in New Zealand,” *Notes and Records: The Royal Society Journal of the History of Science* 24, no. 2 (April 1970): 189–193, doi.org/10.1098/rsnr.1970.0013.
- ³¹ “Emotional Welcome at Tuia 250 Commemoration in Gisborne,” *New Zealand Herald*, 5 October 2019, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/kahu/emotional-welcome-at-tuia-250-commemoration-in-gisborne/YTUPW6FFWYIFB5RPTMWPQD7DOY/>.
- ³² Graham Russell, “‘He’s a barbarian’: Māori Tribe Bans Replica of Captain Cook’s Ship from Port,” *The Guardian*, 17 September 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/17/hes-a-barbarian-māori-tribe-bans-replica-of-captain-cooks-ship-from-port>.
- ³³ Te Aniwa Hurihanganui, “Captain Cook Replica Banned From Docking in Mangonui During Commemoration,” *New Zealand Herald*, 17 September 2019, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/kahu/captain-cook-replica-banned-from-docking-in-mangonui-during-commemoration/WNNZU5GHT2LM3MKNVYVFB3SWHY/#:~:text=Far%20North%20iwi%20Ng%C4%81ti%20Kahu,since%20Cook's%20arrival%20in%20Aotearoa>.
- ³⁴ Financial support included \$13.5 million from the government, \$9 million from the Lotteries Grants Board and additional contributions from NZ On Air, as quoted in “Captain Cook 250-year Commemoration to Tell Māori Side of History—Minister Kelvin Davis,” *Radio New Zealand*, 13 May 2019, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/389081/captain-cook-250-year-commemoration-to-tell-māori-side-of-history-minister-kelvin-davis>.
- ³⁵ Leigh-Marama McLachlan, “\$20m Captain Cook Commemoration Ignores Māori Pain,” *Radio New Zealand*, 9 May 2019, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/te-manu-korihi/388808/20m-captain-cook-commemoration-ignores-māori-pain-critics>.
- ³⁶ The essays were later collectively published in Tina Ngata, *Kia Mau: Resisting Colonial Fictions* (Wellington: Kia Mau Campaign, 2019), and the cover image was created by Kahukiwa.
- ³⁷ Resist250, “Resist250—STOP celebrating Cook,” Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/resist250/>.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 28 September 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/resist250/>.
- ³⁹ The toolkit included templates for declarations of non-participation, a Kia Mau non-participation statement, a “Know Your Rights with the Police” guide, suggestions for allies (non-Māori), a list of scheduled Tuia 250 events suitable for protest rallies and a presentation and video on the Doctrine of Discovery. “Resist250 Toolkit Guide,” accessed 27 October 2023, https://docs.google.com/document/d/14PsluT-Bmn_bUcQbgfA1u7-Y2mU9ZIOmaojKjR7vvVI/edit?fbclid=IwAR0UfoSe3CSe-Kj0w_v3Z5bG_uCdkkUUX-arb9bLlo5KJrb9dx9krkbZWbg&pli=1#heading=h.vddfzps8uv9p.

⁴⁰ Kahukiwa selected seven works to display in the exhibition. Additional works were used in her children's book *A True Story* (2019), and for posters to raise awareness and support the anti-Tuia 250 campaign on her personal Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/robyn.kahukiwa>.

⁴¹ Some works had been exhibited previously as part of group exhibitions, including *A Bloody Encounter* (Pātaka Art + Museum, 15 November to 8 December 2019) and *He Tirohanga ki Tai: Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery* (Tairāwhiti Museum, 8 December 2018 to 10 March 2019, ORA Gallery, Manhattan, New York, 4 April to 2 May 2019 and the University of Waikato, 26 to 29 June 2019). Other works were displayed after the Mahara exhibition at the Ōtaki public library in September 2020.

⁴² The exhibition moved online when Aotearoa New Zealand went into lockdown at the end of March 2020 as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

⁴³ American theorist and critic bell hooks coined the term “oppositional gaze” to describe a perspective and survival mechanism for those who find themselves as subordinates within a power relationship.

⁴⁴ “Let's NOT Celebrate Cook,” artist statement, *Let's NOT Celebrate Cook*, Mahara Gallery, 2020.

⁴⁵ Bayly, interview.

⁴⁶ *A Bloody Encounter* (curated by Suzanne Tamaki, Ngāti Maniapoto, Tūhoe) was a collaborative exhibition of ten artists protesting Tuia 250. It ran from 15 November to 8 December 2019.

⁴⁷ “United Tribes Flag,” Ministry for Culture and Heritage, accessed 27 October 2023, <https://mch.govt.nz/nz-identity-heritage/flags/united-tribes-flag#:~:text=To%20M%C4%81ori%2C%20the%20United%20Tribes,particularly%20significant%20to%20northern%20M%C4%81ori>.

⁴⁸ Bayly, interview.

⁴⁹ Unnamed Waikanae Resident, quoted in Roger Childs, “Dishonest Political Art Exhibition at Mahara Gallery Causes Upset,” *Waikanae Watch*, 27 February 2020, <https://waikanaewatch.org/2020/02/27/dishonest-political-art-exhibition-at-mahara-gallery-causes-upset/>. The *Waikanae Watch* is an online forum for local residents in a town of just under 13,000, 91% of whom identify as European/Pākehā, with a median age of 55. (Statistics New Zealand, Census 2018 (includes Waikanae Beach, Waikanae East, Waikanae West, Waikanae Park and Peka Peka) accessed 15 December 2023, <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-place-summaries/>).

⁵⁰ Childs, “Dishonest Political Art Exhibition,” *Waikanae Watch*, 27 February 2020, <https://waikanaewatch.org/2020/02/27/dishonest-political-art-exhibition-at-mahara-gallery-causes-upset/>. Childs is well known for consistently speaking out against anti-colonial rhetoric. See, for example, his submission regarding proposed changes to the Aotearoa New Zealand history curriculum: https://www.hobsonspledge.nz/roger_childs_school_curriculum_histories_submission.

⁵¹ Childs, “Dishonest Political Art Exhibition.”

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ See, for example, his admission of guilt in James Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery Volume 1*, edited by J. C. Beaglehole (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society at the University Press, 1955–1967), 171.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 115

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Further examples may be found in J.C. Beaglehole, *The Life of Captain James Cook* (London: A. & C. Black, 1974), 566.

⁵⁶ K.R. Bolton, post to Childs, “Dishonest political art exhibition.”

⁵⁷ William, post to Childs, “Dishonest political art exhibition.”

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*”

⁵⁹ “Mahara Gallery responds to Roger Childs on its controversial exhibition,” *Waikanae Watch*, 6 March 2020, <https://waikanaewatch.org/2020/03/06/mahara-gallery-responds-to-roger-childs-on-its-controversial-exhibition/>.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Soenke Bierman, “Knowledge, Power and Decolonization: Implication for Non-Indigenous Scholars, Researchers and Educators,” *Counterpoints* 379 (2011): 394.

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- ⁶³ See, for example, Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook*, 182–183.
- ⁶⁴ Interestingly, as part of the Tuia 250 activities, the New Zealand Geographic Board initiated a research project to explore more than 200 place names attributed by Cook during his first expedition to Aotearoa. The study led to the adoption of dual heritage names for some locations, thereby reinstating their original Māori names. For example, the previously named Poverty Bay was officially changed to Tūranganui-a-Kiwa/Poverty Bay in 2018.
- ⁶⁵ Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, “Memento Mori: Memento Māori—Moko and Memory,” Tangi research Programme Working Paper (University of Waikato, 2009), 5.
- ⁶⁶ Louise Furey, “Use of Kōkōwai in Traditional Māori Society,” in *Five Māori Painters*, ed. Clare McIntosh (Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2014), 75.
- ⁶⁷ Aaron Leaman, “Waikato Academic Calls Endeavour a ‘Death Ship,’” *Stuff*, 27 September 2019, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/116155732/waikato-academic-calls-endeavour-a-death-ship>.
- ⁶⁸ See *New Zealand School Journal*, part 2, no. 1 (1969), which refers to the violence of the first encounter with Māori as a “scuffle,” and Frank McLynn’s biography, *Captain Cook: Master of the Seas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), which portrays Cook as well-meaning and Māori as at fault for ignoring the firing of warning shots.
- ⁶⁹ Hinemoa Hilliard, “Robyn Kahukiwa Maumahara: Remember,” in *Robyn Kahukiwa: Maumahara = Remember: Selected Works 1971–2012*, by Robyn Kahukiwa and Hinemoa Hilliard (Waikanae, NZ: Mahara Gallery, 2012), 8.
- ⁷⁰ Mane-Wheoki, “He Wahine Toa,” 36.
- ⁷¹ See, for example, the depiction on the New Zealand 1935 pictorial stamp, *Captain Cook Landing at Poverty Bay*, and Louis John Steele’s *Arrival of Captain Cook, an Incident at the Bay of Islands* (1890).
- ⁷² This is a frequent motif in Kahukiwa’s work. See, for example, *Power to Define* (2009) and *Resistance/Te Tohenga* (2009).
- ⁷³ “The Huia,” Auckland Museum, accessed 28 October 2023, <https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/discover/collections/topics/the-huia>.
- ⁷⁴ See examples cited in note 68.
- ⁷⁵ Examples include the beheading of the Governor Grey statue in Auckland in 1987 and the almost complete destruction of the John Ballance statue at Pākaitore, Whanganui, in 1995.
- ⁷⁶ Ah Loo-Matamua, “He Kupu Kei Runga,” 58.
- ⁷⁷ See, for example, *What if all Māori spoke Te Reo* (2015) and *Cause and Effect* (2023).
- ⁷⁸ Ah Loo-Matamua, “He Kupu Kei Runga,” 58.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.
- ⁸⁰ Kahukiwa has written a number of children’s books, including *True Story* (Raumati Beach: Mauri Tū, 2019), a variation of *Captain Cook Rhyme*.
- ⁸¹ Robyn Kahukiwa and Giles Peterson, *Mauri Ora!* (Rotorua: Mauri Tū, 2001), 5.
- ⁸² Childs, “Dishonest political art exhibition.”
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁴ Cook, *The Journals of Captain James Cook*, 170.
- ⁸⁵ Childs, post to Waikanae Watch, “Mahara Gallery responds to Roger Childs.”
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁷ Tusiata Avia, *The Savage Coloniser Book* (Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington Press, 2020), 10–12.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.
- ⁸⁹ “Word Christchurch 2023: Tusiata Has Spoken,” Christchurch City Council Libraries, 31 August 2023, <https://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/blogs/post/word-christchurch-2023-tusiata-has-spoken/>.