



Cliffs of fall daguerreotype 4 1/4 x 7"



Whakapunake - which burnt for weeks daguerreotype 5 x 7"



Two Rooms

16 Putiki Street
Newton Auckland 1021
PO Box 68 643
Newton Auckland
New Zealand 1145

Phone 64 (9) 360 5900
Fax 64 (9) 360 5904

Tuesday - Friday 11am - 6pm
Saturday 11am - 3pm

www.tworooms.co.nz

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Gallery Director

Jenny Todd

jenny@tworooms.co.nz

Assistant Director

Chantelle Smith

chantelle@tworooms.co.nz

Administration

Marina Cains

marina@tworooms.co.nz

Architectural Projects

Kerry Morrow

Cover Image:

Looking for Hinekōrako daguerreotype 4 1/4 x 7" (detail)

Joyce Campbell: *Te Taniwha*

Te Taniwha is an evolving collaboration between artist Joyce Campbell and historian Richard Niania from the Ruakituri Valley in Wairoa. The work draws on the knowledge of the Niania whanau and the whanau of the late Phillip Smith, whose kōrero inspired the project and to whose memory it is dedicated. It is also a tribute to Phillip's great grandmother, Te Taniwha McRoberts, one of three kuia moko kauae whose portraits hang in the tara whānui (visitor's side) of the whare tipuna, Tuarenga.

Joyce Campbell has produced a set of images of local landforms that have deep cultural significance to the tāngata whenua of the Ruakituri and Hangaroa River catchments and which have been imbued with kōrero from the ancestral house, Tuarenga, situated at Te Reinga Falls.

Te Taniwha is woven from multiple threads, drawing on the mythology, history and ecology of Te Urewera, the Ruakituri Valley and Te Reinga Falls at the headwaters of the Wairoa River. Through photographs and text, the project traces the search for two great, serpentine water species: the Taniwha and the tororauiri or longfin eel. The project also binds together the ancient and mythic past with the present via the whakapapa of the Te Aitanga-ā-Pourangahua Hapū of the upper Ruakituri Valley at Erepeti and the Ngāi Kōhatu/Ngāti Hinehika people of the lower Ruakituri at Te Reinga Falls in the vicinity of Whakapunake maunga.

*He toka noa te toka,
He rākau noa te rākau,
Kia tāpiri rā anō ki te kōrero
A rock is only a rock,
A tree is only a tree,
Until it is imbued with stories*



Whakapunake - The Receptacle daguerreotype 5 x 7" (detail)



Given the waterfall gelatin silver fibre-based prints 780 x 1100 mm

Te Taniwha McRoberts was a direct descendant of three well-known taniwha or ‘substantial water spirits’¹ in Haumāpuhia, the creator of Lake Waikaremoana, Ruamano, the creator of the Ruakituri River and Te Reinga Falls, and Hinekōrako the creator of the Hangaroa River and keeper of Te Reinga Falls. These are their stories. They are stories of journeying over time, space and generations, of discovery and settlement, migration and return, of people, of water and of eels.

He tipua, he taniwha, he tangata.

Whakapunake o te matau a Maui-tikitiki-a Taranga.

The root word of our mountain’s name is pūnake or receptacle. Whaka, used as a prefix, causes the mountain to become the metaphorical container for the fishhook of Māui, last born of Taranga. Ngāi Kōhatu are kaitiaki of the mountain in a physical sense and also the mātauranga Māori concerning the oral traditions of Māui, the original fisher or discoverer of Te Ika-ā-Māui. The many tomo that riddle the mountain are reputed to be places where his fish was foul hooked. These tomo are said by some to be the entry places for the tūrehu to Te Āo Marama, the world of light. Whakapunake is also reputed to be the last resting place of the Moa.

The tororauri or silver belly eel was of particular significance to our Hapū, Ngāi Kohatu. This is a migrating eel or tuna rere. Our grandfather taught us that like the tororauri, we were descended from Hinekōrako. He believed that the tororauri migrated to Hawaiki to renew itself and reconnect with the wairua of the numerous generations of Ngāi Kohatu that have passed over. The beginning of the migration is marked by the first coloured water in mid-February and continues until the March floods. During this time different families would operate eel weirs at Tauwharetoi on the Ruakituri River, at Pohaturua on the Hangaroa River and at Mahurangi on the Wairoa River. In his speech making, he would liken the travel of the wairua to the migration of the tuna rere to Hawaiki with phrases like, “Haere e hoki, me he tororauri i runga i te waipuke, e kore a muri e hokia” – Go. Return. Like the tororauri on the flood, never ever to return.

Te Reinga marae is situated at the confluence of the Ruakituri and Hangaroa Rivers at the top of Te Reinga Falls. The joining of these two rivers below the falls marks the beginning of the Wairoa River. Ngāi Kōhatu people have always lived here. They are regarded by other Hapū and Iwi of the district as the custodians of the waterfall (hīrere) itself and the keepers of old world knowledge pertaining to two tipuna taniwha in Ruamano and Hinekōrako who feature significantly in the oral traditions of Takitimu waka and Ngāti Kahungunu iwi.

The coming of Takitimu waka and the taniwha are inextricably linked. The voyage of the Takitimu was clothed in myth. After leaving Hawaiki, a school of whales appeared, to escort the vessel. Ruamano was the leader of the escort. The gods Kahukura and Hinekōrako, stored on board in the punake by the priests, were utilized as guides. In the morning, Kahukura was sent ahead and he assumed the form of a rainbow on the horizon in the direction of the land they were seeking. When night fell, he returned to the canoe, and Hinekōrako was sent out for the night watch. She assumed the form of a lunar rainbow, guiding them in the correct direction toward the land they sought.

Hinekōrako Te Taniwha

The genesis of Ngāi Kōhatu can be traced to a kōrero about the formation of the Ruakituri and Hangaroa rivers.

According to Ngāi Kōhatu tradition, Ruamano and Hinekōrako were kin taniwha. Atop a hill one day Ruamano and Hinekōrako heard the sound of the sea. Deciding to heed its call they began to race to the sea. Ruamano came via the Ruakituri River and Hinekōrako via the Hangaroa. On reaching Te Reinga, Hinekōrako saw that she was ahead of her brother and decided to wait there for him. On arrival Ruamano, seeing that Hinekōrako was ahead of him, wildly bashed and crashed the bedrock to rush ahead. In so doing he created a short cut. The short cut he created is Te Reinga Falls.

When Hinekōrako felt the water receding behind her she knew that Ruamano had moved ahead and would reach the sea first. She settled, according to the kōrero, under a large, flat, pale rock called Hinekuia at the top end of the main channel. She has remained there in the hearts and minds of her Ngāi Kōhatu descendants ever since. For us, Hinekuia represents the mana, tapu and wehi of this place and this tipuna taniwha.

This story is the source of the belief of the old people that has always associated Ruamano with the Ruakituri and Hinekōrako with the Hangaroa. In their estimation, Ruakituri was a male river and Hangaroa a female.

In times of flooding, the Ruakituri, because of its greater catchment area, is a raging torrent at the falls - male aggression at its height. So much so, that the waters of the Hangaroa back up while the Ruakituri rages and it is only when his rage subsides that the Hinekōrako is able to enter the water course. This very natural phenomenon of the water backing up the way it does during flooding is, I think, where the idea of the supernatural and extraordinary ability that is associated with Hinekōrako originates.

Wairakeina is the name of the main channel exiting the falls. It is a puna ika, a fishery, that had significant traditional importance to the people of the Ruakituri Valley. Whitebait (īnanga), flounder (mohoa), mullet (kanae) as well as eel were traditionally harvested at the falls in season.

In late November, ngoiro or elvers were taken from the top of the falls using manuka or bracken fern. This material would be placed along the edges of the main watercourse where the current was not so swift. Elvers traveling up the falls would rest in the material making it easy to harvest them. The run of ngoiro is over by Christmas because if they haven’t already made it up the falls they are too heavy to negotiate the overhangs in the rock.

In the traditions of Ngāi Kōhatu, Hinekōrako is represented by an eel. She is amongst the hierarchy of taniwha in Wairoa and has a particular connection to Te Wekanui of Mahia and Moremore² of Ahuriri.

Of the latter, my grandmother related a story from the Second World War. She was in charge of a team of pack horses on Tauwharetoi and had halted them in the river to drink at the end of the day. While the horses were drinking they disturbed what she believed was a shark with no tail. Her interpretation of that incident was “E, kua haere te kuia ra ki te torotoro haere” – Oh, the old girl has gone visiting. Apparently, the manifestation of a shark in a river over twenty miles inland from the sea was a sign to her that Hinekōrako was abroad and had left Moremore in charge while she was away.

My father also told of his experiences of Hinekōrako while on active service with the 28 Māori Battalion in 1942. On final leave before going overseas, he was amongst six recruits of 16 Platoon (Wairoa), D Company that were taken to the falls by the kaumatua to have rites of war performed

over them. They were given the names and signs of kaitiaki who would look after them while they were away. In the air the kaitiaki was Te Potuatini represented by a comet. On land Tunui-a-te-ika was the kaitiaki and a lizard was his sign. In the water Hinekōrako was the kaitiaki.

Dad said that knowing this was of great comfort and a source of courage and confidence to him during the heat of battle when it was fight or die. With this sort of faith he just knew that he would return home.

Much is written about Hinekōrako and the Takitimu waka. There is information about her doings in Hawaiki in pre-Takitimu times. There is also a description of her conveyance to Aotearoa (referred to above) in the pūnake of Takitimu and subsequent release at Te Reinga Falls by her keeper Te Rongopātahi. These traditions form the main part of the Ngāti Kahungunu orthodoxy on the peopling of the eastern sea board of the North Island by the crew of Takitimu waka.

Hinekōrako Tipuna

Hinekōrako is the name of the dining room at the marae. This is in reference to the Taniwha Hinekōrako, ancestress of Ngāi Kōhatu who cohabited with Tanekino, one of a set of twins of the ancestor Ruapani of the Horouta waka (Ūawa) and Uenukukōihu, who like Hinekōrako was of Te Urewera.

The name of the whare tipuna is Tuarenga, named for the son of Hinekōrako and her husband Tanekino. This is tangible evidence for us of the travel of the name of Hinekōrako down through time, from the substantial water spirit to the very human whanau that are the kaitiaki of the falls.

The tohu (emblems) of Hinekōrako are the lunar rainbow, the white eel and the kohuwai, (the green weed that grows in the river) that is likened to her long hair. The family who carry the name Hinekōrako tell the story of her sitting on a rock combing her long, flowing hair. That rock sits in the roto at the rear of the old pa Pohatu-roa.

Once a vibrant pa of the rangatira Tu-akiaki, Pohatu-roa was an isolated rock cut off from the Whakapunake range by a deep gorge. It was then a formidable place to take in battle.

The pa itself, on top of this rock, was small - with a parapet built of rocks and earth, held together by layers of fern, on top of the cliffs. Access to this area was obtainable only by a very narrow ledge in the cliff.

The last attack on this pa was by a taua combined of various iwi, including the musket owning Nga Puhi. The sides of the papa rock were so steep that supplejack ladders had to be used to approach it. On one side of the cliff is a large cave where some of the people took refuge from the attackers. Some of the Nga Puhi invaders were armed with muskets. They constructed a large basket of toi and pirita, which they lowered down in front of the cave with some men in it with the aim of shooting those inside. But before they could use their firearms, the cave dwellers, armed with long spears or huatas, killed several of them. Eventually the pa was taken by the invaders. A great slaughter took place, and amongst the killed was Tu-akiaki, who was slain by Te Whatanui. From that time on people no longer inhabited the pa. The site where the killings took place is now the urupa where the bones of the Ngāi Kōhatu of today are joined with their tipuna whose bodies lay scattered where they had been slain. The rock on which Hinekōrako sat has suffered a similar

act of destruction and is now a shattered mess blasted by a quarry master in the 1960s to provide metal to coat the roads of the district.

The hair of Hinekōrako, the kohuwai, provided succour for another taniwha, the new-born infant Te Taniwha McRoberts, but that is another story...

Richard Niania

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1 See W. E. Gudgeon, "The Maori Tribes of the East Coast: Those Inhabiting the Wairoa District of Northern Hawke's Bay," JPS vol 6, 1897, p 180.

2 Moremore is of the Pania (of the reef) genre of taniwha. He is a changeling that appears sometimes as a shark and sometimes as a red eel.



Pohatu-roa, now the Urupa gelatin silver fibre-based prints 780 x 1100 mm