

15 October –21 November 2020

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Over a 26-year career, Areta Wilkinson has developed a rich art practice in which personal adornment and object-making are considered in relation to *mātauranga Māori* (Māori knowledge systems). The artist's recently completed PhD study signalled new ways for how contemporary jewellery practice might be understood in Aotearoa New Zealand, and how a Māori voice might offer a counter-narrative to the current discourse.¹

It is generally regarded that the tribal group known as Ngāi Tahu embarked on a later migration to Te Waipounamu (New Zealand's South Island) that then amalgamated with the earlier indigenous settlers of Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe, Rapuwai and Hāwea peoples. All peoples recall longstanding *whakapapa* (genealogical) ties to the land and to each other. Through these relationships, Wilkinson recalls her connection to these earlier peoples, known simply as the 'Moa Hunters', a term first coined by twentieth-century ethnologist Roger Duff.²

Today, all manner of Māori cultural material can be found in the great museums of the world. Museums are repositories of *taonga* (treasured items) of Aotearoa New Zealand's colonial past, and are a critical site of inquiry for the artist. Investigating collections of the personal adornments, related tools and technologies of her people in institutions at home and internationally, Wilkinson explores the importance of *making* relationships to both an extensive lineage of makers and to their material knowledge.

For 'The 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art' (APT9), Wilkinson presented a contemporary *mahinga kai*, a site of cultural production, in reference to Ngāi Tahu traditional places of manufacture, such as stone quarries.³ Her series 'Moa-hunter Fashions' 2018 is a place of cultural production complete with tools, creations and midden. The exhibited works are fashioned using tools and technology similar to that of her ancestors. The artist assembled a set of archaic implements for her jeweller's kit comprised of 3-D-printed replicas of original artefacts held at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge. The tools — like the river stones used as anvil stones and the adornments themselves — carry meaning and memory. In this way, Wilkinson connects to a specific cultural history and creates continuity with particular methods and knowledge of making.

Wilkinson forges precious metals on anvil stones sourced from two ancestral boundaries near her home — the major Waimakariri River and the smaller Rakahuri River. The fine metals bear the rough textures that the hammer stone has imprinted upon their surfaces. These are the marks of the land; in fact, they *are* the land and the land then becomes part of these new forms made into personal objects worn on the body. Replicas of stone tools also shape and mark fragments of locally sourced clay. Through this approach, Wilkinson's objects are also holders of *whakapapa*, or genealogical connection.

In her work, Wilkinson reclaims the museum processes of the collection and exchange of cultural material — her fabrication of replicas offers a way of complicating these narratives and gives new meaning to the role of the replica. Wilkinson attests that these new objects also carry meaning, connection and memory that is activated by *whakapapa* and personal relationships.

'Moa-hunter Fashions' goes beyond reflecting on the aesthetic nature of forms to consider the nature of the sites and the materials involved in the production of body adornment. The creation of the work is informed by visiting these sites and by observing the time-honoured practice of making in relationship to the land. Areta Wilkinson explores making by working with concepts of time and memory, and she ponders how yesterday's making is created anew through the assertions of descendent communities and their present-day aspirations, thereby crossing and collapsing different understandings.

Nigel Borell and Zara Stanhope

The artist would like to acknowledge support from Creative New Zealand



Notes

¹ Areta Wilkinson, *Jewellery as Pepeha: Contemporary jewellery practice informed by Māori inquiry*, PhD thesis, Massey University Te Kunenga Ki Pūrehuroa, New Zealand.

² Moa were flightless birds once endemic to New Zealand that became extinct; her works include *Moa Hunter Fashions: Vertebra I, II, III* 2017. See Roger Duff, *The Moa-Hunter Period of Māori Culture* [3rd edn], EC Keating, Government Printer, Wellington, 1977.

³ *Mahinga kai* are customary food and resource gathering places and practices

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(Originally published in *APT9: The 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, South Brisbane, 2018.)