

Ngā Hau Ngākau - Media Release

Luminous paintings, intricately carved taonga puoro and beautiful music are woven together to form the extraordinary exhibition Ngā Hau Ngākau (Breath of Mine) which opens at **NAME OF GALLERY** on **DATE OF OPENING**.

A collaborative installation between painter Robin Slow, master-carver Brian Flintoff and musician Bob Bickerton, this exhibition presents paintings, carvings and sound to explore narratives of Te Ao Māori through rich and evocative imagery and other-worldly soundscapes. Ideas born of harmony, memory and storytelling are supported through waiata sung by Ariana Tikao and Holly Weir-Tikao with evocative accompaniment on taonga puoro played by Solomon Rahui, Bob Bickerton and the vocalists. A video produced by Bob Bickerton, to which the soundscape is played, explores in further detail the stories behind the wonderful imagery.

Ngā Hau Ngākau is an exhibition that evokes the form of the Whare Whakairo (carved meeting house) and this whare is dedicated to manu (birds), treasured in Māori mythology as messengers that connect the physical and the spiritual realms. And so it is with this exhibition where paintings, carvings and sound weave together to bind the past to the present and then to the future, to bind the physical to the spiritual.

Acknowledging birds as 'Atua Tāngata Whenua', the original ancestors of these islands, the exhibition honours the ancient whakapapa (genealogy) of ngā manu and offers a different perspective to consider contemporary human experience in Aotearoa. The Wharenui is a place of learning, a place where the stories of ngā manu can be seen and heard, a place to rest, to explore, to reflect and to experience through quiet contemplation.

Stone and bone meet acrylic paint and gold foil to create a space inside and outside of time. Using kōwhaiwhai as a base, the spiralling forms echo the cyclical relationship we have with the past. The overlapping of traditional and contemporary tools and techniques reflect the continuum on which we exist with our world and our history today.

As Robin Slow says, "Our kaupapa has been to work together, using painting, carving and music to bind narratives that celebrate the forms and histories of the whenua (land). These narratives can be expressed by a spiral, kōwhaiwhai, a bird's song, a carved form, a woven kete – any symbol that may help reflect the whakataukī; 'Plait the rope that binds the past to the future'".

This collaborative art work is the result of decades of friendship and service by the artists to the communities of Te Tau Ihu o Te Waka-a-Māui (the top of the South Island) and beyond. Their enduring relationship and shared philosophies are central to the concept of the exhibition and encourages viewers to consider their own individual and collective identities, and, relationship to the environment.

Brian Flintoff reflects on the process of creating the work, “We are delighted and privileged to work as a group of friends who believe that our varied art forms, visual and musical, are powerful vehicles that convey treasures held in traditional stories, sayings and concepts. We offer this in the hope that this combination of sounds and sights create an experience that can enrich others lives in the way it does so for us”.

Having the opportunity to support the kaupapa of the exhibition through music and video production is something Bob Bickerton feels is a privilege, “Each painting, each carving is an encyclopaedia of knowledge that opens a window for the viewer to experience other worlds and other times. Being able to support that concept through music is an honour and it has been an absolute pleasure to bring the process together through working with wonderful musicians like Ariana, Holly and Solomon”.

Ngā Hau Ngākau is on exhibition at the **NAME OF GALLERY** from **DATE OF OPENING** to **DATE OF CLOSING**.

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More:

For more information contact: **MEDIA CONTACT FOR GALLERY**

For artist interviews contact: **Bob Bickerton on mail@bickerton.co.nz**

Link to the Ngā Hau Ngākau website: **www.ngahau.nz**

Link to the Ngā Hau Ngākau video: **https://vimeo.com/bobbickerton/ngahaungakau**

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

BRIAN FLINTOFF

Brian Flintoff is a carver and educator. He is a founding member of Te Haumanu, a group dedicated to the revival of taonga puoro, the traditional Māori musical instruments. Support and guidance from the Māori community has been the greatest influence and inspiration for his carving. He considers the most satisfying acknowledgement of this work is to have these accepted by many marae throughout Aotearoa, most prominently, at Onetahua marae in Golden Bay. His contribution to the revival of taonga puoro was recognised with the award of a Queens Service Medal in 2010, with his nomination supported largely by Māori.

In his work he aspires to the standards established by the ancestral artists, who strove for excellence in order to please the spirit world. An absorbing interest in the art of the West Coast Canadian First Nations people led him to research animal forms in Māori Art. This remains a focus through which he can express his love of, and concern for, nature.

ROBIN SLOW

Ko Parapara te maunga
Ko Mōhua te taki wā
Ko Te Tāi Tapu te moana
Ko Te Waikoropupū te awa
Ko Onetahua te marae
Ko Te Ao Mārama te whare
Ko Te Whānau o Mōhua
Ko Robin Slow tāku ingoa.

Robin Slow is an artist and educator. Robin was born in Blenheim (Wairau) and has lived and worked throughout Te Wai Pounamu as an art teacher. He undertook a Diploma of Teaching with an art major at Christchurch Teachers' College and has taught in Christchurch, Twizel and Golden Bay. As the art teacher at Golden Bay High School in Takaka for thirty-one years, Robin taught generations of students of this region.

Since 1991, Robin and his wife Rose, have worked as part of Te Whānau o Mōhua to establish Onetahua Marae at Pohara, Mōhua/Golden Bay. Robin was tasked with the design and layout of this innovative koru-shaped whare whakairo.

In recent years, he has committed to full-time art practice with regular solo exhibition at galleries around Aotearoa. A recent highlight was designing and producing etched wooden kōwhaiwhai pou (posts) that run through the foyer of the redeveloped Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū along with motifs for the marae ātea.

BOB BICKERTON

Bob Bickerton has a long history in the New Zealand music industry as a performer, educator, sound engineer and manager. As a performer in schools, he presented education programmes, which included taonga puoro, to over 300,000 students around the country over a 30 year period.

His interest in the traditional instruments and enthusiasm to explore and record their sounds resulted in him working closely with Richard Nunns on a number of projects including Green Fire Islands and North South (also with Glenn Colquhoun), and several film scores for Kathleen Gallagher which also featured Aroha Yates-Smith.

Bob was appointed as a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the 2015 New Year's Honours list for services to music.

ARIANA TIKAO

Ariana Tikao is a composer and performer of waiata in te reo Māori and English, as well as an exponent of taonga puoro. Ariana began writing waiata in the Kāi Tahu dialect while studying at Otago University in the early '90s and started performing in 1993 with the folk group, 'Pounamu'. She started her solo music career in the early 2000s and has become well known for her engaging live performances and critically acclaimed recordings. She has released three solo (Whaea, Tuia, and From Dust to Light), two collaborative albums, and several music videos, one of which (for her waiata 'Tuia') won an international award at the imagiNATIVE film + media festival in Toronto in 2009.

In 2015 Ariana was a soloist with the Auckland Philharmonic Orchestra at the Auckland Arts Festival performing kōauau and singing a karakia for Kenneth Young's 'In Paradisum'. She co-composed with Philip Brownlee, the first concerto for taonga puoro, 'Ko Te Tātai Whetū,' which she also performed with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra for its world premiere in June 2015 and again with Stroma in 2017. The concerto was based around a traditional mōteatea, which relays a southern version of the story of Hinetītama and Tāne. In 2016 Ariana was a featured singer in John Psathas's epic international collaboration 'No Man's Land' and in 2020 the Arts Foundation Laureate awarded her the Jillian Friedlander Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa Award.

HOLLY TIKAO-WEIR

Ko Rāpaki rātou ko Ōnuku ko Wairewa ko Koukourārata ngā marae

No Horomako ia (Banks Peninsula)

Ko Kāi Tahu rātou ko Kāti Māmoe ko Waitaha, ko Kahungunu ngā iwi

Ko Ngāti Wheke, rātou ko Irakehu, ko Kāi Tarewa ngā hapū

Holly has completed a degree in Maori performing arts and has performed with the Kahurangi dance company. She was a professional performer and tour guide at Ngā Hau e Whā marae and was a performer for the Tāmaki Village in Ferrymead in Christchurch. She has Performed with various kapa haka groups that have competed at Te Matatini and as well as kapa haka, she has performed as a vocalist with Ariana Tikao and Richard Nunns. She had recently recorded a whānau CD with Bob Bickerton.

In 2018 she completed a masters degree in Māori and Indigenous Leadership at Canterbury University.

SOLOMON RAHUI

Ko Arowhenua rāua ko Matahi ngā marae

Ko Kāti Huirapa rāua Ko Ngāi Tama Tuhirae ngā hapū

Ko Tūhoe rātou ko Kāi Tahu, Ko Kāti Māmoe, Ko Waitaha ngā iwi

Solomon is a highly experienced performer and teacher of Māori performing arts and as well as featuring at Ngā Hau e Whā marae, has performed kapa haka at Te Matatini. He has performed with Ariana Tikao and Richard Nunns and has recorded a whānau CD with Bob Bickerton.

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

The exhibition Nga Hau Ngakau has been one of the most successful publicly enjoyed shows held at The Suter Art Gallery in the last decade. From the opening night where the crowd overflowed the gallery, the show entranced people who returned again and again to receive more from its gifts.

These were not simply displayed art works sitting singularly to be viewed one after another but rather one complete enveloping installation that immersed the visitor in its world of dark glowing paintings, complex carved taonga puoro and beautiful music.

It certainly did not feel as if it had been curated by a single mind but rather its elements had grown together into an inviting room or better still “womb” of energy that evoked timeless forces of nature.

Craig Potton

Photographer, Publisher, Chairperson Suter Art Gallery

It is nearly fifty years now since I first engaged with the creative genius of Brian Flintoff and I have observed with affection the gentle trajectory over which his art has evolved through those years. A major feature of that evolution has been his capacity to associate his work with the creative endeavour of others – in pounamu and other stone, in music both traditional and contemporary. This gift for collaboration reflects a respect for other creativities and sets aside solitary artistic egotism in favour of a joyous explosion of variant insights fuelled by a surging generosity of spirit.

This exhibition, ‘Ngā Hau Ngākau’, reflects the capacity of a group of friends to manifest a creative totality greater than the mere sum of the whole. The music of Ariana and her whānau, Bob’s music and its associated images, are all framed against the uncompromising presence and raw power of Robin’s paintings. Brian’s smaller treasures adorn the breast – truly as the title suggests – a new way of breathing!

Tā Tipene O’Regan

Vice chancellor (Maori) University of Canterbury, Former Chair Ngāi Tahu Maori Trust Board

Bob Bickerton’s music for the Nga Hau Ngakau exhibition reflects the depth of experience he has with taonga puoro. Bickerton has worked closely with Richard Nunns, whose pioneering work alongside Brian Flintoff and the late Hirini Melbourne was in large part responsible for the extraordinary contemporary renaissance in the use of taonga puoro in many genres of music.

In this exhibition three artists in painting, sculpture and music take the viewer on a journey through a magical world of image and sound, reflecting their kaupapa of collaboration and a deep respect for the avian subject matter. The bird calls, through evocative sound and music are beautifully integrated with the paintings and the intricately sculpted instruments by Flintoff, one of Aotearoa’s most respected makers of taonga puoro.

Elizabeth Kerr

Music Writer and broadcaster

Artistic and heartfelt experiments with Mātauranga Māori continue to grow with the work of dedicated artists Brian Flintoff, Bob Bickerton and Robin Slow with support from Ariana Tikao and whānau. An indigenous approach to life has much to offer us – a soulful way of being in the world, deep connections with natural world environments, an holistic engagement with life. I commend the ongoing commitment of these artists to this pathway – particularly Brian Flintoff who has been at the forefront of the renaissance of taonga puoro for many years. Long may this adventure continue. Go see 'Ngā Hau Ngākau', breathe it in, experience it, love it.

Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal
Researcher and Consultant on indigenous knowledge