

## HĀUKATI: Kezia Whakamoe July 2022

Nothing soothes the trenches of trauma. They exist, as the dichotomy of grief and life, intertwined and unshakeable. In te ao Māori, this concept is woven throughout our stories, sung through our songs and exists in the tension of our tikanga. The way we exist in the world is reflected by our spectrum of experiences and in the realm of toi (art) this element can be seen in a multitude of ways.

Its beholding and appreciation, however, can only be experienced by the individuals own personal relationship to the material being presented. Kezia Whakamoe (Tūhoe, Ngāti Ruapani) is one of Aotearoa's most experiential, grounded and thought provoking caretakers of the phenomena that is the evolution of self in the face of great, unshakeable trauma. Through HĀUKATI, Kezia Wakamoe confronts the individualism of colonial art by weaving the experiential collectiveness of ngā toi Māori (Māori art) into a space. This work is an extension of AUKATI, the progenitor of HĀUKATI. AUKATI had two consecutive showings in Heretaunga and Te Whanganui-a-Tara galleries in July 2021 and February 2022.

Throughout Whakamoe's mahi, they wield Mātauranga Māori as the central pou of the work, inviting the beholder to experience the evolution of self through the journey Whakamoe has taken. In laying this invitation, they provide a revolutionary challenge: that grief, collectiveness, community and evolution can each exist safely within the confines of a single truth – life preservers.

Utilising tikanga Māori through audio and visual components creates an immersive space through which the art communicates. Throughout the space, clues to this kaitiakitanga (guardianship) can be found in the winking of eyes, the scent of fresh dirt and the use of te taiao (the natural world) to communicate evidence of life in death. By utilising the natural elements of our environment, Whakamoe invites our ātua into the space and liberates the symbiosis we continue to foster. This relationship is central to the task of evolving beyond the confines of colonial machinations, and is unwaveringly unique to this particular body of work, by this incredibly brave artist.

In providing evidence of life after grief, the work explores the relationship between ritual, sustainability and spiritual practice as an expression of mahi toi (art). Although this concept is an integral aspect of ngā toi māori, it's in the weaving of it – the vast depths of its experimentation, tha the beholder is able to comprehend how transformative the works are.

Ngā toi māori are some of the oldest truths we hold – we hear them in our stories, we carve them into our wharehau and we weave them into our karakia. Te ao māori is synonymous with the persistence of life, and life is synonymous with death. Death is a birth, birth is a death. And as change wields its wild tail across our spaces, we see this truth. Here, with HĀUKATI, Whakamoe invites us to move beyond the beholding of art by challenging us to transform alongside it. Hā ki roto, hā ki waho. We breathe.

Words by Rangimarie Sophie Jolley, 2022