



te tuhi  
contemporary art

# *Moana Don't Cry*

Francis Aljys (BE/MX) // Charlotte Graham (Aotearoa NZ)  
Ioane Ioane (WS/Aotearoa NZ) // Knitlab (Aotearoa NZ/KR)  
Graeme Atkins, Alex Monteith, Natalie Robertson,  
Kahurangiariki Smith and Aroha Yates-Smith (Aotearoa NZ)  
Tuan Andrew Nguyen (VT)

curated by Gabriela Salgado

1 September – 17 November 2019





## Moana Don't Cry

*"We sweat and cry salt water, so we know that the ocean is really in our blood."*

Teresia Teaiwa

The exhibition *Moana Don't Cry* approaches the ocean from a number of angles.

The Pacific is a vast liquid continent that connects hundreds of cultural groups with a robust spiritual thread: for indigenous islanders, Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa is an ancestral home that both sustains and provides them with a fluid identity, as it did for ancient civilisations. Conversely, daily media coverage of environmental degradation around the world inundates our lives with news about melting ice sheets and unmanageable levels of sea plastic pollution. We hear reports of coral bleaching and underwater fracking for gas and oil that threatens marine species. Alongside the impact of ocean acidification, we are made aware of rising water levels, which endanger the very existence of a few Pacific nations.

Trouble in the moana is not new; history tells us that the Pacific endured 1,054 nuclear tests performed by the USA and France between 1945 and 1992. Colonial notions of the region as remote and isolated favoured military projects in the name of security, employing islands as strategic places for unnoticed tests.<sup>1</sup> Faced with these past and present threats to ocean life, this exhibition addresses our need to protect life as kaitiaki (guardians) with a duty of care for the planet entrusted to us. An ontological turn connected to indigenous spirituality and ways of doing becomes paramount, to counter narratives of loss articulated by the colonial logic of dispossession.

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<sup>1</sup> Arriola, Theresa. *Securing Nature: Militarisation, Indigeneity and the Environment in the Northern Mariana Islands*, University of California, Los Angeles, USA. Paper presented at NAISA conference, University of Waikato, 27 June 2019.



## The peaceful waters

Portuguese navigator Fernão de Magalhães coined the name 'Pacific Ocean' in 1520, during the voyage of discovery he undertook by appointment of King Charles I of Spain to find a passage between the Atlantic Ocean and the ocean previously known as the Southern Sea (Mar del Sur). Magalhães changed the southern reference to 'Pacific' after coming upon the peaceful waters that provided relief after sailing the temperate Atlantic currents that took part of his fleet. Located in the southern tip of South America on the present-day border between Argentina and Chile, the discovered passage became known as the *Strait of Magellan*.

This period of intense European imperial expansion affected Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa as it also transformed the Americas. Walter Mignolo suggests that the notion of cultures as we know them today is a by-product of the making of the modern colonial world.<sup>2</sup> He argues that "there were no 'Indians' in the Americas until the arrival of

Spaniards. Of course, there were people that identified themselves with names, but there were not 'Indians'... Coloniality of power emerged in this original organization of the modern-colonial world."

Unfortunately, coloniality is not exclusively a question of the past, as the economic impulse that spearheaded those voyages of discovery heavily lingers in the present. Pacific islanders and indigenous groups in the Americas alike continue to suffer from the environmental calamities caused by harmful extractive models.

Among the most proactive approaches to mitigating environmental damage are initiatives that establish legal responsibilities to prevent progressive deterioration. Researcher and artist Nabil Ahmed, founder of Inter-Pacific Ring Tribunal, INTERPRT, advances the notion of environmental crime.<sup>3</sup> His project uses spatial analysis to justify the adoption of ecocide as an international crime, by gathering evidence on long-term conflicts within the Pacific, most precisely in West Papua.

2 Mignolo, Walter. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity, Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Duke University Press, 2011, p.221.

3 INTERPRT, 2017–2019 <http://www.interprt.org/>. Visited on 28 August 2019.

## Migration: then and now

Although migration is as old as human history, distressing news of migrants and refugees packed aboard dangerously tight boats in search of a better life seems designed to create apprehension.

In *Moana Don't Cry*, we present two films that draw from such concern, both associated with the political conditioning of the Cold War hangover. *The Island*, by Tuan Andrew Nguyen, revisits the Vietnamese exodus at the end of the American War, a tale of dispossession and landlessness in the midst of tropical paradise. A documentary of a performance orchestrated by Francis Alÿs enacts the will to unite what the sea of ideology separated since the Cuban revolution split the Caribbean nation from its capitalist neighbours in Florida.


While sprouting nationalists are unable to address the needs of all, and link the cause and effect of economic disparities, waves of migrants on the move seeking a safer place to live are causing worldwide alarm. However, scientists

and policy makers know that in light of increasing climate chaos and insecurity, migration is likely to grow dramatically. Moreover, the nations that have had least impact on climate change are those who will see their homeland disappear under the floods. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern declared a state of emergency in relation to climate change in the region at the last two annual Pacific Islands Forums, where it was described as the second biggest threat to security in the Pacific. Additionally, during her inaugural UN address, Ardern said: "Rising water levels is a reality, extreme weather not a theory, loss of marine life an everyday occurrence, against speculations by climate deniers."<sup>4</sup>

From times immemorial, our oceans have been the stage of countless migrations, conquests and exile, as well as providing a battlefield for territorial combats, while lying as silent witnesses of the Middle Passage and other tragedies.

At the same time, coastal communities across the planet acknowledge the ocean as a

4 Full text: PM's speech to the United Nations <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/2018/09/27/256105/full-text-pms-speech-to-the-united-nations>. Visited on 10 August 2019.



nurturing entity connected to femininity and motherhood, the fundamental source of life. This metaphor doubles as a scientific fact, given that the oceans not only feed us but also produce most of the oxygen we breathe. Within the moana, motherhood and breathing collapse into the fundamental agents necessary for the perpetuation of the species, calling us to radical action through relational political ecologies.

The various names for the sea across cultures express the identification of spiritual entities with the blue waters. Whether it is Tangaroa for Māori, Agwé in Haiti, Kā-moho-ali'i in Hawai'i, Aman Sinaya in the Philippines, Iemoja in West Africa or Tagaloa in Samoa, most seaside peoples pay respect to deities representing the oceans, thus expressing an integrated worldview where humans and nature are one.

Philosopher Carl Mika establishes a parallel between two notions that in te reo are encapsulated by one word: wai. Seizing its double meaning as water and who (what), his notion of 'worldedness' summarises a world where all things are a 'who' rather

than a 'what', in the sense that they all have the deeply implicated essence of the world.<sup>5</sup>

### Gabriela Salgado

Artistic Director, Te Tuhi  
August 2019


### List of works

#### Francis Alÿs

*Bridge / Puente*, 2006  
Havana, Cuba / Key West, FL, USA  
single-screen film  
23 min 15 sec

Borders have been a recurrent topic of inquiry for Francis Alÿs. In *Bridge / Puente*, the artist returns to the staging of poetic actions to enact the impossible: a choreographed line of fishing boats departing from Havana and the Florida Keys were set to meet at a point in the horizon to form a bridge of sorts. Thus, the action was designed as a metaphor to negate the separation between Cuba and the USA, the last bastion of Cold War politics. However, the bridge did not fully materialise, with the Caribbean Sea waters remaining a ninety miles' rift between families, communities and nations, given uneven engagement and purposeful miscommunication necessary to avoid sanctions.

*Bridge / Puente* recalls his earlier work *The Loop* commissioned by the Mexico–USA art project INSITE in 1997. Upon refusing to produce a site-specific work on the border zone



between San Diego and Tijuana, Alÿs instead employed his artist fee in travelling around the world to elude the crossing.

As relevant today as it was then, *Bridge / Puente*, and other works performed in Jerusalem and the Gibraltar strait, interrogate who has the right to cross national borders, a question at the centre of international disputes.

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#### Charlotte Graham

*Whakawaikawa Moana/Acidic Oceans*, 2017–19  
wall-based mirror units and text installation

*Whakawaikawa Moana* comes from the ancestral pūrākau of Pare Hauraki, of the Hauraki/ Coromandel Peninsula area, descended from Whanaunga. Hinerehia is the artist's tīpuna and a tūrehu (fairy spirit) who holds ethereal qualities and non-solid energy. As passed on by Ngāti Whanaunga and Ngāti Paoa ancestral narratives, Hinerehia was forced to weave in darkness but by trickery of the tohunga she

<sup>5</sup> Mika, Carl. Transfiguring the flow of Maori identity: Deep implicancy. In International symposium: *Soot breath: On land, law and bodies*, held at Goldsmiths, University of London, United Kingdom, 2019.

continued through daylight, bringing the art of weaving to the female line of her people, Pare Hauraki.

The public are encouraged to swivel the circular mirrors in the installation revealing words on both sides, and producing different reflections under the zenithal lighting. The words represent oppositions, such as AO (world)-OA (ocean acidification), light-dark, alkaline-acidic, changing meaning depending on the angle of perception, and referring to the tīpuna and the multidirectional power of the winds—Hauraki meaning northern winds.

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### loane loane

*Va'aalo Savaii*, 2019

traditional Sāmoan canoe by Mulitalo Malu Tautua (Sāmoa) and loane loane supported by Whitespace Contemporary Art, Auckland

*Tradition is the backbone or core to contemporary practices in my work as a Pacific islander. The makeup of the vaa'alo is a metaphor for the makeup of a person: each bit of the vaa'alo is from nature (no nails, wire, etc.) and self-made by the carver. Therein lies the makeup of a person.*

*O le malaga malosī tele / A Very Strong Journey*, 2019

18 min 41 sec

filmed and directed by loane loane  
additional filming: Sila loane  
editing: Tomek Bogdanowicz  
soundtrack: loane loane

Special thanks to: Tanea Heke and Dr Steven Ratuva

*Moana Don't Cry*, 2019

performance ritual by loane loane, Sila loane and Shannon loane  
costume design by Rosanna Raymond  
recorded on 31 August 2019 during the opening of *Moana Don't Cry*  
filmed by Tomek Bogdanowicz, Ella Ryborz and Pākē Salmon  
edited by loane loane  
commissioned by Te Tuhi, Auckland

*Sila is the sails of the Va'a, Shannon is the constellations of stars.*

*I am the Va'a.*

*My daughter and niece have journeyed a very long strong path.*

*Sila re-enchanted her life back to her roots by leaving London, where she previously lived. Shannon's re-enchantment back to her roots occurred recently in Sāmoa, where she got the malu (traditional woman's tattoo), becoming the first*

*female in our family to do so.*

*Our body is a Va'a.*

*Pe'a or male tatau contains the sails, and the star constellations that navigate the Va'a on its path across uncertain oceans are represented in the malu (female tatau).*

*The girls will be pouring water into the va'aalo using ava bowls (ava bowls of humanity). Like in Japanese teaism tradition, the kava ceremony introduces the idea that we are defined by our sense of proportion to the universe. Healing beauty comes with simplicity among the sordid facts of everyday existence.*

*This existence is the moana within and of us.*

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### Knitlab

*Te Muri Waters*, 2019

suspended light sculptures  
knitted fabric of monofilament, copper wire and retroreflective ribbon interlaced with fibre-optic strands, macrocarpa and pōhutukawa housing and 50W colour-changing LED devices  
commissioned by Te Tuhi, Auckland

*Te Muri Waters* consists of three soft sculptures hanging from the ceiling forming a mesmerising ensemble of hypnotic luminescence. Evoking an underwater experience, the works invite us to turn on meditative appreciation as an antidote to the despair of ecological collapse.

Knitlab member HyunJin Yun wove her pieces by visualising the waves she observed at Te Muri Beach, while Robin de Haan enmeshed light sequences in the knitted sculptures to infuse them with tidal rhythms and the pace of breathing.

Inspired by the Te Muri Beach landscape, the three sculptures summon different water formations: the estuary, the bay and the reef, transforming our experience of the gallery space into a vision made of twinkling water surfaces under the summer sun, where layers of seawater invite us to explore the dim heart of the vast ocean.

**Graeme Atkins, Alex Monteith,  
Natalie Robertson, Kahurangiariki  
Smith and Aroha Yates-Smith**

*Te rerenga pōuri o nga parawhenua  
ki Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa*, 2019  
multi-channel video installation  
commissioned by Te Tuhi, Auckland,  
with support from Auckland  
University of Technology and  
University of Auckland

*Te rerenga o Waiorongomai ki uta,  
ki Waiapu ki tai—The journey of  
Waiorongomai inland to Waiapu at  
the coast*, 2019  
four-channel video projection  
16 min 17 sec

*Ko te kongakonga pakohe—Mudstone  
crumbled into fragments*, 2019  
video  
14 min 32 sec

*Te rerenga pōuri o nga parawhenua  
ki Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (The  
desolate journey of sediment to  
Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa—the Pacific  
Ocean)* is a suite of new video works  
created collaboratively. Graeme  
Atkins lives on the lower reaches  
of the Waiapu River and Natalie  
Robertson is a trustee of whānau  
land there. Mass erosion caused  
over the past century has had a  
devastating impact on the coast and

ocean. Years ago, Atkins—a Te Papa  
Atawhai Department of Conservation  
ranger—had the vision to video the  
eroding gullies at Waiorongomai from  
the air to show the scale of erosion  
and how it impacts downstream.

The artists followed the water flow  
from mist, rains and streams down  
the river to the moana—the ocean.  
Cinematographer Sam Britten  
began recording on Armistice Day,  
November 11, 2018. Intrigued by the  
fragility of the rocks, Atkins, Alex  
Monteith, and Robertson returned  
to Waiorongomai to make detailed  
studies in July 2019. Rachel Shearer  
contributed an audio composition  
that includes granular fragments of  
Atkin's dialogue.

The title for the works is a response  
to the desolate journey of the  
erosion sediment to the ocean.  
Parawhenuamea, the atua (deity)  
of alluvial waters, is also a maker  
of land, carrying sediment loads  
to the ocean. Aroha Yates-Smith,  
renowned scholar of feminine  
deities in Te Ao Māori, and her  
daughter Kahurangiariki Smith share  
knowledge about Parawhenuamea in  
their collaborative work.

*He Tangi Aroha—Mama Don't Cry*, 2019  
a collaboration between  
Kahurangiariki Smith and Aroha  
Yates-Smith  
video  
16 min 17 sec

*Framed by our puna in Rotorua,  
a place of burning-cold water,  
renowned scholar of feminine  
deities in Te Ao Māori Aroha Yates-  
Smith sings her composed waiata  
Pupū ake Waipuna, addressing  
Parawhenuamea, the deity of  
alluvial waters and silt.*

*In 2012 my mother Aroha was  
one who stood for this awa in the  
Waitangi tribunal hearing of Ngāti  
Rangiwewehi.*

—Kahurangiariki Smith

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Ngā mihi arohanui ki a Atkins, Monteith,  
Robertson and Yates-Smith whānau.

**Tuan Andrew Nguyen**

*The Island*, 2017  
2048 x 1080p, colour, 5.1 surround sound  
42 min

Weaving historical documentaries  
with sci-fi futurism, *The Island*  
navigates the tortuous territories  
of survival in the midst of exile, and  
end-of-the-world dystopias.

Drawing from the artist's family  
escape from Vietnam at the end of  
the American War, Tuan Andrew  
Nguyen's work revisits the island  
of Pulau Bidong off the coast of  
Malaysia, where his family stayed for  
years as occupants of the largest  
refugee camp of the time.

On the one-square-kilometre  
island, better known as a diver's  
paradise, the artist built his own  
filmic memorial by blending historical  
testimonies and media reports  
from the island with a fictional tale  
of apocalypse. In the film, the two  
survivors of a devastating global  
nuclear war hover between hope  
and despair. Marooned on a tropical  
island in the middle of a vast  
ocean, the protagonists stand as a  
possible solution to the survival of  
the species, pondering about life  
and death among monuments and  
remnants of a disappearing world.

## Artist bios

**Francis Alÿs** (b. 1959 Antwerp, Belgium) was originally trained as an architect. He moved to Mexico City in 1986, where he continues to live and work. It was the confrontation with issues of urbanisation and social unrest in his new country of adoption that inspired his decision to become a visual artist. Alÿs' art is centred on observations of, and engagements with, everyday life. His multifaceted projects include public actions, installations, videos, paintings and drawings; the artist himself has described his work as "a sort of discursive argument composed of episodes, metaphors, or parables".

**Charlotte Graham** (Pare Hauraki, Pare Waikato, Ngāti Kotimana) is an interdisciplinary artist who uses different materials to engage in indigenous dialogue. Graham's work has addressed social, cultural and political issues for more than twenty years. Graham has exhibited nationally and internationally, including at *Piko*, Keomailani Hanapi Foundation, Waimea, Hawai'i; *Te Tataitanga* at Southwest Art; Craft, San Antonio, Texas, 2008; and APT8 with The SaVAge K'lub, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, 2015. In 2017, Graham undertook a residency working closely with Chilean scientists and educators in the Bosque Pehuén (Pehuen Forest), Southern Chile.

**Ioane Ioane's** multidisciplinary practice involves sculpture, painting, installation and performance and often acknowledges the spiritual and transitional nature of space (the va) as a place of transformation-birth and becoming.

His work is held in the public collections of the National University of Samoa; Cambridge Museum of Anthropology, UK; Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington; Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki; Pātaka Art + Museum, Porirua, Wellington; Tjibaou Cultural Center, Noumea; James Wallace Arts Trust; the University of Auckland; and many other private and public collections.

**Knitlab** is the art and design initiative of HyunJin Yun 윤현진 and Robin de Haan. Together, Knitlab's kaupapa is to make illuminable knitted light sculptures to invoke mystery and marvel.

Born in Go Bu, South Korea, Yun is a former silk colour technician and trader with a Masters in Art and Design at AUT. She develops shape-able fabric using copper, nylon and fibre optics. De Haan studied Graphics and Design at AUT and Sociology at the University of Auckland. He is a member of the Gribblehirst Community Shed workshop, the South Auckland and the West Auckland Woodturners Guild.

He designs lights using 3D modelling, woodturning and electronics. Themes of nature and sustainability inspire Knitlab's exhibitions, events and productions.



**Graeme Atkins** is a born and bred East Coaster, living at Tikapa, a small community situated on the coast near the Waiapu river mouth, half an hour northeast of Ruatoria. Atkins combines his interests in natural history, specialising in indigenous flora, with his vocation. Employed by Te Papa Atawhai Department of Conservation as a ranger, for 25 years Atkins' focus has been on rare and threatened flora. In 2009, he was awarded Network's National Conservation individual award for his efforts caring for indigenous plants on the East Coast. Recently, Atkins has activated his own interests in visual media to tell the story of the extreme challenges facing Waiapu River and Raukūmara Forest.

**Alex Monteith** (b. Belfast, Ireland. Resides Te Piha, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand) is an artist and senior lecturer at the Elam School of Fine Arts, The University of Auckland, Aotearoa. Her participatory and video works often explore the political dimensions of culture engaged in turmoil over land ownership, history and occupation. Traversing political

movements, contemporary sports, culture and social activities, many artworks focus on relationships between knowledge and water in the Pacific region. Exhibitions include *Coastal Flows Coastal Incursions*, 2014–ongoing; *Exercise Blackbird: Alex Monteith*, MMK Frankfurt, 2012; and the 4th and 5th Auckland Triennials, 2010 and 2013. She is also a member of the collective Local Time (Danny Butt, Jon Bywater, Alex Monteith and Natalie Robertson), and is a some-time political and environmental activist.


**Natalie Robertson** (Ngāti Porou, Clann Dhònnchaidh, b. Kawerau, Aotearoa New Zealand) is an artist and Senior Lecturer at AUT University, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Robertson's research and artistic practice draws on historic archives and Ngāti Porou oral customs, by exploring Māori knowledge practices, environmental issues and cultural landscapes, to engage relationships to place.

Robertson photographed extensively for the multi-award-winning book *A Whakapapa of Tradition: One Hundred Years of Ngāti Porou Carving, 1830–1930*, written by Ngarino Ellis (2016), which won the Judith Binney Best First Book Award for Illustrated Non-Fiction in the 2017 Ockham New Zealand Book Awards; and recently exhibited in *To Make/Wrong/Right/Now—Honolulu Biennial 2019*.



He uri tēnei nō ngā iwi i heke mai ai i runga i ngā waka o Te Arawa, o Tainui, o Takitimu, o Horouta, o Mataatua me ngā iwi hoki i takea mai nei i te whenua nei, i te Ūkaipō, i ngā whenua o Uropi hoki.

**Aroha Yates-Smith** was raised in Rotorua and lives in Kirikiriroa (Hamilton). She was Professor and Dean of Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao, School of Māori and Pacific Development, at the University of Waikato. Her PhD thesis, entitled *Hine! E Hine!: Rediscovering the Feminine in Māori Spirituality*, focuses on the role of atua wāhine in Māori cosmology and the marginalisation of the Māori feminine in ethnographic writings and the modern colonised Māori community. Ultimately, her main focus is on caring for the environment, descendants of Papa and Rangi. This is reflected in her diverse creative works.



**Kahurangiariki Smith's** principal focus is on mana wāhine and storytelling, which inform her art and video game development practices. Kahurangiariki's artworks often employ digital formats, a reflection of the media we engage with, in person and online—gifs, games and karaoke. Recently Kahurangiariki has been collaborating with her mother, Aroha Yates-Smith, sharing intergenerational knowledge. Kahurangiariki's work seeks to elevate indigenous voices, critiquing colonial histories and ongoing colonising relationships.

**Tuan Andrew Nguyen** (b. 1976, Saigon, Vietnam) graduated from the Fine Arts program at the University of California, Irvine in 1999 and received his Masters of Fine Arts from The California Institute of the Arts in 2004. Upon returning to Vietnam, he founded the collective/media agency known as The Propeller Group in 2006 and a year later co-founded an artist-initiated space call Sàn Art in Saigon. Nguyen has been the recipient of multiple film awards. His work, both individually and as part of The Propeller Group, is in the collections of major institutions around the world including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Queensland Art Gallery, and the Museum of Modern Art.





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