

**Chantel Matthews** (Aotearoa NZ)

**Jacob Hamilton** (Aotearoa NZ)

**curated by Janet Lilo** (Aotearoa NZ)

# PONO: The potential of making something that leads to nothing

*PONO* is both a play on the Māori term for sincerity and can be seen as an expression for what is true. In its extended version, the title of the exhibition also has resonance with a 1997 artwork by the Belgian artist Francis Alÿs, where he pushed around a block of ice in a beautiful yet futile act in which “sometimes doing something poetic can become political and sometimes doing something political can become poetic.” The *potential* of *nothing* is a consideration when making any artwork, something the artists regard as significantly heightened given our current situation of social change and physical distancing. The exhibition asks us to consider how to manaaki and hold space when we cannot physically host or be hosted, with artworks made of materials that are integral to our living environment, shifting between something essential and something familiar.

*PONO* also negotiates the balance of tapu and noa and how this sense of harmony is crucial for our collective hauora. There is a sensibility of giving and taking inherent in the gestures of Chantel Matthews’ pieces. Visitors are invited to take a cup of tea away; mattresses will be gifted to whenua in Whāingaroa where Matthews is from; and vessels made from the wai moana and earth act as the tuarā or backbone enveloping the exhibition. Matthews highlights the female body, specifically the whare tangata or womb,

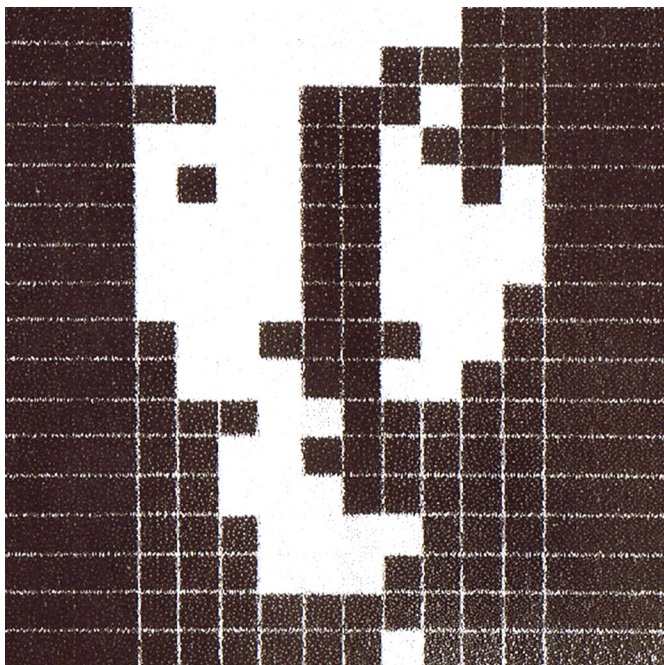
and the potential it has to foster a deeply restorative relationship between the body and the environment – to care for the whenua is to care for yourself. These considerations stem from Matthews journeying back to her tūpuna and connecting with whakapapa, introducing her to various stories and materials that inform her practice. While these objects are things we might consider to be ordinary, they are also transformed into things that matter for our everyday survival: objects that nurture and nourish, holding an embodied, sculptural presence in the exhibition that allows manaakitanga to take place. Collectively, these artworks serve as a kind of interior to manaaki the gallery and reverberate with the social fabric of a marae as a space of hauora through domesticity.

Jacob Hamilton's artworks act as the conceptual exterior and counterbalance. His artwork *Rāwhiti-mā-raki*, a whare placed in the courtyard, uses wood upcycled from industrial sites, Kāinga Ora homes, state housing and materials intended for the skip. The artwork is inspired by previous land occupations and a kīwaha by King Tāwhiao which states that, in a time of poverty and disarray, he will build his own house of the cheapest woods and grow his own medicines to strengthen himself in ill-health. This cabin also nods to the ongoing housing crisis in Aotearoa, and the alternative modes of living and occupation that communities need to form to sustain their sense of self-determination and connection to their whakapapa in the face of physical displacement. Originally intended to house Hamilton himself for a short period during the exhibition, the house has remained empty due to Covid-19 restrictions, standing as both a provocation to reconsider our relationship to dwelling, and providing metaphorical shelter for those most impacted by the inaccessibility of housing. Alongside the whare, Hamilton exhibits *UTU*, thermal printing machines that will continuously produce text and images appropriated from government and history websites. These receipts give face to

the many transactions – monetary and otherwise – between tangata whenua, settlers and colonial government, that shaped connection to whakapapa through the land. Acting as a repayment record, they unravel the balance needed to restore ownership.

Both artists are referencing how harmony is essential for our collective hauora and to restore a connection to whakapapa. Through the generosity of manaakitanga as both social interaction and the site of physical occupation, *PONO* earnestly maintains a kaupapa of taking care of ourselves and of others through questioning how we do this, and through moving towards acts of pono.

Jacob Hamilton, *self-portrait*, 2021. Thermal receipt.  
Image courtesy of the artist.



# About the artists

## Chantel Matthews

Tainui Awhiro  
Ngāti Hounuku  
Ngāti Koata  
Ngāti Tahinga  
Ngāti Ikaunahi

Chantel Matthews' artworks can be described as sculptural moments that explore social, political and cultural concerns through her own subjectivity as a woman, mother, artist and wahine Māori. Focusing on process-led exchanges, Matthews mobilises experience as a storytelling mechanism, contributing to objects that become both "things" and "things that matter".

## Jacob Hamilton

He uri au mai Raukawa ki Tuhourangi. He uri hoki au mai Ngapuhi ki Ngati Arera.

Jacob Hamilton's artistic practice uses sound, photography and objects to trace links to whakapapa, land and the urban environment. Through postcolonial attitudes, he explores te ao Māori and hauora as a way to navigate culture and identity in a modern context.

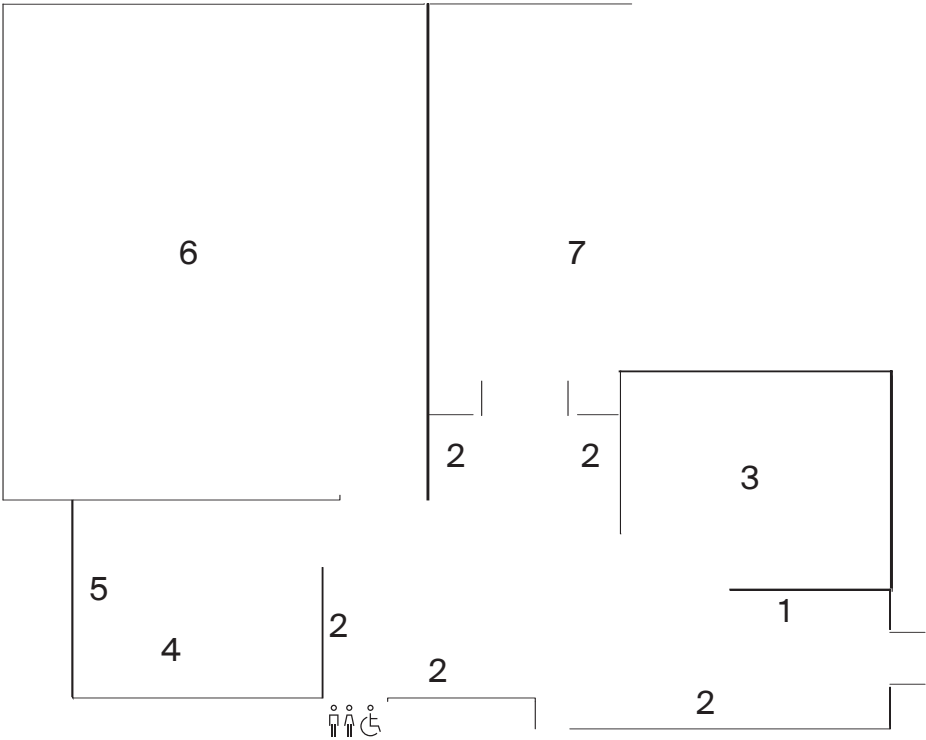
# About the curator

## Janet Lilo

Janet Lilo is of Te Rarawa, Samoan and Niuean descent. She has built an artistic practice playing with the lens and posturing of identity through popular media and has exhibited across Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Hawai'i and Japan. For *PONO*, she sets up a curatorial framework of tuakana/teina through the lens of manaakitanga within te ao Māori. Alongside her socially and politically engaged artwork, she is trying hard to raise good, solid, feminist men.

# List of works

## Galleries





## Galleries

1. Chantel Matthews

*Kawa*, 2019

single-channel video

44 sec

2. Chantel Matthews

*Wai-rua*, 2021

33 Uku Vessels glazed with Whāingaroa te Moana

3. Chantel Matthews

*Tides of Life*, 2021

200 AWWA period underwear, washing line, pegs  
available to be taken during the course of the exhibition,  
please ask at reception

commissioned by Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

4. Jacob Hamilton

*Between A Main Road And New Housing*, 2021

digital c-type

1230 x 885mm

5. Jacob Hamilton

*UTU*, 2021

10 thermal receipt printers

commissioned by Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

6. Chantel Matthews

*Bad dreams and fantasies*, 2021

32 mattresses

to be donated on completion of exhibition

3265 x 900 x 1900mm

commissioned by Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

7. Jacob Hamilton

*Rāwhiti-mā-raki*, 2021

reclaimed timber

2980 x 2330 x 3320mm

commissioned by Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

## Foyer

Chantel Matthews

*Help yourself to a cuppa tea, 2021*

cup of tea for visitors to take away

commissioned by Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

## Reeves Road billboards

Chantel Matthews

*Transmission, 2021*

commissioned by Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

## Parnell Station billboards

Jacob Hamilton

*Crown loop, 2021*

commissioned by Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland



Principal funders

