

## COASTAL SIGNS

Shannon Te Ao

*Tiwakawaka*

16 November 2022 – 28 January 2023

Wednesday – Friday 11am-5pm, Saturday 11am-3pm

“It is through image and fantasy – those orders that figure transgressively on the borders of history and the unconscious – that Fanon most profoundly evokes the colonial condition.” (Homi K. Bhabha on Franz Fanon)

The five images that comprise *Tiwakawaka* depict blurred figures suspended in indeterminate, inky blue space. Shot on film against rear-projected footage of landscapes particular to the artist’s whenua and whanaunga, a single actor is seen in a range of movements, from the turning of a head to cart-wheeling motion.

*Tiwakawaka* is one of many names for a bird native to Aotearoa, also known as the fantail. In Māori legend it is a messenger that moves between realms, and it’s laughter warned Hinenuitepō of Maui’s transgression and resulted in his demise. For some it is a bad omen, a harbinger of death, for others it is a symbol of transformation in all its forms. *Tiwakawaka* also refers to a movement – a particular striking movement that can be construed as both playful and warlike.

The details of the material behind these works – powerful myths, intricate personal stories that spin out to larger narratives of grief, loss, and transformation – are not unimportant however Te Ao’s work recedes from portraying lived experience through character and/or narrative, to open up a politics of aesthetics and affect.

Viewed as if through night-darkened windows, the figure appears like a premonition or apparition, inhabiting a liminal state between visibility and invisibility, between human and not-human. One image, *Hara* (2022), depicts a hand flung away from the body, so blurred it appears as a wing, and in another, *Pūaotanga o te ao* (2022), a folded body becomes a maunga, maybe Ngāruhoe.

Shannon Te Ao (b. 1978, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Wairangi, Ngāti Te Rangiita, Te Pāpaka-a-Maui) holds a BFA from University of Auckland’s Elam School of Fine Arts and an MFA from the College of Creative Arts at Massey University Wellington.

Te Ao has exhibited widely nationally and internationally. He has recently completed commissions for The 10th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT10) QAGOMA Brisbane and 13th Gwangju Biennale: Minds Rising Spirits Turning. In 2021 Te Ao presented solo exhibitions at REMA Modern (Saskatoon); Oakville Galleries (Toronto), and Te Uru (Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland). In 2016 Te Ao was Awarded The Walters Prize by international judge Doryun Chong.

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WORKS

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|---|---|
| <i>Hara, 2022</i><br>archival digital print on<br>Hahnemühle photorag paper<br>two elements, 930 x 1160mm each<br>ed. 3 + 1AP<br>NZD 12,500 | <i>Kimikimi, 2022</i><br>archival digital print on<br>Hahnemühle photorag paper<br>two elements, 930 x 1160mm each<br>ed. 3 + 1AP<br>NZD 12,500 |
| <i>Tuapōkere, 2022</i><br>archival digital print on<br>Hahnemühle photorag paper<br>930 x 1160mm frame<br>ed. 3 + 1AP<br>NZD 7,500          | <i>Pūaotanga o te ao, 2022</i><br>archival digital print on<br>Hahnemühle photorag paper<br>930 x 1160mm frame<br>ed. 3 + 1AP<br>NZD 7,500      |
| <i>Tīwakawaka, 2022</i><br>archival digital print on<br>Hahnemühle photorag paper<br>930 x 1160mm frame<br>ed. 3 + 1AP<br>NZD 7,500         |   |