

Mike Ting

Matt Ritani



**THE
HOUSE
WE BUILT**

THE RESTORATION

INTRODUCTION

When selecting proposals during an open round, there is a few proposals that obtain a quick yes. We go through the selected proposals discussing individual aspects of each one and then we select a facilitator for those shows based on the facilitator's artistic preferences and knowledge of the exhibition subject matter. Both shows, I was highly drawn to and although I didn't know much about the specificity of their topics I was interested to learn from people who were engaged in a topic and wanted to see it through in an artistic resolution. Amongst professional writers and academics, within a historical field, I can only do justice by adding comment on these artist's methods to understanding a common topic.

Matt's project from the get-go seemed like something and someone I could learn from. With a strict plan in place I established faith in the project quickly. Ritani's incredible ability to plan, was an interesting skill to observe as he documented the effects of colonial urban planning within Aotearoa. I hardly read the newspaper, let alone statistic reports however Matt's architectural and visual thinking facilitates interpretation of large amounts of specific data (NZ 2017 Housing and Income Statistics) and thus helping me, a newcomer, immediately understand the significance of the matter.

I originally was attracted to Mike's thinking through something he said in his essay More Fruit Salad? - 'Of course, an artist needn't be aware of any philosophical concepts to produce art that informs a philosophical discussion'. I naively and quickly identified with this. As an immigrant in Aoteroa for seven years now my knowledge of the long-term effects of colonization on land is limited. Mike was the cup of coffee through which I could better understand how colonization can be observed and exemplified from virtually anywhere. Mike is someone who is very aware of the concepts he is trying to inform, in his research and observation and in this case of this project - flora. The house we built and The Restoration acknowledge the bottomless extensions and effects of a colonized place, whether this may be on the people, the land or the way these two interrelate.

— *Bent*

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THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN ALTERNATIVE

Vanessa Cole

In the lead up to the 2017 New Zealand parliamentary election, Moana Jackson argued that we need a politics that imagines the impossible:

“the idea that politics is only a matter of economically-determined possibilities is relatively recent and culturally-specific. It was brought to this land as part of the Westminster constitutional system ... where wealth had become the measure of human worth as well as political possibility, and ownership had become enshrined in the strangely named ‘sanctity’ of property rights”.¹

The idea of property rights as individual ownership is a relatively new system imposed on this land through colonisation which continues today with neoliberal capitalism.

The economic and social situation we currently live under not only encloses land, privatising it and displacing people from their homes and communities, it also encloses our imaginations that another situation is possible.

Aotearoa/New Zealand has some of the worst levels of income and wealth inequality in the OECD². This can be linked directly to housing. We have whānau living on streets, in cars, and in motels many of which are on a waitlist for public housing but are forced instead into unaffordable and substandard private rentals. At the same time we have developers building luxury apartments in the cities and low-income people paying an unsustainable level of household income on rent. The private market has failed, yet our politicians continue to

promote the private ownership model, selling public land to developers to build private housing amidst this crisis. Gentrification is rampant, people are losing their relationships to each other and the space they call home.

Neoliberalism rode in under the banner ‘There Is No Alternative’ but there are many alternatives and they are here with us already. Māori have never lost models of collective ownership despite violent capitalist enclosure of land and culture. Iwi and hapū continue to struggle to produce and reproduce these models. We see this with the revitalisation of papakāinga housing³. It is time for the rest of Aotearoa New Zealand to struggle towards this as well.

Even within the colonial capitalist imagination there has been an exploration of alternative models to private housing. In the 1930s under the First Labour Government mass building of state housing was normalised as the logical solution to the housing crisis. It offered secure rentals for life, and an affordable alternative to the private market, curbing speculation and preventing private landlords from extracting monopoly rents. We must be wary not to romanticise the past, but to recognise that we had successful programmes to address the housing crisis which resisted the commodification of housing and promoted it instead as a space for living in.

What would Aotearoa New Zealand look like if collective ownership models for housing communities were normalised? What if public housing, papakāinga and other forms of non-market and communal housing were treated as the logical solution to the

crisis today? What if communities had a determination over how they lived and participated fully and democratically in the planning process?

Alternatives have always been with us, we just need to continue the struggle to make them a reality. So, when those in power say it is impossible to reject the sanctity of private property and build housing based on communal rights and not profit, they are wrong.

1. Jackson, M. (2017). How about a politics that imagines the impossible? <https://e-tangata.co.nz/comment-and-analysis/moana-jackson-how-about-a-politics-that-imagines-the-impossible/>
2. <https://data.oecd.org/inequality/income-inequality.htm>
3. Kake, J. (2016) A Communal Solution. Build 153, 78 <https://www.buildmagazine.org.nz/articles/show/a-communal-solution>

DUBIOUS ACQUISITIONS

Rebecca Kiddle

The gap between rich and poor in Aotearoa/ New Zealand has widened at a staggering rate. Between the 1980s and 1990s the gap widened more quickly than any other developed country.¹ Despite slowing down in the early 2000s, since the global financial crisis (2008) this gap looks to be widening again.

For the most part, a system that worships the ‘free’ market, a focus on individual rights and responsibilities and the ‘if you just work hard enough you’ll get ahead’ mentality has pervaded much of our government policy and societal norms, free of any suggestion that there might be other ways of living lives and other values that might underpin who we are as a nation. Alongside this, this capitalist system has galloped through our history free from critique as to the provenance of this capital and who, through the pernicious tool of colonisation benefited most from the dubious acquisition of land-based capital – arguably the most important type of capital of all.

Severing place based, kinship notions of land ‘ownership’ and turning land into a commodity to be bought and traded has led to some having and others having not. Māori, as compared with Pākehā patterns of income, wealth, land ownership, home ownership and economies suggest that this colonial tool was a great success building wealth and incomes for those who colonised and those who descended from these colonisers.

The Māori median personal income in the 2013 census was \$22,500 compared with \$30,900 for European New Zealanders.² Māori wealth in 2010 averaged just over \$18,000 compared to \$125,500 for Pākehā.

Only 6% of New Zealand remains as Māori freehold land. Māori homeownership rates have dropped 20% from 1986 to 2013 to 43%.³ The European homeownership rate has dropped 11.2% in the same period from nearly 79% to 70%. And, finally, the Māori economy is estimated to represent 6.1% of the total New Zealand asset based in 2013 – a very small proportion of New Zealand’s wealth given Māori make up approximately 15% of the overall population (Rashbrooke, M 2015).

This intergenerational wealth creation or loss, Rashbrooke argues, is significant when thinking about equal opportunities. His book *Wealth and New Zealand* clearly shows that there is much advantage transmitted from generation to generation if one’s parents are affluent. Protestations of ‘it’s nothing to do with me....I didn’t colonise’ belie the everyday privilege experienced by many reaping the spoils of this early capital acquisition.

Some may think it an obvious question with obvious answers to ask - why does wealth matter? but I think it is worth spelling out exactly why it matters. According to Britain’s *Smith Institute* think tank,

“it is the existence of assets which provides security, opens up opportunity and gives people freedom to take risks, to invest for the future, to buy time, and to give”.⁴

Anecdotal evidence from my own institution suggests that students from lower income households are far less likely to attend university, despite the recent introduction of free fees in the first year, because they don’t

1. Rashbrooke, M. (2015). *Wealth and New Zealand* (Vol. 34). Bridget Williams Books.
2. Statistics NZ (2014) 2013 Census QuickStats about income, <http://archive.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-income/personal-income-ethnic.aspx>, Accessed on 10 October 2018.
3. Johnson, A., Howden-Chapman, P. & Eaquab, S. (2018) A stocktake of New Zealand’s Housing, New Zealand Government, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2018-02/A%20Stocktake%20of%20New%20Zealand's%20Housing.pdf>, Accessed 10 October 2018.
4. Kumar, A., Ussher, K. & Hunter, P. (2014) *Wealth of Our Nation: Rethinking Policies for Wealth Distribution*, Smith Institute, London.

want to the attract high levels of debt, and therefore risk, associated with university education in this country. In the words of Nana,

“An increasing inequality of wealth will, likewise, accentuate inequalities of opportunities”.

Furthermore, the link between subjective wellbeing (that is self-reported wellbeing) and income is also now well established implicating⁵ widening income gaps in influencing a reduction in subjective wellbeing in those less well off.

So, what do we do now? How do we disentangle the complex layers of capitalism and colonialism which inhabit that widening fiscal chasm? ‘The house we built’ moves us forward, even if just an inch by illustrating the problem in a way that all of us can grasp and, one would hope, be horrified over. If we know it, we can respond to it – seek out ways to decolonise, to bring about equity, to think more deliberately about what we want for our society and what kinds of ideologies we want to invest our energies in. Recent research by Dickinson suggests that our individual wellbeing rests on the wellbeing of our collectives. Given, as noted above, wellbeing is rooted to income this would seem to suggest that more than a few of us would like to see more equitable societies, perhaps ironically, because it improves our own wellbeing.

Le Guin’s poignant words underline the need for this urgent work.

“We live in capitalism, its power seems inescapable – but then, so did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings. Resistance and change often begin in art. Very often in our art, the art of words”.

Ursula K Le Guin (2014).

5. Carver, T. & Grimes, A.,(nd.) *Income or Consumption: Which better predicts subjective wellbeing? An Executive Summary of Motu Working Paper 16-12*, <https://motu.nz/assets/Documents/our-work/wellbeing-and-macroeconomics/well-being-and-sustainability-measures/Income-or-Consumption-Exec-Summary.pdf>, Accessed 10 October 2018.

6. Dickinson, P. (2018) *The sensitivity of wellbeing to inequalities in local wellbeing* (Unpublished master’s thesis). Victoria University of Wellington: Wellington

REORIENTATIONS

Martin Patrick

Ludwig Wittgenstein once said:

“A philosophical problem has the form: ‘I don’t know my way around’”¹

I think of this in counterpoint to the fact that today we seemingly always know where we are going, logistically speaking, due to the GPS systems embedded and enabled in so many of our technological devices. This in turn lending the false impression that we might always be able to find our way, that we are exactly situated. Perhaps we have relinquished the notion of ‘being lost’, via the reassurance of such technologies. But it is important to remember that while our exterior positioning may be spot on within centimetres, our interior subjectivities involve a complex array of flows, collisions, overlaps, inaccuracies. I like to think we are increasingly and fluidly un-bounded such that we may take on new behavioural roles, ways of thinking, and patterns of living. In turn, the most intriguing works of art actively reenvision, and elicit new readings of our expansive identities in the world. Maybe the most relevant question today is: what is it to reimagine existing forms, histories, figures?

If we continue to think through the implications of slipping away from the precisely located, we might reorient ourselves around idiosyncratic coordinates, unusual patterns, different modes of perceiving our surroundings. The American essayist Rebecca Solnit, who entitled one of her books *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, writes:

“That thing the nature of which is totally unknown to you is usually what you need to find, and finding it is a matter of getting lost”.

Reading Walter Benjamin, she interprets him as arguing that “to be lost is to be fully present”.² Any displacement from our normative modes of thinking allows for necessary shifts intellectually, attitudinally, empathetically. To reposition ourselves further from our received notions and constructs ultimately initiates new perceptions and actions.

The late New Zealand ecologist Geoff Park’s 1995 book *Ngā Uruora* was recently reissued, and his prescience is both reassuring and unsettling, given how certain things have improved since that time and others have not. Park’s overall theme concerns how rapidly and unthinkingly the deforestation owing to colonial settlement occurred here in Aotearoa. A short glimpse of his evocative prose lends a sense of his approach:

“Mention of ngā uruora today is like raising something from the dead. Go into a lowland kahikatea forest in autumn when its koroī are ripening, lie under the towering trees listening to the cacophony of birds and the constant patter of the inedible bits hitting the leaves around you, and you’ll know what ‘the groves of life’ mean. These are the ecosystems that are now, like huia and kākāpō, vanished or down to a few survivors in need of intensive care, their wildness something to wonder at”.³

Moreover, one might reach further back yet another century to Thoreau’s statement that “Wildness is the preservation of the world”.⁴

Today it’s clear that historical eras that once claimed insight and clarity, are increasingly problematic, such as the enlightenment or modernism, if read through the lens of postcolonialism or in the wake of postmodernism. Social and political violence has been a recurring symptom of ideologies of progress, and today’s neoliberalism is no exception, simply a hyperacceleration of residual processes. Across the Pacific there are certainly regimes in which the mere stating of factual information is ridiculed and dismissed in an authoritarian manner. Correspondingly, being lost is not an entirely bad thing, in that one relinquishes an inaccurate and often unjust sense of control. Also one might let other entities into the mix, rather than a consistently anthropocentric interference precluding other possibilities. To move into our uncertain future is to accept uncertainty and move in multiple directions, non-hierarchically, dialogically, without trying to navigate with false assurance, but with hopeful curiosity.

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Tr. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953) 49.
2. Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (New York: Viking, 2005) 6.
3. Geoff Park, *Ngā Uruora The Groves of Life: Ecology and History in a New Zealand Landscape* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1995/2018) 20.
4. Henry David Thoreau, “Walking”, 1862.

THE PLACES THAT WE ARE: LANDSCAPE, NAME AND STORY

Katherine Palmer Gordon

In creation stories, we always come from the earth.

One version of our beginnings was that the first human, Adam, was created from dust.

In the Iroquois story, Sky Woman fell towards the water-covered earth, but was saved by landing on mud that animals had placed on the back of a turtle. There her children were born and flourished.

In Māori lore, it is Papatūānuku, the Earth Mother, who bears and nourishes the first people of the land.

We humans are not only of the landscape in these stories: it *is* us. We are inseparable, one and the same; utterly dependent on the air and waters and earth and mud and dust from which we have come.

Perhaps that is why, in Aotearoa, it is traditional in a Māori setting to introduce oneself by naming the river, the ocean, and the mountain with which you have a relationship. In this whakapapa, the recital of this genealogy, kinship with the landscape is integral. That mountain, that river, that ocean: you are all one family, with a whanaungatanga relationship. That interconnectedness of whenua and tangata, of place and people, of ancestral identity and story, is the crucible in which a fundamental relationship with the land is forged: how the people of that place behave in the landscape, and how they think of it personally, spiritually, politically, environmentally and culturally.

The names of these places are part of that relationship. First they tell you where you are: the long lake or the sheltered cove, the anchorage, the big river, the great harbour of Tara; the beautiful place, the place where

someone died in the freezing cold wind, the good place to catch and eat crayfish. Then, along with each place name, comes its story. For example:

Te Rerenga Wairua, near the northernmost tip of Te Ika-a-Māui, is a desolate, steep and rocky cape battered by rough seas and winds. It is also sacred. The dead pass through Te Rerenga Wairua as they return to Hawaii Ki along Te Ara Wairua, the pathway of the spirits. It is a revered but fearsome place, demanding veneration from the living.

Far to the south, below Te Wai Pounamu, the island of Rakiura is named for the glowing skies of the *aurora australis*. It also bears the name Te Punga o Te Waka o Māui. The story goes that as Māui paddled past the southern end of Te Wai Pounamu, he pulled up a stone from the seabed and named it Te Punga o Te Waka o Māui, his anchor, to stop his waka from floating out to sea.

Tongariro and Taranaki, living near each other in the centre of Te Ika-a-Māui, coveted the favours of Pihanga, a small and beautiful mountain living nearby. They fought for her; Taranaki lost, and fled to the west coast. In his tracks arose Te Awa Tupua, the great river. When he arrived on the westerly shores of Te Ika-a-Māui, Taranaki saw a small mountain called Pouākai overlooking Ngā Motu, some small islands nearby, and decided to settle down beside her. Eventually, they produced many children: streams, rock formations, trees, plants, birds and people among them.

There was a time when these names and stories were in danger of being lost. When Te Whanganui-a-Tara, the great harbour of Tara, became Wellington; Tāmaki-makau-rau, Tāmaki of a hundred lovers, became Auckland; Te Whenua o Te Potiki-Tautahi, Tautahi's place, became Christchurch; Ahuriri, place of fierce rushing water, became Napier; when Te Papa-i-Oea, it is beautiful here, became Palmerston North, when Aoraki became Mount Cook, and when Taranaki Maunga became Mount Egmont, named at the whim of explorer James Cook for an Englishman who never set foot in Aotearoa.

Places arbitrarily renamed by Englishmen newly arrived in this land, with no understanding of the stories, the whakapapa, the connection between landscape and wellbeing of the people, the people and the wellbeing of the landscape. What happens when a new name with no history displaces a name that is inextricably linked to the landscape in this way, and that the people in that place have always known and understood?

This is how I would tell the story of the place that is now named New Zealand:

The first sight of Aotearoa, long white clouds on the horizon, beneath them a land abundant with food and waters teeming with fish, ripe for the first wave of great Māori waka to land;

The renaming of Aotearoa by a Dutch explorer, the renaming of Te Ika-a-Maui and Te Wai Pounamu as the North and South Islands;

A tale of Rangiratanga and a Treaty with the Queen of England;

The narrative of British settlement that followed: a cultural exposé of war and resource exploitation and taking of land and children and language;

The rise of the captains of commerce: railways and roads, trade and tree-shorn hillsides, forests laid bare for sheep and cattle; waterways poisoned; gorse brought from the old country as a remembrance of home, cats and dogs at the hearth, goats and deer, rabbits to shoot, stoats to hunt the rabbits, chemicals to kill the stoats, the extinction of species, the silence where bird calls once rang deafeningly;

The growth of cities, development and investment, wealth generation, dream homes and lifestyle properties to escape those same cities;

Erosion, cyclones, flooding and landslides, our twenty-first century chronicle of climate change, our contemporary lexicon of environmental catch cries: *biosecurity, invasive species, pest management*;

Poverty and hunger, danger and desolation, people in crisis all around us;

Papatūānuku, crying in pain and sadness for what her body has become, how her children are faring.

My version is a sad story, I know.

But I also have hope. I see that through her children, Papatūānuku is calling back the original names. Aoraki, Taranaki, Tūrangānui-a-Kiwa, Whanganui, Te Koko-o-Kupe, Muriwai, Te Awa Whakatipu, Haukawa, Hauturu, Te Moana i kataina ā Te Rangitakaroro, Matiu, Pikirakitahi, Ngā Motu, Rangitoto ki te Tonga, you and so many others have returned.

These rich names and the stories that go with them, imbued with ancient wisdom, are a way of being and engaging with the world. They invite us to invest our contemporary environmental and political approaches to the ecosystems in which we live with their relevant, timeless and fundamental concepts of creation, human wellbeing and community, shelter and sustainability, abundance and prosperity. They offer us a way to relate again in the old way to the landscape of Aotearoa.

They invite us to hope.

I offer you all that I am covered in, the land, the forest, the water that flows over me.

If you respect me then I'll respect you.

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