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Natalie Robertson: Toxic Waters

Abstract

Natalie Robertson is a Māori photographic and moving image artist who currently lives and works in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Robertson, who is originally from Kawerau in the Bay of Plenty, belongs to the Ngāti Porou tribe. She has very strong ties to the land and to her iwi and as a tribe member shares responsibility for the life force of the Waiapu river. Her work explores Māori knowledge, practices and cultural landscapes, and also engages with conflicting settler and Indigenous relationships to land and place. Customary and contemporary mythologies of the land and space are the framework of Robertson's work, which also draws on paradoxes of economic development and environmental destruction and the effects that these have had not only on the environment, but also on its inhabitants. This paper examines her art practice, in particular, Uncle Tasman: The Trembling Current that Scars the Earth, *a three-screen video installation recorded at geothermal sites in the Eastern Bay of Plenty, and her photographic work* The Slow Catastrophe of the Waiapu River, *which was exhibited for the first time in Le Havre, France, in 2015 for the exhibition Pacifique(S) Contemporain, curated by Caroline Vercoe and Jacqueline Charles-Rault.*

Keywords: *Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori art, Natalie Robertson, photography, video art, environment*

Figure 1. Natalie Robertson, Auckland, 2008. Courtesy of Jacqueline Charles-Rault

Introduction

Natalie Robertson (Fig. 1) is a Māori photographer and film and video artist who currently lives and works in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand.[1] Her work explores Māori knowledge and cultural landscapes and engages with conflicting settler and Indigenous relationships to land and place. Originally from Kawerau in the Bay of Plenty, Robertson is of mixed heritage—Scottish (Clan Dhònnchaidh), French, and Māori—and belongs to the Ngāti Porou *iwi* (tribe) with which her family has close ties.[2] It took Robertson a number of years to build relationships with her *marae*[3] and to proclaim herself as Ngāti Porou. As a child, she didn't grow up near Tikapa Marae or even in the same region as her *iwi*, whose homeland is in the most easterly region of the North Island of New Zealand. As a young adult, she chose to travel and live abroad for two years, and spent some time living in London. On returning to Aotearoa, Robertson spent time learning from her maternal grandfather, David Hughes, who was brought up in the Ngāti Porou community in Port Awanui. He had inherited his mother Mabel's collectively-held Māori land shares and steadfastly retained them for future generations.

Robertson's quest for a deeper connection to her *iwi* and its land intensified while she was pursuing her master's degree in 1997 and working on the subject of land occupation. When reflecting on this moment, Robertson said,

> My Dad's family had ties to Whanganui and one branch of the family had stayed there and had land on the river. So, during these occupations I became really aware of the tensions between the settler history and Māori history and how that might manifest and how I might situate myself within that with all of those tensions. So, it did all begin as a trek back to my own *iwi* to start looking into how the land was and what the processes of caring for it were.[4]

This quest ultimately led to Robertson taking over her grandfather's responsibilities and becoming a trustee for her family's land. Inevitably, her relationship with the land at Waiapu grew from this and she explored it through her photographic and video work. Robertson discloses that this connection with her family's land enabled her to acquire a deeper understanding of her *whakapapa* (ancestral connections) and to become actively involved with her *marae*. According to Robertson,

> Māori is a word that means natural or ordinary, as the natural and ordinary people. It only became used as a descriptor post-European contact. It is one's tribal affiliations that matter to other Māori. The word "natural" is associated with life for the Māori. Their lives incorporate the philosophy of nature and the whole of our existence.[5]

This affiliation with her Māori origins is present in Robertson's photographic and moving image work, as she has spent a number of years making images of the rural land, rivers, seas, beaches, and mountains that are often associated with her *iwi* and its land. Her work is usually politically oriented, underscoring the social and environmental problems that Māori people have had to face in the past or are facing today. Robertson frequently documents the environmental destruction and havoc that is caused by humans, focusing on changes to the landscape and the consequences that these changes have on the *iwi* who rely on natural resources not only to survive but to maintain their traditions and their *whakapapa* (genealogy).

Figure 2. Natalie Robertson, *Uncle Tasman: The Trembling Current that Scars the Earth* (still) 2008. Three-channel video installation with sound, MIC Toi Rerehiko, Auckland, New Zealand. Courtesy of the artist

Uncle Tasman: The Trembling Current that Scars the Earth

Robertson's three-screen video installation *Uncle Tasman: The Trembling Current that Scars the Earth* was first presented in 2007 at the MIC Toi Rerehiko in Auckland. It examines the paradoxes concerning economic growth and environmental destruction in her hometown and the Bay of Plenty region while underscoring the contemporaneousness of Māori mythologies that relate to land and space. The three-channel video presents footage from different geothermal sites in the eastern Bay of Plenty, focusing on three mountains: Pūtauaki, Tarawera, and Whakaari (Fig. 2). The first channel shows a close-up view of hot, sulphuric vapours rising out of a rocky volcanic landscape; the second shows steam rising from geothermic hot springs with a mountain in the background; and the third shows a cascade of water, the size of which is difficult to determine. The camera remains still in each of these shots, never moving from its position during the 11 minutes and 11 seconds of video. A voiceover soundtrack recounts the misfortune endured by the people in Kawerau, Robertson's hometown, and its region through first-hand, eyewitness stories of environmental devastation, while also incorporating Māori mythologies, chants, and hakas. In the soundtrack you can hear predominately the cascading water overpowering the sound of the sulphuric gases from the hot springs. "The voice

of Te Haukakawa Te Rore an elder can be heard thirty seconds into the video, reciting a tauparapara, (chant), that is a lament meant for lost lands and waterways that echo back."[6]

During the pre-colonial period, the Bay of Plenty was densely populated with Māori who had settled there because of the region's natural geothermic springs. That all changed around 1870 with the arrival of the Pakeha (Europeans) who initially came to the region as tourists seeking the healing powers of the geothermic springs and then gradually settled there.[7] In 1953, the foundation of a mill for the Tasman Pulp and Paper Company was laid in Kawerau.[8] In the video installation, Robertson reveals how the activities of the mill, known locally as "Uncle Tasman," have wrought environmental devastation in Kawerau. As viewers watch the three-screen video installation of the natural wonders of the area, they hear recordings of locals who describe the environmentally destructive activities that were being carried out in Lake Rotoitipaku not only by the mill, but also by the federal government that authorized the dumping of the mill's industrial waste into the Tarawera River. The Tasman Pulp and Paper Company Enabling Act of 1954 states that the company could take water from the river and discharge "trade wastes" back into it. While the Act stipulates that trade waters should be discharged into the sewer system, the mill did not adhere to these regulations, and instead dumped their trade waste directly into the Tarawera River.

Robertson pinpoints the hypocrisy of those in power at that time by including eyewitness accounts of what happened at the mill in the installation's audio soundtrack.[9] One of the locals refers to the company's waste dumping: "They were able to take our lake away from us without any payment...what they did...was out of sight. No one could see what was actually going on. They dumped all, a lot of waste there."[10] The waste from the pulp and paper mill had disastrous consequences on the environment, the region, and its inhabitants. Greenpeace described it as "one of the worst toxic areas in the country."[11] At one point, the town of Kawerau had the highest age-standardised rate of cancer-related illness in the entire country.

Robertson spent a great deal of time researching the activities of the Tasman Pulp and Paper Company, looking at historical maps of nearby lakes and surrounding areas, and speaking to Māori who remembered fishing and swimming there shortly after the arrival of the paper mill. During her research, Robertson came across an 1883 map showing the exact location of Lake Rotoitipaku, a lake that was frequently used by the Māori of Kawerau for agricultural purposes and for the health benefits of its geothermal vapours. Elderly Māori have fond memories of the baths they had in the lake, which has now completely disappeared due to all the waste dumped into it over time, causing it to completely dry up. Over time, ordinance maps were altered to hide the pollution from the Tasman Pulp and Paper Mill and a different nearby lake was given the name Lake Rotoitipaku in order to cover up the paper mill's years of negligence.[12] In 2005, a court hearing at the Waitangi Tribunal in the Central North Island publicized the circumstances that led to the disappearance of the lake. Robertson interviewed Wayne Peters who recalled what happened when he was a schoolboy in the 1970s:

> My cousins and I went to have a look at the spillway. The sludge was slowly moving into the lake from the *ngawha* [hot pool] end. Little did we know this was the beginning of the end to our playground and food basket. Sadness filled our minds. Then anger took over. We knew what was happening was wrong. We lifted a big boulder from the side of the road and smashed the spillway. The workers fixed it up and we smashed it again. In time we came to realise the Rotoitipaku was gone FOREVER.[13]

Today, the estimated solid waste in the former lake bed is equivalent to 10,000 truckloads. Robertson, looking at a satellite photo, remarked that without local knowledge it would be impossible to know that the lake had ever existed.[14] Although none of the surveillance maps or condemning documents are present in Robertson's video installation, they are nonetheless important in understanding her actions and artistic choices from personal and political perspectives. In 2009, despite ongoing protests from the local residents, the Tasman Pulp and Paper Industry was granted permission to continue dumping waste into the Tarawera River for the next 25 years.[15]

Mountains have held a fundamental place in Robertson's life from an early age, when she could see the mountain Pūtauaki from her bedroom window. Not surprisingly, Māori storytelling about mountains finds its way into *Uncle Tasman*. In the Māori mythological story, the three mountains—Pūtauaki, Tarawera, and Whakaari—fight for the affection of Pihanga, the damsel mountain.[16] As the mountains are never fully shown in Robertson's three videos, the viewer is left to their own imagination concerning the story. When discussing her research into the mountains' mythology, Robertson said, "Loss and grief emerge in the local tribal story... It is the story of a clean, green New Zealand that comes under question as a geothermal lake smothered by waste, Rotoitipaku, is recalled by people who lived nearby."[17] For the *kaitiaki*, guardians of the land, this loss of environmental integrity signifies the destruction of their spiritual inspiration and their economic well-being.

During the video, a chant which speaks of tribal histories and cosmology can be heard. We hear a local man recalling the times he used to swim in the lake with his father and friends. The paper mill was already there and the water in Lake Rototipaku polluted. He remembers witnessing as a child eels jumping out of the lake and river onto the roadside, preferring to die there than in the polluted waters. The Ka Panapana, the customary haka of the Ngāti Porou tribe, is performed. This is followed by the haka of the God of earthquakes and volcanos, Rūaumoko. Paptuanuku (mother earth), who's unborn child's name signifies an earthquake scar. According to the artist, this is "a reminder that Aotearoa sits balanced along the Pacific 'rim of fire' with potential for sludge from deeply toxic dumping sites to be scattered far and wide from what is known as the Taupo volcanic plateau if eruptions were to occur from that site".[18] The haka Ka Panapana is followed by cries that are intended to either welcome visitors

or entreat challenges amongst rival tribes. This haka gives the women of the tribe the opportunity to express their social and political concerns.

Robertson's *Kawerau Driveby* (2008), a video shown in New Plymouth at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in the collective exhibition *Dateline* (2008), is related to *Uncle Tasman* in that it deals with the human toll of toxic waste dumping. *Kawerau Driveby* was shown on a television screen with audio headphones. Robertson takes the viewer on a tour of her hometown and neighbourhood by car at twilight, one that is entrenched in personal loss and sadness. She recounts tales and offers subdued images of her childhood, neighbours, school friends, and local histories. She also recalls a number of young people from Kawerau, many of whom she knew personally, who died of cancer, and indirectly asks if these deaths are linked to exposure to the pollution dumped by the Tasman Pulp and Paper mill. Her voice is evenly paced, like the car's steady momentum. The headphones and small screen make the experience all the more intimate. There is never a fixed moment, only perpetual movement. As Robertson's passenger, the viewer does not know where she is taking them nor when the journey will end. Streets that resemble each other are deserted and as disconcerting as Robertson's commentary, leaving the viewer perplexed and uneasy. On every street corner we hear of someone who fell victim to cancer, some of them Robertson's childhood friends. In this mournful journey, she relates one by one how each got cancer, highlighting not only the loss of youth, but also the culpability of the Tasman Pulp and Paper company and the government. Robertson's incomprehension is conveyed through the tone of her voice, which expresses confusion, sorrow, indignation, and anger. The subject, while personal to Robertson, is also universal; waste, pollution, and the destruction of the environment concern the human collective today, enabling the viewer to share her sorrow and that of Kawerau while also becoming a helpless spectator to her array of emotions.

Pohautea 1-4

In 2015, Robertson created the multimedia installation *Pohautea 1–4* for the exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain,* which was presented at venues in Le Havre and Rouen, France.[19] The installation included four large black-and-white photographs depicting the Waiapu River; a wall text with the words to *He Tangi Mo Pāhoe*, a *mōteatea* (customary Māori chant); a two-channel video focused on the Waiapu River; and a photographic wall mural titled *Ko Iwi-Bones*.[20]

Figure 3. Natalie Robertson, *Pohautea 1–4*, 2015. Four black-and-white photographs, each 340 cm x 110 cm. Printed from the negatives. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 4. Natalie Robertson, *Pohautea 1–4* (detail), as installed in the exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain*, Le Portique, Le Havre, France. Courtesy of Jacqueline Charles-Rault

Robertson's four large-format black-and-white photographs (Fig. 3) document the lasting devastation to the Bay of Plenty caused by Cyclone Bola in 1988. Robertson took the photographs of the region in 1996, eight years after the catastrophic storm. *Pohautea 1–4* was generated from existing 6 cm x 17 cm black-and-white panoramic photographic negatives that had never been printed prior to the exhibition. Robertson decided to show only four of the images due to the wall space in the gallery. The walls were high enough to hang the tall photographs, but too narrow to hang a fifth because of a division that cut the wall space in half. This unfortunate configuration was ultimately advantageous, as it provided a space for the video installation and connected the two works, creating a coherent environment of land and water (Fig. 4).

Pohautea 1–4 focused on the Waiapu River, which was once a beautiful natural area devoid of pollution. This all changed between 1890 and 1920, when trees from the dense native forests were chopped down and burnt to make way for agriculture that, in turn, led to widespread erosion. Today, when a storm hits the region, the land erodes and collapses into the river. During Cyclone Bola, hundreds of trees were washed into the river, their trunks and branches carried downstream where they piled up. Robertson's images show the remains of this driftwood—whitened trunks and branches resembling a mass of ancestral bones—cloaking the beach adjacent to the mouth of the Waiapu River.[21] According to Robertson, one interpretation of the name Waiapu is "consuming waters," which seems appropriate considering the gorging of land into the water that occurs. The river is conceptualized as female and is home to spiritual beings, according to Māori lore. The river also has immense spiritual, cultural, and traditional significance to the Ngāti Porou tribe, who connect it with their own identity.[22]

Robertson's large-scale photographs show tree trunks and branches strewn all over the beach at the river's mouth, locally referred to as *ngutu awa*—"the beak of the river." Her use of black-and-white emphasises the whiteness of the mutilated tree trunks and branches against the dark grey of the riverbanks. Her sweeping vantage point directs us to look at the extent of the destruction and harm the storm has brought. Although we see the direct wreckage of the cyclone, this environmental violence was indirectly caused by human action and has deep consequences for the Ngāti Porou tribe and their well-being. Fishing and seafood gathering are an integral part of Te Mahi Kai, which "refers to all activities associated with finding, preparing and cooking food. This includes hunting and gathering, as well as cultivating, and is a fundamental right and necessity for Māori people, so that they can continue to collect seafood and fish from the waters of the Waiapu River." [23]

Robertson's decision to use images from her own archive was two-fold: to connect the narrative in *He Tangi Mo Pāhoe*, a Ngāti Porou *mōteatea* from Waiapu (discussed below), and

to document Robertson's personal research into the work of James McDonald, who had spent three weeks in the Waiapu district in 1923 with Apirana Ngata, a member of Parliament and tribal leader. McDonald revealed that he, too, had photographed the river and his are likely to be the first photographs taken there, available on the public record.[24]

Robertson also wanted to show the *whakapapa* of her *iwi*'s ancestors, which is discussed colloquially amongst Māori as "bones-iwi." The word *iwi* is derived from *koiwi*, meaning the bones of the trees and their resting place, which represent the forests where the ancestors once lived, long gone because of deforestation. "With every storm and landslide, more and more silt pollutes the river and the seabed of the estuary. Māori burial remains have also washed into the river with the landslides; they are eaten by fish which are later eaten by the local inhabitants, who are unknowingly consuming their ancestors."[25] Tuna, eels, *kina* (sea urchins), and *pāua* (abalone) consume toxins from runoff and the locals who eat these sea creatures suffer accordingly. The muddy waters also make it difficult for fish to swim, causing the *kahawai*, a local fish akin to salmon that is sacred to the tribe, to slowly diminish in number. According to Robertson,

> the seafood beds that are our *kāpata kai* or food cupboards are being buried. If we cannot access food, we become totally dependent on other food sources such as the global capital system of supermarkets. We cannot host [*whānau*] and therefore we suffer a great loss of *mana* for not being able to look after our environment sustainably and not being able to give our best food to our visitors.[26]

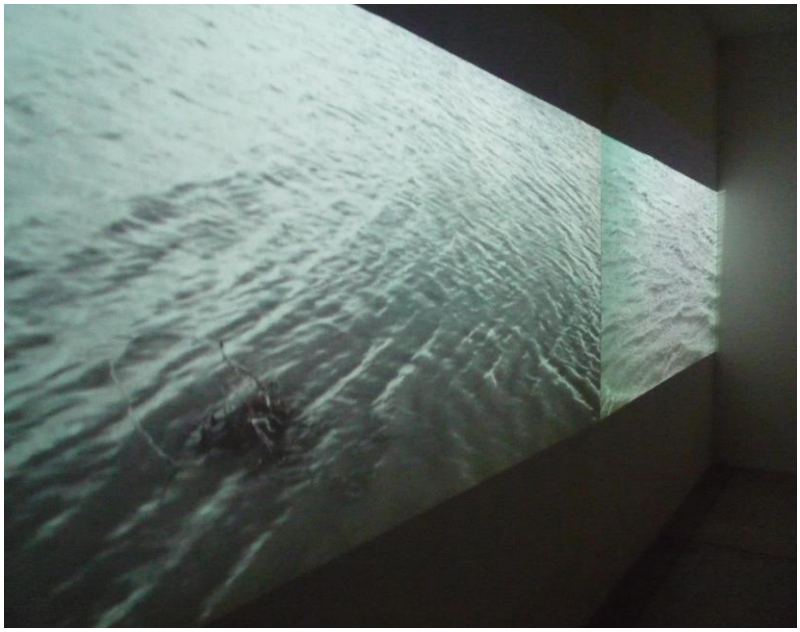

Figure 5. Natalie Robertson, *Pohautea 1–4* (detail), as installed in the exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain*, Le Portique, Le Havre, France. Courtesy of Jacqueline Charles-Rault

The Waiapu River was the subject of Robertson's two-channel video installation in *Pohautea 1–4* (Fig. 5). While her imposing black-and-white photographs conjured a stark and hostile environment, the colour videos presented soothing moving images of the surface of the river and its mouth. Like the calm after a storm, the two-channel video installation's perpetual movement was a video meditation. Cushions were placed in front of the screens to allow viewers to sit and contemplate the lulling of the waters. In these images of calm waters, Robertson created visual dialogues related to Indigenous land and knowledge. The viewer is once again reminded of the richness and abundance that the river brings to those who depend on it for their survival and way of life, and how fundamental it is to keep it free of pollution.

Figure 6. Natalie Robertson, *Ko Iwi – Bones*, part of the multimedia piece *Pohautea 1–4*, as installed in the exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain*, La Forme, Le Havre, France. Courtesy of Jacqueline Charles-Rault

The third work in the multimedia series, *Ko Iwi – Bones*, was exhibited in *La Forme*, a contemporary art gallery in Le Havre, and consisted of a series of still images from a video of tidal motion where the Waiapu River enters the sea. These freeze-framed images were presented in black and grey, and from a distance resembled metallic plates with abstract images

on them (Fig. 6). Upon close inspection, the viewer discovers that each image includes something resembling driftwood being washed over by the tide (Fig. 7). Robertson mounted over one hundred of these photographs onto the wall to obtain the overall effect of an abstract image in motion; the lulling and rippling of tidal movement seemed to sweep across the wall. The Māori consider the river mouth a special place to be, where the spirits of those who have passed travel on. In the images that Robertson exhibited, the river current meets the tidal motion of the sea and brings with it branches resembling bones from a tree buried in the sand.

Figure 7. Natalie Robertson, *Ko Iwi – Bones* (detail), part of the multimedia piece *Pohautea 1–4*, as installed in the exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain*, La Forme, Le Havre, France. Courtesy of Jacqueline Charles-Rault

In the final part of the installation, Robertson applied the words of a 19th century lament, *He Tangi Mo Pāhoe,* to a gallery wall (Fig. 8). Composed by Hone Rongomaitu of Ngāti Porou, it tells of a young man being overtaken by a river's rushing waters and dragged down to the rocky bed. When his body is found, it is likened to a stranded fish hidden amongst the driftwood. At the exhibition opening, Robertson read the chant aloud in Māori.[27] According

to Robertson, "chants were ways of retaining knowledge and knowledge systems. A chant that might be sung to a child might take twenty minutes to describe all the land features of a journey and how they came to be where they are now."[28] In discussing her work, Robertson said, "one of the reasons why I chose to work in video is to have the opportunity to include sound. It's also a way of having Māori language, of putting language into places that it might not be highlighted in."[29] This was certainly true of this exhibition, as the majority of its visitors had likely never heard or seen the Māori language.

Figure 8. Natalie Robertson, standing next to the text of *He Tangi Mo Pāhoe*, part of the multimedia piece *Pohautea 1–4* (2015), as installed in the exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain*, Le Portique, Le Havre, France. Courtesy of Jacqueline Charles-Rault

Through her work, Natalie Robertson continues to pose numerous questions as to who is accountable for human-made environmental catastrophes and who should take responsibility for cleaning them up. As lands erode, Pacific sea levels are rising, adding a greater sense of urgency to saving its land and rivers. Robertson believes that "art can safeguard against cultural, political, and historical amnesia. New media and photography and moving images

can be effectively deployed to represent issues facing land, sea, and sky."[30] Sharing such images online has become an effective way of raising awareness about environmental issues, both to Pacific and international audiences. Robertson gives voice to these slow, often silent catastrophes through her images. Her most recent exhibition, *Tātara E Maru Ana – The Sacred Rain Cape of Waiapu* at the Tairāwhiti Museum explores the erosion of the Waiapu River as well as its activities and inhabitants. Fundamental needs, such as food gathering and fishing, are represented as well as stories, laments, ancestral acknowledgement, and historical documentation of the river and its region over the past one hundred years. A ray of hope is provided through the poetic form of "a red tipped dawn" despite the tragedy of the river.[31]

Jacqueline Charles-Rault lectures in English at Le Havre Normandie Université in France and is a permanent member of the research group Le GRIC (Groupe de Recherche Indentités et Cultures). As a graduate of fine arts, she has always been passionate about the arts. Her research concentrates on contemporary Māori and Pacific art, paying particular attention to Māori women artists She has also curated a number of contemporary Pacific and Māori art exhibitions in France.

Notes

[1] Special acknowledgement and thanks to Natalie Robertson for her time and help with this paper.

[2] Robertson's parents, who are of Scottish and Māori decent, were both from large families. The elders in both their families, according to Robertson, held an important place within her parents' lives and respective cultures, and Robertson grew up acknowledging and respecting them. Her grandfather, David Hughes, with whom she was very close, played a fundamental role in Robertson's Māori education and political awareness. Having grown up in an entirely Māori environment on the East Coast, Hughes was a staunch advocate for the safekeeping of Māori land. During the 1950s, when the policy of assimilation was in full force, Hughes remained firm and loyal to his opinions. Robertson was still quite young when she began to be interested in her Māori origins and although she was familiar with and knew her grandfather's stories well, these weren't enough for her to be confident in proclaiming her Māori identity, especially as she didn't live on the tribal lands growing up. Referring to her childhood and growing up as a fair-skinned child in a mixed Pakeha and Māori environment, Robertson said, "In the era I grew up in, ethnicity was largely determined by perceptions based on skin colour and dominant race rather than cultural heritage. While I remember asking my grandfather to teach me Māori from when I was about 8 [years old], and also claiming my Māori heritage at school, this wasn't necessarily understood by those students who were identifiably Māori–and fair enough back in those days when racism was so overt in the school system, I wasn't the one being discriminated

against due to the colour of my skin." Natalie Robertson, email message to author, June 14, 2010.

[3] A marae consists of "a fenced-in complex of carved buildings and land that belong to a particular iwi (tribe), hāpu (sub tribe) or whānau (family)." https://www.newzealand.com/int/feature/marae-maori-meeting-grounds/ , 100% Pure New Zealand (website), accessed 17 May 2021. In this instance, marae also refers to how Māori regard their marae as *tūrangawaewae* (a place to stand and belong).

[4] Natalie Robertson, personal communication, Auckland, February 20, 2007.

[5] Natalie Robertson, email message to author, June 14, 2010.

[6] Jason Brown, "Uncle Tasman: The Trembling Current That Scars the Earth, 2007," April 2007, ed. Natalie Robertson, June 2008, "Pacific Rim Artworks," ZeroOne San Jose: A Global Festival of Art on the Edge & the Thirteenth International Symposium of Electronic Art (ISEA2006) August 7–13, 2006 (website), accessed April 6, 2009, http://2006.01sj.org/content/view/183/49/index.html. Brown notes that Robertson can be heard providing offstage commentary while driving through Kawerau and recounting the loss of so many young lives to cancer. I saw this as Robertson's *Kawerau Driveby* (2008) at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth, Aoteaora New Zealand, for the exhibition *Dateline*.

[7] The tourist industry in Aoteaora New Zealand took off around 1870 after the royal visit of the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Albert. The first visitors were primarily people from Great Britain taking part in a six-month cruise around the world. Places like Rotorua in the "Hot Lakes District" were extremely popular with tourists for their numerous geysers and deep lakes where the water temperature could reach 90°C. The first tourist guidebook for New Zealand was published in 1882. See Margaret McClure, "Tourist Industry," in *Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/tourist-industry.

[8] This followed extensive de-forestation that began in 1924. In 1924, extensive planting of pine trees was carried out in the Kaingaroa Plains to deliberately create a pulp and paper industry. In 1951 the New Zealand government decided that they were ready to sell the timber from the Kaingaroa Forest. "The Tasman Pulp and Paper Mill," Engineering New Zealand, accessed January 4, 2021, https://www.engineeringnz.org/programmes/heritage/heritage-records/tasman-pulp-and-paper-mill/.

[9] Brown, "Uncle Tasman." Brown's review includes witness accounts presented in evidence to the Central North Island Inquiry at the Waitangi Tribunal of 2005: "'A visit to the area today leaves me wondering how anyone could take a piece of paradise and turn it into hell. There is a stench that carries across the river to the homes of my aunties and uncles in Onepu; Waitahanui is surrounded by sludge and a pond of black water,' says Clem Park, a resident. He remembers swimming in Rotoitipaku as a child."

[10] Natalie Robertson, "Uncle Tasman - The Trembling Current that Scars the Earth (2008)," Natalie Robertson (website), accessed 15 December 2017 http://natalierobertson.weebly.com/uncle-tasman---the-trembling-current-that-scars-the-earth.html.

[11] Brown, "Uncle Tasman." According to Brown, "People Poisoned Daily is the name of one Greenpeace campaign, with an online exhibit of people affected by milling."

[12] Brown, "Uncle Tasman." When referring to the lake that replaced Lake Rotoitipaku, Brown writes: "New maps have already been printed giving a smaller, nearby lake the same name. Supposedly, this replaces the old name, Fox's Pond, a nickname applied by company officials and, apparently, picked up by cartographers."
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Isaac Davison, "Mill Gets 25-Year Pollution Consent," *The New Zealand Herald*, October 15, 2009. https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/mill-gets-25-year-pollution-consent/JX2U23RG7EU-ORVMKK2S575Y5MI/
[16] According to one of the many versions of the legend, there were four warrior mountains situated in the region known today as Tongariro National Park. They were called Mount Tongariro, Mount Taranaki, Mount Tauhara, and Mount Pūtauaki. In the same region there also resided a damsel mountain called Pihanga, who was very beautiful and all of the warriors were in love with her. One day, a huge battle broke out among the warrior mountains over who would claim the hand of the damsel mountain. The winner was Mount Tongariro. That night, the other mountains fled and the following day were frozen to their current locations by the sun. Mount Taranaki, the saddest and angriest of the mountains, headed towards the coast just as the sun was setting, but Mount Pouakai chained Mount Taranaki, forcing the warrior mountain to remain in New Plymouth next to the sea. The next day, following the flight of the other mountains, a torrent of water started to flow next to Mount Tongariro and filled the crevasse left by Mount Tarankaki. This became the Whanganui River.
[17] Natalie Robertson, "Uncle Tasman."
[18] Ibid.
[19] The exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain*, co-curated by Caroline Vercoe and Jacqueline Charles-Rault, was held simultaneously in the towns of Le Havre and Rouen in France in 2015. It brought together thirteen Māori and Pacific artists from New Zealand. The exhibitions ran from November 3, 2015 to December 19, 2015. An international conference was held at the University Le Havre–Normandy at the beginning of December 2015. Natalie Robertson presented her paper "The Slow Catastrophe of the Waiapu River" at the conference.
[20] Robertson has shown *Pohautea 1-4* in New Zealand and Germany since *Pacifique(S) Contemporain*.
[21] Natalie Robertson, "Takutai Moana - Rangitukia Hikoi (Hikoi Series) 0-14. 2016," Natalie Robertson (website), accessed September 28, 2020, https://natalierobertson.weebly.com/takutai-moana---rangitukia-hikoi-hikoi-series.html.
[22] Natalie Robertson, "The Slow Catastrophe of the Waiapu River," *Pacifique(S) Contemporain* Symposium (Le Havre, France: Le Havre University, 06/11/2015).
[23] Natalie Robertson, "From the Mouth of the Port to the Beak of the River, 2014," Natalie Robertson (website), accessed January 20, 2021, https://natalierobertson.weebly.com/from-the-mouth-of-the-port-to-the-beak-of-the-river-2014.html.
[24] McDonald worked as a photographer for the Dominion Museum at the beginning of the twentieth century and was involved in tourism. His best-known photographs were taken using gelatin dry plate negatives to obtain black-and-white photos while on field expeditions

with the ethnographer Elsdon Best from 1919 to 1923, along with Te Rangihīroa (Peter Buck) and Ngata. The Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington still holds a large collection of his negatives today. During his lifetime he took numerous photos of Māori people, many of which were probably used by the tourist industry. He also took photos of famous geysers erupting, such as Waimangu Geyser, which was active from 1900 to 1904 and a famous destination for tourists at that time. For a number of years Robertson's work evolved around documentary photography before she realised the weightiness of photographing Māori people as a photographer and artist. She now prefers to record the landscapes where her ancestors once dwelt. "I'd begun my photographic practice really working in portraiture and then documentary like the main styles of many photographers, and then I got involved in a project in a small predominantly Māori town and that project then developed over three years and I realised how important the role of the photographer is in taking photos of Māori people." In conversation with the author, Auckland, 20 February 2007

[25] Robertson, "The Slow Catastrophe of the Waiapu River," *Pacifique(S) Contemporain* Symposium. (Le Havre, France: Le Havre University, 06/11/2015).

[26] Robertson, "From the Mouth of the Port."

[27] The chant was explained in French in the exhibition pamphlet.

[28] Natalie Robertson, personal communication, Auckland, February 20, 2007.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Robertson, "The Slow Catastrophe of the Waiapu River," *Pacifique(S) Contemporain* Symposium (Le Havre, France: Le Havre University, 06/11/2015).

[31] "Tātara e maru ana – The sacred rain cape of Waiapu - Natalie Robertson," Tairawhiti Museum (website), accessed February 22, 2021, https://tairawhitimuseum.org.nz/exhibition/tatara-e-maru-ana-the-sacred-rain-cape-of-waiapu-natalie-robertson/. About the exhibition: "Centuries ago, Tamokai of the inland Te Aowera people spoke to his kinsman Kōkere and said 'Hoake tāua kit e Waiapu tātara e maru ana – Let us go to Waiapu, where the rain cape is thick.' With its reference to a woven rain cape, usually made of harakeke, this Ngāti Porou whakatauāki speaks of the shelter provided by the forested Waiapu valley. Today, her 'rain cape' is now threadbare due to deforestation more than a century ago. In response, Ngāti Porou have set forth the vision to revitalize Waiapu Kōkā Hūhua. This exhibition offers a record of an ancestral tīpuna landscape as it is today. Hope comes in the form of a red-tipped dawn – ta atā kura."