Toi Tū Toi Ora: Contemporary Māori Art
Nigel Borell with Moana Jackson and Taarati Taiaroa

The story of contemporary Māori art from the 1950s to the present day, with more than 200 artworks by 110 Māori artists, this is a powerful, dynamic new book.

‘Kia māia! This is the art book Aotearoa has been waiting for! It resets the potential of all our dreams and creates a powerful poutama to the future.’ — Witi Ihimaera

Māori art is unique among all art movements, and to Aotearoa New Zealand. Drawing on centuries of indigenous knowledge and skill, it reflects a Māori world view, life in this land and the debates that continue to shape it.

Based on the ground-breaking 2020–21 exhibition staged by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, and edited by the show’s curator Nigel Borell, Toi Tū Toi Ora: Contemporary Māori Art tells the story of contemporary Māori art from the 1950s to the present day, with more than 200 works by 110 Māori artists.

From carving to painting, video art to jewellery, body adornment to weaving, this is a powerful expression of the vast creativity and diversity within Māori art, linked across time and place through the Māori creation story and revealing profound connections to whakapapa, to whenua and to the spiritual world.

Every work is illustrated in full colour and described in illuminating captions that are bilingual in English and te reo Māori. A beautiful foreword by Moana Jackson and the author’s informative introduction share the history of contemporary Māori art within a kaupapa Māori worldview.

These are supplemented by a comprehensive chronology of contemporary Māori art by the exhibition’s assistant curator Taarati Taiaroa, and detailed biographies for every artist, written by expert curators and art historians.

Published by Penguin Random House NZ in partnership with Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, this is a major resource on toi Māori for anyone interested in the culture or history of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Nigel Borell says, ‘This publication reveals the distinct place Māori knowledge plays in understanding Māori art. It brings into focus the dynamism and wisdom of the Māori creation story as the ultimate Māori knowledge framework and this permeates throughout Toi Tū Toi Ora. Often art histories adhere to a chronology shaped by Western understandings of time, knowledge, and art traditions. This publication intersects that dominant paradigm to privilege a Māori world view as the first conversation or proposition in relation to encountering Māori art and its legacy.’
Head of Publishing at Penguin Random House Claire Murdoch says, ‘Toi Tū Toi Ora’ represents a great legacy and carries in its pages the knowledge and creativity of so many. Both simple and profound, it rewards hours spent reading and looking. I expect it to be in print for many years to come.’

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki’s Director Kirsten Lacy says, ‘This book is a significant resource, a marker in time and will be enjoyed for generations to come. It is an important achievement for Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and another step in our continuing journey, celebrating and showcasing the artistic achievements of Māori and New Zealand artists.’

‘A taonga that will be accessible by ngā hekenga a ngā kaitoi – the descendents of the artists – and for Māori o nāiānei – Māori of today.’ — Te Arepa Morehu, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki Head of Kaupapa Māori

‘This is a seminal work and my hope is that it will be seen as a gift to future generations in Aotearoa and around the world, inspired by the creativity of the ancestors living and ever present in the medium of Te Ao Māori contemporary art.’ — Helen Te Hira, Auckland Unlimited Director of Māori Outcomes

About the editor

Nigel Borell (Pirirakau, Ngai Te Rangi, Ngati Ranginui, Te Whakatohea) is an artist, curator, writer and educator. As Curator, Māori Art at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Nigel curated the ground-breaking 2020–21 exhibition ‘Toi Tū Toi Ora: Contemporary Māori Art’. Prior to that he was Associate Curator Māori at Auckland War Memorial Museum and has been a lecturer in Māori art history and museum studies in the University of Auckland Art History Department. He holds a Master of Fine Arts (Hons) from Elam School of Fine Arts in 2002. Most recently Borell was appointed Curator Māori at Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira. In 2021 he was awarded the inaugural Art Foundation’s ‘He Momo – A Moment In Time’ award for curating ‘Toi Tū Toi Ora’. Nigel received a 2022 New Year’s Honour recognising his services to Māori art.

Nigel Borell, and featured artists Reuben Paterson and Maureen Lander are each available for interviews. Please contact Priscilla Southcombe at Auckland Art Gallery for more information.

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