

Media Release  
Monday 19 March 2018

## Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki Celebrates Māori Artist Wi Taepa



IMAGE: Wi Taepa, *Ipu Moko*, circa 2011, Collection Pātaka Art + Museum

A major retrospective exhibition of senior Māori clay artist Wi Taepa will open at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki on Saturday 28 April.

*Wi Taepa: Retrospective* looks back over 30 years of the artist's practice and investigates how, through his work with clay, he has expressed a unique and contemporary artistic voice. The exhibition, developed in partnership with Pātaka Art + Museum, includes many key works from Taepa's career, sharing the breadth and diversity of his thinking and making.

The exhibition traces Taepa's progression from a background in carving and his grounding in mātāuranga Māori (Māori knowledge) through to the international residencies that have influenced his practice as an artist and arts educator.

Auckland Art Gallery Director Rhana Devenport says *Wi Taepa: Retrospective* registers an important moment for Auckland Art Gallery.

'This exhibition is an incredible opportunity for visitors to see the spectrum of Taepa's work, which is distinct in that it articulates a Māori understanding of clay practice informed by the artist's connection to both Māori genealogy and material innovation.'

'The Gallery is immensely proud to share this exhibition with audiences here in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland,' says Devenport.

Exhibition curator Nigel Borell adds, 'Taepa is a significant figure in New Zealand art, and his works have been collected the world over. We are incredibly fortunate to have been able to bring together such a strong range of works from the last 30 years that illustrate Taepa's evolving practice.'

The exhibition will be expanded upon with a range of public events, including an opening weekend floor talk and clay-making workshop.

*Wi Taepa: Retrospective* is accompanied by a new publication on Taepa's work that includes essays by Nigel Borell, Curator, Māori Art, Auckland Art Gallery, and Reuben Friend, Director of Pātaka Art + Museum.

*Wi Taepa: Retrospective* is free for New Zealand residents and runs until Sunday 2 September.

### Exhibition opening events

#### Sunday 29 April

##### 10.00am to 12 noon | **Wi Taepa: Workshop**

Do not miss this unique opportunity to participate in a special workshop with one of New Zealand's most respected figures in contemporary Māori clay artmaking.

Members \$75 | Non-Members \$125 (includes a one-year membership)

Price includes all materials and morning tea

Strictly limited to 20 people

##### 1pm | **Artist's Talk: Wi Taepa**

Join Wi Taepa for an exhibition walkthrough and conversation.

##### 3pm | **In Conversation: Nigel Borell with Ngatai Taepa**

Auckland Art Gallery Curator Nigel Borell is joined by artist and Kaihautu Toi Maori - Director of Maori Arts Massey University Ngatai Taepa for a tour of the exhibition.

### For images and interviews contact:

Samantha McKegg, Communications Officer, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

M +64 21 548 480

E [samantha.mckegg@aucklandartgallery.com](mailto:samantha.mckegg@aucklandartgallery.com)

W [www.aucklandartgallery.com](http://www.aucklandartgallery.com)

### Artist Bio:

Born in 1946, Wi Te Tau Pirika Taepa (Wi Taepa) is affiliated to Ngāti Whakaue, Te Arawa, Te Āti Awa. Taepa served in Vietnam and as a prison officer at Wellington's Wi Tako prison, before becoming a self-taught carver. During his employment as a social worker, he developed an interest in clay as an alternative to wood in teaching boys in reform institutions how to carve. Now known for his ceramic work, Taepa prefers a low tech approach – hand building and sawdust firing, using oxides and other clay slips. He also incorporates Māori design elements.

In 1992, he graduated from the Whitireia Polytechnic with a Diploma in Craft Design, and completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts at Wanganui Polytechnic in 1999. He has participated in many exhibitions in New Zealand and overseas, including NZ Choice (1994) in Santa Ana, United States; at Zimbabwe National Art Gallery (1995) in Harare; the Haka (1998) tour of the United Kingdom, and Kiwa (2003) at Spirit Wrestler Gallery, Vancouver, Canada. He is a founding member of Ngā Kaihanga Uku, the New Zealand collective of Māori clayworkers.

**Exhibition details:**

*Wi Taepa: Retrospective*

When: Saturday 28 April to Sunday 2 August 2018

10am – 5pm daily except Christmas Day

Where: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

**Admission:**

New Zealand residents FREE (with proof of residency)

Members and Members Guests FREE (with valid Members card)

Children 12 & under FREE

International adults \$20

International students \$17 (with ID)