



Aro ki te Wairua o te Hā: Spoken Spirit, Spirit Formed

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This piece is two videos. Part I, Aro ki te Wairua o te Hā, is set within native bush on the lands of Te Kawerau ā Maki. Videography, words and painting articulate my identity and journey as an Indigenous artist, activist and community psychologist. I begin with an abstract image that appears visually dislocated, fluid and non-complementary, inviting the audience to draw on senses to emancipate stories and spirit otherwise choked in Psychology and to make sense of the image – to try and create, light up and connect – thereby also inviting mystery, curiosity, confusion and misperception. In Part II, Ali, Rachel and I kōrero after having seen and felt Part I. My stories of Psychology, diving, painting and my Nan carry us through the role of unknowing and vulnerability when experimenting with form. I reflect on how painting is an assertion of mana motuhake and commitment to decolonisation. While this Abstract has reflected on content, I conclude with a 'Concrete' that reflects on form, before offering a recording by Dr Amitabh Rai.

KEYWORDS

Kaupapa Māori, Indigenous, spirit, painting, identity

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Part 1

Part 2

Review

2 | CONCRETE

This piece became two videos. Part I, *Aro ki te Wairua o te Hā* weaves sound and imagery to enact my identity and journey as an Indigenous artist, activist and community psychologist. Words created through journaling, *karakia*, poetry, *maramataka*, reflections and *whakataukī* are spoken or chanted in English or *te reo Māori* to carry the listener through a layered anger, indignation, confusion, yearning, unease, power and peace. Mistake and repetition foretell an emancipated sense of im/perfection and being held. This soundscape is accompanied by images of native bush and painting that themselves evoke the presence of a calm force alongside the turmoil of my experiences. Long pauses in the words make a space for this force, *wairua*, to especially show itself as the 'silence' allows one to more carefully hear bird song and watch the strokes of white liquid chalk on black card. Slowly, a form that at first appears as an abstract landscape materialises as light reflecting on my Nan's face. All along I have been accompanied by *Pāpatūānuku*, my *tīpuna* and *mokopuna*. They are one. Creating meaning in-between these different modes of sound and image, the video both cites and enacts Dr Moana Jackson's point that the power of Māori is innately relational. It invites an experience of connection beyond spoken words and lines drawn, it evokes *aro ki te wairua o te hā*.

Part II is a dialogue between Ali, Rachel and I about *Aro ki te Wairua o te Hā*. Loosely structured around our preformed questions of breath(lessness), body, performance, mystery and de/coloniality, the conversation follows the *wairua* offered by my responses. In doing so it enacts my commitments to not just the relational production of meaning but to unease, undoing and unknowing as generative – indeed necessary – for decolonising Psychology. For my decolonising commitments, the possibility of active collaboration is shown here, with the invitation for my peer reviewer to speak their thoughts and reflections - supplying much needed oxygen – “an act of freedom freeing” (Rai, 2021).

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