



ANIWANIWA

BRETT GRAHAM AND RACHAEL RAKENA

Ka riro he au heke, e kore e hoki ki tona matapuna ano.

(the current never returns to its source)*

Aniwaniwa is a collection of wakauiua with internal projections and sound components suspended from the ceiling; large carved sculptures holding memories of a place now submerged under water. This collaborative work by Brett Graham and Rachael Rakena has been in development for over three years. Graham became interested in working with Rakena after seeing her performative moving image work *Rerehiko* (2003) involving underwater filming. From the collaboration emerged another earlier work, *U.F.O.B.*, which was exhibited in *Zones of Contact: Biennale of Sydney* (2006) at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Aniwaniwa is based upon a specific historical event and local Aotearoa New Zealand geography, yet also continues the artists' reflection on the forced migration of the Pacific peoples explored in *U.F.O.B.* and earlier works by each artist. In the local context, *Aniwaniwa* highlights the submerged Waikato village of Horahora and uses flooding and immersion as a metaphor for cultural loss with specific reference to local iwi. It is a theme that has wide relevance in a time of global warming, with rising sea levels effecting the Pacific, but also many other coastal regions and cities. Participation at the Biennale of Venice, a slowly sinking city, provided an ideal forum for the watery nature of this work.

Māori identity is usually defined in terms of a relationship to land, as in the expression, tangata whenua. In many of Rakena's works however, this identity is explored as being in a state of flux, a fluidity that like the borders of a river, is constantly changing. Rakena has likened this fluidity to intangible cyberspace digital networks, and has explored water as a metaphor for people, communication and culture. *"As I worked with people in water, I found culturally specific relationships between Māori and water impossible to ignore. We are island people living in a vast ocean. We belong to water just as we belong to land."* Rakena explains.

Aniwaniwa has multiple meanings and connotations; it can evoke the blackness of deep water, storm clouds, a state of bewilderment, a sense of disorientation, and confusion as one is tossed beneath the waters, it can also refer to a rainbow, a symbol of hope. Aniwaniwa is also the name of a set of rapids on the narrowest point of the Waikato River.

The artists were initially interested in using the notion of 'submersion' as a metaphor for cultural loss, The 'submersion' of one's history had been the subconscious theme of many of the conversations Graham has had with both his father, respected sculptor Fred Graham, and grandfather. His father's childhood village of Horahora had been flooded with the creation of the hydroelectric power station at Karapiro in 1947. Significantly, many of the waahi tapu, or sacred sites of Ngati Koroki Kahukura were also lost at that time.

In 1911 the Waikato River was diverted at the Aniwaniwa rapids to create the Horahora Power Station. Graham's grandfather and many other local Māori of Ngati Koroki Kahukura were employed here. His stories about the power station were touched with nostalgia for a place that is now under water, existing only in the memory. As the newer, more efficient power station was built downstream at Karapiro, Horahora became obsolete and was flooded, more or less in perfect working order, to create Lake Karapiro. As it was deemed necessary to keep the station open for as long as possible to supply power to the national grid, it was still operational whilst in the act of being flooded – in fact one of the generators was unable to be shut down giving rise to the legend that Horahora refused to die (die the death of the hammerhead shark! in Graham's words). Many of the workers and their families were present at the time, witnessing their former workplace's demise. An old photo shows the words, 'Kia kaha ake ake, Graham 1947' (forever be strong), that his grandfather had written on one of the generators. As the waters rose, a karakia (blessing) was delivered and 'Po Atarau' was sung with family members all looking on, crying as their homes and power station were gradually being filled with water. Sixty years later, the artists invoked Graham's grandfather's words, and wrote upon the forms departing for their long sea voyage to Venice, 'Kia kaha ake ake' (Graham 2007).

Graham describes the development of the sculptural forms: *"The generators themselves became a focus for the suspended sculptures. Their location, above the viewer, was intended to disorientate one's perception, suggestive of the other meanings of Aniwaniwa. They are covered in a pattern that evokes the gnawed paths of insects, gouging through wood and hence the origin of the word 'whakairo', to carve, or literally, be like a maggot. This is reminiscent of the legend of Ruatēpūpūke, where the art of carving was itself retrieved from under the waters, from the sacred house of Tangaroa."*

Whereas Graham anticipated focusing on the machinery, or other images of disorientation, Rakena has chosen to look at the community itself in the filming of a village under water with villagers going about their daily chores. Each of the scenes offers an alternative reading. The woman trying to light the fire could be lighting it to keep the fires burning, or to keep warm, or to cook, but she is wearing mourning clothes. The man could be digging his garden or maybe a grave. The children might be going to school, or leaving for good. The woman bringing her washing in has not managed to dry it. Her washing is a reference to the original naming of Horahora where the infant Raukawa's clothes were spread out to dry. Raukawa grew up to become the eponymous ancestor of Ngati Raukawa, a powerful Tainui tribe. Generations later the place only exists under water. Women keep the hearth warm—a metaphor for a culture being quietly sustained. 'Ahi Kaa roa' literally means the 'long burning fire'. The fire refers to the occupation and therefore ownership of land, maintained through generations. Mana whenua status is based on long term occupation i.e. the home fires have been kept alive and burning and have never been extinguished. The phrase is about maintaining one's claim on the land. The fire no longer burns under water.

The villagers lives have been preserved, their actions that like history, are forever suspended in space and time in pools that defy gravity. *"I wanted to acknowledge peoples lives, the repeated activities of the people suspended forever as a memory floating, immersed in the lake of a disrupted river. They are not dead. They are symbols of a community still alive, still engaged in the activities of living, struggling to maintain their claim to the area. The repetition of actions that never achieve their goal shows the determination and continuation yet,"* says Rakena.

While the story is not of her tribal ancestry it also allows Rakena the distance to create narratives around the stories that have resurfaced, a re-imagining and evocation, with the fires of chief Waharoa's cremation of corpses running into rivers of blood. The constancy of river flow might be finite, our children and grandchildren may not ever know a river without contamination. While the genesis of the work comes from the mighty Waikato River with all of its mythology, the imagery is reflective upon the sustainability of our whole natural environment and the drying up of such natural water sources globally.

Alice Hutchison, Dr Brett Graham and Rachael Rakena

*Once an opportunity is lost it will never come again.



Aniwaniwa – te hokinga mai

It may appear somewhat audacious to attach the words 'te hokinga mai' (the return home), a phrase so closely aligned with homecoming of *Te Māori* the landmark travelling exhibition of taonga in 1986, to this project. In doing so we seek not to directly align these two very different projects realised some twenty years apart, but to celebrate the achievements of the *Aniwaniwa* project and the presentation of this mesmerising work by Brett Graham and Rachael Rakena within the illustrious 52nd Venice Biennale, the art world's oldest and foremost international biennale.

The presentation of *Aniwaniwa* as part of City Gallery's contribution to the 2008 New Zealand International Festival of the Arts is strategic, not only do we welcome the work from its successful showing at Venice and offer it to New Zealand audiences, we also underline our support of the artists and the project. Their earlier collaborative work *U.F.O.B.* (2006) was shown here within *Telecom Prospect 2007: New Art New Zealand*. In many ways *U.F.O.B.* was a precursor to *Aniwaniwa*, but it is also useful to recognise the differences between the two works, with *Aniwaniwa* being more directly rooted to a specific place and time (the Waikato village of Horahora and its powerstation), while also discussing more universal concerns of rising water levels, and dispossessed peoples. *U.F.O.B.* explored more broadly waves of migration of Pacific peoples from early waka explorations to the present day, and the evolving challenges and prejudice facing migrating peoples (whether re-location is forced or voluntary). It had a satirical, tongue-in-cheek attitude, from the co-joined acronyms of F.O.B. and U.F.O. in the title, to the sculptural forms based on Temuera Morrison's space ship from the Star Wars pre-trilogy, and the soundtrack which included strains of ukulele classics such as 'Pearly Shells'. In *Aniwaniwa* the tone of the work has shifted. The haunting soundtrack featuring the inimitable talents of Whirmako Black, Paddy Free and Deborah Wai Kahope accompanies moving images that speak of an intense disruption to land, the displacement of a community and the struggle to survive in the face of adversity.

Brett Graham, Rachael Rakena, the curatorial team of Alice Hutchison, Camilla Seibezzi and Milovan Farronato were joined by friends, whanau and supporters to take this ambitious project on its journey to the 52nd Venice Biennale. There were naysayer's who eyed their selection with suspicion,

and maintained that it couldn't be pulled off. Their participation in the Biennale was not 'through the back door' but through official channels. *Aniwaniwa* was entered into an open contestable part of the Biennale—the Collateral Events section. The Biennale curator, in this case Robert Storr, selected projects, and an invitation to participate was extended to the project's curator Alice Hutchison by the Biennale Directors. Selection is a highly competitive process, and while kudos may be seen to be bestowed on those projects selected, this is not accompanied by funds from Biennale coffers. The notice of inclusion came in January 2007, less than five months from the opening date. A venue needed to be sourced, the work completed, the logistics of shipping and installation negotiated, a media campaign and a catalogue prepared. Progress on all fronts proceeded apace, but the most mountainous challenge was securing the resources required within such a short time-frame. Even though the project was realised as economically as possible, its scale and many 'Venice-specific' challenges meant that costs were significant.

Generous support was garnered from a range of organisations and individuals (listed in the Acknowledgements section of this publication) and the artists took on substantial personal debt to make it happen. Over 23,000 people experienced the work during its four month run. Responses were rapturous and the work was a revelation to many, often being their first experience of contemporary art from Aotearoa. Expressions of interest to show the work flowed in, St. Petersburg, London, Tasmania, Toronto. I was lucky enough to be in Venice for the opening and to lend my fruit chopping and Prosecco pouring skills, which also meant I could see how this project stacked up against others, from national pavilions, to Robert Storr's curated sections, and other Collateral Events. *Aniwaniwa's* presence in Venice was comparatively modest compared with some of the gargantuan national pavilions and Collateral Events underwritten by vast budgets. The work, presented in a 700 year old salt store of cathedral-like proportions, had great integrity, poignancy and mana, and affected visitors in ways that many of the more glitzy presentations would have yearned for.

Heather Galbraith

For more information on *Aniwaniwa* in Venice, catalogue essays by Jonathan Mane-Wheoki and Professor Sean Cubitt, and additional acknowledgements go to www.aniwaniwa.org



Biographies

Dr Brett Graham (Ngati Koroki Kahukura, Ngati Pākehā)

Born in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand in 1967.
Lives and works in Auckland.

Graham was awarded his Doctorate in Fine Arts in 2005 from the University of Auckland and in the last decade has exhibited extensively, locally and internationally. In 2003, at the Adam Gallery, Victoria University, he created his doctoral exhibition titled *Kainga Tahī Kainga Rua* to expose the devastation caused by phosphate mining on the Micronesian island of Banaba. His work has been included in major national and international exhibitions including: *Telecom Prospect 2007: New Art New Zealand*, City Gallery Wellington, 2007; *Zones of Contact; Biennale of Sydney* at Museum of Contemporary Art, 2006; *Purangiāho Seeing Clearly*, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2001; *Parihaka: The Art of Passive Resistance*, 2001, City Gallery Wellington and the Asia Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery, 1996. His work is also featured in most major collections in the country, such as the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, and his public commissions include *Kahukura*, Tjibau Cultural Centre, New Caledonia, *Whaouhia* for the Auckland War Memorial Museum, 2006–7, *Kaiwhakatere*, Wellington and initiated by the Wellington Sculpture Trust, *Kouchatu Karohirohi* for the Victoria University Collection 1999, *Escape* for the North Shore Court House, 2002. Graham completed Bachelor of Fine Art, University of Auckland 1985–88; Master of Fine Art, University of Hawaii, 1989–91; Doctorate in Fine Art, University of Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, 2001–5.

Rachael Rakena (Ngāi Tahu, Nga Puhi, Ngati Pākehā)

Born in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand, 1969.
Lives and works in Palmerston North.

Rakena works primarily with video installation, often in collaboration. She lectures in Māori Visual Arts at Massey University in Palmerston North. Her work has been shown widely in major national and international exhibitions including: *Dateline: Contemporary Art from the Pacific*, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin, 2007; *Telecom Prospect: New Art New Zealand*, City Gallery Wellington, 2007; *Mo Tatou; Ngai Tahu Whanui*. Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, 2006–8; *Zones of Contact*; 2006 Biennale of Sydney at Museum of Contemporary Art; *Container Culture in ZeroOne: A Global Festival of Art on the Edge*, San Jose, California, 2006; *HIGH TIDE: currents in contemporary Australasian art*, Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland, and Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania, 2006; *Pasifika Styles*, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, UK, 2006–8; *PLAY: Portraiture and Performance in Recent Video Art from Australia and NZ* at Adam Art Gallery, Wellington and PICA, Perth, 2005–6; *L'art urbain du Pacifique* Saint Auvent, and San Tropez, France, 2005; *Taonga Whanau*, SOFA Gallery, Christchurch, 2005; *Face Value: video portraiture from the Pacific* at Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney, and Museum of Brisbane, 2005; *The Greenhouse: multimedia art from New Zealand* at Medienwechsels 3, Frankfurt, Germany, 2004; *Lightscape in SCAPE 04*, Cathedral Square, Christchurch, 2004; *Te Puāwai o Ngāi Tahu* at Christchurch Art Gallery, 2003; *Whare* in SCAPE 02, Christchurch, 2002, and Adelaide Festival, 2004; *Traffic: crossing currents in indigenous photomedia* at the Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, 2003; *Techno Māori: Māori Art in the Digital Age* at City Gallery Wellington, 2001.

The soundscape features two of Māoridom's most established and celebrated singers, Whirimako Black and Deborah Wai Kapohe alongside Paddy Free of electronica duo Pitch Black. Paddy Free: sound design and engineering; Whirimako Black: original lyrics and vocals; Deborah Wai Kapohe: vocals.

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Ki a koutou nga purapura ora, na koutou te kaupapa 'Aniwaniwa' i tautoko, tena koutou.

We wish to acknowledge the many people who have contributed generously and worked tirelessly to assist *Aniwaniwa* in its journey to Venice. At the beginning family and friends encouraged us to pursue this dream and supported us with their aroha, time, energy and resources. An especially big thank you to Marina McCartney and Pip Rakena for making sure we never abandoned the dream. They were joined by Alison Bartley of Bartley and Company Art; Jenny Todd of Two Rooms Gallery; staff and students of Te Putahi a Toi, Massey University.

The project momentum gathered speed with some most welcome patronage; we appreciate the contribution made by Byblos; Centreport; Creative New Zealand; Sue Fisher; Ruth and Rob Foreman; Allan & Christine Hedlund; Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga; Massey University; Ombra; Te Puni Kōkiri; Kevin and Rowena Roberts; Seresin Estate; Saatchi and Saatchi; Tainui; and The Todd Trust.

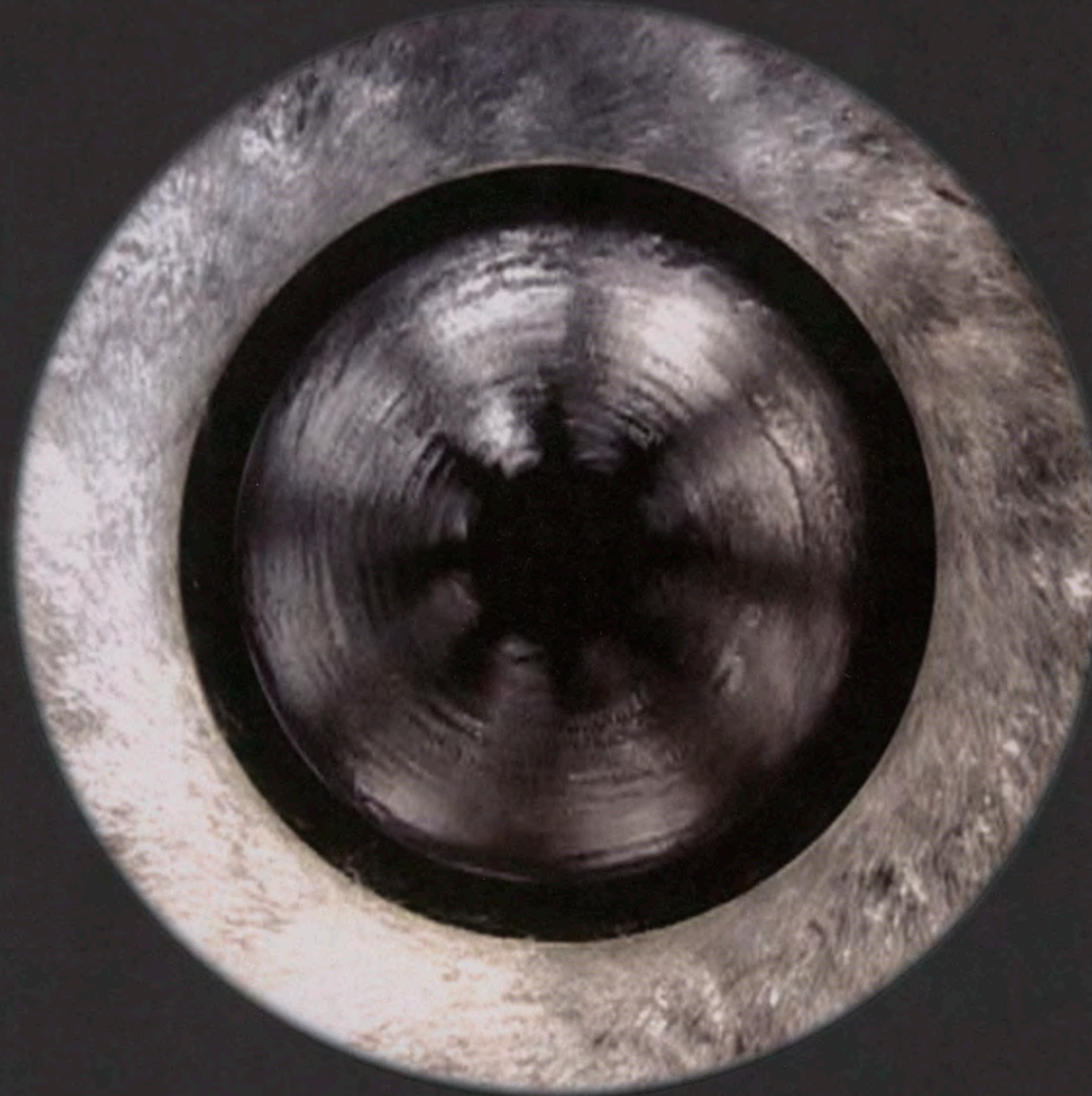
We were fortunate to receive special contributions from musicians, artists, vocalists, writers, performers, divers, waka and production crew, and suppliers—their generosity and goodwill helped this project enormously. The video production featured the work of underwater cameraman Dion O'Connor, and performers; Hori Barber, Ngahina Hohaia, Justin Kawana, Jordina Kokiri, Darnell Marsters, Hone Morris, Tina Ngata, Awarangi Gray Nicholls, Sharon Paewai, Todd Horowai Parker, Alex Ratu, Jacob Tapiata, Taiawhio Tapiata, Morehu Teohaere, Jasmine Timu -Te Ture; the production assistants; Aimee Stevenson and Marc Kawana; and team, Reweti Arapere, Erena Baker, Asher Newbery, Kelvin Kara, Tawhai Rickard, Amy Van Luijk; divers: Jhanitra Gavala, Dave Haturini, Neville Heihei, Dennis Hopkins, Tim Horgan, Joshua Millan and Dive HQ Palmerston North. We thank you all.

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A special thanks to all of those from Horahora who shared so much of their knowledge and memories.

Brett Graham, Rachael Rakena, Alice Hutchison and the Venice curatorial team



Aniwaniwa at the 52nd Venice Biennale was curated by Alice Hutchison, Camilla Seibezzi and Milovan Farronato. *Aniwaniwa* was shown as a work in progress at Te Manawa Museums Trust, 2006.

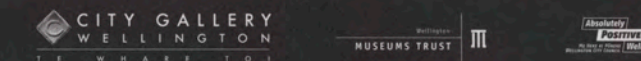
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