



Brett Graham *Maungārongo ki te Whenua, Maungārongoki te Tangata* 2020

Resource Card **Brett Graham: Tai Moana Tai Tangata**

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

Resource Card

Education Programme: *Brett Graham: Tai Moana Tai Tangata*

About the Exhibition

Brett Graham's exhibition *Tai Moana Tai Tangata* addresses the architecture of colonial warfare, the language of war memorials, and historic political pacts between Tainui and Taranaki iwi.

Graham's white cast sculpture *O'Pioneer* is based on a gun turret from the armed steamer *Pioneer*, which was commissioned by the New Zealand government to invade the Waikato in 1863. The form is clad—or disguised—in a cast-relief ornamental pattern that recalls the 'royal icing' used to decorate Queen Victoria's wedding cake in 1840. Both of the *Pioneer's* original gun turrets have been transformed into war memorials, one in Ngārawahia (addressing the New Zealand Wars) and the other in Mercer (addressing World War I).

Graham's black carved sculpture *Maungārongo ki te Whenua Maungārongo ki te Tangata* combines the forms of a pātaka (a treasure house) and a wagon. This mobile pātaka suggests Māori strategies of resistance to the disruption brought by colonisation, including the practice of delivering food and water to Pākehā surveyors and road builders engaged in the land confiscation process—a confusing gesture asserting sovereignty and manaakitanga. The carving style is based on the *Motonui Panels*, the historical pātaka panels now housed in Puke Ariki. Carved sometime between 1750 and 1820, the *Motonui Panels* were buried in a swamp for safekeeping during intertribal warfare. Discovered in 1972 and illegally sold to a Swiss collector, they were the subject of an extensive repatriation campaign, and were acquired by the New Zealand government and returned to iwi as part of Waitangi settlements.

Graham's white weatherboard sculpture *Monument* is an anti-monument to the Great War, made to remember 11 June 1918, when Te Puea Herangi and Waikato Māori made a stand against the conscription that had been imposed on them. Graham's 'monument', however, is in the style of a block fort from the Waikato Wars (1863–4), a pioneer's house, or a redoubt enclosure built to

protect frontier property. All are symbols of the invasion of the Waikato and the reason Te Puea had objected to conscription, her tribe having been rendered landless fifty-three years earlier.

Pre-Visit Discussion and Activity

What monuments you have seen? Where are they? What do they commemorate? What features do they have?

Research memorials in Aotearoa

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/map/memorials-register-map#map>

Vocabulary

Plaster Casting—a sculptural process that employs a mould, into which liquid plaster is poured and allowed to set, then the mould removed.

Whakairo—Māori carving, in wood, stone, or bone.

Monument—a statue, building, or other structure erected to commemorate a notable person, event, or site.

Post-Visit Activities

Reflect on your visit. What did you see and do at the Gallery? Which artworks did you find interesting? Why? What did you notice about how Brett Graham made his work?

Write a story inspired by one of the sculptures you saw at the Gallery. Will your story be set in the past, present, or future? Where will your story take place? What characters will it feature? What will happen?

Compose a poem about memories of your home, local area, or whenua.

Look at more examples of Brett Graham's art.

www.brettgraham.co.nz

Learn more about NZ wars.

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/war/new-zealands-19th-century-wars/introduction>