

# nested nows

suzy costello 2021



Here I am

this is personal  
an exploration

I am the lived body  
and the living body  
intertwining in a now of temporal textures

a moment of becoming  
in a topology of fractals  
that will never repeat

this topography is my~our space  
our place  
here



*Figure 1 Mountain, Forest, and Sea: (2021). Wood, rocks, pastel and paper.*

## Land is You are I am

me and you  
let's discover these temporal  
textures of here and now

the dynamics of outer and inner  
shared and flowing between us  
re-constituting  
like parts reassembled  
and woven together  
across the broken symmetry of time

anticipated futures  
retained pasts  
exist here  
nested in this primal now  
buried within the land  
that feeds us



*Figure 2 Detail from Mountain, Forest, and Sea (2021). Stones.*

June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021 .Tangata Whenua and Material Traces

I've been thinking about Shannon's suggestion to ask permission from tangata whenua to collect natural materials from the environment where I live. I'm not even sure who to ask, so I need to investigate this further. I will visit Ellie the local historian who has developed relationships with Te Āti Awa, our local tangata whenua.

In the meantime, it feels as if a new veil has been placed over the materials on the seashore and in the forest. In the past I have always asked permission directly from the natural object and promised to return the material back to its site. However, by trying to overlay the principle of tangata whenua into my practice, it seems this direct connection between nature and me is being altered somehow, as if there is something happening in the space of my urge to interact with the material. So, until I receive permission from tangata whenua, I will explore this space of impressions and perceptions and material traces left by the natural objects.



*Figure 3 Impressions of Burnt Wood (2021). Charcoal and tissue paper.*



*Figure 5 Impressions of Mountain, Forest, and Sea (2021). Tissue paper, charcoal, thread, tape, and plywood*



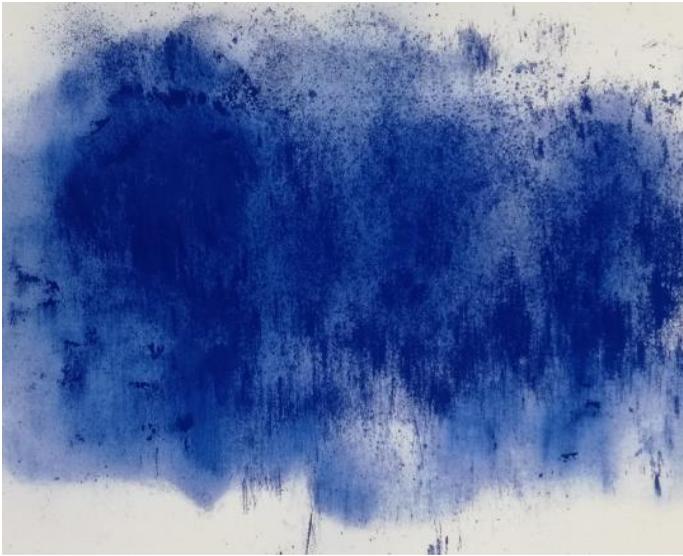
*Figure 6 Impression of Forest (2021). Tissue paper and thread.*

## Patterns emerge

our eyes blink  
we synchronise to pulses

emerging fluctuations of  
fractals spontaneously group  
into patterns that group  
into patterns that  
group into patterns

beyond time and space  
they are a  
nesting of nows



*Figure 4 Detail from Mountain, Forest, and Sea (2021). Pastel and paper.*

*"Through emotions, the past persists on the surface of bodies. Emotions show us how histories stay alive, even when they are not consciously remembered; how histories of colonialism, slavery, and violence shape lives and worlds in the present". However, emotions can also offer new paths forwards. Ahmed suggests emotions "open up futures, in the ways they involve different orientations to others". She cautions us, "It takes time to know what we can do with emotion" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 202).*

*"What moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place. Hence movement does not cut the body off from the "where" of its inhabitation, but connects bodies to other bodies: attachment takes place through movement, through being moved by the proximity of others. (Ahmed, 2004, p.11)*

*"Woven like a tapestry from the lives of its inhabitants, the land is not so much a stage for the enactment of history, or a surface on which it is inscribed, as history congealed. And just as kinship is geography, so the lives of persons and their histories of relationships can be traced in the textures of the land" (Ingold, 2000, p.150)*

*Space is relational. "A lot of what I've been trying to do over the all too many years when I've been writing about space is to bring space alive, to dynamize it and to make it relevant, to emphasize how important space is in the lives in which we live, and in the organization of the societies in which we live" (Massey).*

*Sharing his sorrow for the loss of this "moist, ancient forest...its myriad plant and animal species constantly crumbling leaves, accumulating nutrients and keeping decay in pace with growth", Park laments, "as one with an eye for nature, I find it lonely and full of melancholy" (Geoff Park, pp165-169).*

*Listen to the tree; it tells you where it wants to go (John Naka).*

*A bonsai is a microcosm containing within it, unchanged in everything but size, the mystery of the universe (Colin Lewis)*



*Figure 5 The Space Between (2021). Pastel and wood.*

July 19<sup>th</sup> 2021. Meeting Tangata Whenua

Following Jill's suggestion I approached Myra Hunter, who is Kaiwhakahaere (organiser) or Kaitiaki (carer) at Te Tatau o Te Pō ('Door to the night') in Alicetown. Myra lives down the road from me and our families belonged to Days Bay Playcentre (although not at the same time). The marae opened in 1933. It connects ancestrally with the waka Tokomaru and Aotea, the maunga Pukeatua, and the awa Te Awakairangi.

We discussed what it means to use natural materials and while I wasn't harming anyone or anything, Myra felt it best if I left the materials where they were. I asked what tangata whenua meant to her and Myra explained it as "making a place to bring people together". Oh, that took my breathe away; it is humble and filled with a caring for others. It wasn't about the possession of land for land's sake but as a place to hold the aroha of her people.



*Figure 6 Space (2021) Pastel.*

August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Artist Matt Pine (1941-2021)

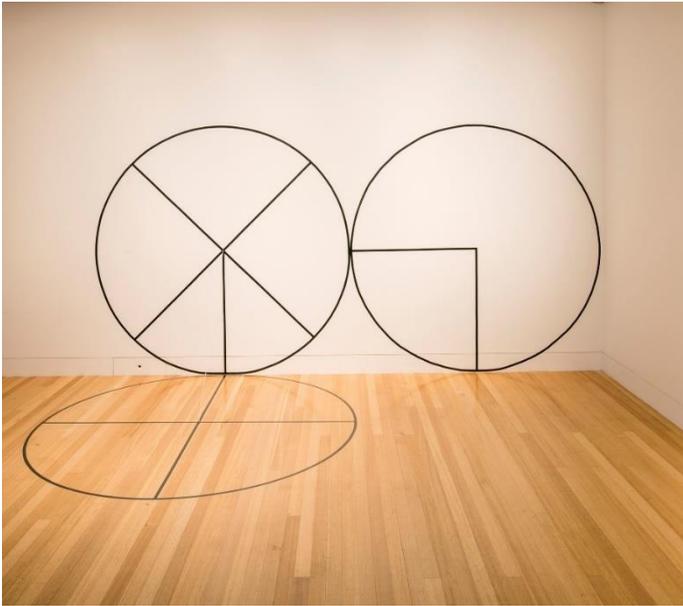
(Te Āti Haunui-a-Pāpārangī, Ngāti Tūwharetoa Te Āti Awa)

Matt's art "eliminates all non-essential features to find a subject's very essence." (Te Papa). This is no understatement as Matt's aesthetic is really really pared back. Quite stunningly so.

Matt's early works used everyday materials like aluminium pipe and black tape to create minimalist, site-specific works that explored a sense of place and architecture. *Line of Circles* was made in 2009. It is both simple and complex as if an understanding of the subject's essence is on the tip of your tongue yet still hard to articulate. I am intrigued by this conundrum minimalist art invokes.

Matt has drawn 3 circles in tape: two equal sized circles positioned on the wall, touching the floor and meeting rim to rim; and a third larger circle drawn on the floor to connect with the left circle on the wall. Each circle is divided into different ratios and these internal divisions provide directional lines to link the circles, but it feels as if a line is missing?

Is the junction between wall and floor a horizon line? Does the vertical wall represent the place of living and the horizontal floor a place of resting, a shadow world? Circles describe cycles and revolutions; are these of our lives, the cosmos, wheels of industry? Do the circles' internal lines represent divisions of time and space or something else? I struggle to understand the work until reading this description of Matt's later works as "an ongoing series of personal laments and memorials for his whanaunga (relatives) killed during World War II". These works give voice "to the toll of human-induced crises on people, land and ecologies" (Auckland Art Gallery).



*Figure 7 Line of Circles, Matt Pine (2016). Tape. Sourced Te Papa*

## Territoriality

here I am  
demarcating my space  
my domain my home  
fences real and imagined  
construed constructed and fought over  
land that is named and claimed from others  
who named and claimed from others  
histories congeal in the texture of this land  
histories that are complex

but it is plain to see this treaty of partnership  
has been dishonoured  
privilege bestowed on the children of those who  
stole  
while others wept  
and the land stripped of its ancient moist forest



*Figure 8 Impression of Mountain (2021). Tape.*

August 10<sup>th</sup> 2021. Artist Brett Graham  
(Ngāti Koroki Kahukura)

Brett's large-scale sculptural work shown here is from his recent exhibition *Tai Moana Tai Tangata*, held at New Plymouth's Govett-Brewster Art Gallery exhibition. It shows an exquisite technicality of whakairo and a simplicity of form. Like his previous works, it asks us to image "what our future might look like if we better understood the past" and to reflect on why we privilege histories whose "constructions rely on a resistance to remembering and rearticulating Indigenous agency" (Art News Forum).

Speaking to place and site, Brett engages with landscapes and their narratives. Curator Anna-Marie White (Manukorihi, Te Āti Awa) explains the show focuses on "the relationship between Taranaki and Tainui Māori, and on Te Kīwai o te Kete, the pact of solidarity they forged during the New Zealand Wars. The title of *Tai Moana Tai Tangata* was taken from a remark Ngāti Toa rangatira Te Rauparaha made to Te Wherowhero, who would become the first Māori King: 'Ka pari te tai moana, ka timu te tai tangata' (When the ocean tide rises, the human tide recedes)."

Brett's works hold an authority that is unequivocal. They ask me to acknowledge the suffering instruments of warfare have inflicted on indigenous communities throughout the world. What does it mean that my ancestor came to New Zealand with gun in hand to defend the Empire and spade in hand to claim the land?



*Figure 9* Maungarongo ki te Tangata, Brett Graham 2020. Wood. Photo by Neil Pardington.

## Tangata Tiriti I am

it has been a painful journey  
this reckoning

a steady gaze required  
to see suzy~me  
as Pākehā Privileged  
as Coloniser Disenfranchiser  
with an avarice for land  
a Destroyer of ancient forests

it began as a quiet seeping  
out of my body  
out of the land  
water rising  
to submerge me  
be still suzy  
allow yourself to feel  
allow the water to settle and recede ...

... I have found  
my place my iwi  
grown from the seed of  
tiriti o waitangi  
planted by tangata whenua  
to ensure we weren't lost  
in this foreign land  
to give us  
a place to belong

kia ora me te aroha

te toto o te tangata, he kai;  
te oranga o te tangata, he whenua

Māori whakataukī of unknown source



Figure 10 Placenta, Land, but Nowhere to Stand. Robyn Kahukiwa (1987)  
Auckland Art Gallery