

Karere ana, taapapa ana, 2020
single channel video with sound
1:35min
Featuring: Te Awahina Kaiwai-Wanikau and Waimarama Tapaita Bright
Lyrics: Kurt Komene
Cinematography: Adam Luxton
Production: Michael Bridgman, Shaun Waugh and Fraser Walker

GALLERY THREE

Fipwharaura II, 2020
pigment inks on Hahnemühle photorag ultra smooth paper
Courtesy of the artist

Korokoro, 2020
pigment inks on Hahnemühle photorag ultra smooth paper
Courtesy of Stephanie and Sjoerd Post

Maikuku, 2020
pigment inks on Hahnemühle photorag ultra smooth paper
Courtesy of Simon Morris and Nicola Shuttleworth

Pakahukahu, 2020
pigment inks on Hahnemühle photorag ultra smooth paper
Courtesy of Trish Clark

Karere ana, nā Kurt Komene, 2020
painted text

Clockwise from main entrance

GALLERY TWO

SHANNON TE AO KA MUA, KA MURI

The exhibition by Shannon Te Ao begins with a moment of reflection. In his film *Karere ana, taapapa ana* (2020), two sisters are seen leaving a tragic event. Resembling a scene from a classic road movie, they drive as they process what has happened through waiata; perhaps seeing for the first time the way they are inherently connected to the world around them.

Te Ao's photographic series plays out in the same kind of decelerated, reflective space. Similarly, in the painted text *Karere ana* (2020), created in collaboration with Kurt Komene, we are left to conjure our own moment of reflection, prompted by a series of distilled phrases that observe the patterns of life through other living things — in this case, birds at sunrise.

The whakatauki "ka mua, ka muri" speaks to the ways in which we move forward in the world, supported by the guidance of past and ancestors. Through a series of reflective moments, Te Ao reminds us how this understanding is vital in helping us face future challenges. We don't know what's going to happen around the corner, and with this exhibition, Te Ao reminds us that we've never known this more clearly than right now.

Showing for the first time in Aotearoa, *Ka mua, ka muri* was originally co-commissioned for two Canadian galleries, Oakville Galleries, Toronto and Remai Modern, Saskatoon. The artist would like to acknowledge Creative New Zealand, Kurt Komene, and the generous lenders to this exhibition.

6 March – 23 May 2021

Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery
420 Titirangi Road, Titirangi
Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland
teuru.org.nz

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Shannon Te Ao, production still, 2020

Shannon Te Ao: I am tied to the centre of the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. Our great lake Taupō-nui-a-Tia and the mountain ranges of Tongariro plot my tribal location. These days, driving north from Wellington for several hours eventually leads me to the Rangipo Desert. Set between the Kaimanawa Ranges on the east and the mountain ranges of Ruapehu, Ngāuruhoe and Tongariro on the west, this region marks the southern border of Ngāti Tūwharetoa lands. An approximately 60 kilometre stretch of highway cuts through an inland volcanic plateau, peppered with hundreds of electrical pylons that follow the road and inform a stark and barren vastness. Most notably, this area is managed by the New Zealand Army, and is used as a training facility. At times, I've seen plumes of smoke in the distance—presumably fallout from a detonated charge. Something is compounded here. The reality of this landscape and how it signals a returning.

Just above the northern arc of the lake, I exit the highway. On the way to a different kind of returning. Usually at the beginning or the end of a long weekend visit, I'll stop by to pay respects to my father who is laid to rest near the small village of Mōkai. The setting is completely rural, apart from the masses of infrastructure that support a geothermal power station that the region is also noted for. The urupā is now encircled by privately farmed lands, some owned and operated by local hapū—some not.

All of this gives rise to a heightened sense of how I feel both connected and disconnected. Somehow the ambivalence I carry within me is mirrored in what I see outside.

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Taapapa ana taku ara o te ora, waewae ana te mauri tini tangata. The pathway of my life is laid out, and traversed by the essential energy of many, many people.

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Matariki Williams: Shannon, your surname is made up of the 'A' and 'O' categories, the junior and senior relational classifications of Māori linguistics. When combined, they encompass the whole Māori world. Night, day, death, life.

Your name reminds me of Te Whiti o Rongomai's whakatauaāki, "Ko te pō te kaihari i te rā. Ko te mate te kaihari i te oranga."

Night is the bringer of the day. Death is the bringer of life.

Te Whiti was a leader of the Parihaka settlement where the people practiced passive resistance in the face of insatiable colonial hunger for land. These forces eventually razed Parihaka to the ground, imprisoned the men and sent them southward, and assaulted the remaining women and children.

This is but one of the many roads our people have been forced to travel.

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MW: My siblings and I are children of an army man, and when we were living in the small military town of Waiouru, our returns home to iwi lands in Rūātoki would traverse the windy paths of the Desert Road through the North Island's Central Plateau.

When I was very young, my older siblings told me of a spider that lived in the gully of a bend on the Desert Road. A giant spider.

"Can you see it?"

"Where?! Where?!"

"Oh. You missed it."

For years I strained to see the gully-dwelling giant, leaning so hard against the window I thought our van would tip. I never did see it. I still look for the spider, though I know I'll never find it.

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MW: Shannon, your work always has me thinking of death. Perhaps it reveals a default to the darkness I never knew I had. Maybe it is the lamentation of women, bodily excising their pain, which calls me to the dark.

These women, you know the ones, are veiled in black and pare kawakawa. They are the whānau pani draped around the tūpāpaku of their loved one. Beckoning people onto the marae, not with a karanga, but with their wails of mourning.

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Karere ana mai te reo powhiri ki ngā manu e korihi mai nei i te ao awatea. The voice of welcome bellows to the birds singing as dawn breaks.

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MW: Shannon, for me too, these roads have gathered many stories.

"Remember that time we saw a pig freshly-killed in the middle of the road and koro such-and-such told us to pull over so we could take the pig?"

This, too, is the road we take, when they call us home, before body and wairua separate.

The rest of us beleaguered by three days of tangihanga on our feet: cooking, cleaning and harirū with the pressing of noses. They are the three days heading toward a final send off and a feast fit for royalty.

Night falls and the wails turn to waiata, seeing us into a new dawn.

Shannon, these waiata echo with us in the days after whānau, from far-flung cities and worlds, leave again after their fleeting returns. The hard part is the differences that widen between them and the home fires with every passing year. It is the car ride home, when you're alone with company, their presence a comfort but not comfort enough to let your pain flee your mouth like your wailing nannies do.

The hardest of all is the knowing and the unknowing. The realisation that the time has come for you to be the aunty wailing, and the Koro directing the van. We take these roads and arrive as the passers of knowledge, future generations waiting to learn from us.

We are the echo of the past, the father and the mother.

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Tai timu! Tai pari! Rere noa e iii! The tide ebbs! The tide flows! It flows on endlessly!

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Lyrics by Kurt Komene. Originally published online by Remai Modern in association with the exhibition Shannon Te Ao: Ka mua, ka muri, August 6 2020 – January 3 2021.

Matariki Williams (Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Hauiti, Taranaki, Ngāti Whakauae) is Senior Curator Mātauranga Māori at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and the co-editor of *ATE Journal of Māori Art*. She is also co-author of the award-winning publication *Protest Tautohetohe: Objects of Resistance, Persistence and Defiance*. Her writing has been featured in multiple publications including *frieze*, *e-Tangata*, *Pantograph Punch*, *The Spinoff*, *PhotoForum*, and *ArtZone*. She is a Trustee of the online critical arts writing site *Contemporary HUM*.

Shannon Te Ao (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Wairangi, Te Pāpaka-a-Māui) was born in Sydney in 1978. He holds a BFA from the University of Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts and an MFA from Massey University Wellington. Other recent solo exhibitions include: *what was or could be today (again)*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery (2021); *my life as a tunnel*, The Dowse Art Museum, Wellington (2018); *With the sun aglow, I have my pensive moods*, Edinburgh Art Festival, Scotland, and Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts, Auckland (2017); *Tenei ao kawa nei*, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu (2017). In 2016, Te Ao was awarded the Walters Prize and is a Senior Lecturer at Whiti o Rehua School of Art, Massey University.

Kurt Komene (Te Ātiawa, Taranaki Whānui) is a weaver, composer and lecturer at Massey University's Te Kaihautu Toi Māori, College of Creative Arts. Komene is known for his specialist knowledge of te reo Māori and his skills as an orator and performer.