

Mana Whenua

12 February 2022 – April 2022

Wormhole Gallery and Studio, Edgecumbe



Curated by Sarah Hudson (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Pūkeko, Ngāi Tūhoe)

Featuring work by Ayesha Green (Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Kahungunu), Sarah Hikuroa (Ngāpuhi, Waikato, Ngāti Maniapoto), Nikau Hindin (Ngāi Tūpoto, Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi), Ana Iti (Te Rarawa), Kahu Kutia (Ngāi Tūhoe), Sian Montgomery-Neutze (Muaūpoko, Ngāi Tara), Bronte Perry (Ngāpuhi), Nathan Pōhio (Waitaha, Kātī Māmoe, Ngāi Tahu), Bridget Reweti (Ngāi Te Rangi, Ngāti Ranginui), Raukura Turei (Ngāitai ki Tāmaki, Ngā Rauru Kitahi), and Cora-Allan Wickcliffe (Ngāpuhi, Tainui/Alofi, Liku)

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

While food provides the blood in our veins, our wellbeing is drawn from the land and soils

The Mana Whenua project, organised by Sarah Hudson, features 11 contemporary Māori artists who work with whenua conceptually and physically. Sarah wrote to Ayesha, Sarah, Nikau, Ana, Kahu, Sian, Bronte, Nathan, Bridget, Raukura, and Cora-Allan in 2020 with questions about their individual practices. She sent an original artwork, blank pieces of paper, and some special ingredients for art making: honey, gum from rākau, and small chunks of coloured earth from her local area [Ngāti Awa, Whakatōhea, and Ngāi Tūhoe]. The artists were asked to work with the materials to paint a postcard that could be returned to Sarah with the answers to her questions.

Along with earth pigment paintings on paper and aute, the Covid-appropriate, snail mail-based wānanga collected words about working with dirt. The findings were published in a 55-paged dusky pink book that has introduced many to the potential and vitality of whenua as an art collaborator. It stands alongside work being done by Kauae Raro Research Collective¹ and is evidence that Māori earth pigment practices are not locked in the past. Contemporary Māori earth pigment practices have moved since Mana Whenua was published in 2020, and this is a sign of its vitality. Museums and galleries are formally recognising the present practice and its historical context, and most importantly, the mātauranga continues to develop in the hands of the people. All around Aotearoa, people are connecting with the soils that have nurtured them. They find colour, texture, whanaungatanga, and reciprocity.

We are excited to show the original paintings for the first time at Wormhole, alongside the mātauranga collected in Sarah's publication. The rich, crusted surfaces of the paintings tell stories of whenua, connection, and reclamation. It feels good to host them in Edgecumbe on Ngāti Awa whenua. In this way, the pigments come back home and their stories can connect with the people here.

Mauri ora!

¹Kauae Raro Research Collective was founded in 2019 by Sarah Hudson (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Pūkeko, Ngāi Tūhoe), Lanae Cable (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Pūkeko, Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Maru ki Hauraki), and Jordan Davey-Emms (Ngāti Pākeha). Kauae Raro is dedicated to researching and sharing mahi which looks at whenua as an art material, a component of ceremony, for personal adornment and as rongoā. Kauae Raro is focused on the retention and promotion of mātauranga Māori around earth pigment - "a taonga to which we belong to as tangata whenua."