

About Tracey Tawhiao

As a contemporary Māori artist working within Aotearoa, New Zealand, I investigate what is meant by spirituality or wairua in my art practice, and why Māori art is both a practice and a philosophy that can revive the spirit. I explore my connection to the natural world and the primordial elements to define what is meant by an indigenous psyche. Steeped in the same wairua of customary Māori art, I am in the realm of imagining, feeling and activating a force from within. I project non-physical images/ideas into the physical world. Being in the realm of wairua Māori informs my art practice despite the impacts of colonisation. Enacted through whakapapa (genealogical connection) to the natural world, my art practice is a pathway to reviving an unwritten/oral philosophy.

Through my own creative art practice and research, I have awakened my own primordial connection to nature's biological intelligence and created a place that enriches wairua. Wairua exists within all whakapapa. I have activated my artwork Te Puna O Āio, The Temple of Potential with its own spirit and whakapapa. Wairuatanga and Māorioritanga are evoked as a framework to attend to the spirit through an ease or lightness of approach. This research proposes a counter-narrative to art as hard work, instead positioning art as an elemental flowing spring of our creative potential that emerges with ease. This ease combined with spirit has become a method I use to create my work.

The simple notion that grounds this research is that we have a spirit and it must be activated; both to contribute to "thought" and to activate our inner potential. The spirit joined with our physical being contributes to a multi-dimensional reality. It is an acknowledgment of our potential to be anything we can think of being, regardless of our circumstances. Using an indigenous-auto ethnographic methodology, this thesis explores how the Temple of Potential, Te Puna O Āio, as a piece of contemporary Māori art, constitutes the space of the acknowledged spirit; a place to remember our multi-dimensional potential.

This work describes the evolution of Te Puna O Āio. A - vibration of the sacred feminine. I - vibration of the sacred child potential. O - vibration of the sacred masculine. ĀIO - peace, calm, serenity, tranquility, balance of potential. Te Puna O Āio is not a direct translation of The Temple of Potential, as an architectural form, instead it is a vibrational equivalent that expresses this spiritual potential.

At the very end of this work, I discovered that, Te Puna O Āio metamorphoses to Te Pū Nao A Io, the source, essential, creative energy, influence of the creator within us all.

The thesis for this work will be online in a couple of months. This opening is of the temple itself.