

WHĀNAU, FAMILY

There is no one way to experience **Hiria Anderson's** work.

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“My playground was the *whareniui* [large communal meeting house] my grandfather built in the front of his place and I played in the old *Waka tētē* [canoe] which spurred on my imagination.”

Hiria Anderson

Connections and the artists own experiences between *whānau* (family), *hapu* (A cluster of extended family from the same *iwi*) and *iwi* (the largest kinship group in Maori culture) are what drive Aotearoa-based painter **Hiria Anderson's** (Rereahu, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Apakura) practice. Therefore the artists' life truly is art. Anderson was born in the North Island town of Otorohanga in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The area is known as King Country – named after the New Zealand Land Wars of the 1860s – and became a place of refuge for those who battled against the colonial Government, one of those being King Tawhiao.

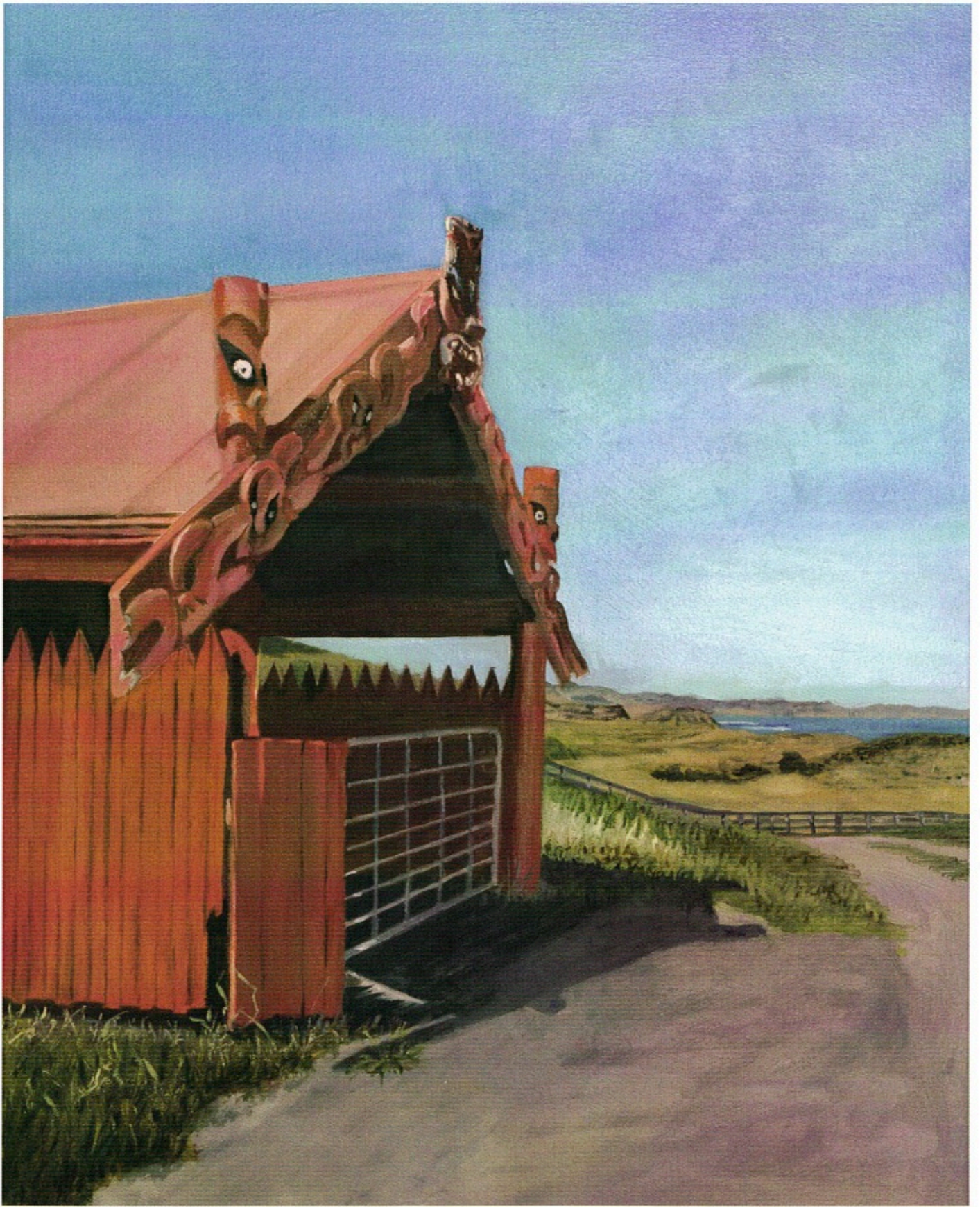
Not only did Anderson get inspiration from the historically and culturally rich landscape she grew up in but she also gained insights into art making and process. She would sit watching and listening to her grandparents and their peers (who were traditional practitioners of Māori art) talk, make and share knowledge. When reflecting on her childhood she notes, “My playground was the *whareniui* [large communal meeting house] my grandfather built in the front of his place and I played in the old *Waka tētē* [canoe] which spurred

on my imagination. My friends were lizards, skinks and centipedes that lived amongst the fern.” Anderson attended Te Wananga o Aotearoa, an Indigenous-led tertiary provider, developing a career in arts and education under the tutelage of artists **James Ormsby** and **Eugene Kara**. However it wasn't until she decided to study her Masters of Fine Arts in 2014-2016 at Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design that her painting practice flourished, which she attributes to the support of her supervisor **Noel Ivanoff**.

After finishing her Masters and receiving first class honours, she was picked up by Tim Melville Gallery and later this year Anderson will stage her solo show *Collective Aspirations* at the gallery. The title of the show comes from a phrase that she had heard repeated multiple times in the media.

Upon reflection, she liked that it was made in reference to various groups working together towards a common goal for the greater good. Taking the term and idea, Anderson adapts it to the way in which working together to achieve something has long been at the heart of Māori culture.





One key painting in the exhibition, titled *Te Rerenga*, depicts her research into the *whenua* (land) that a *tupuna* (ancestor) governed as chief with tribal authority called **Te Rerenga Wetere**. Wetere had to negotiate diplomacy between the Crown and Māori over a railway line that was pitched to run through a town called Mokau. Wetere managed the delicate negotiations and through the collective aspirations of all involved, conflict was avoided and a peaceful outcome and resolution was made.

At the core of the Māori worldview is the idea of interconnectedness – that all things living and non-living are connected – which is imbued in the way that Anderson thinks and makes. To consider her a figurative painter is merely one surface reading as her practice is also rich with depth and layers of culture, time and history as well as fascinations with things that are perhaps more minute. As Anderson comments, “Sometimes I paint because I’m in love with the light falling in the room or the strong composition, or spiritual connotations or connections.” Just as there is no one way to experience being Māori, there is no one way to experience Anderson’s work.

There is a sense of time being frozen in Anderson’s paintings, almost like a photograph which captures a moment that can never be experienced again physically. Instead, we are left with a memento of everyday moments to be remembered and treasured. “I note the nuances of culture, differences and similarities that exist in the banal everyday life,” she says. “The colour-faded retro print of **Vermeer’s *The Milkmaid*** hangs over our oven and jug. A kitchen scene painted by a male Dutch painter in his kitchen is painted again by a female Māori painter in her kitchen.” It then seems fitting that she has returned to where it all began. In 2016 Anderson relocated back to her family homestead in Otorohanga where she renovated a room at the back of the house to become her studio. Although her grandparents have now moved on, their



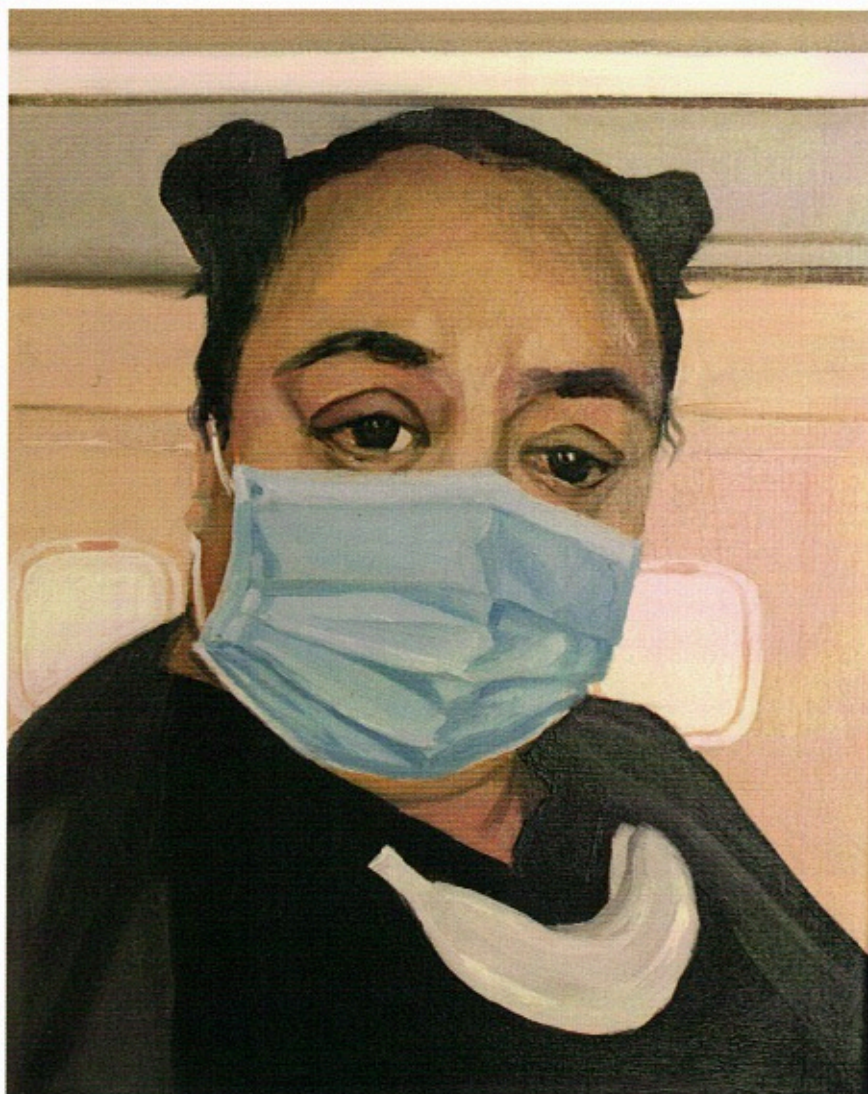
histories and the artists own are forever intertwined within the walls, grass and sky that surround the area.

Anderson’s works are held in public and private collections, in particular Auckland Art Gallery and Wallace Arts Trust, which means that her works will be able to be viewed for generations. Perhaps 50 years into the future, art history will look a little different, the more that lived experiences like Anderson’s are included, the more that these perspectives will fill the walls and pages of history. And really that is the most important thing, that future generations can access these stories and histories, that they can see themselves represented. When asked what is an achievement that she is most proud of so far in her career, her response was simple: “I am proud that my work is within institutions that my future generations of *whanau*, *hapuu* and *iwi* can have access to.” Anderson is represented by Page Galleries, Wellington and Tim Melville Gallery, Auckland.

OPPOSITE: Hiria Anderson, *Te Rerenga*, 2022. Oil on canvas, 50.4 x 40cm. COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND TIM MELVILLE GALLERY, AUCKLAND.

ABOVE: Hiria Anderson, *Supreme Beings*, 2022. Oil on canvas, 40 x 50cm. COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND PAGE GALLERIES, WELLINGTON.

Hiria Anderson’s *Collective Aspirations* shows at Tim Melville Gallery, Auckland from 29 November to 23 December 2022.



"By painting things that we all recognise but we don't notice, and by painting them with such aroha and care, Hiria seems to encourage us to consider aspects of our own lives."

Tim Melville

LEFT: Hiria Anderson, *NZ5817 ki Pōneke*, 2022. Oil on canvas, 25 x 20cm.

OPPOSITE: Hiria Anderson, *Waiora*, 2022. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND TIM MELVILLE GALLERY, AUCKLAND

NGAHIRAKA MASON

Tūhoe, Te Arawa and Ngāti Pango, independent curator, critic, and visual historian

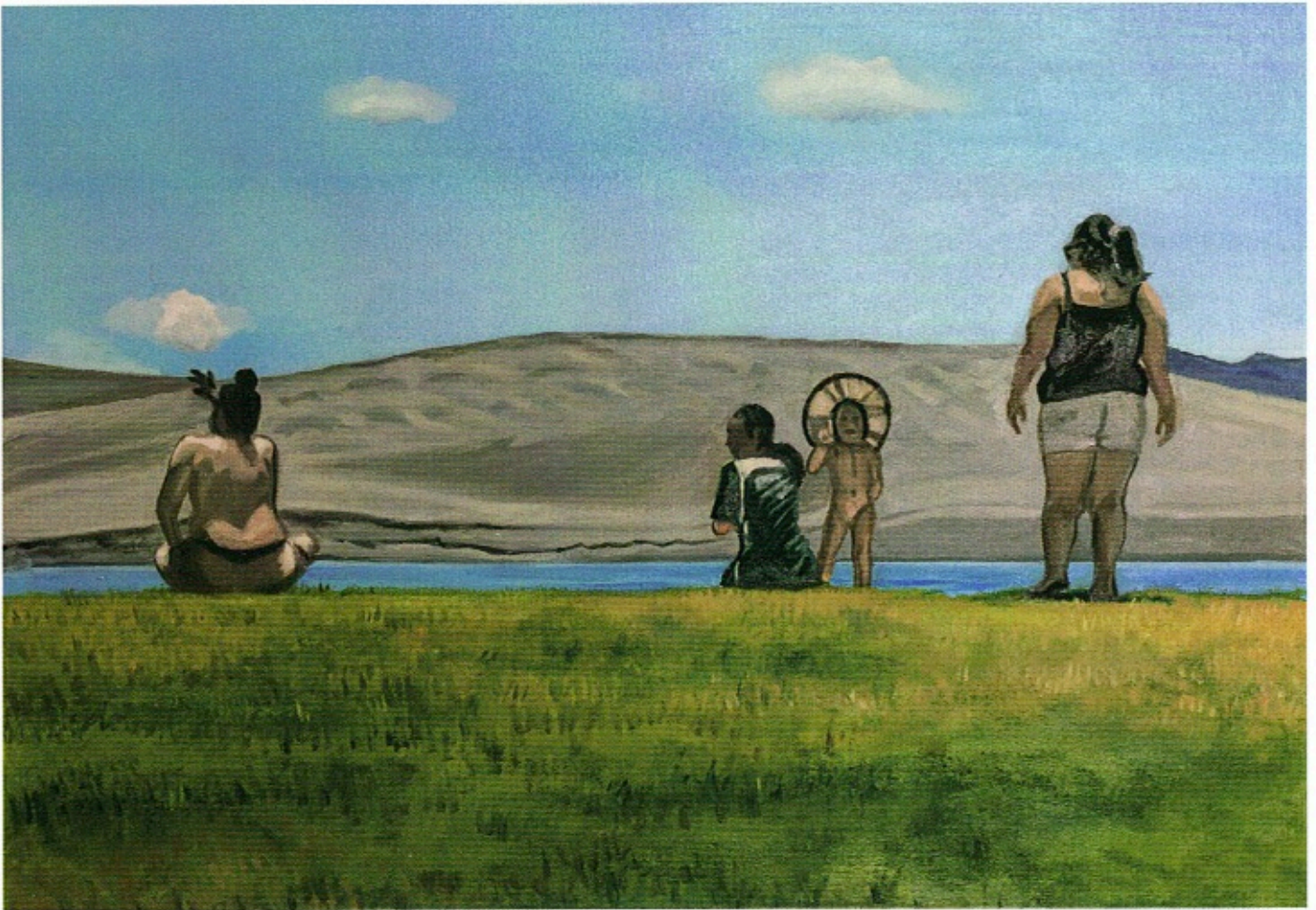
"If you have an art practice, you are making art for which you will eventually develop proficiencies and expertise. I came across **Hiria Anderson's** work while she studied at the Māori tertiary institution Te Wānanga o Aotearoa in their arts program. Good training is half of what you need to become a reasonable painter, and Anderson has done the hard yards to enjoy a self-sustaining art practice now. It has been a while since a Māori woman painter has broken into the New Zealand urban art scene to acclaim.

Anderson's themes and topics run the spectrum of Māori social and political issues and community and personal narrative, which are in constant play in Otorohanga, her place of birth. Compellingly, the artist's paintings are organised through random reinforcement. When refining an image or a series of story elements and characters, she produces studies that show the mundane against human drama and the social and spiritual wearing down of her home base community.

"In her hands, her iPhone and paintbrush

are protagonists, capturing people, social issues, cultural landmarks, colonial histories, pastoral landscapes, and nostalgic remnants from the lives of previous generations, such as her grandparents and forebears.

"The importance of Anderson's work is considerable. Her Māori public love having one of their own exhibited on gallery walls. The artist proudly brings alive countryside childhood memories. Her community followers reminisce of her as a child growing up with older carers. In return, Hiria evokes a time when regional family life was communal and shared experiences; everyone needed everyone. Kia ora Hiria for showing us what endures and to celebrate life in its many iterations."



TIM MELVILLE

Founder and director Tim Melville Gallery, Auckland

"I saw Hiria's Masters Grad show in 2016: two dozen small (20 x 30cm) paintings installed in a cluster on a single wall. Their technique was immaculate, which impressed me, but it was their honesty and tenderness that made me pay attention. The exhibition comprised a series of painted vignettes from the artist's life at home, life on the marae and life in her community of Otorohanga. They were simple everyday scenes... piles of plates in the *whare kai* (dining hall), shadows on a linoleum floor, laundry on the line, nothing extraordinary, and yet they were extraordinary.

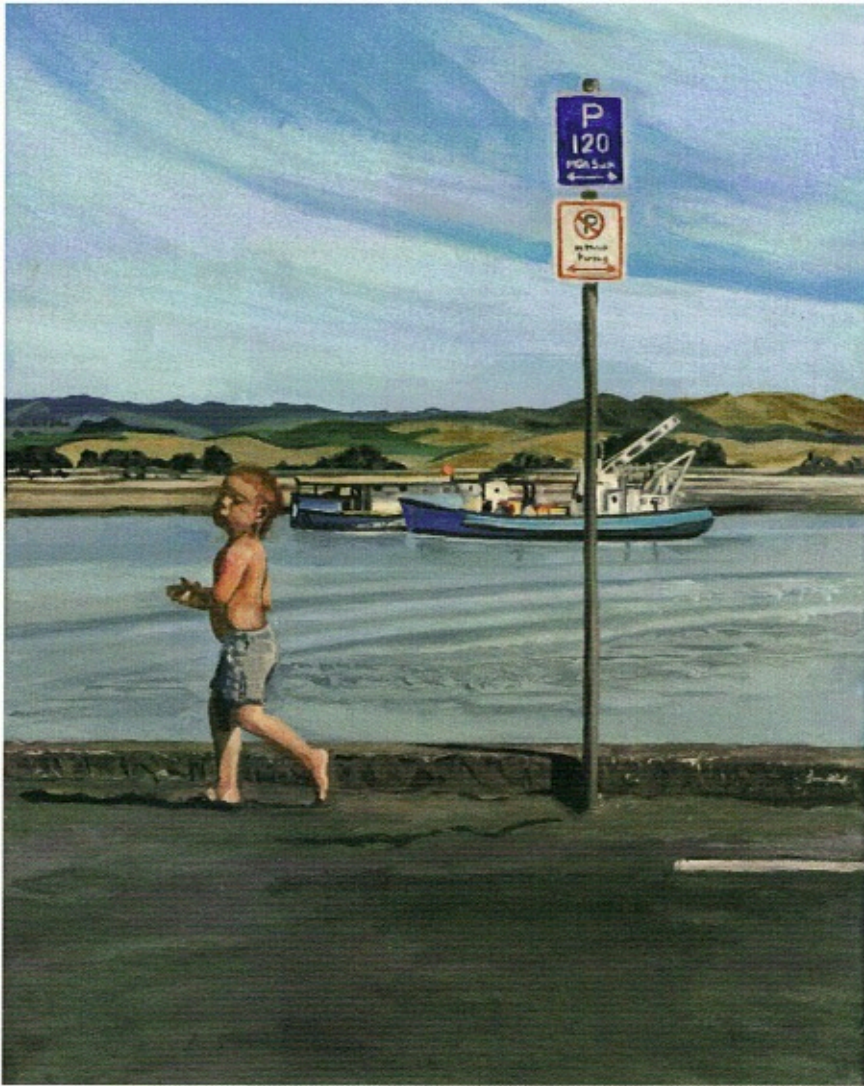
"By painting things that we all recognise but we don't notice, and by painting them

with such *aroha* and care, Hiria seems to encourage us to consider aspects of our own lives. Whatever our cultural background we're encouraged to think about simple things that we have in common. Their intimacy is powerful. She somehow brings people together.

"Also significant is the fact that Hiria's practice colonises European oil painting in order to reveal contemporary Māori life. Art writer **Lucinda Bennett** recently observed in this magazine that '...while her work may be focused on depicting the everyday, in concentrating on the minutiae Anderson's paintings capture the nuances between Māori culture and 21st century living. Furthermore, in

depicting the everyday lives of her community, these paintings interrogate the history of representation of Māori in European art, gently shifting the viewpoint from outside looking in, to inside, looking at one another.'

"A suite of six works was acquired by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki and was included in **Nigel Borell's** landmark *Toi Tu Toi Ora* exhibition in 2020-2021. Her work has also been acquired by the University of Auckland, Waikato Museum, Hamilton, and the Dowse Art Museum, Wellington. There is strong demand for her work, and we have a waiting list, so there will be a price increase in her upcoming show relative to last year's show."



ABOVE: Hiri Anderson, *Kawhia Moana*, 2022. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND TIM MELVILLE GALLERY, AUCKLAND.

LEFT: Hiri Anderson, *Whakaaro*, 2022. Oil on canvas, 25 x 35cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND PAGE GALLERIES, WELLINGTON.

RIGHT: Hiri Anderson at her home in Otorohanga. PHOTO: MARK HAMILTON.

