



Heimler
and
Proc

All In The Same Waka

(cover) *Little Prince*, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 91cm



Foreword

Land, Water, Waka

Thoughts evoked by an exhibition

Looking at the paintings of Gabriel Heimler and Anna Proc there are three words that come to my mind. Land, or the earth that is the sphere of human life, the water that feeds and nurtures people, and the waka, or boat, that floats on water and connects the lands. The boat is the means of intercommunication, that connects different people.

These three words are important in regards to both New Zealand and Hungary. Although Hungary is not surrounded by sea in a geographical sense, it is nevertheless an island as it exists in the midst of a sea of Germanic and Slavic people. Hungary has a unique language and culture that has been thriving for thousands of years, and water is a decisive element for Hungarians despite the absence of a physical sea. There are, of course, beautiful lakes and huge rivers in Hungary, but the special and ancient connection with water shines through beyond these bodies: Hungarians are avid sportspeople. They are at the forefront of record holding in water sports – in swimming, canoeing and water polo. And with the kayak and canoe we arrive at the boat and the waka...

One might ask: how did the Hungarians get to New Zealand? The first immigrants were lured by the promise of plentiful land, arriving at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. In Hungary, the land for cultivation was sparse, whereas in New Zealand it was abundant. Later, the immigrants were no longer looking for land. Rather, they

were seeking freedom and the opportunities presented by a free state. After the revolution of 1956 against communism, which was opposed by the Soviet Union, more than a thousand Hungarians could board the boat (the vessel Sibajak) that brought them here to the Land of the Long White Cloud. Their welcome and acceptance was a proof of the generosity of spirit of the people of New Zealand.

Gabriel Heimler and Anna Proc did not come to New Zealand by boat; they did not come seeking land. Rather they came because they heard about the people of this remarkable place, as well as about the quality of life that the country offered. This unparalleled combination of land and countrymen, coupled with a set of values consistent with the artists' own morals and beliefs, served as the inspiration for Heimler and Proc's paintings.

Individually, Anna is well versed in the Polish and French cultures, while Gabriel was raised with a French and German heritage. Gabriel maintains strong ties to his Hungarian origins, continuing to speak the language and teaching of it to his son. Together, the couple incorporate elements from each of their cultural backgrounds and experiences. They are active, eager participants in numerous Hungarian community events.

Given Gabriel's devotion to his cultural roots, it is an honor for the recently opened Hungarian Embassy in Wellington to promote the couple's exhibition. They did not come for the land and they did not arrive on water. But their presence is no less vital, as they strengthen the bonds between New Zealand and Hungary. They are, in essence, the boat; they are the Waka.

Dr. László Zsolt Szabó
Ambassador of Hungary
Wellington, 26th of February 2017

Introduction

Seven Years On

I first met Gabriel Heimler and Anna Proc when their *Happy Pacifica* series was being exhibited at the Kiwi Art House – some five years ago. I was previously familiar with their work on account of *The Mover* mural, which still stands dominantly on the exterior of the Museum Art Hotel in Wellington and I have subsequently visited *The Wall Jumper* mural in Berlin which is one of Gabriel's most recognised works.

This catalogue is the first retrospective look at Heimler and Proc's work produced in New Zealand since they moved here in 2010. It is a celebration of their seven years living and working in New Zealand, and the life they have established for themselves and their son, Ariel, in Wellington.

I invite you to look back through selected works from Heimler and Proc's previous exhibitions, which is followed by their newest series *All In The Same Waka* (from page 24). For this new series, Alice Burmeister, a professor from Winthrop University, USA, has written an essay discussing cultural appropriation and how Heimler and Proc have deliberately chosen waka imagery to make a statement about the shared journey and history of migration. There is also an interpretive literary text on the paintings in the *All In The Same Waka* series from Daniela Gil Sevilla, Cultural Attache, which provides ideas on the themes of voyage, origin and identity.

The process of compiling and creating this catalogue has been a privilege, and it is clear to me that both the Wellington and New Zealand art scenes have been enriched by the work of Heimler and Proc. I hope you will join with me in congratulating these talented artists on their inspiring work over the last seven years, and celebrate the success of their newest series *All In The Same Waka*.

Stacey Coenders – MA - Art Curatorship
Independent Curator
March 2017



The Mover, 2010, 8m x 9m

The Mover (2010)

Heimler and Proc made an impact when first stepping into the New Zealand art scene in 2010 with one of their most significant and standout public works, *The Mover*, a large-scale mural on the exterior of the Art Museum Hotel.

In depicting physical movement, *The Mover* portrays an important aspect of the history of the Art Museum Hotel, its relocation across the road. This move paved the way for the opening of the Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa in the early 1990s.

Notably, the mural was voted as the second best outdoor art work in Wellington in 2011, and has also been featured in The Lonely Planet Guide - *Discover New Zealand* (3rd ed.)

The Mover strongly correlates with Gabriel's other significant mural, *The Wall Jumper*, at the East Side Gallery in Berlin (shown below). It has proven to be a catalyst for future works, such that over the last seven years Anna and Gabriel have completed several other murals around Wellington.





Working Together

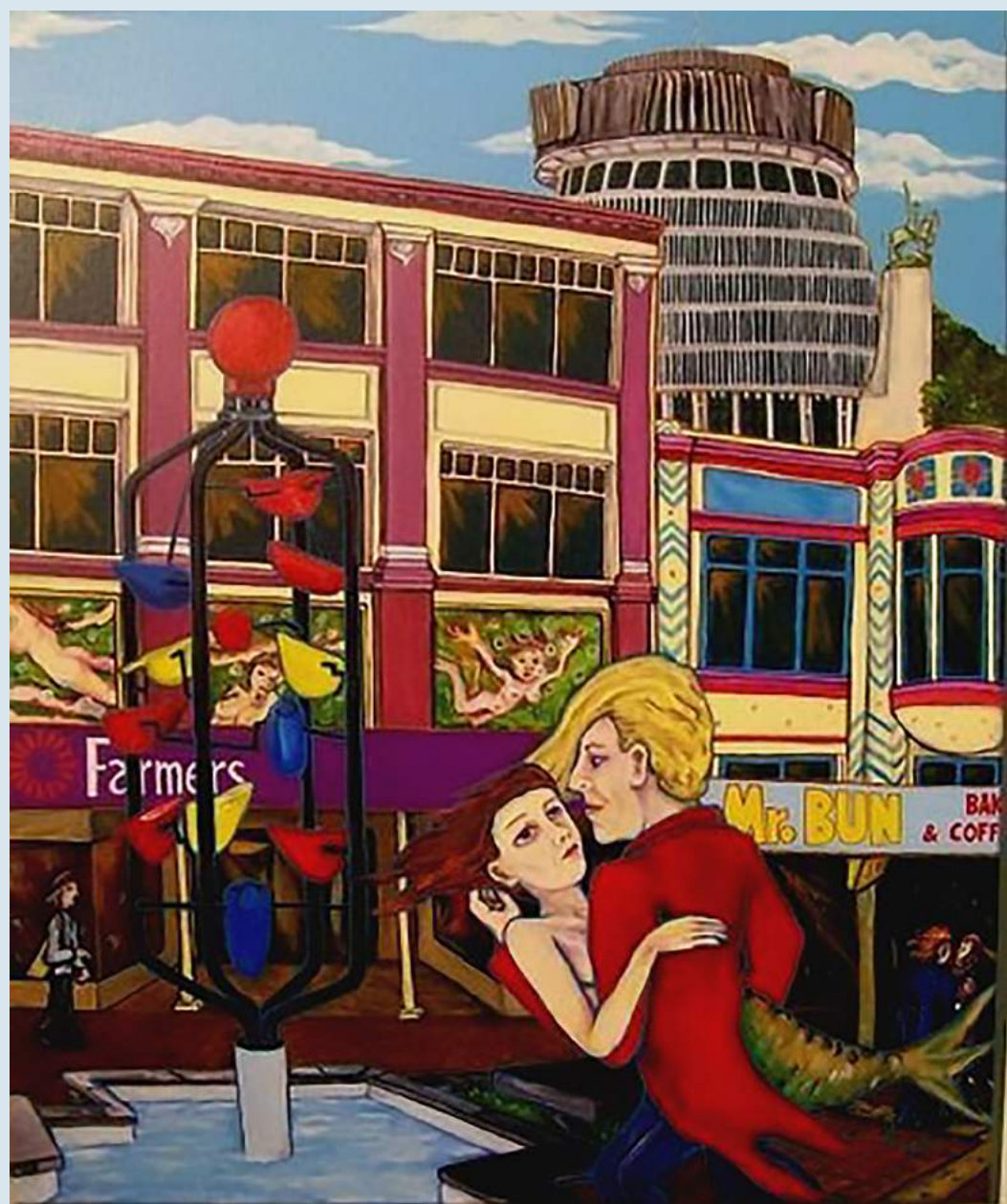
We are Anna Proc and Gabriel Heimler and we have been working together for ten years. Our long-standing collaboration allows us to intensify and dynamize our creations. When we first began to work together, we focused on the organization of exhibitions, such as in Art Express, a show that travelled to different countries. As we grew together, we added a verbal critique to our work: before painting, we offer a critique of each sketch that we prepare on canvas.

Working in tandem also encourages us to diversity, including by working on diptychs. This enables us to work on the same painting at the same time. Symbolically, our shared individuality exists in the gap between the two paintings of a diptych. This gap represents our personal limits, our individual borders; and yet, at the same time, the gap connects us. In sum, our art is a reflection of our quest to gain a deeper understanding of our single and united selves.



(above) *Kiwi Art House*, 2011, 288 Cuba St
(opposite top) *Open Sea Path*, 2011, Upper Cuba St
(opposite below) *Arc de Triomphe*, 2011, Old Dominion Post Building

We strive to forge new paths and explore uncharted waters in our compositions, so that we may give the viewer an opportunity to experience new horizons. Our work is not didactic; rather, we raise questions. As we work, each of us contributes in a way that is organic and unplanned. We do not know precisely what our creation will bring until we reach the end. Our process is as much one of exploration as of discovery. Finally, we sign each piece “Heimler & Proc”: a united couple that creates art we cannot wait to share with you, our cherished viewer.



Beehive in Cuba Street (2011)

Beehive in Cuba Street was Heimler and Proc's first New Zealand exhibition. It was held at the Kiwi Art House Gallery, Cuba Street, 2011.

In this series, the artists create a unique juxtaposition of familiar Wellington buildings and scenes. The layering of these elements create both a pleasing yet unnerving feeling: one recognises the various elements, but they are different from everyday reality. The artists have chosen the Beehive as a symbol of government and business, and placed it in Cuba Street, the home of culture and art.



(above) *To The Next Stop*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 45 x 50cm

(opposite) *Beehive In Cuba Street*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 60cm

Happy Pacifica (2012)

The *Happy Pacifica* exhibition was shown at the Kiwi Art House Gallery, September/October 2012.

The main work for this exhibition, *Happy Pacifica* (shown opposite), is a painting that poses many questions. In keeping with this concept, it can

be hung and viewed in many different ways. It depicts four men who desire the same woman. But is she happy? The painting brings into question the history of the South Pacific, and makes a powerful statement on colonisation through each of the four men - who in turn represent four European nationalities.

Other paintings in the *Happy Pacifica* series invite audiences to consider the impact of colonisation, and how it has affected the lives of Indigenous / Pacific Island people in New Zealand.



(above) *Gauguin Of The North*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 90 x 140cm
(opposite) *Happy Pacifica*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 100cm





(above) *Piano forte*, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 126 x 128cm

(opposite) *Piano III*, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 91cm

Foxtrot Around the Piano (2013)



The *Foxtrot Around the Piano* exhibition opened at the CQ Hotel in Cuba Street in July 2013.

The owner of the Kiwi Art House Gallery, Alan Aldridge, described this series as a “relationship between the human body and musical instruments, where there is both physical contact and spiritual energy created”. In the paintings of the *Foxtrot Around the Piano* series, Aldridge states “we travel with them around the piano and along with the pianist, we observe the dancers over the evening and over decades as not only their dances change, from foxtrot to the sweeping falls and catches of rock and roll, but so do their social mores. The passions of life, the passage of time”.



Dark Light (2014)

Dark Light was a series initially presented at the Auckland Railways Studio Gallery, where Heimler & Proc incorporated the notion of chromatic principles, something they learned about in Europe.

Briefly, this concept avoids the use of black as a colour. In New Zealand galleries, Heimler & Proc have noticed that artists such as Goldie, Michael Smither and Shane Cotton utilized black as liberally and as effectively as other colors. In time, our own work has evolved so that they, too, incorporate the color black when depicting New Zealand mythological figures and scenes.



(above) *Sparks on the Volcano*, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 90cm
(opposite) *Night Birth*, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 170 x 100cm

Shadow In The Bush (2014)



The *Shadow In The Bush* exhibition was held at the Kiwi Art House Gallery in July 2014.

In this series, Heimler and Proc were inspired by New Zealand scenery and its ability to enchant people and provoke them to imagine or dream of what it was like before humans arrived. *Shadow In The Bush* is described as a dreamland - where you can dream of the past and the future.

In this series, Heimler and Proc's goal was to create a new and global composition, where human figures are blended with trees. The paintings create a sense of continuity between man and nature, so that it is not clear where one ends and the other begins. Humans are constructed, while nature deconstructs. The simultaneous building and breaking of composition is a uniquely novel artistic idea.



(above) *Nature's Womb*, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 92 x 92cm

(opposite) *Union Tree*, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 122cm

The Inside View (2015)

The Inside View was exhibited from October through to November 2015 at the Kiwi Art House Gallery. The following text was written by Heimler & Proc and is from the exhibition booklet.

“New Zealand artists approach the landscape with a diversity of styles and a range of interpretations. We see it while comparing examples of the works of Charles Heaphy, Rita Angus and Michael Smither. Our ideas are also an interpretation of our iconic landscape, or in this case the Wellington cityscape, but as seen through the lens of our artistic ‘camera’. We think of these paintings as a creative variation on the theme of a camera objectively recording ‘inside views’, but in our case the black box of our camera is our artistic imagination, the image on the film (canvas) is not dispassionately objective, but creatively subjective. In the series ‘Inside View’ we look out at our cityscapes through a window and create an artistic vision of life using as our ‘template’ the philosopher Edmund Husserl’s concept of the ‘lifeworld’.

Edmund Husserl introduced the concept of the lifeworld in his *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936): ‘In whatever way we may be conscious of the world as universal horizon, as coherent universe of existing objects, we, each “I-the-man” and all of us together, belong to the world as living with one another in the world; and the world is our world, valid for our consciousness as existing precisely through this “living together”’.

The lifeworld can be thought of as the horizon of all our experiences, in the sense that it is the background on which all things appear as themselves and meaningful.”





Calla Lilies or Alcatraces

Homage to Diego Rivera (2016)

The exhibition for *Calla Lilies or Alcatraces. Homage to Diego Rivera* was held in February 2016 at the Mexican Embassy. The exhibition was complimented with photographs from close friend and artist Eva Kaprinay.

The idea for this exhibition came from the discovery of a book that Heimler & Proc found on a trip to Paris, which featured on the cover a picture of Diego Rivera's painting *Nude with Calla Lilies*, 1944. Heimler & Proc were struck by certain aspects that bridged them to Rivera and New Zealand to Mexico. The following is a summary, written by Heimler & Proc from that exhibition booklet.

"The calla lily, a sensual, sculptured flower, is a quintessential example of Mexico's exuberent flora. It is celebrated throughout Rivera's work, particularly in frescoes depicting peasants with indigenous features carrying bundles of these magnificent plants. Notably, these floral offerings are often carried in baskets made of flax, using techniques similar to one employed by the Maori of New Zealand. In keeping with this fascinating cross-cultural similarity, we painted the symbols of the Aztec and the Maori on the flax objects common to both peoples that we imported from Rivera's *Nude with Calla Lilies* into our paintings.

On a more personal level, *Nude with Calla Lilies* made a special impression on us as a couple. It sparked our idea for the exhibition because we recognized in this painting Rivera's wife, Frida Kahlo. Rivera and Kahlo mirror our work together as painters and also as life partners."

(opposite) *Calla Lily I, Homage to Frida Kahlo*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 90 x 70cm



All In The Same Waka (2017)

Essay by Alice Burmeister

The idea of cultural appropriation in art is hardly new. Indeed, artists have likely been adopting visual forms and conceptual ideas from other artists since the dawn of human creation. After they are produced, works of art become living artifacts that testify to a whole range of cultural practices, historic circumstances, and aesthetic preferences. Embodying lived experience, their richness as expressions of culture and ideology take on a life of their own as they are shared through time and across cultures. This seems more evident now than ever before, in an age where virtually any example of the massive array of things that humans have created is just a mouse click away.

One could argue that the practice of cultural appropriation of visual forms has inspired some of the greatest shifts in the history of Western art, at least over the past century. It is well documented that early 20th century European artists such as Picasso, Van Gogh, Derain, Matisse, Modigliani, and others were influenced and inspired by the formal visual qualities found in works of art produced by African and other non-Western cultures. The collective rejection of traditional modes of representation, coupled with opportunities to encounter works of art brought to Europe during the colonial era, gave rise to a broad range of new creative possibilities. Not surprisingly for the time period, much of the appeal of non-Western art for these artists was based on biased perceptions of exoticism, savagery, and magical fetishism, coupled with projections of cultural purity and childlike innocence -- qualities that were valued for their freedom from European restraint. Although this particular example of artistic appropriation is most commonly understood as saying more

about the Eurocentric viewpoint of the time, rather than illustrating the value of the non-Western works that served as the inspiration, it is undeniable that these examples of appropriation led to a revolutionary turn in the history of art. It is perhaps easier to overlook the narrow mindedness of these early 20th century artists, if we consider the worthiness of the end result!

In our current era, while we enjoy the benefits of revisionist history, such hindsight can also be a nagging curse. The question of the legitimacy of cultural appropriation lingers, particularly in an age when “everything has already been done”, and artists must constantly struggle to be “original”, however that notion is defined. When is it appropriate or valid to borrow visual forms or conceptual ideas from other cultures? Does artistic appropriation lack substance, or cross some perceived line of disrespect, whether real or imaginary, towards the other culture? These questions themselves seem culturally entrenched, specific to a time and place in the same manner as laws regarding intellectual property or copyright. Ultimately, it seems as though the real question comes from the nature of the encounter itself, and the inherent potential for reciprocity. Art has the capacity to both shape, and be shaped by, human experience. An artist’s encounter with another culture therefore has the opportunity to offer something new for the artist, in addition to impacting the culture itself in new and potentially positive ways, depending upon the character of the encounter. In the best of all possible worlds in our current era, this meeting is mutually beneficial to both parties, and creates unlimited opportunities for shared creative dialogue in an atmosphere of equality and respect.

Such is the case, I believe, with the Waka series by Heimler & Proc. In their statements about the work, they have indicated a deliberate choice in the appropriated image of the Maori boat form to suggest the idea of migration as a universal and ongoing aspect of the human experience. For these artists personally, it is also a metaphor with which they identify, as international artists living in a culture that inspires them both visually and conceptually. The narrative aspect of the scenes in their paintings is a reflection of both their own personal histories, as well as a response to the rich history and spiritual power of Maori culture embedded in the waka carvings themselves. In light of the prohibitions against certain artistic subject matter in recent decades in New Zealand, this body of work attempts to stand in opposition to that repression – referencing the waka form as the vehicle for reviving the universal narratives of all of our lives, wherever we are from. In our current times, as many global communities reflect on the role of immigration as a driving historical and political force, it can be particularly useful to consider the role of art as a vehicle for understanding what that shared journey of migration entails. As we contemplate a multiplicity of narratives in our increasingly complex and globally-connected world, it is sometimes startling to comprehend how interconnected we actually all are. Art has the power and the capacity to bear witness to these deeply felt experiences. Hopefully, the wisdom of our shared history will guide us in ways that are mutually beneficial to all.

Alice R. Burmeister, Ph.D.
Winthrop University

All In The Same Waka

Literary Descriptions by Daniela Gil Sevilla

Expressive faces and poses are a constant in the artistic work of Gabriel Heimler and Anna Proc. Their paintings, with bright colours and marked contours, interweave history and philosophical approaches in a subtle yet palpable manner. There is an unmistakable symbolism in all their work, one that is evident in the complexity of the characters.

Heimler and Proc's 2017 Exhibition takes the viewer on a voyage through the origin and identity of New Zealand, a prosperous nation whose cultural roots and current diversity are reflected in the paintings. In this sense, the artists invite us to journey across the ocean in search for land; to sail on a Waka, the sacred canoe and recognizable Maori symbol for odysseys of discovery.

The 2017 Exhibition also offers a look at New Zealand's current cosmopolitan society, and a glimpse in its future. The Waka comes to symbolize New Zealand. It then becomes a microcosm in and of itself, incorporating elements of human behaviour much as it is in the rest of the world.

Under the brushstrokes of Heimler and Proc, the domestic and global levels correlate, and the Waka is transformed into a remote New Zealand, unique and at the same time connected to the world - a world we all belong to and whose fate we inevitably share.

A vessel for transoceanic voyages has been sighted in open waters. The great Waka Hourua guides the future New Zealanders to Aotearoa. In the canoe, Maoris and Europeans carry their own dreams and stories. Culture and art coexist in the form of a piano, and science and technology are represented by the canoe itself. The air is full of possibilities.

The world is coming to New Zealand but, are there still islands on the planet? Is it the future that travels in the Waka, or just the present, the current New Zealand that slips between the waves and approaches to the world?

(opposite) *Pacific Orchestra*, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 169 x 100cm



There is majesty in the Waka beyond our sense of sight, such that when we gaze at the work, our innate capacity for exploration is awakened. Its mana calls on us and talks about ancestral journeys and tales of courage and audacity.

Five people share this beautifully decorated Waka in the middle of a calm sea. Five people cohabiting an isolated space. Five people, all unique and different from each other. There are no conversations, their eyes do not meet, there are no signs of emotion or fraternity. Each individual is submerged in his own reality, his own thoughts, desires and habits. Yet, there is something guiding the canoe, as suggested by the highlighted word, “Wahine” somewhere near the bow. “Wahine” means woman: woman - human – people: a powerful binding of elements, such that woman becomes a symbol of belonging to humanity and to a society moving forward with each paddle stroke.

In this way, *The Golden Fish* is a mirror that reflects the New Zealand nation, its diversity and complexity. A land where tradition cohabits with modernity, and formality coexists with spontaneity, through a geographical distance imposed by the ocean and minimized by globalisation and technology.



The Golden Fish, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 122cm



Rocking In The Wind, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 91 cm

The world is moving in a Waka and is coming to a New Zealand ruled by birds. There will be birds in the sky and birds on the ground. One of them, the Kiwi, will become the brother of those who are now sailing the salted sea. The birds will be there, and there will be new rulers, too. For now, the future governors rest on the Waka, self-absorbed, as an omen of a New Zealand isolated in the vast South Pacific, but linked to a common planet.

Once again, “Wahine” is at the bow, not only as a word, but as a woman. Next to her, a bottle reads “All”, as a statement of inclusion and diversity within the same nation.



Icon, 2017,
acrylic on canvas,
104 x 67cm,
framed

We used to worship deities framed in gold. Today we worship ourselves. We have been emancipated from the sacred images, we buried these in the earth. We are now our own gods and we pay homage only to ourselves.

Icon is a painting with deep symbolism and philosophical connotations, a social criticism. The loneliness of humanity no longer depends on geographical separations; loneliness is within us all, in our individualism, in our technological dependence. We are orphans worshipping personal images embedded in electronic devices.

In our technological advancement, we have developed skills to connect ourselves in many different ways. At the same time, we have lost our ability to connect with the earth. The forgotten gods that lie beneath remind us constantly of the risks of absolute power over nature.



Little Prince, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 91cm

The Waka has arrived in New Zealand: we are spectators of a brief moment in time and history. In the canoe, people are overflowing with emotions. A child opens his arms in joy. A woman dips her feet in the water for the first time. The sea is restless, whispering of change, of uncertainty and hope.

The Waka has arrived in New Zealand and people disembark. They are migrants, foreigners in a land that welcomes them with melodies of birds and siren songs. They will get used to the call of the birds, they will grow familiar with the siren songs, they will become locals, yet, at the same time, always be migrants, foreigners.

Daniela Gil Sevilla, Cultural Attache



Providence, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 90.5 x 61 cm



Human Waves, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 102 x 102cm

Fusion

Summary Text by Stacey Coenders

The New Zealand art scene in the twenty-first century is a dynamic place, but its constantly evolving aesthetics and boundaries make it difficult to discuss major movements, themes or trends in detail.

Yet, the one core feature that keeps appearing and is worth discussing is the inclusivity in New Zealand art of elements of Maori history and culture, while simultaneously showing features that are increasingly global. This speaks to the fact that we as a people, and therefore in turn our art, are increasingly diverse. In this way, the country is at the forefront of forging a new and inclusive identity where people recognize and acknowledge a shared history of migration – a process that blurs the lines of nationality.

A good example of where contemporary art is heading can be seen in Michael Parekowhai's 2011 Venice Biennale piece, *He Korero Purakau no Te Awanui o Te Motu: Story of a New Zealand River*. It is symbolic of the positive connections between Maori art and culture with something as universally recognizable as a piano, but which is also synonymous with the nation's colonial history. This piece reflects a state of harmony, or at the very least acceptance of our shared history. It reflects a fusion of many of the different cultures that now reside harmoniously.

There is also a real fusion in Gabriel and Anna's new series *All In The Same Waka*. When looking at this new body of work, one could consider the writing of one the world's most influential art curators, Hans Ulrich Obrist and his discussion of the French philosopher Édouard Glissant. Obrist talks about Glissant's idea of a "worldwide process of

continual fusion". This certainly relates to the *All In The Same Waka* series, with Gabriel and Anna's fusion of races, symbols, and objects that contribute to the melting pot that is modern-day New Zealand. This collection offers a visual representation of the nation's cultural maturity and diversity coming together.

Heimler and Proc have highlighted this fusion by portraying the traditional Maori mythology surrounding the discovery of Aotearoa. They have paid homage to the indigenous Maori people but have also included recent migrants to reflect our country's diversity in the twenty-first century. In doing so, Gabriel and Anna have created a powerful visual statement about New Zealand's current culture, society and art scene.

I hope that this series encourages audiences to think about where contemporary New Zealand art is at today, and where it might go in the future. One hopes that through the work of talented artists, like Heimler and Proc, that New Zealand will continue to be accepting of, and embrace, our cultural diversity. It is hard to think of a more appropriate topic or body of work to commemorate Gabriel and Anna's seven years in New Zealand.

Stacey Coenders
MA - Art Curatorship
Independent Curator

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