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# Memory Markers in the Landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand

A Poetic Language Journal About Somewhere

Auckland University of Technology  
School of Art and Design

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Elliot Collins, 2017

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## Abstract

This exegesis presented as a journal, attempts to elucidate through a process of travel, research and making, the way memory markers reveal or conceal themselves in differing circumstances, specifically discussing ideas of enigma, signature, place-naming, silence, absence and speech. By observing and referencing signs, signwriting, tombstones and monuments there is a repeated encounter of human interventions with and in landscape. Whilst I walk the tracks and paths towards these markers I am repeating the action of advancing and retreating from memory, I also perform a kind of pilgrimage/research interaction that reveals to me the complex and differing layers of memory that exist within the social spaces of Aotearoa New Zealand. These experiences of mine in the field, both physical and cerebral are then articulated into the art works that constitute the thesis of this practice led PhD.

A key aspect of the project involves the research and discussion of the uses of text in Aotearoa New Zealand and its continued presence in contemporary art. Within the parameters of this writing I pay particular attention to the usages of language that draw attention to the complexities of naming, recording and translating the texture of social memory in the public domain.

Research questions involve a questioning of the nature of historical monuments in relationship to the complexities of memory. Furthermore, as a nonindigenous landscape artist, who was born in Aotearoa, how does my artistic practice relate to modernist perceptions and traditions of landscape painting in New Zealand? How does the nature of travel and the use of a journal of text (including poetic reflection) and photography relate to an ongoing studio practice?

My painting titled *New Zealand Was A Wilderness*, 2015, acts as proxy for the developing Ph.D. project. The middle ground of the painting seems to threaten and almost obliterate the landscape in the background. The painting is a provocation of the idea that the landmass of Aotearoa New Zealand was, and is, a place to *write about*, to *write to* and to *write upon*.

The act of writing within this journal is a process that troubles oppositional structures of presence and absence, inscription and erasure. In this respect, the project engages with temporalities in which artworks explore death and memory. The difficulties of reading the underlying qualities of marked places. My practice explores the lingering effect that memory markers have on the witness. At the core of my work and its translations of the landscape exists a dis-stilling of time that paradoxically opens up toward the depth of an elsewhere. This 'elsewhereness' destabilises binary oppositions which presume to lock a fixed site to a fixed time.

As an ongoing journal of the North Island/Te Ika a Māui, recording different objects, sites, buildings and features, I have coined the term 'memory markers' that I present here in an original collection of images and texts which have cultivated my creative research thesis' explorations of praxis, in a synergistic way. Resulting in its investigations and interrogations of the complex relationships, both personal and social, between indigenous and nonindigenous ways of seeing and being with the land.

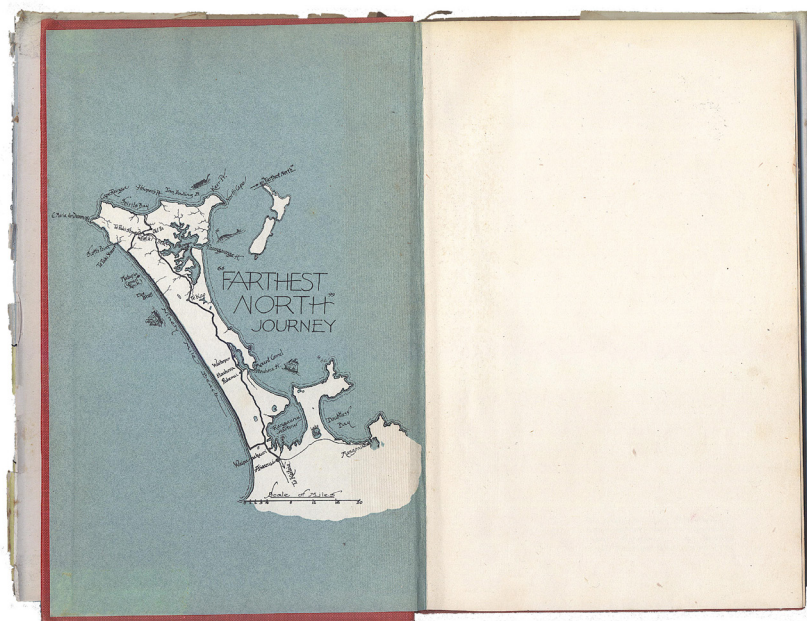


Figure 1. A. H. Reed, *The Farthest North*, (1946)

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## Acknowledgements

To Mum who trusted me to follow the path that was out in front of me though we couldn't see where it would lead. Thank you to Dad, I'm more like you than I thought. Thank you to Tamara Eyre for talking to me about everything but my research. Thank you to Renee Duncan who reminded me always about balance and where to find it. Thank you to Marita Hewitt for being there while being far away. To Te Waka McLeod, thank you for waiting. Thank you to friends and family for ongoing support and encouragement. Thank you to my studio colleagues, Emily O'Hara, Ziggy Lever, Lucy Meyle and Richard Orjis for the enforced breaks continual support, constant challenges, championing of my abilities and laughing at my failures. Thank you to Layne Waerea who told me not to tell lies. Thank you to Rob Lindsay for ongoing instruction and always keeping a beginner's mind. Thank you to the boys for being the most authentic humans I know; it is an honour to walk along side you. Thank you to Marie Shannon for your impeccable corrections. Thank you to Tim Melville and Alison Bartley for your ongoing support. And finally, thank you to Chris Braddock and Andy Thomson for getting me here from all the way back there.



## **Attestation of Authorship**

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

27 October 2017





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Figure 2. Elliot Collins, *Somewhere Far Away* (2015), flag, (torn by wind), Wynyard Quarter, Auckland Waterfront



## Guide to Reading this Journal

Chapter breaks in this journal depart into discrete studies of places in Aotearoa, alternatively known as New Zealand. These departures take a poetic turn interspersed with autoethnographic observations and speculations. This kind of research it seems is best undertaken with a multipronged approach rather than in a linear fashion. Questions are accompanied by images and/or documentation that captures that which language fails to achieve. These departures serve to distill the previous chapter and reinforce the methodology by creating a horizontal hierarchy of academic research. Diverging from the body text as a whole as they become concentrated in their singularity. ‘Turns-offs and detours’ are taken, ‘roads’ are travelled down to observe small memories and subtle clues to a larger narrative so that contemplation can take place. Some places are heavy and loaded with significance, others are ethereal and contain the simple observation of light or atmosphere in order to take a break from an often overwhelming study into language and memory. Maria O’Connor, when writing about the collaborative show with Emily O’Hara, called *There’s Something You’re Not Telling Me*, commented that my artwork reflects a particular kind of time. She writes, ‘Elliot’s time comes to us in the dis-stilling of time to its most contracted formulation: a contract that paradoxically opens up “toward” the depth of an elsewhere: It exists as a temporal-spatial schema facilitating an open, opening us onto the depths of time via a surface understanding or ruse that leads into sublime conditions’.<sup>1</sup>

The design of the text will indicate the two different ways of writing within this exegesis, the journal breaks will be in italics and are a more auto-ethnographic approach to research. I’m in these places but observing my surroundings and my response to these surroundings which is different to observing other people and objects in a space separate from myself. The field work is drawn into the studio and so the connection of my body in space is mediated through these objects. I have recorded my perceptions not feelings. I made a point not to include biographical information but my presence is comprehended from the position of the photographs. I do not reference my own personal history but my subjectivity is constantly implicated in this form of journal as fieldwork which translates into my studio practice.

It’s also important to recognise the transformation of the ethnography of ‘the other’ into auto ethnography of the self. Faith Ngunjiri et al. write that, ‘autoethnography is a qualitative research method that utilizes data about self and its context to gain an understanding of the connectivity between self and others within the same context’.<sup>2</sup> I’ve chosen this method to inhibit myself from speaking on behalf of anyone else as I can only ever accurately know my own experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Maria O’Connor, “There’s Something Your Not Telling Me,” personal correspondence, November 25, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Ngunjiri, Faith Wambura, Kathy-Ann C. Hernandez, and Heewon Chang. “Living Autoethnography: Connecting Life and Research.” *Journal of Research Practice* 6, no. 1 (August 23, 2010): 1.



Figure 3. Map of the North Island/Te Ika a Māui, with numbers corresponding to images

## Places Travelled

I have supplied a map of the North Island/Te Ika a Māui, marked with numbers that correspond to the images contained within this document that give an overview of the journey. While not an exhaustive list, these places give a good array of the types of memory markers that will be discussed within. My travel was self-funded and was undertaken in the last four years. I have not included the South Island/Waipoumanu as there was not enough time to adequately travel through and document as much as I have for the North Island. There are however several images from the South Island that made it into the conversation that are valuable inclusions. There is also a publication called *Land of Memories: A Contemporary View of Places of Historical Significance in the South Island of New Zealand*,<sup>3</sup> with my work and journey potentially acting as its Northern counterpart. This geographical area of exploration is also about the same area in which the kowhai naturally grows and this is folded into an artwork within the thesis. Some places were returned to while other locations were only visited once. All have come to hold importance as places that helped inform and influence my research and practice. The observations and considerations of different objects, sites, buildings and features gathered together and coined ‘memory markers’ of Aotearoa NZ reveal resonances as memory vessels in the landscape. My visual art practice employs what I have witnessed within the explorations of markers to reveal aspects of unique and defining relationships with the land and memory within Aotearoa NZ culture.

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Adams and Mark Evison, *Land of Memories: A Contemporary View of Places of Historical Significance in the South Island of New Zealand* — *Whenua I Maharatia, Haehae Nga Takata - Land of Memories, Scarred by People* (Random House New Zealand, 1993).





Figure 4. Elliot Collins, *New Zealand Was a Wilderness*, (2015), 1350 x 2000mm, oil and enamel on linen, AUT



Figure 5. Elliot Collins, *Bodies of Water (passed under, over, through and around)*, 2014-17, 2017, duration 10:12, Apple iPhone, AUT

## Introduction

At any given time amongst my ruins, I feel the impulse to write, or record, or walk, or touch, or inhale the memory markers. Some markers are recorded in depth, some referenced only in passing, some need only a photograph to illustrate their connection to the project, whilst others require or seemingly desire further discussion or decoding. Others, require poetic reinforcement to dissolve the distance between myself and the object or place. I have learnt in this process to recognise the romanticism surrounding the German term *ruinenlust*, meaning the delight one can feel when seeing ruins. This is a practice-led project that discusses the use of text in New Zealand landscape and its continued presence in contemporary art. I pay particular attention to the idea of memorial situated within the landscape and a use of language that draws attention to the complexities of naming, recording and translating memory.

As part of my practice I have developed a process of regularly travelling to different places in Aotearoa NZ. Sometimes this appears as a prodigious road trip to a new location, with journeys mapped out and accommodation booked, other times I could appear from the outside like a wanderer, or *flâneur*, always ready to engage with memory markers while not intentionally travelling to find or experience them. Sometimes they seem to show themselves, this emerging often occurring in familiar places which, after a certain amount of time, give up their stories. These journeys are performative acts or pilgrimages that put me as artist into the land that I have great affection for and feel a deep connection with. I have come to hold these places in the similar sacred vein of prominent journeys like El Camino de Santiago, travelling to the River Ganges, or the city of Mecca for religious rituals, or the Incan pilgrimage site of Machu Picchu. These sites of my contemporary pilgrimages in Aotearoa are places like Waitangi or Parihaka, as well as Te Rerenga Wairua or Mt Hikurangi. There are also local pilgrimages that mean more to local people, like where their waka (boat) of their iwi (tribe) made landfall, or places marking events both public and private.

I move through the country, often feeling my way in a responsive manner. Continual research as well as following my instincts is combined to navigate the turn-offs I take along the way. A larger representation is created from the accumulation of the journey rather than a fixed point from which everything emerges. This is different from a shallow observation or flights from one place to the next. I have been deliberate about the places visited. If I do not have the amount of time a place deserves, I will drive on, unwilling to expedite an experience. So there is an element of time that is impossible to predict on my travels. It should be noted that the places I visited and witnessed through photography and writing in this journal are not completely listed and documented here. The current research has clarified which are significant markers in the landscape and on the land, for me at this time.

A work by Billy Apple called *Brown Room Subtraction*, 2017, draws on multiple threads of engagement with memory and movement that can occur with an invitation to respond to a space, its memory and kaupapa

**Billy Apple has requested that Mokopōpaki remove the painted vinyl flooring to reveal the Kauri floorboards beneath.**

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Figure 6A. Billy Apple, detail of *Brown Room Subtraction*, (2017), Mokopōpaki, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland



Figure 6B. Billy Apple, *Brown Room Subtraction*, (2017), Mokopōpaki, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland



(agenda), a term Jacob Terre discussed during my recent visit to the gallery. The artwork, which is Apple's response to an invitation by the director of Mokopōpaki, is a wall text displayed on the brown wall of the gallery's brown room that requests the gallery to remove the linoleum flooring to reveal the kauri floorboards of the room. Michel Foucault retraces a history of space by suggesting:

that in the Middle Ages there was a hierarchic ensemble of places: sacred places and profane places: protected places and open, exposed places: urban places and rural places (all these concern the real life of men). In cosmological theory, there were the super-celestial places as opposed to the celestial, and the celestial place was in its turn opposed to the terrestrial place. There were places where things had been put because they had been violently displaced, and then on the contrary places where things found their natural ground and stability.<sup>4</sup>

The kaupapa of this space required and requires yet another view of space as layered and meaningful. This request by Apple was accepted and the kauri floorboards were revealed for the visitor to walk on. They are worn and bare in some places and painted a strange orange in others. The memory surface of kauri floorboards is revealed. Now a national treasure, this type of flooring was common during the early colonising period of New Zealand yet now the cultural shift of conservation and preservation would frown upon such an action.

This work is a subtraction or erasure to reveal an invisible memory, the kauri floorboards. Interestingly the word kaupapa, which Terre mentioned, can also mean level surface, floor, stage, platform or layer when used in different contexts. It is this removed layer, and another invisible layer that is revealed via the action of the gallery and the intention of the artist, that reveals the importance of context. As with much of my research around the country, the context is becoming the defining factor for understanding how to engage with national, local or personal memory. Taking something away helps the viewer understand more, rather than less, about the memory of the space and the initiative of the gallery, which John Hurrell writes is an inclusive but critically cooperative space aiming to renounce a traditionally overriding 'Pākehā ethos via a confident and smart Māori perspective'.<sup>5</sup>

Next to the Apple text was the response by Mokopōpaki in te reo Māori which is a verse from the Book of Isaiah. The English verse – intentionally absent from the space – speaks about valleys raised and mountains and hills made low. There is a doubling occurring in the flattening out of details or memory. A smoothing out is occurring even in the translations while, 'hidden' in plain sight are rich metaphors, in the Māori version of the verse.

This is an example of how this kind of study and engagement opens up discussion with memory and trace structures. Is Apple's subtraction a kind of cleansing that is repeated via a levelling of earth? Even a word such as *kōpikopiko* in the Māori verse alludes to death because of its specific context. *Haere rā i a koe ka kōpikopiko atu*

4 Michel Foucault and Jay Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22–27, <https://doi.org/10.2307/464648>. p. 22  
5 John Hurrell, "Beyond the Brown Cube – EyeContact," 2017, <http://eyecontactsite.com/2017/08/beyond-the-brown-cube>.



Figure 7. Elliot Collins, Te Kooti Road, (2017), Ohiwa



Figure 8. Elliot Collins, Chimney, (2017), Waioeka



*ki Te Hono-i-wairua, ki te kāpunipunitanga o te wairua*<sup>6</sup> roughly translates to meaning: *We farewell you as you wend your way to the Gathering Place of Spirits, the meeting place of departed souls.*

So, in the small long room as I stand in the space facing the two texts that open out memory, I am also participating in the remembrance and spiritual act of giving attention to an invisible or unseen presence.

Pierre Nora asserts that, ‘memory is blind to all but the group it binds – which is to say’, and that there are just as many memories as there are individuals, and memory is in its nature ‘multiple and yet specific’. History on the other hand is outside of memory and belongs to ‘everyone and no one’. ‘Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects’<sup>7</sup>. History binds itself to relations between things, stuck within boundaries of associations. ‘Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative’.<sup>8</sup>

The act of writing within this journal is a process that troubles oppositional structures of presence and absence, inscription and erasure. For example, the monumental in my practice is enacted to ward off death through acts of remembrance. In this respect, the project engages with temporalities where artworks explore time, death and memory. Does this journal – by its nature as recording device and tool for inscription – become a memory marker in itself? I am attempting to write about the multiplicity of memory yet, in doing so, am I inscribing one way of thinking and dulling other possible readings? Giselle Byrnes writes that, ‘by inscribing names on the land, then encoding these places on maps, land surveyors laid the foundations upon which British colonial hegemony could be extended’<sup>9</sup>. Are my observations of these sometimes historically violent, or at least culturally disturbing, places reinforcing colonialism? Or, in my poetic observations and auto-ethnographic approach, am I countering a long history of colonisation which demanded ‘that cultural space be absolute and indivisible, and rendered with a homogeneity’<sup>10</sup> that negates or obscures difference.

Because of my Anglo-Celtic extraction, and the dominant cultural narrative to which I belong, I have replicated with many of my photographs the *emptiness* of the images recorded by early land surveyors like Samuel Stephens, referencing a colonial imprinting that prevails in the way I have been taught to ‘read’ and ‘see’ landscape. Stephens produced images of the landscape, ‘devoid of human habitation – or any form of life for that matter – and was therefore available’.<sup>11</sup> My images, in my defence, have always held a trace structure of remembered human life, and the artworks reflectively produced have maintained a resonating if residual connection.

During my research, I have undergone a personal process of addressing history and adjustment within my actual psychology, as to the difference between ‘landscape’, as an ideal British Colonial archetype of how a place *should* be, and whenua (land), which sustains, provides and nurtures while having its own

6 John C. Moorfield, “Te Whanake 4: Te Kōhure” (Longman/Pearson Education, 2004), 37

7 Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, no. 26 (1989): 9.

8 Nora, 9.

9 G. Byrnes, *Boundary Markers: Land Surveying and the Colonisation of New Zealand* (Bridget Williams Books, 2001), 77.

10 Byrnes, 50.

11 Byrnes, 74.



Figure 9. Elliot Collins, Nin's Bin, (2016), Kaikōura



Figure 10. Elliot Collins, Wakapuaka, (2017), Nelson

life-force and resonance. This has not been the focus of my research as this is not a new idea. Haskins mentions Matthew Reason's essay where, 'in the course of his travels and research, he realises that the relationship between the archive and its interpreter flows both ways – that "the archivist is not effaced, but rather becomes a player within an overt performance of cultural memory"'.<sup>12</sup> Martin Edmond refers to place as an archive when he writes:

Ohakune, we used to say, is a dump; but a dump is a kind of archive and from an archive you can find a way to elaborate memories and dreams as well as stories. Everything is there, including the absences.<sup>13</sup>

This journal attempts to elucidate, through the process of travel, research and making, the way memory markers reveal or conceal themselves in different circumstances that are out of the 'control' of the observer. The project will specifically discuss notions of enigma, signature, place-naming, silence, absence and speech, by looking at and referencing road signs, signwriting, tombstones and monuments to encounter again the human interventions with the landscape. The journal is also a way to come to terms with my own exile, despite the fact I come from generations of people born here.

My painting titled *New Zealand Was A Wilderness*, 2015, acts as a placeholder for the developing Ph.D. project. It's a large-format painting on stretched canvas that references large-format landscape traditions and is overlaid by a dominating text that the title references. Between the roman serif text and the landscape backdrop there is a middle ground that appears to be some kind of fluorescent orange graffiti. This middle ground seems to threaten and almost obliterate the landscape in the background. The painting and its title are intended as deeply ironic. It acts as a celebration of some of the modernist landscape traditions that it references while, at the same time, critiquing that very tradition from which it comes. I highlight this painting because it situates my practice as both a celebration of that landscape and the use of words upon landscape while, at the same time, being mindful of a number of questions. The title *New Zealand Was a Wilderness* needs no question mark, as this would over literalise the provocation. Was New Zealand a wilderness? Did the traditions of modernist New Zealand painting that this project discusses save that wilderness? Or is it merely referring to an unknowable fiction? What is the role of the artist in the landscape within contemporary visual art? Stephen Bann answers this in a way that highlights my methodology, implying that the artist uniquely contributes, 'in the form of material tokens: not simply signs, but traces, vestiges, even deferred presences, relating to the "no-place" which is also a concrete place'.<sup>14</sup>

The painting is a provocation of the idea that the landmass of New Zealand was, and is, a place to *write about*, to *write to* and to *write upon*. This is in contrast to early-settler land surveyors who were charged with measuring and marking the soil for arriving settlers to coerce into a 'British way of life'. These surveyors were at the

<sup>12</sup> Kingsley Baird, Kendall R. Phillips, and Gary Peters, "The Cultures of Memory" 2, no. 1 (2016), p. 11

<sup>13</sup> I. Horrocks and C. Lacey, *Extraordinary Anywhere: Essays on Place from Aotearoa New Zealand* (Victoria University Press, 2016), 221.

<sup>14</sup> Y. Abrioux and S. Bann, *Ian Hamilton Finlay: A Visual Primer* (MIT Press, 1992).





Figure 11. Elliot Collins, Cenotaph, (2017), Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira,

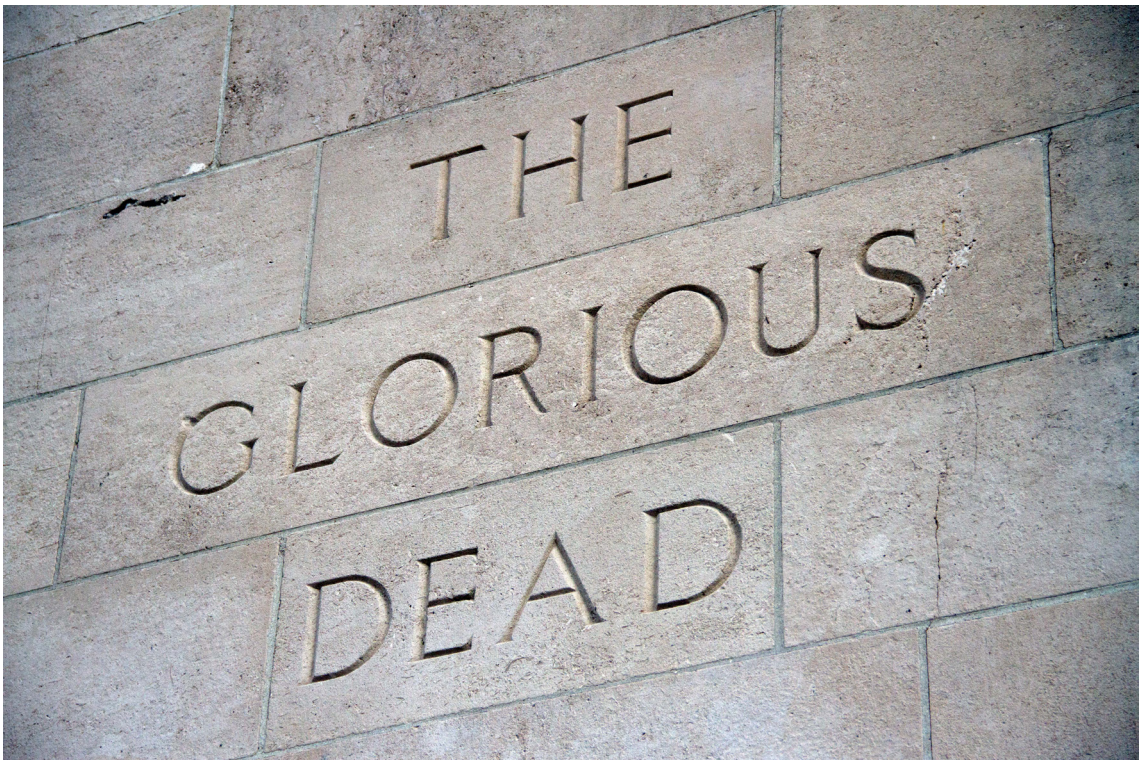


Figure 12. Elliot Collins, Detail, Cenotaph, (2017), Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira

forefront of *making landscape* and of transforming 'space' into 'place'.<sup>15</sup> Byrnes writes of three ways that this 'transformation' occurred:

reading the land, writing over and about it, and negotiating its physical and cultural boundaries.

In using these strategies, land surveyors created a variety of different landscapes, or specific perspectives of *the land*. These landscapes, revealed through written narrative, sketches, plans, maps, paintings, and other sources, transformed the land into a kind of palimpsest of fragmented visions.<sup>16</sup>

The surveyors colonised the land through language, literally inscribing it with new meanings and ways of seeing: place naming and mapping are perhaps the best example of this. I have 'surveyed' the landscape in different places all over the country and discovered these buried names and hidden memories, and attempted to 'un-map' and 'dis-place' these names by refusing to acquiesce to the propaganda of place that has become so normalised that it is no longer seen.

Other recent paintings in this project such as *Untitled (Northland panels, 1958)*, 2015, and *Untitled (Cass, 1936)*, 2015, speak about a density and layering within my work with reference to modernist paintings within the New Zealand canon that perpetuated this surveyed landscape. The overlaying grid (which happens to be in the background) is a reduction of the colours of the original paintings that the text is based on. These works are not referencing what I am seeing but rather *how* I am seeing; the layered and fractured way the viewer in any culture observes the landscape and themselves within it. They are my perceptions of a mediated landscape or narrative that I have attempted to see through the eyes of another, and then proceed to retell that story in my own voice. Finding a story or memory within the language and landscape that was not mine to tell, but now is.

The surveyor's grid, writes Rangihiroa Panoho, as 'a Pākehā (non-Māori) nomenclature, is a longstanding feature of New Zealand's bicultural dialogue and the reimagining of the New Zealand landscape that has been going on since the 1850s'.<sup>17</sup> From such a perspective, I have become aware that my 'retellings' are rife with mistranslation, exaggeration and misleading reference to important elements. I make special note of these paintings as they emphasise the layered and complex task of navigating this terrain.

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15 Byrnes, *Boundary Markers: Land Surveying and the Colonisation of New Zealand*, 3.

16 Byrnes, 6.

17 R. Panoho, M. Adams, and H. Sameshima, *Māori Art: History, Architecture, Landscape and Theory* (David Bateman Limited, New Zealand, 2015). 73.





Figure 13. Elliot Collins, Catholic Cemetery, (2017), Charleston



Figure 14. Elliot Collins, Plaque below statue of Mary, (2017), Catholic Cemetery, Charleston

## Object Memory / Memory Containing Objects

I have observed, while travelling, that all markers seem to exist in relation to death. In one sense, they themselves seem to have a limited lifespan based on their materiality, manufacture and subsequent durability — they are an echo of a memory apparently only contained or held for the duration of their lifespan. In another sense, each marker resonates with certain aspects of knowledge that defer to this death. There also exists the inherent ‘unseen’ within things generating a peculiar absence. As I mentioned, there is an assumption that markers and memorials are exclusively commemorating death, however the original use of the term refers to the Latin *memoria* meaning memory, and later the Old French term *memorial* meaning to record or report. This thinking about memorials, as reports or memories, allows for the Heideggerian term *Das Nichts* or ‘the nothing’ to be employed as a counterbalance to the idea that every marker is about death. Some memories are about a celebration of life. In this respect, the memory marker can be seen as a signpost or way-marker that illuminates the basic concept of being. It records, in myriad ways, the certain entity of *Dasein* which Heidegger describes as, ‘in itself “historical”, so its own most ontological elucidation necessarily becomes an “historiological” (*historischen*) interpretation’.<sup>18</sup> I have documented and made artwork in lateral ways that concern *Das Nicht*, yet find it difficult to discuss with any real definition. It eludes description and fluctuates within the realm of perception. The work made throughout this project, and for the final exhibition, asks the viewer to look at what is not there as much as what is available. The riddle of art, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev writes, ‘is that we do not know what it is until it is no longer that which it was’. ‘Furthermore’ she continues, ‘art is defined as much by what it is, as by what it is not; by what it does, or can do, as by what it does not, or cannot do; it is defined even by what it fails to achieve’.<sup>19</sup> Then there is the question of what I am referencing when participating in simulacra or homage to the memory marker. Heideggerian scholar Karsten Harris highlights the obscure nature of language with an example:

Language disguises the thought: so that from the external forms of the clothes one cannot infer the form of the thought they clothe, because the external form of the clothes is constructed with quite another object than to let the form of the body be recognized. On this view language hides its essential structure, just as the body hides the spirit.<sup>20</sup>

From this perspective, I explore the idea that memory is both internal and external to language: that there are trace elements in the memory marker as much as there are in the human subject. In this way I believe that the monuments are mirroring ourselves and that the mirror can see what we can’t and is both utopic and heterotopic as a placeless place. Foucault writes that in the mirror he sees himself where he is not, a kind of imitation or, ‘virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent’.<sup>21</sup>

18 R. Barthes, *S/Z*. (Hill and Wang, 1974). 39.

19 C. Christov-Bakargiev and B. Funcke, *Documenta 13: The Book of Books, Catalog 1/3*, Documenta 13: The Book of Books, Catalog 1/3, v. 1 (Hatje Cantz, 2012). 30.

20 Karsten Harris, “Heidegger’s Being and Time” (Yale University, 2014). 8.

21 Foucault and Miskowicz, “Of Other Spaces.”





Figure 15. Elliot Collins, The Madonna Falls, (2017), Te Kuiti



Figure 16. Elliot Collins, Memory Marker for the Madonna Falls, (2017), Te Kuiti



I am further defining the term heterotrophic as a placeless place to emphasise that memory markers are sites of conflagration that are important but impossible to fully enter into. If we do so it is via metaphor and poetry. To me Memory Markers take up spaces we cannot enter and were not originally in their current form in their current configuration or location and so have displaced space and made it a place that one cannot enter. So there is a placeless nature that each marker fulfils. They are perfect places but irrelevant as places because they, like the mirror, cannot be entered. Even the powhiri could be conceived of as a heterotopia yet that too cannot be entered into but rather journeyed through.

Mauro Mancia references the analytic work of Sigmund Freud who, 'gets to the core of the question of memory and memories, on which analytic construction is based: the patient's task is to remember, the analyst's is "to make out what has been forgotten from the traces which it has left behind"'.<sup>22</sup> Mancia uses the term *ponifex* or bridge-builder, that is another way of describing the memory marker's role as a kind of bridge that endlessly connects the present with past experience and 'binds together the adult's object world'.<sup>23</sup> On my journeying I have found many pontifices to other times. It is useful to remember that memory markers are time-heavy subjects and cannot ever be completely separate from their time of initial record.

Within this journal I speak only to my perception of experience, singular in a multiplicity of readings and experiences, of the ritual act of monumentalising object, place or event to the extent that it does not set apart or exclude others from having their own individual or collective experience. Yet we are all collectively unable to occupy the exact space on the memory markers and so it reinforces our absence from exactitude. I make no excuses for using creative licence to project a monumental desire upon the landscape, as has been done by many as far back as Captain Cook's journeys to these islands, and his first journal like mine a work of *art*. I am, however, doing so knowingly and without the desire to use these images or text as propaganda or for dominion over today. I am privileged to walk amongst such things. Mancia raises the idea that, 'memory is not so much a reactivation of historically definable experience as a facilitation of the comparison and integration of present and past experience, as reactivated *by* the transference'.<sup>24</sup> My experience is not *the* experience but merely *an* experience. Monumentalising is a process involving a constellation of meanings, symbols, emotions, memories and narratives. It is exactly the vague and elusive nature of absence and trace that this journal attempts to contemplate. Even from the three different journal entries of the time by Cook, Banks and Parkinson, of discovery of New Zealand on the Endeavour, it is obvious that perspective always shifts the memory and record of a place and event, even dates don't seem to be of too much concern to those involved, what we find of interest we see fit to record.

This journal is a response to certain memory markers that I have observed as being set apart. They contain some kind of distinct sentiment and exist outside of the everyday. They exist in places or *are* places to go to, to remember either very recent or historical events. In this respect they are also markers of forgetting. Peters writes of forgetting that:

<sup>22</sup> Mauro Mancia, *In the Gaze of Narcissus: Memory, Affects, and Creativity* (Karnac, 1993). 162.

<sup>23</sup> Mancia, 163.

<sup>24</sup> Mancia, *In the Gaze of Narcissus: Memory, Affects, and Creativity*. 164.



Figure 17. Elliot Collins, Cape Maria van Diemen, (2017), from *Te Rerenga Wairua*



Figure 18. Edward Frisström, *Pōhutukawa*, (c. 1905), 178 x 251mm, oil on card, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, accession no. 1967/9/1

perhaps as Nietzsche proclaimed, we need to remember how to forget in order to create new habits of remembering, whereby the crushing weight of the 'it was' – the 'spirit of gravity' – is transformed into a bearable lightness of being, and where a sense of the past or the affect of the past engulfs us as a fate to be loved (*amor fati*).<sup>25</sup>

The march of time sees that everything becomes distant and potentially forgotten. These markers can be outside of a direct line of relation and may simply hold a place in your awareness that brings you a deep sense of connection. This 'outsideness' is referenced by Peters who writes about memory as an outside as, 'a lived exteriority capable of witnessing and sensing the *event* of memory in the incommunicable and irresponsible an-archy of the given'.<sup>26</sup>

I have explored markers that are built through hard work or ritual. Whoever made the memorial appears to seek out the other to say, often silently and on the wind, 'remember'. These sites and traces of memory are also 'quietening grounds'; they are locations where calm seems to descend. For no other reason than that they are set apart from everyday life, away from a road or in a secluded area, and the often-accompanying messages that require something of the reader. I connect to the mark via the poetry of the text written or set down by a writer I will never know. I say 'poetry' because it seems there is no way of talking about death without poetry. The poet Thomas Hirsh writes of the elegy as, 'a poem of mortal loss and consolation' in his book *A Poet's Glossary*; he cites examples from ancient Greece to Thomas Hardy, before elaborating on such a poem's function: 'The elegy does the work of mourning'.<sup>27</sup>

And so, when coming back to these markers, I have photographed them in a monumental way by selecting a single often central subject and used the landscape around them to frame their importance in it. By extending my encounter and understanding of them I begin to experience something that can be identified as collective memory. In this encounter, I do not have the authority to dissect, control or manipulate the memory nor will I try to suggest how the remembering is inferred. Possibly I have agreed to become an ally to memory despite the fact that these memory markers appear to suggest that it is reasonable to forget or, incrementally, to lose track of the date and time of the memory, but not its essence. And maybe this forgetting is an essential part of memory construction. With this in mind I defer to Peters who continues to say that, 'culture-nature; memory-forgetting; knowledge-ignorance; having and being-had; the will to power – the power not to will, are not dialectical binaries but the chiasmus'<sup>28</sup> of our co-existence with ourselves and 'our coexistence with the other, the endless crisscrossing of being-with and remembering with.'<sup>29</sup> The reader of memory markers is caught in the chiasm because there are no absolute truths but instead 'conflicting and conflicted narratives' that expand outward, inside and outside, cultural realms which reveal and conceal as a standard originating function of collectively developed memory.

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25 Baird, Phillips, and Peters, "The Cultures of Memory." 20.

26 Baird, Phillips, and Peters. 20.

27 E. Hirsch, *A Poet's Glossary* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014).

28 Baird, Phillips, and Peters, "The Cultures of Memory," 21.

29 Baird, Phillips, and Peters, "The Cultures of Memory." 21.





Figure 19. Elliot Collins, detail of submerged tidal step text, *Karakia for Tauranga Moana*, (2017), Tauranga



The world appears to me as a fluid and transient medium which I am, as Heidegger puts it, thrown into. This 'thrownness' or '*Geworfenheit*'<sup>30</sup> is activated when observing a memory marker that draws the *me* back to a fixed location in the world and makes me stop and think for a moment. This is where I step outside my narrow orbit of self and experience my connection to the universe as a unified whole before being thrown back into ego-driven pursuits. Thus, there is also a temporal nature to interactions with markers I will address in later chapters. Memory markers as monumental objects are reminders that perhaps there are stable touchstones that can act as anchor points to memory. Their very materiality implies that life might actually be quite solid, and yet ironically, they represent the ephemeral and transient qualities of humanity. Because someone, or a group of people, has recorded important details, it is customary – and I might here imply encouraged – for them to get a little bit vague in collective memory. Though I am aware of erosion and decay, these markers seem like eternal, deathless objects, their monumentality lends them an aura of immortality. The irony is that they often speak of death or *das nichts*, which they will never experience, at least not in the way we do. Even as ruin the memory marker maintains a certain power. Even in decay I believe that an emanation continues, especially where there are marks and traces of habitation, stories or signs of a once-lively signification.

Unless I become deeply ingrained and immersed in the provenance of particular memorial makers, and the communities in whose domain they occur, something as a passerby I am reluctant to do, I cannot ascertain why memories have been altered, changed, removed or have evaded memorialisation. Thus far, an insight I have gained from my research is that there is always a certain emotional resonance that these memorials contain; an indescribable element that I can only hint at, or suggest, for it eludes me. Even when the memory falls out of popular discourse, the residue, or poignant trace, is visible within the many aspects of these markers that I will depict throughout the journal. The markers contained within this journal are not part of an exhaustive list of my visitations of monuments, and there are many markers that have been redacted, removed or purposely left out through the process of compiling this exegesis because of their problematic nature, which I will discuss or purposely overlook during the course of this exegesis.

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30 Heidegger, Martin (2000), *Being and Time*, John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson. 172.



Figure 20. Elliot Collins, Masonic Hall, (2017), Kohukohu



Figure 21. Elliot Collins, Left Bank Art Gallery, Old Bank of New Zealand, (2017), Greymouth

## Invisible Text – ‘Languaging’ Silence

It has become apparent that accumulating unspoken and/or unwritten histories or memories has become the task of the ‘non-memorial’ memory markers, that influence my work, that leave a trace of a person, place or event with differing degrees of opacity – amid fluid historical backgrounds, they often mention one aspect but remain silent on others.

A trace can be seen and not seen, removing the binary of presence or absence. Deidre Brown writes that, ‘[Māori believe] all actions leave a trace of their presence on their environments through the accumulation of wairua supported by korero’.<sup>31</sup> There are examples of the spectrum of trace within my research, from old mining tunnels in the Karangahake Gorge to crumbling houses or decaying and ‘misplaced’ monuments. The journeying to the place is as important as the destination, just as it is for Rachel Buchanan when researching ‘settlement’ sites of significant Māori places in and around Wellington Harbour/Te Whanga-nui-a-Tara. She writes that, ‘the first approach was to “re-touch” all the archival evidence generated about two of the “returned” sites – the harbour island, Matiu and the second was to visit the sites’.<sup>32</sup> For Buchanan, these visits were a way of assembling ‘whānau memory’ from the ground up and creating a methodology for knowledge retrieval. For me they are an introduction to memories that I am only aware of in some measure. For all their inherent difficulties, these contemporary places were an entry point into ideas of memory, absence, trace and silence that my practice welcomes. Historic difficulties will always arise because of flawed systems of national collective memory, Buchanan suggests that this system continues ‘to marginalise, elide, or silence public memories about Māori people and places’.<sup>33</sup>

Touching the markers, entering the site and being amongst its surroundings gives a valuable insight into the tangible and invisible presence of memory. I am drawn to what James E. Young says about the way we approach markers and their surroundings when he says that the, ‘mind pours itself into the gaps between fragments, like so much mortar, to bind the remnants together’.<sup>34</sup> ‘We are reminded’ he continues, ‘that memory is never seamless, but always a mortar of collected fragments, recomposed by each person and generation’.<sup>35</sup> I am reminded not to fill in the gaps with the assumptions of preconceived or learnt singular narratives but to observe what Roman Jakobson called the *medial*, which were six aspects of communication. The six parts are addresser, addressee, message, code, contact and context.<sup>36</sup> When each of these *medial* parts are stressed upon memory markers there is an understanding of the kind of reading that is intended but also the invisible ‘hidden medial parts’ that are invisible but present in the interaction.

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31 A. Smith and L. Wevers, *On Display: New Essays in Cultural Studies* (Victoria University Press, 2004). p. 68-69

32 Kingsley Baird and Kendall R. Phillips, “Contained Memory,” *Memory Connection*, 1 (2011). p. 284

33 Baird and Phillips. p. 285

34 J.E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, Jewish Studies/Art (Yale University Press, 1993). 198.

35 Young. 198.

36 T. Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Harvard University Press, 2007), 36,





Figure 22. Elliot Collins, the sign reads: The Memory Bank, (old ANZ Building), (2017), Taumarunui



When I visit memory markers I notice the hot grass smell in the quiet still air, or the busy road that dissects the ancient site, or the lack of people in places that once thrived with community life. When I assume the position of the marker, looking out from its viewpoint to see what it surveys, from a wide vista of a declining mining towns to a clearing flanked by mānuka in bloom that rarely receives visitors, I attempt to comprehend the invisible and to consider what is waiting to be revealed, while remembering that some memory will remain concealed.

It is within these small, often overlooked gestures, notes Nicos Papastergiadis that, 'it is possible to discern strange echoes composed of different voices and the persistence of memories that are otherwise overwhelmed by the din of progress'.<sup>37</sup> In New Zealand these 'strange echoes' and 'different voices' are the persistent memories of 'pre-New Zealand' voices, from pre-European 'discovery' times. They are old words and phrases from the first people who proclaimed words over, under and through the land and its inhabitants.

Papastergiadis writes, 'cultural identity is a fragmentary, disjointed and contradictory phenomenon that is experienced as if it were a unified and stable formation, precisely because the boundaries between the constituent symbols, ideas and practices constantly oscillate through the process of interaction'.<sup>38</sup> Those within a particular culture or landscape read the absent text of identity and instinctively navigate its oscillations. It surrounds us but does not hinder revelation. Young writes that in a certain way identity is a noise that affects the message we transmit and receive concerning ideas and discussions of identity. For some it is barely audible yet for others it is overwhelming. Young compares it to a room in a house, now gone, remembered as something to be fought for; it is interesting to recall Billy Apple's intervention with Mokopōpaki, as a noise about the collision or meeting of identities against a cultural framework. The observed noise of that meeting still humming in my ears. It was because this rooms, 'lingering space defines that fragile presence we call identity'.<sup>39</sup> It is a dilemma because of the invisibility of the identity being fought for and it is heard as a distant humming in the inner ear, like the indistinct sound 'film editors refer to as *room tone*'.<sup>40</sup>

The importance of my project in relation to art in Aotearoa NZ can be seen when discerning differences from other contemporary art practices. I am interested in negotiating the unexamined regions left by artists such as Mary-Louise Browne who has informed my practice with ongoing reference to memorial stone plaques and wordplay with artworks like *Body to Soul*, 1996, where four letter words morph from one to the other, one letter at a time, as they are traversed. Another work titled *This plaque is placed...*, 2010, addresses the significance of relationship between author and reader via a description of the responsibilities of engagement between the artwork and the viewer. Browne's installations 'comment on traditional uses of stone in plaques, gravestones, doorplates, foundation stones and even milestones'.<sup>41</sup> She has used words extensively throughout her career and has played with themes of feminism, place, romance, pop culture and memory. Her precise execution of materials within her practice is thoughtful and considered. She appropriates all of her language and text from

37 Nikos Papastergiadis, "Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place and the Everyday," *Theory on Demand*, no. 5 (2010). 10.

38 Papastergiadis. 52.

39 Papastergiadis, 76.

40 Papastergiadis.

41 Wedde, I., and G. Burke. *Now See Hear!: Art, Language, and Translation*. Victoria University Press for the Wellington City Art Gallery, 1990, 230



other sources and for this reason is well read in a wide range of areas, styles and themes. This appropriation has also been a methodology of her practice since art school and the use of phrases, sentences and quotes from external sources has functioned as playful, often ironic word play. A notable reference to Browne is my work, *A Drop of Water*, 2016, which uses Browne's signature style of shifting language from funerary monuments and placing it in a contemporary art context pushing at the boundaries of memory and the structure of language. Another artist, Shane Cotton, teases out ideas of identity and meaning-making as well as the construction of place via symbolism and language. Cotton combines storytelling and traditional Māori patterns in works like *He Pukapuka Tuatahi*, 2000, or *Whakakitenga ki te Kenehi*, 1998, with contemporary images and themes. In a similar way, *The Hanging Sky*, 2012, negotiates different layers of memory, myth and contemporary conversations on biculturalism and identity politics in Aotearoa NZ. The artist with whom I feel most affinity is Martin Awa Clarke Langdon who plays with poetic language and dialectic understanding. As a contemporary we have similar interests in the tangential discussion of culture and language. As noted below in the section 'Motif as Named Places', Langdon has a concerted interest in shifting institutional space by addressing biculturalism and in the idea of a contemporary colonial New Zealand, especially in artworks such as *No Longer Available*, 2016, or *Revolving Quesitons*, 2017. He uses Māori-based, stylised letterforms that inform the message held in the words they create. The viewer is obliged to take time with the words and to decipher what the work is communicating.

All these artists explore their own distinct position in Aotearoa NZ in relation to identity, language, time and place. Within this terrain, my work responds to these artists by focusing on the notion of the artist as pilgrim or traveller. From this perspective, I am expanding the area of research upon which the non-indigenous artist might address the landscape, with language, attempting not to repeat colonising actions that disconnect or 'other' any peoples. Accordingly, the journal is a crucial method, informing my sense of place in Aotearoa NZ.

Throughout this journal I have devised the term 'memory marker' – rather than memorials or monument – as an indicator that represents, stands for, or suggests divergent ideas, contradictory visual images, a variation of beliefs or past actions that are presently 'unseen'. Memory markers in the landscape take the form of words, sounds, gestures or visual images and are used to convey ideas and beliefs that often develop into distinctive entities which can become cultural motifs or signifiers. The word 'symbol' is derived from the Greek, token, sign; in other senses from Latin *symbolum* token, sign, symbol, from Greek *symbolon*, literally, token of identity verified by comparing its other half, from *symballein* to throw together, compare, from *syn-* + *ballein* to throw.<sup>42</sup> Symbols are representations or patterns of identity, that are external examples of what is an internal experience. Their failure to span an entire experience is an accepted part of the collective display of identity. Quigley notes that to Charles Brasch:

passivity and patience were the keys to a true understanding of any place'. Brasch's poetry is full of criticism of those who sought to control the landscape by force, suggesting that they impressed themselves upon the land like conquerors, 'scarring it with vain memorials.'<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> "Definition of SYMBOL." Accessed March 3, 2018. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/symbol>.  
<sup>43</sup> S.V. Quigley, "Charles Brasch: A Visual Poet" (University of Canterbury, 1991), 63.





Figure 23. Elliot Collins, Embroidered cushions, Anglican Church, (2017), Kororāreka/Russell



Figure 24. Elliot Collins, Te Mahoe Mission Station Site, (2016), Mōkau



Invisible text and languaging silence contends with the problems of trying to *make* identity as Zygmunt Bauman writes, ‘all diligent work of construction may prove to be in vain’.<sup>44</sup> *Meaning making*, as opposed to *uncovering* or *discovering* meaning – and therefore seeing identity – that exists, are different processes. Uncovering or discovering could appear passive, allowing symbols to unfold and reveal what there is to disclose.<sup>45</sup> The other, *making*, appears active, carving out deities through mythmaking and creating patterns that represent waveforms or mnemonic devices; helping ‘create’ memory. Both have relevance within my practice and the wider discourse of identity construction and identity discovery, though the latter now exposes the ‘thrownness’ mentioned earlier and the impulse to retreat from ‘the nothing’ *das nicht*. Pablo Neruda talking about Hotere’s use of words through the lens of Aristotle, wrote in his *Poetics* that:

words are not only ‘resounding matter’, they are symbols capable of taking the place of things which cannot appear themselves in our midst. In the ‘Te Whiti’ series, words – with the messages and beliefs they contain – stand in for the lives of authors: the political and spiritual leaders of the past, the ancestors. They are also the veil through which we see the physical world.<sup>46</sup>

There are keener observations of ‘truths’ to make by looking for forensic clues through accessing supplementary texts to the main composition of my images; road signs, for example or information boards or geographical marks like islands floating on the horizon space become a code by which to read a sign. Timothy Morton writes of Heidegger’s ‘locative vagueness’ which holds a precise function, ‘as he develops his view of art as a ‘happening of truth’ in the revealing of the ‘thingly’ character of the thing, it becomes clear that this view is deeply rhapsodic.’<sup>47</sup> In *Origins*, Heidegger comments on a pair of shoes painted by Van Gogh, simply called *Shoes*, 1888:

Rather than trying to be adequate to a real pair of shoes – Heidegger criticizes the idea that art is, in the medieval terminology, a kind of *adaequatio* – the artwork embodies the historicalcultural ‘world’ in which it was made, and the ‘earth’ out of which it emerges and which, in Heidegger’s words, ‘shelters’ it, ‘makes space for that spaciousness’.<sup>48</sup>

There exists a very real fear here – what if there is nothing, no identity, to discover – that space is made in my practice and it is filled by nothing. But again, these are merely signs and symbols pointing to another invisible text that are either hidden in memory or indistinct pasts via translation, even as Hotere writes translations within his work there are silences that his words, or the words of poets, can only point to. There are *translations* which do not translate. The banality of governmental information signage or indiscriminate translation creates what Young describes as a, ‘splintering of memory and its meanings’.<sup>49</sup>

44 S. Hall and P. du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*: SAGE Publications (SAGE Publications, 1996),

45 I find it interesting that both these words hold the word cover within them as if they hold the answer within their form.

46 T.M. Hohaia, G. O’Brien, and L. Strongman, *Parihaka: The Art of Passive Resistance* (Victoria University Press, 2006),

47 Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*.

48 Morton, 57.

49 Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 280.



Figure 25. Elliot Collins, First bridge in New Zealand, built circa 1843, (2018), Kohukohu

Gyan Prakash writes about the weight of history and the one-sidedness of memory, especially of colonial history. This idea is recalled in a work I made for Tauranga Art Gallery called, *The Weight of History*, 2016. I would like to draw attention specifically to the lack of memorials to Māori victims or heroes of the New Zealand/Māori Land Wars of the mid 1800s. I mention this only because it was tradition at the time of the wars for the British-led government to remember those fallen British men in memorial. I am troubled by the amount of stories omitted and memories ‘disremembered’ because, ‘of course, historians cannot recover what was suppressed’,<sup>50</sup> and the reader cannot know what they don’t know. In this context, the ‘dis’ of disremembered implies a removal; it creates an uncertainty around the remembering. A disremembered idea is not forgotten but is also not remembered, but is on that boundary of forgetting and remembering. The word ‘remember’ seems lost in the middle of its new combination. The state of disremembering is like the moment before you remember someone’s name. It is a memory but I am not able to gather it. Interestingly, Prakash writes that a public can critically encounter the effects of that silencing only ‘by sketching the traces of figures that come to us only as disfigurations’.<sup>51</sup>

I make art that critically confronts the invisibility of subjects that have not been publicly discussed, not to restore the ‘original’ figures – this is impossible – but to mark the perimeters of the boundaries within vague shadows that the ‘disfigurations themselves outline’.<sup>52</sup> If my work appears to make historical reference it is because I agree with Charles Merewether, who writes that history is not a tool of construction because it is not consistent, regular or empty but rather heaving with the ‘presence of the now’.<sup>53</sup> In this sense time as it relates to history is also made boundary-less if it is filled by this ‘presence’. Once again, this emphasises memory markers as non-memorials in what could perhaps never be historical continuity; traces of deferred presences ‘relating to the ‘no-place’ which is also a concrete place’.<sup>54</sup>

When Jacques Derrida was received by tangata whenua onto a marae during a pōwhiri, on an invited visit to New Zealand to deliver a public lecture in 1999 called ‘Forgiving the Unforgivable’; Linda Tuhiwai Smith addressed the different accesses granted, and boundaries positioned, to be traversed during the process of the welcome.<sup>55</sup> Invisible boundaries become visible through language during a pōwhiri while time is collapsed and the past is merged with the present. Papastergiadis notes that this is not just a matter of identifying the boundaries of difference which might appear at first the objective for the novice boundary rider; ‘the narratives of place and displacement are not binary opposites but part of a broader quest for understanding the imperatives of social connection’.<sup>56</sup> Derrida was negotiating, using protocols of the host, to interpret a new social connection which paved the way for a ‘new language that allows for a dialogue with difference’.<sup>57</sup> Foucault describes these permissions and gestures as important ways to enable the visitor to enter the heterotopias of marae and

50 Gyan Prakash, “Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography,” 1992, 14.

51 Prakash.

52 Prakash.

53 Art Gallery of New South Wales and Ivan Dougherty Gallery, *The Boundary Rider: 9th Biennale of Sydney, 15 December 1992-14 March 1993* (Biennale of Sydney, 1992), 20.

54 Abrioux and Bann, *Ian Hamilton Finlay: A Visual Primer*, 27.

55 INQ13 | Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Eve Tuck - “Decolonizing Methodologies” (The Graduate Center, CUNY, 2013), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIZXQC27tv8>.

56 Papastergiadis, “Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place and the Everyday,” 119.

57 Papastergiadis.





wharenuī.<sup>58</sup> In this next section I discuss the multilayered way that this matter of reading and negotiating the language of the landscape occurs. There are many angles, and below are addressed some perspectives that contribute to this thinking.

To continue from the pōwhiri, I begin with Panoho, who asserts a Māori worldview. He shares a perspective wherein Māori create work with the access already embedded beneath the surface of the work. The invisible text is already read in relation to the artist's whakapapa. These artworks contain human collaborations which possess a remarkable peaceful 'vitality' as though motif and text are impressed onto an artwork, either figuratively or literally. A series of signs and signifiers are collected, distributed and dissolved in a bricolage of

distinctive marks. Merewether discusses the concept of bricolage in relation to the collection and creation of signs, by writing, 'through bricolage new signs are created, but unlike the conceptual procedures of science, these signs tolerate, and even demand, that some human thickness be incorporated'<sup>59</sup> into their reality. 'The sign, like the image and unlike concepts, is indirect. It does not relate exclusively to itself, but replaces something other than itself'.<sup>60</sup>

The story of an artwork by a Māori practitioner begins in their whakapapa from time immemorial and passes forward to the present to hold the art object in its gaze. The 'artwords' are 'signs that point to deeper layered information that the artist is reluctant to give away to [their] viewer without inviting enquiry'.<sup>61</sup> From this perspective, Panoho discusses the missing, forgotten or misplaced details and narratives that exist in the landscape. Significant stories that have travelled with an individual or group, through the act of re-telling, and towards on-going collection points are 'always-becoming' present and, in a way, becoming new; knowledge adjusts and memory shifts via a paradigm of wisdom not available to this researcher. Even in the wider sense of an archive which includes abstract thought a truth will always pervade the 'carried-over' stories yet become disturbed, disfigured or lost. A removal will always occur within the carrying over of memory because the presence of the absent knowledge always confirms its structure as being both present *and* absent yet complete. The role of my practice and this document is to create an understanding that grounds these absences or invisibilities in a physical way, marking work about seeing and reading congregating with invisibility and the inability to 'read'. The idea that the traveler *has been* or *has not yet arrived* does not discount that they have presence even though they are currently invisible. This idea of presence/absence is always in transition, an

arrival or departure. There is a convergence of thought that flows through both Panoho and Papastergiadis' writings on the idea of speaking from a grounded place that observes the transit of memory. Contemplating the idea of the traveller, I suggest that they could be received, by memory markers, in the way the coast receives a migratory bird, expectantly yet without thought of possession.

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58 Foucault and Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces."

59 Wales and Gallery, *The Boundary Rider: 9th Biennale of Sydney, 15 December 1992-14 March 1993*, 20.

60 Wales and Gallery.

61 Panoho, Adams, and Sameshima, *Māori Art: History, Architecture, Landscape and Theory*, 44.



Figure 26. Elliot Collins, King Country Memorial, (2017), Taumarunui



Figure 27. Elliot Collins, Plaque detail, King Country Memorial, (2017), Taumarunui



I agree with a shift in attitude that Francis Pound observes when he reports of McCahon's works that do not contain Māori words until 1962. However, when they commence, 'McCahon's landscapes "proper" show a further effort to give his paintings a Māori voice'.<sup>62</sup> In this respect there is an invisible speaker rather than an absent text. 'In *Urewera Mural*, 1976, for instance, the inscriptions memorialise two Māori leaders and prophets linked with the Urewera: Te Kooti and Rua Kenana'.<sup>63</sup> McCahon does not explain or offer information about the prophets or allude to the stories of the Urewera implicitly but he does offer the viewer an opening, a tentative few steps with te reo Māori. This lack of explanation could be a way to avoid the appearance of often-perceived co-opting of cultures not our own. I have faced this within my own practice and witnessed it while travelling thought the country. McCahon acknowledges that the land resonates with a Māori voice in '*Te Tangi o te Pīpīwharau* (*The Song of the Shining Cuckoo*), 1974, [which comes] from a traditional Māori lament whose words were given to McCahon by Ralph Hotere, who had learned the song from his father'.<sup>64</sup> Pound shows signs that McCahon researched and held great reverence for Māori, as shown in his association between Moses and Māori prophetic figures and, 'since the nineteenth-century Māori prophetic tradition had itself identified with the Old Testament prophets'.<sup>65</sup> Regardless of contemporary discomfort, the works in their time were speaking to a public who longed for connection.

Travelling back in time to Edward Friström's, *Pōhutukawa*, 1905, we can witness an early example of the European New Zealander's foundational appreciation of Aotearoa New Zealand at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that was fundamentally divergent to the British understanding of a 'beautiful' landscape. This painting represented a new place, that emigration had 'gifted' its new occupants. My work called, *Thrown Into the Sea*,<sup>66</sup> 2017, is a block of wood that is reminiscent of a book, made from a branch of pōhutukawa acquired from the Auckland Art Gallery gardens. It is a symbol of record as it holds the years of the tree's growth. It is also a reminder of a Māori proverb centred around being impatient or thoughtless. The 'story' is held within it and again, it is not mine to tell yet it exists there as it exists in all pōhutukawa. Like Panoho's purposefully missing links and details, Pound states that, 'Art can never totally represent a specific place. Even the most comprehensive map cannot contain all the details of a territory'.<sup>67</sup> In the same way, the archival component of my work, if it is to contain memory, as well my own sense of place, will always be lacking. Papastergiadis writes, 'Art that has come from a place, and which refers to a place, must also acknowledge its own exile'.<sup>68</sup> I use this internal exile to refer to the place of my birth which I am not displaced from, as I have known no other home and being from New Zealand is a defining feature of my identity. It is also intrinsic to my understanding of place yet I will always be culturally separate

62 Francis Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970* (Auckland University Press, 2009), 324,

63 Pound.

64 Pound.

65 Pound, 326.

66 Then they sailed on, and landed at Whanga-Paraoa, in Aotea here. As they drew near to land, they saw with surprise some pohutukawa trees of the sea coast, covered with beautiful red flowers, and the still water reflected back the redness of the trees.

Then one of the chiefs of the canoe cried out to his messmates, "See there, red ornaments for the head are much more plentiful in this country than in Hawaiki, so I'll throw my red head-ornaments into the water;" and, so saying, he threw them into the sea. The name of that man was Tauninihi; the name of the the red head-ornament he threw into the sea was Taiwhakaea. The moment they got on shore they ran to gather the pohutukawa flowers, but no sooner did they touch them than the flowers fell to pieces; then they found out that these red head-ornaments were nothing but flowers. All the chiefs on board the Arawa were then troubled that they should have been so foolish as to throw away their red head-ornaments into the sea. Very shortly afterwards the ornaments of Tauninihi were found by Mahina on the beach of Mahiti. As soon as Tauninihi heard they had been picked up, he ran to Mahina to get them again, but Mahina would not give them up to him; hence this proverb for anything which has been lost and is found by another person, "I will not give it up, 't is the red head-ornament which Mahina found." (George Grey, 1885, p. 88)

67 Panoho, Adams, and Sameshima, *Māori Art: History, Architecture, Landscape and Theory*, 11.

68 Papastergiadis, "Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place and the Everyday," 11.



Figure 28. Elliot Collins, *The Weight of History*, (2016), Tauranga Art Gallery Toi Tauranga



Figure 29. Elliot Collins, *Memorial Plaque*, (2016), Kaero



from it but socially included within it. Chris Prentice writes that the beaches where pōhutukawa are so often seen, 'is a site and figure of liminality that destabilizes the very sense of home and the local it shores up'.<sup>69</sup> There seems to be invisible texts or unspoken recent memory that, if recalled, would ground pākehā experience of 'belonging' in an interesting light.

The invisible text and specific reading that Friström's *Pōhutukawa* may have once had is now occupied with over one hundred years of layers since its creation and with a growing understanding of the world before its creation, it begins to appear unsettled and contradicts its apparent serene depiction. There is an invisible text to this painting that makes a kind of bridge between the western mindset and the 'foreignness' of the tree.

An allowance seems to be made for the pōhutukawa in its idyllic setting. Its gnarly prehistoric roots and branches pacified by rolling grassy hills and calm seaside.

Place naming was a way to language the 'silence' that settlers lived within. Waerete Norman provides an understanding of dominion over the land through naming and dividing, explaining that 'The place names marked the land and domesticated it, fitting it for man's occupation; and the paths gave him direction in his journey.'<sup>70</sup> Norman referred to this in describing the old Muriwhenua pathways,

Travellers in their own countryside could name its features minutely – rocks, caves, beaches, fishing grounds, points, streams, eeling pools, patches of bush, cultivations, swamps, rat-runs, trees, ridges, hills and mountains, even clumps of grass – every smallest feature had its name which evoked the quality of that unique place, and nga tūpuna, the ancestors who named it or passed that way. The great ocean served as their highway and it had no boundaries.<sup>71</sup>

This 'naming' was a way of sense-making, navigation and guardianship. These names and places would be repeated and transformed in song and story and, 'Derrida opines that iteration, mimesis, and repetition should be taken as constitutive of inscription'.<sup>72</sup> Like the signature, the repetition and repeatability of the name/description of place grounds the identity in the utterance or inscription yet the slight difference of the repetition even with a trace of language alters the knowledge and ruptures singular truth, and accompanies it into the

multiple. This must have disturbed early settlers who sought definitive titles, yet with pre-settlement Māori it appears that languaged silence, in the form of memory, would have existed in many similar ways where all versions are included, or at least argued, with respect to their relevance and usefulness.

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69 Chris Prentice and Vijay Devadas, "Postcolonial Studies and the Cultural Politics of Everyday Life," *Sites, A Journal of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies*, 5, no. 1 (2008): 112.

70 Crown, "Muriwhenua Land Report," Waitangi Tribunal Report (Wellington, New Zealand: Waitangi Tribunal, 1997), 19.

71 Crown, 17.

72 Roland Theuas S. Pada, "Iterability and Différance: Re-Tracing the Context of the Text," *Kritike* 3, no. 2 (2009): 68–89. 84.



Figure 30. Elliot Collins, Old Meatworks, Tokomaru Bay, (2016), East Cape

Pound's explanation of the theory of a mute landscape suggests there was not only a voice but also a principal voice that needed listening to. It is my opinion that the language of Aotearoa, with attitudes of kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and a reverence for the land and its people, is what the current inhabitants are now becoming part of, more than two centuries after the disconnection from tangata whenua began. In the Rutherford Lectures, Salmond suggests that as Māori terms are increasingly used by pākehā the language is transforming unacknowledged perspectives. Salmond says that the middle ground created by this use of language to adapt ways of thinking and being keeps 'creating and bubbling up new ideas and ways of doing things'.<sup>73</sup>

McCahon did not create this middle ground that Salmond mentions but seems to have made the preface to it along with artists like Hotere, Para Matchitt and Cliff Whiting as leaders in their respective fields. From this assessment, there seems to be a slow alignment of protocols of how Māori *and* pākehā consider, speak and write about the land or environment, as well as distinct identities and cultural resonances. Amiria Salmond notes that, 'cultural translation is a tool with which difference may be uncovered, engaged, transcended, and resolved through appeals to common goals and shared meanings'.<sup>74</sup> Once there is access there is desire. 'Much ethnography has thus proceeded on the basis of a hopeful humanism that seeks to cultivate the seeds of mutual understanding in the common ground of human nature'.<sup>75</sup>

The characteristic link between language and silence is the reliance on one to the other. Nikita Dhawan writes that, 'Language exists through a regulated variation of repetition'.<sup>76</sup> In this respect, landscape is in a state of continual utterance generating noise or repetition, either by those who reference it in an everyday sense or by those who distance themselves and others from it. Just because something like a part of a particular landscape misplaces its language does not mean it disappears, I state however, that it does become invisible. The invisible is something that is there but unseen and disappearance is something that was there but was removed from sight. Therefore, disappearance is almost an agreement to forget and invisibility is an ambiguous invitation to see under a layer of overwriting.

My practice endeavors to negotiate this complex terrain by revealing what appears hidden or missing. As an example, Cape Maria van Diemen,<sup>77</sup> named by Abel Tasman<sup>78</sup> after the wife of his patron in January 1643. This application of *writing* on the land forced European language with its differing breaks and silences, pauses and breaths onto and over the land, interrupting places that held names already, which I address in the next chapter. This seemed to enable pākehā to participate in *reading* the landscape through titling/naming, descriptions and poetry which loaded Aotearoa NZ with colonial/settler bias, making Māori understandings invisible to the newcomers. However, visiting the place and walking its hills and being moved by the wind I could not escape the disquieting sense of over naming that occurred during this time of (re)discovery and while understanding

73 Anne Salmond, "The 2014 Rutherford Lectures: The Sea The Rutherford Lectures | RNZ," Radio New Zealand, accessed September 27, 2017,

74 Amiria J. M. Salmond, "Transforming Translations (Part I): 'The Owner of These Bones,'" *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3, no. 3 (December 23, 2013): 5.

75 Salmond.

76 Nikita Dhawan, "ERLANGEN," gradnet.de, accessed October 3, 2017, <http://www.gradnet.de/papers/pomoo2.papers/power.htm>.

77 One of the few places to retain the name from Tasman's voyages

78 Who did not land on the peninsula



Figure 31. Elliot Collins, Cannon, Ruapekapeka Pā, (2017), Ruapekapeka



the desire to name, was forced to negotiate the division between these worlds. This 'language' landscape is one that, nationally, the artists of the 1940s and 1950s recognised as uniquely 'ours', one with words that began whole and were formed in the mouths of the old world (of England) as speech, but seemed to perish on the journey across oceans. There exists here Derrida's 'Logocentric' argument that speech is the origin of written

language. Speech or words were reborn or resurrected in Aotearoa New Zealand in a landscape that existed before written language yet contained the presence of indigenous speech. This written language, inscribed on the landscape, was therefore an echo of a 'signifier of a signifier' that interrupted earlier speech. There is an interesting debate to have over Māori and English words in the Aotearoa New Zealand landscape for, as Alex Scott writes, if 'presence is assumed to the essence of the signified, then the remoteness of a signifier from the signified may imply that the signifier is unable, or may only be barely able, to reflect the presence of the signified.'<sup>79</sup> This reinforces the interior nature of Māori speech and exterior nature of English language. In suggesting that Māori speech is interior I am recalling the indigenous connection that Māori have to the land as tangata whenua (people of/from the land). Māori place names, which are a perpetual topical of national conversation, have a proximity to the land and its people that do not exist with British names that have been placed over them from a distance, as if from an exterior position. Here, I am referencing Scott's thinking on proximity and remoteness or interiority and exteriority as he writes: 'This interplay between proximity and remoteness is also an interplay between presence and absence and between interiority and exteriority.'<sup>80</sup>

There are innumerable strange collisions of language to signify Māori words through a European system of signifiers. Merewether considers the term 'bricolage' (that could be used to explain the way language was formed in the landscape when he explains that the term comes from the 'French word "*bricoleo*", meaning to put things together in a manner of improvisation'),<sup>81</sup> which has been a criticism of the way the Treaty of Waitangi was translated, along with subsequent, early colonial texts. 'It has also an apparently contradictory meaning derived from the Italian "*bricola*" as "one who breaks".'<sup>82</sup> This also clutches a certain irony within contemporary discourse of Māori language rejuvenation. If the language wasn't broken by colonisation it wouldn't have to be fixed. However, 'In such terms, the procedure of bricolage signals not only the creation of new signs, but the intervention and breaking open of already existing signs'.<sup>83</sup> There is an optimism to Merewether's statement that is encouraging.

It is necessary reminder that cultural identity is in a constant process of regeneration and that the bricolage of cultural identity is always in negotiation with time, which is where new Māori words can intervene as English introduces contributing terms or objects. Māori sounds continue to reverberate within their written English counterparts. The hau (life force) exists within the speaking, chanting, singing or wailing of these names and places. In constant threat of being revealed as inadequate, colonial language is continually enforced and the *writing on the landscape* is ongoing.

79 A. Scott, *The Conditions of Knowledge: Reviews of 100 Great Works of Philosophy* (iUniverse, 2006),

80 Scott.

81 Wales and Gallery, *The Boundary Rider: 9th Biennale of Sydney, 15 December 1992-14 March 1993*, 20.

82 Wales and Gallery.

83 Wales and Gallery.



William Schafer enthusiastically writes, in *Mapping the Godzone*, that ‘this sense of inconclusiveness, of ongoingness, also helps create cultural identity: the experience is not a piece of dead history, completed fiction, but unfinished business, the present evolving into the future’.<sup>84</sup> My travels, with this journal and practice, all signify unfinished business and show the present evolving into the future. I am unsure, however, that this is an identity *creating* exercise. Unsound foundations are a necessary condition of the trace structure and contribute towards what Salmond calls a developing middle ground, a place we have been more eager to engage with in the past. My practice resides in this complex dynamic, seeking to respond to memory and trace and also continue a dialogue with an invisible text of the ‘other’, that is, the original maker of the marker or their subject matter. Holcroft suggests that, ‘there is always the artist’, though not there strictly as a ‘representative of the people, for he must resist the dulling influences of the masses while paradoxically turning to them for a renewal of the creative impulse’.<sup>85</sup> I read this as a reflexive task aimed at isolation blended with immersion in public life.

To further locate this discussion Rachel Buchanan mentions the settlers’ belief that they were approaching a land without life, history or language. She states that, ‘the land was, of course, not void. For tangata whenua, it was already full. However, for the British incomers it was empty. It was empty of resonance, of agriculture (and therefore of worth), and it was empty of memory (and therefore of meaning)’.<sup>86</sup> A question remains here, how can something be both full and empty at the same time? In this sense, the land lacked a British *resonance* in the form of industry or potential of home. There were no British markers of memory telling the settlers how to think, feel or remember, they were looking for the visible text that they left behind, that told them who they were. Buchanan continues:

To the British settlers, the land was void of meaning because it was void of memory. It could not be ‘home’ until they filled it, until the environment itself could be a mnemonic for their homeland. In this way, they demanded a landscape that contained their memories by allusion.<sup>87</sup>

My incapability to document past or present invisibility gives my project significance as it displays the contrast of what is both known and unknown as well as the ‘unknown comprehensible’ and ‘known mysterious’ memories in these locations gestured to by these memory markers.

<sup>84</sup> W.J. Schafer, *Mapping the Godzone: A Primer on New Zealand Literature and Culture*, Latitude 20 Bks (University of Hawai’i Press, 1998), 144.

<sup>85</sup> M.H. Holcroft, *Discovered Isles: A Trilogy* (Caxton Press, 1950), 149.

<sup>86</sup> Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 106.

<sup>87</sup> Baird and Phillips.



Figure 32. Elliot Collins, Church, Pakanae, (2016), Hokianga



## Services, First Sunday of the Month

The afternoon light shifts low on the horizon in Pakanae, outside of Opononi. A church rests in the distance on a tranquil hilly clearing. I wondered if it might be open. Many in Northland are, perhaps left open as refuge for the wandering pilgrim or parishioner. I also wonder who mows the grass so regularly in these out-of-the-way places. Distance is relative of course, even so, there are no signs of ground-keeping tools, as if this place is preserved in a perpetual frozen state of upkeep. Deciding to alter my route, I look down the turnoff road to my right, the gravel is juddered by the combination of rain runoff, stones and loose dirt, and the road narrows as I venture along it. Up ahead is a farm gate across the driveway that veers upward to the right towards the church. Stepping out the driver's side door I fall into a shallow ditch, boggy with moss and mud. Blackberry vines grow wild here, while not yet in fruit, small green shoots wander over grass and stumps, overwhelming surrounding vegetation as it flourishes. Taking in the surroundings distracts me long enough to allow my t-shirt to catch on the thorns and I am scratched by my absent-minded movement, leaving sharp, red marks that darken as they dry across my bare legs. Small incisions creating bloodshed, the traces of an action recorded on skin.

The stillness of the untrodden gravel road is confirmed by the wooded hills that close in on the valley. I recall Robert Frost's poem **The Road Not Taken**, as I choose the path with better claim that 'was grassy and wanted wear'. The dense bush beyond the narrow pastureland swallows up remaining echoes of the car engine. Just as Frost mentions that 'both that morning equally lay, in leaves no steps had trodden black.' Before I get to the gate a large copper-coloured pheasant leaps shrieking from the undergrowth and flies away into denser bush. As the bird scurries away, I feel my heartbeat thrown into rapid action by reactions beyond my control. I hadn't noticed the creature cowering so still and I wonder what else goes unseen in the quiet places of the world.

The gate has a handwritten note attached to the top bar. A white, rounded-square ice-cream-container lid reminds visitors to 'keep the gate shut'. I look up to the church in *sursum corda*,<sup>88</sup> an action of reverence. Looking up is supposed to release chemicals in your brain that make you feel happy. The church, with its ochre-red roof and white weatherboard exterior, settles in its clearing. Religious buildings should perhaps always be at odds with their environments. Its presence is that of being purposefully in, but not of the world, with its iconic form reiterating its sacred position as a place of worship and prayer in the minds of believers.



Figure 33. Elliot Collins, Church Interior, (2016), Kerikeri

## Death (and Life) Part One

To me this building and others like it will always appear in the service of the outsider or even the tourist. It is not a private place for the individual but a public place for the collective gathering of people for a united purpose. A metaphor which in its original form means 'to transfer',<sup>89</sup> this building is used to transfer something. Its apparent sincere attributes, open door, large space and many seats, encourage its parishioners to move from what Heidegger described as inauthenticity to authenticity in all areas of their lives. Carol J. Steiner and Yvette Reisinger write specifically on the loss of individual identity that can come from inauthenticity. They propose that the activity of the tourist as flâneur or even pilgrim might be:

a quest for new and significant experiences outside of routine life.... tourism allows people to distance themselves from their norms and look at their lives from a different perspective (Turner 1973); that tourism activities are nonordinary, free from the constraints of daily life (Brown 1996); and that tourism allows escape from role playing (Handler 1986). Tourism may be a remedy for the unpleasant loss of identity that comes with inauthenticity.<sup>90</sup>

Moving away from a superficial and constructed mode of being Heidegger called 'they-self' which is inherently individualistic and singular, towards 'our self', an idea that was centred around community and connection. This is the perfect space either from within or without to examine a move away from the chatter of the they-self with appropriate focus on our own approaching death. Within a religious setting the non-binary understanding of life and death are contemplated, rather than life or death. Yet we are unable to grasp the concept of death through the mind of someone living and so Heidegger preferred the idea of 'das nichts', the nothing, rather than death.<sup>91</sup> The silence of the church building as a taciturn symbol marking the landscape (inner and outer) could be a reminder of how we spend our lives trying to avoid the nothing, indulging instead in 'das gerede,' or endless chatter. These memory markers, which are becoming something of a relic or ruin (and perceived private place), stand in contrast to das gerede, their contemplative silence yet prayerful presence is at odds with the sum of all of the trivial matters composed within the chatter that only distracts us from the fact that death, or the nothing, is always around us.

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89 Middle English *methaphor*, from Middle French or Latin; Middle French *metaphore*, from Latin *metaphora*, from Greek, from *metapherein* to transfer

90 Carol J. Steiner and Yvette Reisinger, "Understanding Existential Authenticity," *Annals of Tourism Research* 33, no. 2 (April 1, 2006): 299–318.

91 M. Heidegger and J. Stambaugh, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit*, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (State University of New York Press, 1996), 356.



Figure 34. Elliot Collins, Concrete pillar across a ridge next to Waioeka River, dusk, (2016), Ōpōtiki



## Tohu Tō

*At the northern approach of Ōpōtiki, across a narrow double-lane bridge, is a small, well-tended park, with a streetlamp that seems to have once served a purpose but looks now like an isolated metaphor, a lamppost for no one that sheds no light. Down the gravel access road next to the park is a ridgeline that has been moved into place partly by nature, and encouraged by man. Upon the ridge is a rectangular concrete barrier.*

*The Waioeka River flows calmly out to sea on the outskirts of town, the flood plain suggests another kind of mood the river can take. Men in gumboots and Swanndris run jet boats up and down the shallow water. Someone remarks of the melodic purr of a V8 engine finely tuned, I hear only noise.*

*The white gloss, painted barrier, sits like a fragment of an ancient megalith that didn't quite make its destination. Chipped and worn in places, it seems on a journey of its own, slowly sliding, snail-like across the country, its slimy trace a dragged, mud-line scoring the earth as it goes. It is in this moment when I understand that a thing's place is nothing but a point in its movement, it appears stable because its movement is indeterminately slowed.*

*This block is like the symbol of the macron or tohu tō in Māori. It indicates a dragging of sound, extending the time it takes to articulate the vowel. It elongates time and creates a specific sound in order to say the correct word.*

*The sun is setting on the monument and the evening's eggshell-blue-coloured sky is reflected in pools of still water collected in the tire tracks that expose the pillar's attempt at containment to be unsuccessful. However, it is an interruption, a cast concrete column carelessly painted yet shining white against the bright green grass. Things grow well here, the whole town used to be a swamp. I pause and try to clear my mind of arising associations.*

*The fading light threatens the permanence of the object, the photograph betraying, yet implying, its stillness. Will it be in the same position tomorrow, resting, weary and ceded by its own weight? Or will it have moved forward, ever so slightly, continuing on its way to the river?*

*I just assume it's leaving town.*



Figure 35. Ian Hamilton Finlay, *The Present Order*, (1983), Little Sparta, Lanarkshire

## Monumental Time – Texture of Memory

Later generations, writes Young, ‘visit memorials under new circumstances and invest them with new meanings. The result is the evolution of the memorial’s significance, generated in the new times and company in which it finds itself’.<sup>92</sup> I have become almost bound to visiting memorials and memory markers in the landscape. The lure of their haunting, the promise of impartation of knowledge, and their stoic patience; the ruinenlust has drawn me across the country. It has taken me, quite literally, off the beaten track, and has brought about some truly beautiful moments in communion with objects and memories written in the landscape. But something else happened along the way; I began to see other markers in the landscape and would imbue them with significance though they may not have any. As the myth maker/artist I began to retell stories, often only to myself, of how and why certain objects appeared placed on the land. Young explains that, ‘at least part of our veneration of ruins and artifacts stems from the nineteenth-century belief that such objects embody the spirit of the people who made and used them’.<sup>93</sup> An aspect of my research became my projections which I ‘assigned’ to markers, how I read into their placement, angle and surroundings created context for their potency. ‘In this view, museum objects are not only the remnants of the people they once belonged to, but also traces of the values, ideas, and character of the time’.<sup>94</sup> I have become attuned to the reading of these objects, not simply their intended message via inscription or image but the other interactions that occur, desecration, amendment, vandalism, addition or subtraction all feed into the traces of life the markers witness.

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92 Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 120.

93 Young, 127.

94 Young.



Figure 36. Elliot Collins, Fence, (2016), Rahui-Pōkeka/Huntly



## Taniwha Fence

*There is a fence in Rahui-Pōkeka/Huntly that separates the Waikato from a car park for the fruit and vegetable store as well as the Bottle-O liquor store. It is ioam on Monday and both are open for business. The river runs muddy after heavy rain last night and the sunlight turns the turbulent river shapes to an amber glow. The river is sacred yet the boundary placement of the wrought iron fence tells me otherwise. There are no indications whether the bars are keeping the river out or the township in. The arrowheads on the tips of the bars form a scooping smile from post to post. Could they stop a taniwha? In Māori mythology, taniwha (Māori pronunciation: [tanifa]) are beings that live in deep pools in rivers, dark caves, or in the sea, especially in places with dangerous currents or deceptive breakers (giant waves).*

*The straight vertical lines of the bars are compromised where someone, with hulk-like strength, has pushed them apart. A comical prison break comes to mind. The irony of escaping a downcast part of Huntly to an even worse part will not be addressed here. This herculean feat has created a rupture. The fence is now permeable and able to be passed through. Various trees and shrubs grow in and around the fence. Crushed wild fennel releases aniseed smells into the air next to poroporo with their purple veins and crisp white flowers, their deep purple berries ready to eat.*

*The fence below is out the back of my family holiday place in Whananaki South. It runs down the driveway of the lodge. I have been returning here every year, off and on, since I was four years old. This fence has aged with me. The trees over the fence are feijoa and avocado, though we are always too late for the former and too early for the latter. They lean over the corrugated iron more and more as the years go by. The silver and grey of the metal has oxidised to a burnt orange-brown and it has been painted with enamel paint in other areas in hopeless attempts at keeping rust at bay, though it is 100 metres from a saltwater tidal lagoon. The posts supporting the fence are old, weathered with lichen, and adorned with old hornets' nests as well as cobwebs in their corners.*

*I can't help but think of the way the grooves must have reverberated the many holiday moments and protected us from strong winds during unpredictable summer storms.*

*I am on the inside of this fence.*



Figure 37. Elliot Collins, Fence, (2016), Whananaki

## Boundaries of Language

Boundaries play a role in perception. They are present in our landscape and in the land. Natural boundaries of cliffs, rivers, the ocean are apparent and accepted. It was noted by Captain Cook that the land on the sea coastline is high and appeared, “with white steep cliffs and back inland are very high mountains, the face of the Country is of a hilly surface and appears to be cloathed with wood and Verdure.” With these words did Cook record his first sight of New Zealand’ (sic).<sup>95</sup> It seems, with English language anyway, that boundaries were recognised as a founding concept of how New Zealand was to be perceived. Wittgenstein emphatically proclaimed, (*Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt*) that the boundaries (limits) of our language are the boundaries (limits) of our world,<sup>96</sup> and so the tension between boundaries perceived appears to grasp the guests and hold them in a liminal zone. There is the obvious thinness of these boundaries, (wrought and corrugated iron) yet ultimately a separation is enforced. These physical boundaries are obvious and intended to keep the visitor in or out, often excluded from something beyond itself. But they can also stand as metaphor in the land, not merely because there are places that need separation. Aristotle’s definition suggests that there is always a sharp demarcation between the inside and the outside of a thing. However, ordinary objects and events, as well as the extensions of many ordinary concepts, may have boundaries that are ambiguous or indeterminate. Merewether notes that:

Museums were built to construct a national history and cultural identity. By evaluating contested terrains of representation, they defined and legitimated some forms of cultural expression over others. As such, the cultural boundaries established were always in negotiation, always the place of intelligibility, a threshold of meaning and point from which different cultural temporalities were defined against the homogenous sign of modernity.<sup>97</sup>

I am speaking now less of places with walls or fences to visually demarcate a zone, and more of those sites that imply an adhesion to the path or the implied boundary of photographic documentation. This is a precarious area of examination, for as David K. Lewis describes in *On the Plurality of Worlds*, imprecise boundaries border many things like ethics, people, atmosphere, emotions, laws, rituals, beliefs, death and all often awkwardly explained through language. As Lewis continues:

The reason why it’s vague where the outback begins is not that there’s this thing, the outback, with imprecise borders; rather there are many things, with different borders, and nobody has been fool enough to try to enforce a choice of one of them as the official referent of the word ‘outback’.<sup>98</sup>

95 J. Cook and W.J.L. Wharton, *Captain Cook’s Journal During His First Voyage Round the World: Made in H.M. Bark “Endeavour” 1768-71* (Elliot Stock, 1893), 26.

96 L. Wittgenstein and C.K. Ogden, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, International Library of Psychology, Philosophy, and Scientific Method (Routledge, 1922), 74.5.6.

97 Wales and Gallery, *The Boundary Rider: 9th Biennale of Sydney, 15 December 1992-14 March 1993*, 21.

98 David K. Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, vol. 97 (Blackwell, 1986), 212.





Figure 38. Elliot Collins, Memorial, (2016), Omata



Figure 39. Elliot Collins, Bullet hole, Anglican Church, Bay of Islands Parish, (2017), Kororāreka/Russell



## Looking Backwards

*On a reserve in Omata, beside the main road in front of Omata Primary School, sits a memorial stone that has lost its voice. This stone contains memory from long ago yet has been eroded and consumed by time, its edges worn and brittle. A park bench and two gravesites occupy the surrounding grassed area bordered by trees and nasturtiums that gather at its edges. A concrete slab supports the three-sided wooden structure, which offers the slab little shelter as the light breeze blows along the coast, its corrugated iron roof protecting the small square of moss growing below it.*

*The lichen is soft and covers the rectangle in a pale green coat, if there is an inscription it is illegible. The grass around the concrete seems not to grow very well, yet the worn edges of grass that radiate out from the concrete look like a ritual act of circumnavigation, but are more likely to have been caused by regular use of weed killer to keep the meandering kikuyu at bay. A poison warning is nailed to the back of the shed wall. The rectangular marble slab is set in concrete in front of the shed, which acts as more of a frame than a shelter. This place is reserved to hold meaning, intangible for the casual visitor. Hands clasped, head bowed, I unconsciously stand in silence. Cars burn past but this place remains somber, with kawakawa growing abundantly at its periphery; dark green leaves cool the air as I walk back to the car.*

*The bullet holes in the church in Kororāreka/Russell are even more quiet. Having never been inscribed, they are silent holes that ‘speak’ of an aggressive act. They are small notes about the history of the place and fill stories of battle with added curiosity. The white-painted weatherboards have been repainted with a refurbishment of the exterior cladding of the church and special attention was paid to every board with the signature marks of battle. The peaceful church setting betraying the events that must have taken place in and around the area.*

## There and Not There

*There is a powerful silence resonating from these memory markers. Both are a kind of inscription into the surface of the world by force. Both are a trace yet both have been, and will continue to be, recessed into memory, and slowly passed from a very present experience and converted to a blank surface. The stone surface is reverting to a tabula rasa due to the encroaching lichen and moss, the bullet holes are forgotten about and repainted, water marks discolour the area below the hole. The nature of memory left on the landscape is at odds with the land itself, constantly working to decay, dissolve and colonise its own surface. The land appears to take back anything that is not growing or used. An overgrown path, a forgotten grave or an abandoned lot are all destined to the similar fate of being consumed by the land again. This can be spoken about as a ‘return’, a kind of harmonising.*



Figure 40. Elliot Collins, Kutarere Church, (2015), Kutarere



Figure 41. Elliot Collins, Kutarere Church grounds, (2015), Kutarere



## Two Lovers

Looking from the road, Kutarere Church is encircled on all sides by low fencelines in various stages of collapse, with a small front gate swung open. Many of these 'set apart' places have gates that welcome and enclose at the same time. An action of entering needs to occur for connection to be made. There seem to be unspoken rules concerned with small gates like these, I get the sense that I may enter, but only in a respectful way towards that which is enclosed. The church is closed and the door locked. I try the circular handle gently – it is smooth and worn soft through use, it looks like it has received a hand-sweat patina that coats the metal globe. The white church is a light green, reflecting all the overgrown grass surrounding it. It appears like an island in a sea of green.

Past a large tree and towards the back of the plot, a pair of rocks sit on a slab of concrete which, looking like two pillows, fluffed and dusty, bask in the midday haze. The sun-drenched grounds seem to respond by encouraging white daisies and yellow dandelion flowers in abundance among the grass. Perhaps this is why my head is heavy with the delirium of hay fever. Someone is burning plastic in the distance. It mixes with the smell hot tarseal, pollen and salt.

I appear to be standing at the foot of two lovers buried together but this could merely be an old foundation pad for a shed or outhouse. I do not touch the stones to see if they are covering holes. I want to believe it is something wholly more sacred. There are no inscriptions anywhere, and lichen and moss have grown across their surfaces. The two rocks that seem deliberately placed in their positions appear to watch over the church as they rest, bleached and cleansed by the sun.

The simple wooden building with its board-and-batten-lined walls is kept from the outside world by a simple locked door. I think of it as a time capsule that is perpetually bathed in stained-glass light. Two blue squares move daily through the interior space, tracing a path with light. I imagine how still and quiet it must be inside.

I sit down on the steps for a while, contemplating the idea of sacred spaces that I can and can't enter, and how this church feels so imbedded in place. Its identity and even name is grounded in its location. I listen to someone mowing the lawns behind a fence that holds Kutarere marae. As the lawn mower runs out of petrol I decide that my time here has come to an end, and I follow the cracked grass-filled path to the gate that I close behind me, wondering whether I should leave it open, just as I found it.

There is honey and homemade preserves in a store opposite the church. The Beach Boys are blaring on a tabletop stereo so the owner does not hear me enter over **Good Vibrations**. Putting the jar of honey on the counter, I startle the owner, who says, 'Oh, I didn't hear you come in,' he turns down the music and asks, 'Where did you come from?'

I take a moment to consider my response.



Figure 42. Elliot Collins, Church interior, Pakanae, (2016), Hokianga



## Sacred Mystery – Hallowed Ground – Christianity and Colonialism

It is important to address the overpowering nature of colonialism and more specifically, Christianity's role within it. From London in 1799, the Anglican Church Missionary Society decided that the gospel should be preached around the world. In December 1814, the first missionaries and their families arrived in the Bay of Islands, and Samuel Marsden established their first mission at Rangihoua, under the protection of Ruatara<sup>99</sup> the local chief of Ngāpuhi. In 1823 Henry Williams and his brother William Williams joined Thomas Kendall, who earlier had set up a school and published the first Māori dictionary. They had little success converting Māori to Christianity until Henry Williams gained some support from local Māori for opposing gun running and the sale of alcohol in the region. However, the superintendent of the mission, John Butler, was dismissed for drunkenness and a host of other accusations. 'Jean Baptiste Pompallier, a French bishop, began a Catholic mission in the Hokianga. In 1839 12 priests and brothers arrived to help. Māori were attracted by the rituals of the Catholic Church'.<sup>100</sup>

Having learnt te reo Māori, missionaries travelled widely on foot and on horseback to preach to Māori. Mission stations were established throughout the country. Missionaries such as Henry Williams became trusted peacemakers during the musket wars between tribes. Henry Williams led missionary opposition to large-scale colonisation plans by the New Zealand Company. Missionaries promoted the Treaty of Waitangi to protect Māori land ownership.

As European numbers grew and Māori land was divided and sold, Māori lost their respect for missionaries. When land wars broke out, some missionaries became chaplains to the government troops. However, settler leaders accused missionaries of taking the side of Māori. Thomas Kendal was dismissed by the CMS when it was discovered that he had established a 'relationship' with a Māori woman called Tungaroa, a daughter of the Rangihoua tohunga Rākau and sister of Ruatara's wife, Rahu. Even on less dramatic scale, Tony Ballantyne writes, 'the great weight of historical evidence suggests that Māori frequently dictated the rhythms of missionary life and were quite successful in indigenizing the mission station space'.<sup>101</sup> It is important to mention that te reo Māori was the functional language for every aspect of life on the mission, from education to social instruction and native service, and it was 'the primary idiom of cross cultural communication. Most importantly [to the missionaries] it was the language of scripture'.<sup>102</sup>

99 Hall and du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*: SAGE Publications, 29.

100 Peter J. Lineham, "Missions and Missionaries," *The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, 2016.

101 T. Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Maori, and the Question of the Body* (Auckland University Press, 2015), 5.

102 Ballantyne.



Figure 43. Elliot Collins, Mary, Waireia Church, (2015), Lower Waihou, Hokianga

Missionaries laboured considerably on the project of translating the Bible into te reo Māori with the aspiration of creating a clear and idiomatic rendering of God's word into the local vernacular. This vast undertaking not only reshaped the linguistic underpinning of Māori 'mentalities and transformed Māori political idioms, but it also changed the missionaries themselves'.<sup>103</sup>

The views of the faith-driven at the time were relentlessly conservative and undeniably informed by biblical law, blended with a fresh wave of enlightenment that was then sweeping Europe. The very human nature and well-documented failings of the early church in Aotearoa NZ and the Pacific finds me concluding that while it was committed in connection with Christianity (there was no other religion practiced at the time amongst 'God fearing' emigrants and military), the colonisation was performed from a British authority, not the authority of the church. It was mistakably committed in the name of religion but there is no biblical precedence for colonization. Ballantyne determines that,

Many advocates of colonization were critical of these missionary beliefs and argued that this immersion in the Māori world undercut the national and imperial allegiance of missionaries. They argued that missionaries, especially those who openly opposed the plans for large-scale settlement of New Zealand formulated by the New Zealand Company had become 'philo-Māoris' [sic] ("Māori lover") who were intent on preventing the extension of colonial authority and the effective 'amalgamation of settlers and Māori'.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ballantyne.

<sup>104</sup> Ballantyne, 6.





Figure 44. Elliot Collins, Mine tunnel (1), Karangahake Gorge, (2016), Ohinemuri



Figure 45. Elliot Collins, Mine tunnel (2), Karangahake Gorge, (2016), Ohinemuri



## Under the Crust

*Along the gravel path next to the Ohinemuri River, at intermittent stops are tunnels burrowed into the earth. These tunnels are not visible until almost in line with the visitor. I get out of the car in the parking lot, brave children run ahead to hide within them and scare one another as they approach. I walk towards one of them who seems not to notice me, I watch as they silently, excitedly puff in anticipation of their next surprise attack. They leap out, make a menacing noise and run ahead, laughing to the next tunnel, the quiet of the bush returns.*

*I timidly stoop to enter but go no further than the entrance as it narrows and diminishes to enforce a bowed slow stumble in the darkness, though the day is bright this eternal night is all consuming. These tunnels fascinated me in the way they personify invisibility, by being there and not there simultaneously. A rustling breath whispers an ancient dialect, though I reassure myself it is just the acoustics of the valley, reverberating cicada cries, bird song and sounds of rushing water being manipulated in unexpected ways. The smell of earth and moving water is blustered around the gorge as I stand apprehensively contemplating the voids.*

*Voids producing an organic opening into a world not meant for entering. The dense rock, forced against its will, replies with pressure of remarkable force, but does not collapse the humble grotto, not since its birth in 1889. To walk through the cavities is to walk within the sacred arteries of the landscape; to exist within them is to engage with the peaceful realm of Rongo, despite knowing they came into existence through violent means of pickaxe and dynamite over a hundred years ago.*

*The ceilings of the tunnels drip with moisture of the mountain above; internal teardrops in the darkness forming puddles, creating mysterious circles that radiate outwards. In a thousand years' time these droplets will create holes in the dark cold bedrock causing calcium deposits to stretch down into the earth, rusty and tired. Could these holes become tombs and restricted places? Places where objects of death are held in quiet damp echoes like a crypt where honoured loved ones are placed. The steep rock face that the holes are carved into weeps richly pigmented stains of red, dark brown and yellow along hairline cracks that trickle off to the river below, carving its way to Paeroa.*

*These voids are a human absence and presence. At once open, unable to be closed, beneficent but offering nothing. More tourists walk past, politely weaving around me on the narrow track as I stare into the dark.*



Figure 46. Elliot Collins, Mine tunnel (3), Karangahake Gorge, (2016), Ohinemuri

## Empty Space – The Present Absent Trace

*These tunnels are a present absence of a trace of an action. They are removed and yet ultimately visible or in-visible. They seem to exemplify my understanding of the way memory is left in the landscape. They are an archive full and empty. These tunnels didn't appear by themselves and I could suggest that those who made them had left them as markers of their toil. Yet my assumptions carry myriad problems because I regard the tunnels as the memories themselves, therefore 'Memory-work becomes unnecessary as long as the material fragment of events continues to function as witness/memorial'.<sup>105</sup>*

*I do not believe we should carry these memory burdens, or if we do, only carry them for a time, until the memory marker takes over. The human vessel as memory container is porous and plagued by fragility. The archivists traditional veneration of the trace is tied to their need for proof and evidence of a particular past. There sometimes is proof and evidence but I have found the only way through this discussion is to hold it in tension with other possible truths and variations on the presented 'evidence' with the possibility that other 'evidence' may never been known. Only then, if we allow it, can memory markers perform one of their other roles as non-memorial.*





Figure 47. Elliot Collins, Slip, Goldmine, (2016), Waihi



## **Motion and Money**

*The Waihi goldmine is a place of absence. It is a hole, dug systematically in layers searching to extract traces of gold from the earth. It so happens that there was an interruption to the layers of this open mine. A slip has occurred, rupturing the order of the site, the scale of the hole is hard to comprehend without human reference. The slip has given the mine a kind of personality. I am projecting that personality, but the collapse is echoed around the region and the response, which is also a posture I adopt, is to stand in silence and wait to see if any more movement will occur.*

*The marking on the old concrete structure next to the hole is covered with names scratched into its surface. I witness the desire of strangers to make a mark and be remembered, or make a mark and be forgotten. Either way, the palimpsest scratches pale in comparison to the large mark made on the land, only metres away. Like the mine, these marks are excavation or removals of material from one place to another. The new marks blur previous ones, and only more recent marks are legible and even then they are mostly meaningless, the given names of strangers that are nowhere to be found. In their absence, the walls of the castle-like structure take on a sombre tone. Even in the bright sunlight the grey concrete absorbs sound and heat. The wind howls through the open cavities of the structure, carrying the smell of clay and pine trees.*



Figure 48. Elliot Collins, Markings on the structure at the goldmine, (2016), Waihi

## Time Slip

Eduardo Cadava discusses Walter Benjamin's idea of 'Now-time' where he writes, "Now-time" does not mean the present, nor does it represent the present. "Now-time" presents the present, or makes it emerge'.<sup>106</sup> This is reminiscent of Maria O'Connor's comment on my artwork noted at the beginning of this exegesis, that it is a 'dis-stilling of time to its most contracted formulation: a contract that paradoxically opens up "toward" the depth of an elsewhere'. There is something striking about the presentation of 'now-time', that many inscriptions participate in. They recall or make present a moment or event that occurred in a historic 'present' and bring it to a current, temporal present. The present of 'now-time', he continues,

which is the present of an event, is never present. But 'now' (and not 'the now,' not a substantive, but 'now' as a performed word, as the utterance which can be ours) presents this lack of presence. A time full of 'now-time' is a time full of openness and heterogeneity.<sup>107</sup>

This makes the idea of writing on the landscape a concept caught within time. Perhaps this is the intention of the mysterious mark makers. The very 'presencing' process of scratching away concrete or mineral-rich earth is contained in its trace of 'now-time'. Cadava implies that this quality is diverse in character and content, which could be an underlying theme of my travels, documentation and practice. Am I witness to the 'now-time' in all its various and diverse manifestations, while visiting and considering memory markers and the traces on the landscape?

I consider these marks as those from living ghosts who are for me essentially locked in the 'now-time' of history. Cadava suggests that photography is a mode of bereavement, and I would include the act of mark making for the sake of memory. 'It speaks to us of mortification. Even though it still remains to be thought, the essential relation between death and language flashes up before us in the photographic image',<sup>108</sup> or name inscribed upon a surface. 'Like an angel of history whose wings register the traces of this disappearance, the image (or mark) bears witness to an experience that cannot come to light'.<sup>109</sup> The inability to 'come to light', I contemplate as a way to exist in the tension of those things that cannot again exist in the present moment.

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106 E. Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History*, Princeton Paperbacks (Princeton University Press, 1997), 65.

107 Cadava.

108 Cadava, II.

109 Cadava.



Figure 49. Elliot Collins, Aotea/Shelly Beach, (2015), Kaipara



## Call me Elliot, The Persistence of Identity with a Name

These marks were a personal identity marker, an individual's identity, attached to an external, public place that has been contributed by others. Personal identity usually refers to certain properties that a person feels a special sense of attachment to, a name is a good example. Perhaps because I am accustomed to the dialectical understanding of English, when introducing myself I will often say, 'I'm Elliot'. It is not me but stands in for me, when signing documents or writing correspondences. I should rather say, 'I was called Elliot' or 'I respond to Elliot' (so that we can collectively know who the other is addressing when we speak or write). I am highlighting the absurd nature of a disassociated title or words without context. However, they may open up or begin discussion or questioning. Psychologically, asks Saussure, 'what are our ideas, apart from our language? They probably do not exist. Or [if they do] in a form that may be described as amorphous',<sup>110</sup> and he implies that the we could not easily distinguish between two ideas clearly without the help of language. In this regard I could also offer, 'They call me Elliot' (as a supplement and my name holds a space for my memory to fill). We appear to navigate a complex language system that implies an unfolding or an eventual revealing if persisted with. There can also be a refusal to engage and the name holds its place and 'goes' no further. Writing on the idea of this persistence, Eric T. Olson asks, 'what does it take for a person to persist from one time to another – to continue existing rather than cease to exist?'<sup>111</sup> This has occurred with the inscriptions of names on the Monument against Fascism, 1986, as well as upon this cliff of my childhood memory. The names or marks which act as supplement for their inscribers, and were made at one time to exist into another, even though they disappear from view. What sort of memory does it take for you to survive within inscription, outside of the burial plot, and what sort of event would necessarily bring your existence to an end? A name as identity marker seems like a solid supplement that is at once hollow and full. This simultaneous equation is the strange contradiction that Saussure assures us is where the confused state of language holds its usefulness in navigating the sign and the signifier.

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110 F. de Saussure and E. Komatsu, *Saussure's Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistics (1910-1911)*, Language & Communication Library (Elsevier Science & Technology Books, 1993), 138.

111 Eric T. Olson, "Personal Identity," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2017 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2017)



Figure 50. Elliot Collins, Māori Wars memorial, (2016), Ngāruawāhia

## A Cleared Space

On a suburban street in Ngāruawāhia, next to the Waikato River which runs deep blue and cools the air that crosses from edge to edge, is a monument to the nameless men who fell in the Land Wars of 1845 – 1872. Erected by the 'N.Z Government [in] 1914' the obelisk is tucked away from the main highway to Hamilton and unseen by tourists who down mince n' cheese pies and carry on their way. From my viewpoint on the street, everything in the area is the same relative height; the corner dairy, the fencelines, one-storied houses and overgrown hedges all seem sentenced to only take up a small amount of sky above the earth. This does not seem to matter to this monument, designed and made to oppose these restrictions, as it stands waiting impassively for visitors.

In this sectioned-off clearing, marked by white posts and fencing wire, the obelisk is in contrast to the street. The small white gate automatically swings shut, enclosing the visitor. This is a contained space where contemplation of the past seems to be inevitable. White paint fills the inscription chiseled out of the black-and-white flecked granite, 'Here lie the bones of men who fell', the message is projected out into the quotidian, day and night.

Standing within in what appears like hallowed ground, the shame of ignorance hits me. This is my first encounter with my gap in knowledge; a void that I didn't know existed, filled with a new awareness and knowledge of a defining point in Aotearoa NZ's collective history. Emily O'Hara makes an interesting comment concerning knowledge, 'once it is found it is found'<sup>112</sup> and cannot easily be un-found. This monument in a back street of Ngāruawāhia reinforces a particular invisibility by mentioning that 'names cannot be traced' of those men buried here. In opposition to the inscription, I want to insinuate that they can be traced; surely someone knows something. Instead the inscription could say, 'forgotten except by those whom they loved'. In any family, there is knowledge that is not mentioned but still exists, as latent knowledge, present but unseen or unheard. This knowledge is the exclusive property of its holder, imparted at a time determined by them, perhaps when the time is right, or perhaps not at all.

The other surfaces of the obelisk are blank, as if mirroring my awareness of other unknown stories. I wonder if these surfaces are left waiting for inscription or if they remain clear as a decision of the original stonemason to emphasise its vacancy, never to be filled. I stand there thinking, when is it time to turn these monuments on their concrete platforms and inscribe another version of the story? Will this new version be closer to the truth?

More than a year later, on 19th August 2016, during the 10th anniversary of the coronation of Kingi Tuheitia at Turangawaewae Marae, the government declares that the process to begin recognising the New Zealand Wars, in the form of a national day of remembrance, is mooted to begin in earnest. I think they are essentially saying that they have now officially decided to begin remembering an invisible thing to make it visible. This obelisk in Ngāruawāhia will now join the story in a new chapter of history.





Figure 51. Elliot Collins, Mahoetahi memorial grave, Vivian Street, (2017), Ngāmotu/New Plymouth



## Ongoing Closures from Place to Place

I propose that the significance of a memory marker, in this case a memorial, is the combined effect of the ways it is perceived and read through time, as well as an individual's relation to a particular memory that enhances the reading of the marker that is punctuated as a 'closure'. Eugene O'Brien quotes Seamus Heaney who, in an essay entitled *The Place of Writing* writes that, 'the poetic imagination in its strongest manifestation imposes its vision upon a place rather than accepts a vision from it,'<sup>113</sup> and goes on to add that 'we are more and more aware of writing as a place in itself, a destination in art arrived at by way of art.'<sup>114</sup> The marker is not recalling or conjuring the memory as much as it is laying poetic memory over the locations.

Hilary Lawson suggests that, 'the meaning we attach to any term is thus the combined outcome of the linguistic closures that it has realised in its previous uses.'<sup>115</sup> The meaning attached to the previous or subsequent memory marker is the outcome of all prior linguistic closures that have been created in the 'linguaging' of the marker through my consideration and research.

Through my growing collection of images and visits, these markers have become more complex, rather than simplified through becoming 'known'. Lawson adds, 'as the use of the term proliferates so the meaning, the material realised through linguistic closure, becomes a more complex amalgam of previous closure'.<sup>116</sup> Returning to the romanticism surrounding the German term *ruinenlust*, my journal and art making processes celebrate this complex amalgam of previous closures that constitute the ruin. As said, these are not simply signs, but traces, vestiges, even deferred presences.

From such perspective, these memory markers that I pursue are examples of stories we use for sense-making purposes. In this respect, Lawson writes that, 'We have personal stories about what we are doing and where we are', and the very regional aspects of these markers makes these stories personal, or at least particular, to a place which makes them unique and valuable. At a complex level, Lawson suggests that, 'they offer a broader and more general account of our circumstances: the history of our culture, the nature of reality, [and] the laws that govern the behaviour of things.'<sup>117</sup> In this respect these memory markers, and these way-finders 'throw' me into differing degrees of opacity, amid fluid historical backgrounds.

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113 Eugene O'Brien, "The Place of Writing: Place, Poetry, Politics in the Writing of Seamus Heaney," in *Hermanthema*, 161 (Dublin: Trinity Collage, 1998), 20.

114 O'Brien, 54.

115 H. Lawson, *Closure: A Story of Everything* (Taylor & Francis, 2005), 74.

116 Lawson.

117 Lawson, 117.



Figure 52. Elliot Collins, Māori Wars monument (detail), Symonds Street Cemetery, (2016), Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland

## Surgical Thinking

Realising my 'unmemory' of the New Zealand Land Wars I decided to track down another monument with a similar purpose a little closer to home. Surely seeing more of the same substance and content would generate greater knowledge and uncover more detail. However, as is often the case, this only created more questions. The use of the prefix 'un' addresses memory that has been neglected yet remains. Just like the words invisible or disappearance, the word unmemory holds the original 'memory' but is a trace of memory that sits uncomfortably between the worlds of signifier and signified. Just as the indent of footprints in mud are not the memory but the unmemory of a previous action, they are a trace of memory or recorded action. Finding the obelisk in the Symonds Street Cemetery I again discovered that detailed information is not always supplied and I have a growing understanding that there are reasons attached to this kind of concealment. The monument in the cemetery sits towards the Symonds Street onramp, behind a scoria wall, making it a quiet, serene place that appears outside of the building rush-hour traffic that borders it.

There is a man setting up camp for the night a few plots over from where the monument is located. He goes about his business, uninterested in my presence. The night will be clear, or at least free of rain, his sleeping bag has seen better days. What does it mean to sleep with the dead? This man is rupturing the normal mode of interaction that custom promotes. Young explains that, 'Little by little, time and memory have turned the ground into sacred space, seemingly inviolable. It has become a place in the mind, an abstraction, a haunted idea.'<sup>118</sup> The hallowed space, the sacred ground, should be left undisturbed, yet there is a growing population that finds refuge in these spaces. John Muir, who, on his own pilgrimage on foot from Kentucky to The Gulf of Mexico, slept in Bonaventure Cemetery in Savannah, Georgia and writes in *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*,

I gazed awe-stricken as one new-arrived from another world. Bonaventure is called a graveyard, a town of the dead, but the few graves are powerless in such a depth of life. The rippling of living waters, the songs of birds, the joyous confidence of flowers, the calm, undisturbable grandeur of the oaks, mark this place of graves as one of the Lord's most favored abodes of life and light.<sup>119</sup>

The slope on which the concrete base of the structure stands, gives way to dense bush in Grafton Gully, which used to be a river. I wonder if it still flows down there. I'd been told never to go there, and never questioned why. The original name of the area is Te Iringa o Rauru 'the hanging up of Rauru's body', Rauru was a Ngāti Whātua chief slain by the Waiohū. As a warning to others, his body was hung up on a tree, which thus became tapu. The granite obelisk was assembled through the efforts of the Victoria League, which started in 1901, and stands at over two metres tall with speckled gray, black and white flecks and every now and then a sparkle of silver mica.

The inscription reads, ERECTED - TO THE MEMORY OF THE - 80 MEN - OF THE IMPERIAL AND COLONIAL - FORCES - BURIED HERE; WHO FOUGHT - IN THE DEFENSCE OF - NEW ZEALAND - IN THE - MAORI WARS

The empty letters are hard to read; they may have been filled with gold leaf when erected in 1912 as there

<sup>118</sup> Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 142.

<sup>119</sup> J. Muir and W.F. Badè, *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* (Houghton Mifflin, 1916), 69,





Figure 53. Elliot Collins, Māori Wars monument, Symonds Street Cemetery, (2016), Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland



is a slight yellow residue in the recesses. The word MAORI in the inscription has been chipped. The title Māori Wars also sits without context, so the visitor is left speculating whose side and which battles this memorial represents. But I now know better. After reading the sentiments expressed in various newspapers and books of the time, I could gauge the national psyche at the time of the monument's creation; there were those who took the recent New Zealand Wars to be a problem between the British settlers and Māori that had been overcome, and the outcome would be a fruitful forgetting of tangata whenua.

This looks like a sombre, lonely place and seems forgotten. However, this makes sense because the memories are of people long departed. The cemetery is cut through by the motorway, now mostly used by the growing homeless population looking for a safe place to dwell. Maybe peace can only be truly offered by those who know it completely. Perhaps the inscription on so many gravestones that run down the hill still speak, 'rest in peace (as I do),' as if offering comfort to the unfortunate few that are now their only visitors.

### Cultural Memory – Memory Waka

The presence of this memorial, which is clearly one-sided, reminds me of what Kingi Tuheitia said speaking from Turangawaewae marae, during his speech on the tenth anniversary of his coronation, 'My vision realises the return of all of the battle sites from the Māori Land Wars by 2020, to all affected Iwi. This has begun and I received the title to Rangiriri here last Friday.' The idea of making memorials to remember for people and to be markers for future generations is reinforced by the King's further remarks, 'This vision continues with the development of national memorials for the commemoration of the Māori Land Wars on all battle sites, by 2025.'<sup>120</sup>

The new New Zealand War Memorials will disrupt chronological time by inserting and insisting new information and perspective, wrestling a long-held opinion of binary boundaries. In this respect, Young writes, we might now begin to re-evaluate our own memories of this time, naturalised and reinforced over the years.<sup>121</sup> Right and wrong, good and bad, us and them, will become more complex and more challenging when reinforced narratives are revealed to not hold as much truth as first proposed by our forebears. These new monuments will challenge a cultural memory. Peters writes:

Culture-nature; memory-forgetting; knowledge-ignorance; having and being-had; the will to power – the power not to will, these are not dialectical binaries but the chiasmus of co-existence, our co-existence with ourselves, our co-existence with the other, the endless crisscrossing of being-with and remembering-with. The restlessness of memory work is chiasmal not dialectical, there is no memorial absolute transcending the conflicting and conflicted narratives of culture and its ever-proliferating cultural histories, only the endless revealing and concealment of an origin that has never ceased originating the memorial site that is both within and without us.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Simon Collins, "Maori King Wants Maori Share in NZ Sovereignty by 2025," *NZ Herald*, August 21, 2016, sec. New Zealand.

<sup>121</sup> Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 150.

<sup>122</sup> Baird, Phillips, and Peters, "The Cultures of Memory," 21.



Figure 54 Elliot Collins, New Zealand War memorial, remembering the 'Waikato Wars', (2017), Pokeno



Figure 55. Elliot Collins, detail, New Zealand War memorial, remembering the 'Waikato Wars', (2017), Pokeno



Figure 56. Elliot Collins, *A Drop of Water*, (2016), W 1220 x D 400 H 100mm granite, water, dehumidifier, St Paul Street, Gallery Two, AUT

## Silence Broken by Speech

The title of this chapter is an intentionally poetic example of voice, language and writing which ‘enters’ silence and changes it forever. A silence, so often mentioned in poetry, ‘speaks’ to the listener and within this chapter I will address traces of settler speech discovered in the land, that was said to *produce* landscape. John Andrews asserts that the word ‘discovered’ is a uniquely European word, especially by those sending word back to those at home ‘of a ‘newly discovered’ country and people’, yet these people ‘knew where they were all along’.<sup>123</sup> It is important to note that I denote silence as anything excluding human intervention. The ocean, an empty room, even a forest, all have sound but are, in effect, ‘silent’ until the interference of human speech, text or action, without the reference to silence it does not exist within itself. Holcroft offers a perspective by writing that:

It can be beautiful from a distance, but if you stand alone in a trackless glen, hearing no sound save the wood pigeon high up on the limestone bluffs, or a tui picking out its notes from an unseen branch, the twilight seems to creep almost audibly among the thickets, and the forest reveals itself as something that is not ours, something that... has known centuries of an undisturbed stillness, or has contained some dream of life too strange for our minds to grasp.<sup>124</sup>

To stand in the vast valley scape of the Waioeka Gorge, the colliding oceans at Te Rerenga Wairua or alongside the lone cannon at Ruapekapeka pa, there is a compulsion to speak or at least make noise, to ‘enter’ the silence that is at times overwhelming. Byrnes writes that, ‘space and places are intimately connected. Space becomes place simply by being named: in other words, place is space to which meaning is ascribed’.<sup>125</sup> In the same way silence and being are exclusively connected where silence in the Hiedeggerian sense becomes silence only when it is conceived to have been broken, it must be witnessed if it is to exist. It can even be remarked that someone ‘broke’ the silence of the room but on sitting and standing within these memory markers and working with materials, it is impossible for me to think of silence as anything other than a place holder for ‘that which is unheard.’ The same is true for ‘settling’ a country, though it seems that it took a very strong will to deny prior occupation, naming, stories and connection, on the part of the colonisers this silence that is implied by early European writers and settlers was instead that which is unheard.

Stephen Turner explains that, ‘settlement is a programme, or programming of settlers, so that the place they inhabit is one they can in time imagine is their own.’<sup>126</sup> If silence is broken by another then it cannot be claimed by the self. This would create, however imaginary, a connection to the land upon which they ‘settle’. Re-enactment, writes Turner, ‘tells the story of New Zealand as if the place, so-called, always-already existed as

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<sup>123</sup> J.R.H. Andrews, *No Other Home Than This: A History of European New Zealanders* (Craig Potton Pub., 2009), 171.

<sup>124</sup> Holcroft, *Discovered Isles: A Trilogy*, 26.

<sup>125</sup> Byrnes, *Boundary Markers: Land Surveying and the Colonisation of New Zealand*, 9.

<sup>126</sup> Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 121.





Figure 57. Elliot Collins, *Looking west*, (2017), Te Rerenga Wairua



Figure 58. Elliot Collins, *Damnatio Memoriae*, (August 2017), W 380 x D 245 x H 40mm concrete and bronze, AUT



such, negating the long history of Māori habitation into the short history of non-Māori occupation.<sup>127</sup>

The settler/traveller/pilgrim/migrator/visitor answers back, echoes or fills the silence with their own ideas, myths, dreams and histories, illuminating different avenues of thought and ‘breaking’ the silence, temporarily, with speech but it must be remembered that this breaking of silence did not commence with arrival of missionaries and sailors. Māori were effectively the first to break silence.

Comparatively, Steve Braunias asks what and where are the silence breaking symbols of contemporary Aotearoa, in his book, *Civilisation - Twenty Places on the Edge of the World*, where he addresses this ‘calling into being’ of an identity that is completely our own.<sup>128</sup> He finds *his* voice within conversations with others and then seeks the refuge and isolation of the New Zealand landscape to unpack what he discovers there. In referencing this isolation and refuge, there is a connection with the land, landscape and language that has emerged. Roland Bogue writes that, ‘it seems more accurate to describe the landscape as a “conceptual motif”, a recurring element that participates in the functioning of several key concepts.’<sup>129</sup> Papastergiadis confirms this viewpoint when he writes that, ‘By definition, the unconscious side of cultural identity is not representable in a straightforward manner, it can only be glanced by excavating and ‘working through’ the symbolic processes of language and dreams.’<sup>130</sup>

Braunias inserts into the understanding of our ‘selves’ a new sense of value or pride while romanticising the rural landscape and those who dwell within it. An introductory passage talks about the stereotypical, nondescript town of Mercer that casts new light upon a place I have passed through on the way to ‘better’ places:

The graveyard was across the road from the school and over the fence from a three-bedroom house on the edge of a paddock. It was raining hard at last; summer’s drought had rusted the countryside. Mercer – exactly halfway between Auckland and Hamilton, a fast 40-minute drive in either direction – smelled of chimney smoke on a Friday morning in early winter. A thrush was singing above the dirt track that led to the gates of the primary school, which had a roll of 22 – seventeen Māori and five Pākehā.<sup>131</sup>

He gives voice to objects and signs that could be silent to the reader who is embedded in the landscape or culture and hears nothing. From graveyards and rural schools to chimney smoke and ideas of distance, all symbolically and poetically locate this place in a national psyche. Braunias describes a place that could be anywhere, which is why his identity markers resonate with me at a foundational level.

127 Baird and Phillips.

128 S. Braunias, *Civilisation: Twenty Places on the Edge of the World* (Awa Press, 2013).

129 E.W. Holland, D.W. Smith, and C.J. Stivale, *Gilles Deleuze: Image and Text* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009), 9.

130 Papastergiadis, “Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place and the Everyday,” 60.

131 Braunias, *Civilisation: Twenty Places on the Edge of the World*, 123.



Figure 59. Elliot Collins, Waitangi Treaty Grounds, dawn, (6 February 2017), Waitangi, Bay of Islands

The sound of Māori words became an entry point for Colin McCahon, whose admiration for and appreciation of the Māori language and what he called the ‘Māori tragedy’ is evident in his practice and correspondence, where he writes reflectively about his paintings, ‘the largeness of Māori tragedy is not there as I hoped’.<sup>132</sup> What McCahon may have drawn upon was the writing on M.H. Holcroft who writes of a time before human occupation of any kind, suggesting that:

Many thousands of years ago the ancestors of the human race, urged by the primal necessities of food and living room, pushed out in swarms from the Asiatic home. Their world was dim in outline, for memory was then an evolving faculty, testing its powers in the painful discovery of habit, and only at the beginning of the long processes of linked perception.<sup>133</sup>

There is the potential for a failure to understand that Holcroft is speaking here of a people-less (Aotearoa New Zealand) place in its pure sense – not in the sense that Cook, or later explorers, would suggest as *terra nullius* – of untilled land which was therefore unoccupied, unpossessed and uninscribed upon. Holcroft continues by remembering the ‘we’ who look back to that misty era where, ‘experience was atomic and faintly recorded; only at the levels of community necessity, where the welfare of the swarm was a shared warmth, could the shape of the land and the pedestrian movement leave its faintest rational imprint’.<sup>134</sup>

To return to the boundaries of the previous chapter, when he states that ‘the margins were indistinct’,<sup>135</sup> Holcroft adds that the scattered islands within the Polynesian triangle, ‘lifted their specks of rock and sand above an abysmal depth of water.’ He also posits that at no time in the age of human migration were the New Zealand islands, ‘linked by land fragments that could provide foothold for the primeval traveler.... This, then, is the basic fact of our history—an age of silence’.<sup>136</sup> This also infers that any travel to Aotearoa was intentional and strategic.

As only a third- or fourth-generation pākehā in these places, grounding or grafting one’s identity to a place requires a considerable amount of hard work and trickery. The reason I use the pilgrim, stranger or traveller title is because I will not perform the necessary identity/location ‘rituals’ to co-opt unfamiliar or ‘invisible’ space that already holds prior settlement and culture to make it ‘my own’. As the settlers proceeded to introduce technologies and infrastructure, they inserted and insinuated themselves into the production and vitality of the new place that now ‘exist[ed] *more*’ rather than less, as the perception may have been pre-settlement. The tourist can photograph themselves ‘into’ the scene but this superficial engagement goes no further.

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<sup>132</sup> Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970*, 87.

<sup>133</sup> Holcroft, *Discovered Isles: A Trilogy*, 146.

<sup>134</sup> Holcroft.

<sup>135</sup> Holcroft.

<sup>136</sup> Holcroft, 147.



Figure 60. Elliot Collins, *A Memory (Now There is Too Much Light)*, (2011-17), (2017), 1350 x 2000mm, oil and vinyl on linen, AUT



Authenticity, writes Damian Skinner, ‘is undoubtedly part of what motivates tourist representation and discourse’,<sup>137</sup> but authenticity is an unstable concept that is open to corruption. For this reason, there are places and markers that are personal and undocumented that are not meant for publication in this journal. Their voice is not mine to hear. These are private spaces and memories, where the sightseer is not welcome no matter the desire or persistence. We protect them for fear of what Turner calls ‘Cultural plagiarism’, ‘[which] refers to the “uniqueness” of Māori that Pākehā appropriate to disguise their otherwise unexceptional settlement’.<sup>138</sup> I am also only at the beginning of my long and complex connection to the land to which I *belong* and like McCahon, I make art about Aotearoa, ‘not by perfecting a lake reflection or hyper-realising a kauri, but by personalising it’.<sup>139</sup> McCahon once wrote, ‘you bury your heart, and as it goes deeper into the land you can only follow. It’s a painful love, loving a land. It takes a long time’.<sup>140</sup> The act of writing upon a painting also has an effect on the reader; as the words form pictures in their mind the time of ‘recitation’ is held in stasis.<sup>141</sup>

## Calling it by Name

The naming and mapping, writes Papastergiadis, ‘of colonial space often unconsciously expressed the desperation as well as the triumph of the colonizer’.<sup>142</sup> Park has a similar view when he notes Apirana Ngata discussing names as ‘charged particles’ that become images and then these mark the landscape, just as, ‘outside against the dark forest, the roadside signs do: Signs have shape... they guard and possess acquired terrain. Once established as place, they mould history’.<sup>143</sup> The problem with those in charge of naming is that the time they spent in the country, from a few weeks to months does not allow for any deep sense of knowing the landscape. ‘Impressions are superficial and measured against landscapes and environments,’<sup>144</sup> already known by the explorer. ‘What is known well is compared with that is barely known’.<sup>145</sup>

To make a place more certain, the settler/coloniser brought with them beliefs that originated in England, and Salmond writes that, ‘these habits of mind are so deeply entrenched as to be almost invisible, until they collide with competing realities.’<sup>146</sup> Using the analogy of poorly-prepared painting surface, I propose that the naming and mapping of New Zealand, as colonial space, was overlaid so quickly or applied so inadequately by earlier surveyors that the layers began to show signs of decay almost immediately, and the ‘structure’ of history was disturbed by memory’s power of interference.<sup>147</sup>

The emblem of settler speech, that of a place name, is beginning to lose its lustre. Where ‘over-naming’ occurred, the pentimento of a previous ‘invisible language’ waits, patiently, underneath. This first name also

<sup>137</sup> Smith and Wevers, *On Display: New Essays in Cultural Studies*, 87.

<sup>138</sup> Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 122.

<sup>139</sup> G. Park, *Theatre Country: Essays on Landscape & Whenua* (Victoria University Press, 2006), 65,

<sup>140</sup> Colin McCahon, *Necessary Protection*, in *Art in New Zealand*, 7, p45.

<sup>141</sup> Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, 44.

<sup>142</sup> Papastergiadis, “Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place and the Everyday,” 93.

<sup>143</sup> Park, *Theatre Country: Essays on Landscape & Whenua*, 59.

<sup>144</sup> Andrews, *No Other Home Than This: A History of European New Zealanders*, 171.

<sup>145</sup> Andrews, 172.

<sup>146</sup> Anne Salmond, “Tears of Rangī: Water, Power, and People in New Zealand,” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, no. 3 (December 31, 2014): 297.

<sup>147</sup> Andrews, *No Other Home Than This: A History of European New Zealanders*, 174.



Figure 61. Elliot Collins, Goat Creek, (2015), Arthur's Pass

tells us another memory of place and reveals a history and time beyond its overwritten scaffolding. My work that references this is a self-titled sculpture called *Damnatio Memoriae*, 2017. The bronze letters are sunken just below the surface of a concrete slab. The Latin inscription literally means ‘condemnation of memory’ and was used as a punishment for traitors by the Roman Senate, with the implication that a person must not be remembered. I have doubled the active forgetting, the tile is a place where the viewer can walk over the work and as they do, this action will reveal through erosion the bronze letters that will reinforce the forgetting. It will be a reminder to forget.

Throughout this thesis, I seek to make connections between the experience of settler culture and the ideas of *pintimento* and overwriting. Within my practice I am always working with ideas of language that conceals and reveals certain personal and/or public truths or questions. Within the work there is a doubling that occurs that mirrors written language reflecting speech, betraying the original, yet poignant in its failure. My installation convention of combining painting with sculpture and photography reveal the communication or communion enacted when a visitor attends a place of memory. This extends to the journal, which archives a passage through the landscape, documenting these various and layered opaque ‘markers’ that don’t easily reveal themselves.

A work called *How to Cross the Ocean (by carrying everything inside)*, 2017, gesso and vinyl on linen, holds the place of a memorial plaque in its scale, construction and typeface. The text is cut out of vinyl, and covered over and concealed by white gesso. The text is then shown by removing the vinyl to reveal the raw linen underneath the gesso, which is itself a prepared surface, or ground (historically), to paint upon; this offers the viewer a statement or ‘un-question’ to contemplate. The vague and open un-question, HOW TO CROSS THE OCEAN, is just under the surface layer. It hides within itself the implication that the answer is different for every viewer. The ocean mentioned in the work is either physical or metaphorical and therefore the way to cross it changes. There is also no question mark and therefore appears as an instruction. Like many memory markers witnessed throughout the country it suggests the many ways that memory offers only a vague answer. A small clue is concealed in its bracketed title that exists only in room guide sheet. The work instead implies that any action or contemplation is to be generated by the witness to the memory and not the memory marker itself.

Once a new, larger generation of New Zealanders born of immigrant parents began to slacken ties with England, a home they had never known, a devout number of nationalist *pākehā* writers, poets and monument builders attempted to act as arbitrators for readers and the land they had newly inhabited.



Figure 62. Elliot Collins, Waipapakauri Domain, (2018), Waipapakauri, North-



These roles were viewed as prophetic voices speaking into ‘the void’; disregarding the Māori prophetic movement, which occurred a century earlier, they attempted a sort of patriotism that was forced and naïve, however hopeful it may appear in retrospect. They continued the work of surveyors and ‘place-namers’ by describing, in English, what these places meant, to this new individual called the New Zealander. It is important to note that naming and the inevitable writing upon the land occurred post-sighting and settlement. These places had existed long before they were given names.<sup>148</sup> The heritage of being displaced Europeans in the antipodes, writes Ian Burn, ‘carries implications of being neither wholly displaced nor strictly European.’<sup>149</sup> The contradictions of being both from but not from a place, prompts ‘the continual inscription and reinscription [sic] of the landscape, remaking representations in accord with shifting demands of a (white) national self. Such a construction of a (white) cultural identity framed itself by a colonial emptiness, popularising an unpeopled “land for the taking”.’<sup>150</sup> Alex Calder writes that the problem of using landscape as a site of ‘nation building’, without recognising a previous layered past, produces a ‘palimpsestic problem of authority’ which disturbs the ‘solidity of its rhetorical grounds and [blurs] the scene(ry) of its expression.’<sup>151</sup>

The use of certain words, terms and imagery found in memory markers of the time are challenging, because they often exist in a particular colonial framework that assumes a cosmological voice with a dominant influence and they imply a truth in the silence, repeatedly disregarding a voice they choose not to hear. So, from the very opening moments of exchanges with Māori, and those who inhabited the place called New Zealand, there were boundaries established through language; boundaries to distinguish and delineate areas of access and limits. Tony Ballantyne writes that,

the fences built around mission stations were designed in part to clearly demarcate a distinct cultural space... it is telling in that in one of the first books printed for the mission, it recorded the te reo phrase ‘the fence is broken’ [Ka kore to taihepa].<sup>152</sup>

This shows that early in Aotearoa NZ’s shared history, boundaries were challenged and access contested. A silence that is broken by speech is firstly addressed in the naming of things. The chronicle of these names was an attempt to inhabit a place with the accoutrements, or at least the words, of ‘home’. This might suggest that renaming is not an unusual activity within Aotearoa and in its pure state may be effective where exchange is necessary to establish ‘proper’ boundaries.

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148 This influence can be seen in the sous rature of the blanket term used to describe tangata whenua. The word Māori originally meant ordinary or everyday, as Jodie Ranford writes, ‘The Maori used the word to describe themselves, as opposed to the ‘different’, European settlers, during the nineteenth century, and the Europeans in turn adopted it.’ (1985, p. 64) In this way language became a divisive tool used for ‘othering’. ‘Before the time of the arrival of Europeans, Maori had no name for themselves as a nation, only a number of tribal names.’ (1985, p. 64)

149 Wales and Gallery, *The Boundary Rider: 9th Biennale of Sydney, 15 December 1992-14 March 1993*, 31.

150 Wales and Gallery.

151 Smith and Wevers, *On Display: New Essays in Cultural Studies*, 112.

152 Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Maori, and the Question of the Body*, 90.



Figure 63. Elliot Collins, Kapu-te-Rangi / Toi's Pā, (2017), Kōhī Point, Whakatāne

Merewether adds that, ‘the subject of the border has played, in recent years, an important role because it not only defines national boundaries and therefore identities, but also marks the site of exclusion and discrimination’.<sup>153</sup>

Being the last considerable landmass to be inhabited, early settlers assumed that ‘they had indeed arrived in an “unfinished” country’, writes Morgan, who references what Thomas R. Dunlap says regarding the void as the ‘Anglo’ settler’s need to, ‘make his new land familiar, to fill this “void land” with meaning. In order to be at home here they first noted what was “missing”’.<sup>154</sup> Was making something that was unfamiliar, familiar, what the Modernists were attempting to achieve? Can we begin to see them in a more sympathetic light? Should we? Could there instead be an art that always-already exists within Aotearoa?

The old saying, ‘We bring our *lares* with us’, ‘has many variations’ says Bauman, so many that ‘the daydream deepens to the point where an immemorial domain opens up for the dreamer of a home beyond man’s earliest memory.’<sup>155</sup> Bauman is suggesting that to make any place like home, whatever form that takes, is a way of reaching back into an imagination of safety and a place where recollection is possible. He continues:

The house, like fire and water, will permit me... to recall flashes of daydreams that illuminate the synthesis of immemorial and recollected. In this remote region, memory and imagination remain associated, each one working for their mutual deepening. In the order of values, they both constitute a community of memory and image.<sup>156</sup>

The projection of a place name was to call forth and reconstruct memories and if they did not exist they were created, defined and made ‘flesh’. These lares – brought from the homeland – would observe, protect and influence all that happened within the boundaries of their new location. This is observed in Māori words and names being carried over the ocean from Hawaiki to name people and things in Aotearoa, beginning with:

Guardian mountains on the west coast of Rarotonga, including Maunga Piko, Maunga Tea, Maunga Ko’u and Te Rēinga-a-Pora, stand above a distinctive black rock called Te Rerenga Vairua. This was where spirits were said to depart to the paradise of ‘Avaiki. The same name pattern is repeated in New Zealand, where Maunga Piko, Whangakea, Maunga Kohu-a-naki and Te Rēinga stand as sentinels along the eastern and western pathways to Te Rerenga Wairua (the spirit’s leap), at Cape Rēinga.<sup>157</sup>

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153 Wales and Gallery, *The Boundary Rider: 9th Biennale of Sydney, 15 December 1992-14 March 1993*, 22.

154 Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 105.

155 Hall and du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity: SAGE Publications*, 5.

156 Hall and du Gay.

157 Rāwiri Taonui, ‘Tapa whenua – naming places - Names from Polynesian mythology’, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand.



Figure 64. Elliot Collins, Plaque, Lion Rock, (2016), Piha, Waitakere



Is there a reason, when arriving home to an empty house, that one will speak into the void of the hallway with a, 'hello'? A self-conscious questioning and 'noise-making' in order to safely situate oneself into the unknown, making the unfamiliar space familiar. Turner writes that, 'reflecting on abandonment makes critical thinking itself a kind of purgatory – a local limbo – in which one attends to states of anxiety and dread'.<sup>158</sup> This rationale leads the thinker to a placeless now, to recognise this drawing of a name from somewhere else is to be critical of public memory in Aotearoa, which 'is to enter with full self-consciousness into a permanent internal exile, a forced arrest and condition of waiting whose Māori counterpart, Ranganui Walker, calls ka whawhai tonu matou (struggle without end)'.<sup>159</sup> The memory work occurring across the country, some of which I have documented, disturbs the prevailing narrative.

The end of the struggle would require a majority of the people to reconceive themselves in the view of a minority, a prior peoples whose longer history disturbs the slumber of a second people's dreaming.

Such critics are naturally fretful and disturbed sleepers.<sup>160</sup>

Accordingly, this project traces a palimpsest of stories that are written over and over again. I am attempting to reconcile a languaged, written memory with its flaws and betrayals with a remembered spoken memory of half stories and adjusted truths. I have become aware of my essentially western pākehā worldview that holds stories and truths in a very different fashion to Māori. I have found that indigenous questions of memory and memory's erasure are approached from a different perspective than my own. In Panoho's *Maori Art*, Kura Te Waru Rewiri states that, 'As a Māori artist, I try to embrace the tapu nature of being Māori... in order to resurrect or reconstruct or redefine what it is that we had'.<sup>161</sup> The artist is drawing on the recollected memories that are not her own in order to re-place an identity. She continues, 'This allows a kind of decolonization of the self to take place.... My belief is that we have got to get through a whole lot of colonial imprinting on our memories'.<sup>162</sup> This position is significant in relation to the palimpsest and pentimento of overwritten, concealed or externally-silenced memory that is mistaken for personal silence. Te Waru Rewiri describing a silencing of colonial layers of imprinting, not denying its impact but quieting the voice. Te Waru Rewiri is not alone in this search for categorising of memories affected by colonisation. With this in mind there is a tension that exists between 'artists tangata whenua' and 'artist tauwi' when dealing with memory, layering and invisibility. I have come to the conclusion that my practice is a particular kind of ongoing pilgrimage. A 'walking through' of a silence to come to terms with and to meet it, where it rests.

158 Baird and Phillips, "Contained Memory," 120.

159 Baird and Phillips.

160 Baird and Phillips.

161 Panoho, Adams, and Sameshima, *Māori Art: History, Architecture, Landscape and Theory*, 46.

162 Panoho, Adams, and Sameshima.



Figure 65. Elliot Collins, Trig point, Maungarahoe, Upper Wairoa, (2016), Dargaville

Considering that the colonial imprinting was a control mechanism throughout early New Zealand history, it implied a sort of empty, desert landscape one journeys through. It is noted by Bauman quoting Edmond Jabès that the desert,

is a space where one step gives way to the next, which undoes it, and the horizon means hope for a tomorrow which speaks. You do not go to the desert to find identity, but to lose it, to lose your personality, to become anonymous.... And then something extraordinary happens: you hear silence speak.<sup>163</sup>

Was this the reason for emigration? Was there a wish to shed old memories and construct new ones? If this is the case can we be critical of myth or memory making in any culture? Bauman adds another layer to this thought, considering that at other times the pilgrim did not venture *into* the desert, 'it was the world of their daily life which was turning more and more like the desert'.<sup>164</sup> For Māori, living in a renamed and overwritten home it must seem like the world has been turned placeless. Bauman writes that, 'the familiar features had become obliterated'<sup>165</sup> causing the 'reading' and speaking of place to be disoriented. Within this exile there is a sense of forgetting and losing that is both foundational and troubling in the settler context. 'Impersonality, coldness and *emptiness*' are, writes Bauman, 'essential words in the Protestant language of environment'.<sup>166</sup> This makes sense considering the way missionaries responded to New Zealand, as the Protestant movement was a dominant missionary influence in early New Zealand, 'They express the desire to see the outside as null, lacking'.<sup>167</sup> This is further reinforcement of a refusal to listen to the sounds in the 'silence'.

The kind of language Bauman uses to speak of the desert, 'of nothingness waiting to be given meaning',<sup>168</sup> appears both as a biblical reference and as the Māori word for the nothing: *te kore*,<sup>169</sup> that is, pregnant with possibilities; this nothingness offers the potential for a new space without delineations, 'ready to accept any contour offered, if only until other [forms] are offered; a space not scarred with past furrows'.<sup>170</sup> Peters refers to Emmanuel Levinas who writes, 'Bifurcations – since sensations, words and memories continually turn a train of thought from the path it seemed to be taking towards some unexpected direction; erasures – since the univocal meaning of each element is continually corrected and altered',<sup>171</sup> memory is enacted in both. 'But in these bifurcations and erasures [Michel] Leiris is less concerned to go down the new paths opened up or to latch onto the corrected meaning than he is to capture thought at that special moment when it turns into something other than itself'.<sup>172</sup> I reiterate the notion of names carried over from other places are made imprecise and bifurcate into someplace new. This very elemental prominence of the notion of erasure affirms the 'simultaneity

163 Hall and du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*: SAGE Publications, 21.

164 Hall and du Gay.

165 Hall and du Gay.

166 Hall and du Gay.

167 Hall and du Gay.

168 Hall and du Gay.

169 (that precedes *Te Pō*, the darkness)

170 Hall and du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*: SAGE Publications, 21.

171 Gary Peters, "Affirming Art: Heidegger and the Sense of a Beginning," *Philosophy Study* 3, no. 10 (October 2013): 145.

172 E. Lévinas and S. Hand, *The Levinas Reader* (Basil Blackwell, 1989), 146, <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=I613mgEACAAJ>.



Figure 66. Shane Cotton, *Back Words*, (2011), Acrylic on linen, 2200 x 1500mm, Hocken Collection Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago, accession no. 2011/79



of multiplicity' where Levinas writes, 'the ambiguity of erasures forms a space'.<sup>173</sup> Heidegger's *Das Nichts* appears here when the wholeness of *Dasein* reaches its complete finish, those who remain – who occupy the world of Being-with-others – are able to comprehend by observing, Being-no-longer-in-the-world.<sup>174</sup> The nothing is an invisible space that is held open by unknown forces, yet it affects the current sites where *Dasein* was once present.

The innovative directions that language can take within the unexpected turn of bifurcations is enlivening to my practice. Speech enters the silence where a space has been formed by espacement created from bifurcation and erasure, which holds the history of there or not there. I am attracted by the possibilities and opportunities that the recess brings. Peters emphasises the point of 'forms a space' writing that,

the logic of erasure both opens a space and gives it form – to repeat, a mode of articulation. This articulation is the product of a series of 'yeses' and 'nos' that are multiplicitous not only as a continuum of possibilities but also as a simultaneity that pluralises (or potentializes) the artwork at every moment, with all of the contingency each moment brings.<sup>175</sup>

The settler, seeing New Zealand as an untilled, wild country, could not see sacred trees, mountains, burial places or seasonal hunting and fishing grounds, 'yet fertile with expectations of sharp blades; of virgin land yet to be ploughed and tilled; of the land of the perpetual beginning; of the place-no-place whose name and identity is not-yet'.<sup>176</sup> There is the expectation of a certain celebrity or infamy of a place for it to be assigned as 'place identified' by the memory of 'the pilgrim' who, rather than blazing a trail, merely walked a path regularly until it developed a name. Sidney Moko Mead draws attention to a Māori perspective of history by writing that, 'the past is constantly in view of the ego and the present is changing into the past as each event occurs'.<sup>177</sup> Panoho begins his final chapter called Te Timatanga (the beginning) by stating, 'In Māori thinking you have a two-way thing: the beginning is the future'. The western perception of time is upturned by Mead who perfectly states that:

Logically, the known world is the past, out of which Maori art emerged. The unknown is the future, which cannot be seen. What has happened to us is history and it is this that defines our present position. It is the future that we cannot see and hence it lies behind us, not in front as the Europeans would have it.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Lévinas and Hand.

<sup>174</sup> Heidegger and Stambaugh, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit*, 281.

<sup>175</sup> Peters, "Affirming Art: Heidegger and the Sense of a Beginning," 960.

<sup>176</sup> Hall and du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity: SAGE Publications*, 21.

<sup>177</sup> S.M. Mead and American Federation of Arts, *Te Maori: Maori Art from New Zealand Collections* (Abrams, 1984), 64,

<sup>178</sup> Mead and Arts.



Figure 67. Elliot Collins, Tolaga bay, (2016), Uawa (an anchorage for Cook before heading to Poverty Bay, the name Tolaga bay is disputed as it sounds like neither the original Māori or English names for the bay)

The historic pilgrim is now the artist walking, as a Māori proverb says, backwards into the future.<sup>179</sup> The ‘tracks to reckon with’ are in the making of artworks that always-already exist. Being a pilgrim, writes Bauman, ‘one can do more than walk – one can walk *to*’,<sup>180</sup> highlighting an active role in memory.

Provocative, and critical of such artistic systems, Panoho writes that, ‘the surveyor’s grid and Pākehā (non-Māori) nomenclature, is a longstanding feature of New Zealand’s bicultural dialogue and the reimagining of the New Zealand landscape that has been going on since the 1850s’.<sup>181</sup> Panoho’s grids are discernible as trig markers which are the lingering monochrome monuments that flag New Zealand’s highest points. Often in these significant spots the surveyor’s mark is the only sign of interaction with the land and its people. They are a reminder of exclusion and delineation, where places that held meaning and were geographically recorded through story and markings were carved up and sold. It is a false reminder to a Christian, non-Māori that dominion means control. It is an ironic twist that while on my journey around the country, documenting important places, trig points became a place for silence and reflection. The elevation implies importance and their history repeats its silencing. The strangest place that I discovered a trig point was on top of Maungaraho which must have taken time, effort and expense to ‘mark’ with a survey trig.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard writes of silence that:

There are also great waves of silence that vibrate in poems, as in the little selection of poems by Pericle Patocchi, prefaced by Marcel Raymond. Here we have the silence of the distant world concentrated in one line:

*Au loin j’entendais prier les sources de la terre*

(Vingt Poemes)

(Far off I heard the springs of earth praying.)

Some poems move toward silence the way we descend in memory. As, for instance, in this great poem by [Czesław] Miłosz:

*Tandis que le grand vent glapit des noms de mortes*

*Ou bruit de vieille pluie aigre sur quelque route*

*Ecoute-plus rien-seul le grand silence-ecoute.*

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179 Ka mura, ka muri

180 Hall and du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*: SAGE Publications, 21.

181 Panoho, Adams, and Sameshima, *Māori Art: History, Architecture, Landscape and Theory*, 73.





(While the high wind yelps the names of women long dead  
Or the sound of bitter old rain on a road  
Listen-now there's nothing – but complete silence – listen.)<sup>182</sup>

Bachelard, along with the poems of Czeslaw Milosz, reveals some important and peaceful reflections that need to occur in order for silence and invisibility to possess the significance it deserves and the memory it is comprised of. The significance of silence is additionally maintained through our unwillingness to seek it out in everyday situations. We hardly know where to situate this silence, writes Bachelard, 'whether in the vast world or in the immense past. But we do know that it comes from beyond a wind that dies down or a rain that grows gentle'.<sup>183</sup>

Perhaps this is where myth-making occurs, at this deep place of origin, where words are spoken to make real the not-yet-existing idea or where plans are made to return to the future where these myths are true. Or is it a case of memory creation? That all lives proceed from the past and this distance needs the vehicle of memory to traverse the vast expanse. Bauman proposes that 'pilgrims had a stake in solidity of the world they walked in, a kind of world in which one can tell life as a continuous story, a "sense-making" story'.<sup>184</sup> Migrants to Aotearoa were attempting to speak *into* and/or inscribe *onto* this different land and to construct 'a world in which travelling may be indeed a pilgrimage. A world hospitable to pilgrims'.<sup>185</sup>

## Inscription

The inscription upon the surface of the landscape might be seen and understood as a traditional western method of storytelling or message transmission. Original places recorded during initial engagements were disregarded as trivial, as observed in Sydney Parkinson's journal entry:

On the 12th, early in the morning, we weighed anchor, and attempted to find some better anchoring-place, as this bay (which, from the few necessities we could procure, we called Poverty Bay) was not well sheltered from a S.E. wind, which brings in a heavy sea. The natives call the bay Taoneroa, and the point of land, at the entrance on the east side, they call Tettua Motu.<sup>186</sup>

There was an overlaying of place names and symbols that did not belong, or were at least contentious, that were overlooked by European settlers for the sake of 'national identity construction'. As a way of contesting or problematising this history of inscription upon the landscape, I use words and phrases in my practice that act

<sup>182</sup> G. Bachelard and M. Jolas, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Paperback (Beacon Press, 1994), 179.

<sup>183</sup> Bachelard and Jolas.

<sup>184</sup> Hall and du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*: SAGE Publications, 23.

<sup>185</sup> Hall and du Gay.

<sup>186</sup> S. Parkinson, *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas, in His Majesty's Ship: The Endeavour*, Australian Facsimile Editions, No. A34 (Libraries—Board of South Australia, 1773), 90.



Figure 68. Elliot Collins, Tauwhare Pā, (2016), Ōhope

like broken speech or subtitles, revealing only fragments of my message.

They contain partial sentences that are slowly eroded or worn away like inscriptions on ancient, crumbling ruins. To reiterate, this echoes my travels and the delight in seeing ruins: the *ruinenlust*. An example of this appears in my recent show, *The Reckless Pilgrim*. In a series of paintings I pose rhetorical questions that might act as statements not quite revealing themselves as truths. The ‘un-question’ that each painting asks remains unanswered by the rest of the show or by any supporting material because these are open for debate and interpretation. They often begin mid-sentence and none possess a question mark. They are projected out to the room, the white surface of the linen has been revealed by the process of removal of vinyl stencil letters. The absence of paint thereby discloses the statement. Much the same is the early work of Richard Killeen’s, *Man, Land, Sea and Sky* (also called *Man with Newspaper*), 1967, where the ‘Auck’ heading on the newspaper is an ‘unstable signature of place, since it is so fragmented as to be barely legible’.<sup>187</sup> Similarly, the texts, painted or layered in my work, act as broken speech that has the potential to break silence by holding open a negotiation with the viewer. If they do break the silence, it is with a unique, multi-tonal disharmony, like two church bells in a small town slightly out of time, appealing but disquieting. Another work called *we gathered close in silence*, 2017, is a twenty-four piece work comprised of photographs and stained glass. Each photograph holds within it a portion of a larger poem and in sequence reveals a poem about the end of the world. The poem is ‘broken’ by the choices I have made to reveal each portion of poem one by one, initially via social media, working from last to first then displaying them in a framed grid on a wall in correct sequence. This work produced an atmosphere, an ambience and a space for something to happen. What Morton describes as a ‘thick, embodied, heightened atmosphere, neither full nor empty’.<sup>188</sup> Even on the wall the viewer has the option of reading only portions of the text and gleaning the work that way. The bright yellow texts almost appear as subtitles to the image yet they are centre justified and the image bears no direct relation to the poem.

There is a sense of potential: something is ‘about’ to happen.... Presence and absence, past and future events, discursive thoughts and memory traces, are contained within this space. This ‘thick’ space is strictly impossible, but it is a compelling fantasy.<sup>189</sup> There is alteration, mis-translation, stuttering or mis-hearing that births fresh meaning in my practice. It is however just like the memory marker in terms of it being a singular narrative that allows for bifurcation, just as Bauman quotes Douglas Kellner when he writes, ‘Far from identity disappearing in contemporary society, it is rather reconstructed and redefined’.<sup>190</sup>

The text based paintings in *The Reckless Pilgrim*, are examples of ‘mis-explanations’ and mumblings via repetitions. With the repetitious ‘How’ at the start of each, and hanging together, these works appear inquisitive

187 Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970*, 64.

188 Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, 93.

189 Morton.

190 Hall and du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity: SAGE Publications*, 18.





in their attempt to ask for answers. None have question marks, full stops or commas so all exist somewhere within an ongoing dialogue of the artist.

The conversational aspects are at odds with memorial inscriptions found on monuments yet they all pose 'unquestions' about time, the people in it and its relationship to the viewer. They reconstruct the excursions I go on in abstract ways to avoid pinpointing a moment that exposes the identity of the maker. They all relate to aspects of memory either small and interior or vast and with great depth.

My practice avoids fixation in order to keep possibilities, open for an answer, even one of good quality, can arrest engagement. Peters writes that the 'cultivation of memory takes many forms, all and every one hopelessly resisting the inevitable dissolution of time into an amorphous oblivion of forgetfulness. All and every one branding-irons burning into the forgetful flesh'.<sup>191</sup> Nietzsche contributes to this by suggesting that:

If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory...Man could never do without blood, torture, and sacrifices when he felt the need to create a memory for himself...all this has its origin in the instinct that realized that pain is the most powerful aid to mnemonics.<sup>192</sup>

Because of this 'pain memory' I tread cautiously, often diverting the pain to other places. Revealed in this journal are images of uninhabited places where significant events took place or are places that remember the people who mattered there. My work is about navigating those boundaries and borders and respecting those access points while negotiating and responding to the 'always double function of the border'.<sup>193</sup> And if I am to take up a weight of settler association it is renewed with a more honest title and one that I will leave you without resolution. The settlers will be renamed as the 'Unsettlers' the action implied seems better suited to their memory.

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<sup>191</sup> Gary Peters, "The Obligation to Remember 2015," 2015, 2.

<sup>192</sup> F. Nietzsche, M. Clark, and A.J. Swensen, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Classics Series (Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 38.

<sup>193</sup> Wales and Gallery, *The Boundary Rider: 9th Biennale of Sydney*, 15 December 1992-14 March 1993, 35.

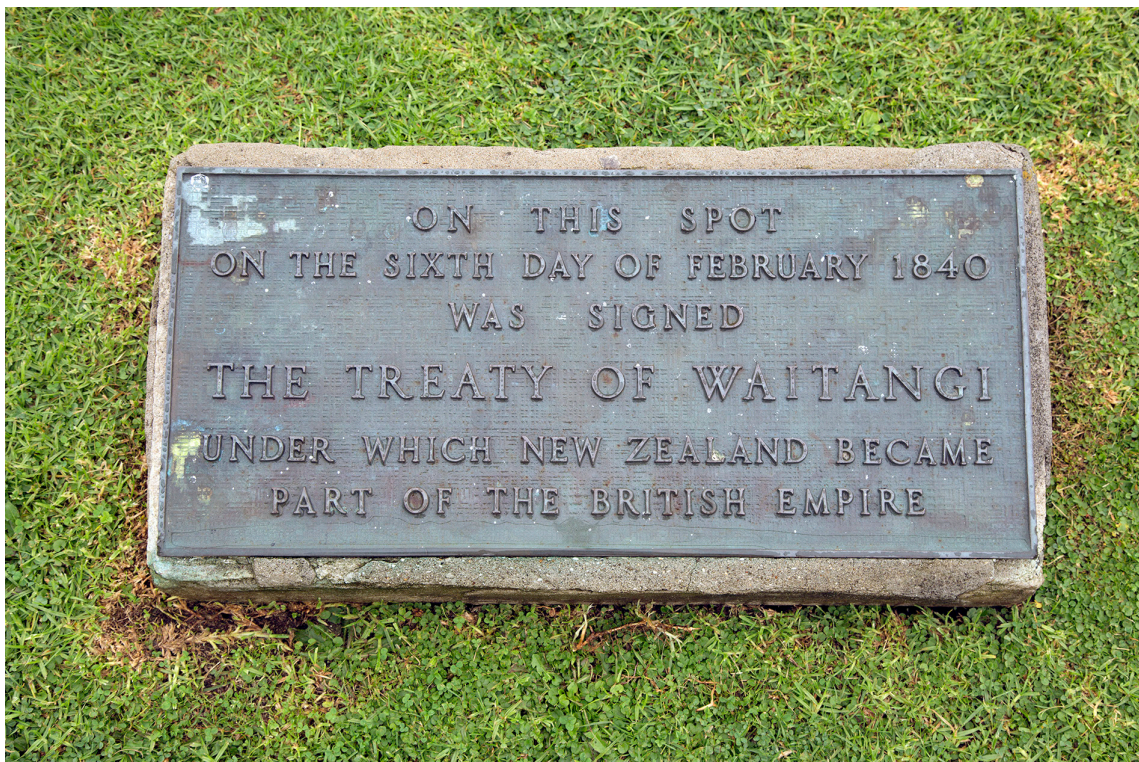


Figure 69. Elliot Collins, Waitangi Commemorative Plaque, below flagstaff, (2016), Waitangi, Bay of Islands

## Dilution of Truth

*Walking up to the base of the flagstaff at the Treaty Grounds at Waitangi I happened upon this commemorative plaque with a surprising lack of detail, written in serif font. The striking thing about this plaque is its economy of language. It is a small bronze plaque set in concrete on vast manicured lawns bounded by the Kororāreka harbour on three sides. The lettering is well spaced and easy to read.*

*It betrays a multitude of events, ideas, problems, narratives and trauma. Yet that it says so little, is also a poignant thought. That it does not attempt to unpack the history of the site or the undercurrent at the time of signing, or even the significance of the occasion. Sensation has been removed from the words.*

*It simply states one of many truths. Even this plaque sits uncomfortably on the lawn outside the Treaty House and the Whare Runanga. In as much as a diminutive plaque can contain emotion it holds the weight of a document that would be and still is contentious.*

*Visitors from around the world wander up to the flagstaff and stand looking down at this plaque. I imagine addendums, small off-shoot plaques that unpack every other aspect of this event and occasion and document that grows to redact and correct major flaws in the simplistic propaganda. Instead I decide on a small enamel brooch that says,*

IT'S MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT.



Figure 70. Elliot Collins, *It's More Complicated Than That*, (2017), 30mm diameter, enamel and nickel brooch, Tim Melville gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland



## Invisible Complexity

This is a complex plaque. Not because the language is cryptic or because there are concepts suggested in the inscription that lead somewhere else, but because it leaves so much out. The details, the insight into the culture at the time, the attitudes to authority, ownership and dominance. The conflicting world views that met on this day have a rich and varied history that is missing from the small bronze plaque. It is complex because of the invisibility of meaning hidden within its boundary. It has not revealed any insight into the minds of those either at the time of signing or since. A visitor, unaware of the memories that this plaque connoted, could look upon this plaque as a forbidden knowledge key whose understanding is out of reach. Jeanette Winterson writes that, 'complex emotion is pivoted around the forbidden'.<sup>194</sup> Does the viewer instinctively know they are in the presence of a multifaceted memory marker that is not doing the memory any justice? 'When I feel the complexity of a situation I am feeling the many-sidedness of it, not the obvious smooth shape, grasped at once and easily forgotten'.<sup>195</sup> This leads me to consider a small counter-argument to the plaque and others like it, as well as the way I witness the over-simplification of memory, myth, stories and histories that seem to frighten western thinkers because of their complexity. The brooch is an artwork that pushes against alleged clarity and simplicity towards more uncomfortable truths. Winterson continues:

Complexity leads to perplexity. I do not know my place. There is a clash between what I feel and what I had expected to feel. My logical self fails me, and no matter how I try to pace it out, there is still something left over that will not be accounted for.<sup>196</sup>

Keeping this paradigm in mind I suggest that memory markers hold within them all the connections, complexities and problems of the memories themselves. That this should be the attitude that is used when approaching and attempting to comprehend the markers. Perhaps our role is merely to witness the complex networks that memory maintains. I support what Roland Barthes says in *S/Z* when he writes that networks are many and interact, without one of them being able to suppress the rest; 'This text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signified; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one'.<sup>197</sup>

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194 J. Winterson, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*, Vintage International (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2013), 112,

195 Winterson.

196 Winterson.

197 Barthes, *S/Z*, 5.



Figure 71. Elliot Collins, Te Kara (the colours) / The United Tribes flag, (2014), Rawene

## Kohukohu to Rawene

*I can make out the United Tribes of Aotearoa flag at the bottom of the hill but I feel it necessary to explain its locality on the main street of Rawene. A 1994 orange Hilux Surf, sports edition, is parked up outside the pub, mud flicked up its sides. I admire it for what it represents and how far away that lifestyle is from my own. In contrast to more remote places, the doors of the small churches up the road are all locked. Possibly to deter unwanted visitors, unwanted but not unwelcome, it must be a very hard equilibrium to provide. The town gently guides visitors to the wharf. The hull of a waka, painted brown, rests on a stand outside the library; it is cradled and it holds a great presence on the peaceful street. It is strange to touch this relic but many must have touched it, from the men who felled the tree to the carvers to the paddlers to the tourists.*

*The car ferry, Kohu Ra Tuarua, has just departed for Kohukohu so the half-hour wait for its return is filled with wandering tourists, eating scones and drinking tea against the expansive backdrop of the Hokianga River's upper reaches. Corrugated iron buildings and painted cinderblocks decay before our eyes along the salty estuary.*

*A boy of about fourteen rides a horse without a saddle down the main street and orders it to stop as it comes to the bottom of the street. It peacefully accommodates its young master who slides off confidently to bum a smoke from a group of men fishing with the incoming tide. People parked in their cars waiting to board watch the horse startle and buck as a stranger gets too close for a photo. The rider calms the horse and they both disappear along the riverbank road. The sound of horseshoes tapping into the distance. After the commotion the scene returns to calm. A black dog slumps down on the grass next to an ageing cannon, a relic which refuses to share its story. Through the speckled silver paint, I make out the Latin words, *ULTIMA RATIO REGIS*, which mean 'the king's final argument'. Two weathered old men who sit at a picnic table discuss the tides, and things that continue to break down no matter how many times you fix them. Their language is coarse yet friendly.*





Above them all, the wanderers, the rider, the tourists, the locals, the fishermen and the dog, flies the flag, one similar to this first raised in 1830. It flies muscularly in the fresh breeze which sucks to the west. Its red cross of St George and white details contrast brusquely with the clear blue of the sky, repeated on the flag in four sections of blue, each holding a white eight-pointed star, another red cross *mise en abyme*. I wonder why I feel a sort of infatuation with this flag, perhaps it is the simulacra of historic symbols that so intrigue me. Maybe it speaks of a more dynamic time in the country. Maybe the symbol has been flown in important historical events and so its collective history is contained in its design, held up above us in a sort of hopeful optimism that evidently didn't last. Perhaps it is merely the absence of the Union Jack that amuses me, one step removed from the Empire. The movement of people witnessed by this flag and perhaps its symbolism of continuing to exist within a changing world is a poignant reminder that important memory markers might last a little longer than once thought. I want to make it clear that I believe it is the symbol that carries the essence of the memory not the individual flags. These flags can be bought in tourist shops, but regardless of their provenance the flying of each flag re-enacts the symbol's purpose and maintains a story.

This flag came out of a necessity to display the difference of who New Zealand was at the time. I'm not sure we've done it much justice, though as the ferry ties up to the dock and travellers are greeted by a man holding a durrie in the corner of his cheerful grin, I have a spark of understanding. The ferryman specks out of the side of his mouth, 'G'day, up there to the left, stop before the edge'. I sense the repetition in his voice, the ritual of aligning vehicles, the passage of time marked by each crossing which counts the hours of the day in the back and forth of the ferry. The flag like the river and the ferry pass through time and seem to exchange their stories, through movement, silently.



Figure 72. Elliot Collins, Te Kotahitanga flag, Te Tii Marae, (2017), Waitangi



Figure 73. Elliot Collins, Weather vane, (2017), Ōhope

## The Lifespan of Memory

*These objects are signs that have been 'speaking' since their creation. But it is as if their existence is ruptured as soon as they are created. These are signs that point to a great distance and ask us how far we have come. While the retired cannon is now comical in appearance, resting in the sleepy harbour, its original intention is somehow far from reach. It speaks of war, violence and destruction, yet now it is a perch for seagulls and a climbing structure for children. While standing next to the cannon I can only see the distant remnants of concepts of dominion retreat into history. What interests me are the stars represented in the corner of the flag. They reference time, memory and transience as well as place and navigation, and it seems only fitting that it should represent a country in flux. Stars, writes Cadava quoting Blanqui, 'are always in the process of vanishing or fading away'.<sup>198</sup> What we see are the traces of light still travelling to our eyes.*

*They are always already dying, and most of them have perhaps already died. As he explains, 'these globes of flame, such splendid representations of matter, do they enjoy the privilege of eternity? No, matter is only eternal in its elements and in its entirety. All its forms, humble or sublime, are transitory and perishable. Stars are born, they shine, they fade away, and surviving perhaps thousands of centuries in their vanished splendor, they surrender to the laws of gravitation only as floating tombs'.<sup>199</sup>*

*Was this a consideration in the design of the flag or the position of the cannon in its resting place? Either way they speak of transient objects that grasp memories that slowly fade from one place to another.*

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<sup>198</sup> Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History*, 37.  
<sup>199</sup> Cadava.



Figure 74. Christopher Perkins, *Taranaki*, (1931), 508 x 914mm oil on canvas  
 Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1968  
 Image courtesy of The Estate of Christopher Perkins



## Naming Places

Sir Ernest Baker wrote that, 'Language is not mere words. Each word is charged with associations that touch feelings and evoke thoughts'.<sup>200</sup> In the same way, I have concluded that naming is a way to know a place. More so than even directions or mapping, naming of places centres those places in a framework of associations. Deception Valley therefore is a valley where one will be deceived. 'You cannot share feelings and thoughts unless you can unlock their associations by having the key of language. You cannot enter the heart and know the mind of a nation unless you know its speech'.<sup>201</sup>

But what happens when a nation holds two languages? When Wellington is also Te Whanga nui a Tara, where Tāmaki Makaurau is Auckland. This is where my passion for non-dualism really begins to burn. The reason I have referenced Perkins' Taranaki, 1931, is because of the vague blurring of the letters over the milking station where Pound writes that,

we get only 'SOMETHING SOMETHING DAIRY SOMETHING' – that is the very earliness of the work that illegibility of its inscription reflects. Had it been painted a few years later, Perkins' sign might have come into focus to read something like 'NORTH TARANAKI DAIRY CO-OPERATIVE'. That such incompleteness is indeed a sign of the work's premature relation to the signature of place tradition is further suggested by the fact that in the heart of the Nationalist period (c. 1930 to c. 1970) not a single example exists of a fragmented inscription of place, or of one whose proper place is uncertain, or of one so blurred as to be illegible.<sup>202</sup>

This appears to be almost a prophetic blurring of names and places. What these markers might now tell us is that these places are both/and each other. The names of these places seem to both reveal and conceal their memories with neither one negating the other but the names remain, interchangeable, to remind the visitor or the inhabitant of its history and memory.

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200 Hepa Taepa, "He Aha Oti i te Ingoa Māori - What's in a Māori Name?," *Te Ao Hou - The Māori Magazine*, no. 71 (1973): 8,

201 Taepa.

202 Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970*, 64.



Figure 75. Elliot Collins, Monument to Henry Williams, St Paul's Church grounds, (2016), Paihia



Figure 76. Elliot Collins, stump of lemon tree, planted by Henry Williams, (2016), Paihia

## Lemon Tree

*It's a rainy February afternoon. The sun intermittently reaches through the clouds which then close up and release a little more rain. It dampens the sand along the shoreline of Kororāreka and Paihia but not the mood of the tourists who swim and wander through the shops and eateries of this tropical summer oasis. There is a kind of plastic wrapper over the tempestuous history of the area, a sort of tourism placation. It feels like the history of this place has been scrubbed clean and only the bare minimum remains to reassure the visitors of an 'authentic' experience of Old New Zealand. Uninterested in joining the browsing hordes, I learn of the original location of the first mission house of Henry Williams, one of Aotearoa NZ's first missionaries, much loved by Māori who affectionately named him Karuwha (four eyes), as he wore glasses.*

*In the grounds of St Paul's Church in Paihia is a monument to Henry Williams, ordinary in its appearance, extraordinary in its message and at odds with the divisive historical narrative learnt by an earlier generation. A person so loved that the collective tribes of Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa, Te Aupōuri, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngatikahununu, [sic] Ngatiporou and Ngatimaru, raised a monument to him. However, after a lecture by Elisabeth Ludbrook, the great-great grand-daughter of Henry and Marianne Williams, she mentioned a particularly sad looking stump outside the cemetery where the homestead was located. This to me seemed like a more interesting way to remember.*

*The stump is bordered by rocks and shells, with seaweed mulch. This lemon tree was planted by Henry Williams in Paihia when they lived on the foreshore of the small township on the now aptly-named Marsden Road. After rot and a severe storm ruined most of the tree it was decided that it be cut to the stump in the attempt to encourage regeneration. After a time, Elizabeth tells, it looked like the attempts at pruning was unsuccessful. The tree that had borne fruit for over 150 years was dead.*

*However, two weeks before we attended Waitangi Day celebrations 2016 at Te Tii Marae, Elizabeth noticed a little, lime-green shoot appearing at the base of the trunk. The lemon tree, she proclaimed was not finished being part of the story just yet.*





Figure 77. Christopher Perkins, *Frozen Flames*, (1931), oil on canvas, 678 x 596mm, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of the Friends of the Auckland Art Gallery, 1962  
Image courtesy of The Estate of Christopher Perkins



## Renewal from the Soil

*This is a small symbol of the inhabitant engaging with the land. The act of cultivating and culture making both come from the root Latin word cultus. ‘Even the physical act of planting was suggestive in its mix of natural and symbolic imagery: digging one’s hands into the soil, scooping out rocks and dirt and planting a seed seemed to be a spiritual mating of a people and its land, a becoming one with it again. To work the land was to become part of it and the natural cycle it represented’.*<sup>203</sup> Ironically the sour fruit of the lemon tree represent to me the souring of the land and culture by the colonial ‘corrections’ made by early missionaries, regardless of their intentions at the time; colonisation and religion go hand in hand in the early contact story of Aotearoa NZ.

Further ironies persist when learning about Māori alignment with Old Testament scripture. Te Waaka Melbourne writes, ‘the interweaving of Biblical, particularly Old Testament themes, within the movements led by Te Ua Haumene, Te Kooti Rikirangi and Te Whiti o Rongomai, looked to the deliverance of their people from what were seen as oppressive forces.’<sup>204</sup> And although the Baptist mission was distinctly British in execution, ‘when combined with the Israeli’s traditional reverence for yedi’ath ha’aretz (knowledge of the land), this notion of memorials as part of the natural landscape assumes still greater significance’.<sup>205</sup>

The significance of the memory marker, in the form of a memorial cross, for Henry Williams, much loved by iwi of the area, is not lost on the visitor. From the little known about the early interactions of Māori and pākehā in the region, the inscription and even the affectionate nickname of Karuwha holds a valuable insight into the advanced relationships formed at the early stages of contact and influence.

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203 Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 219.

204 Te Waaka Melbourne, “Te Wairua Kōmingomingo Te Māori - The Spiritual Whirlwind of the Māori” (Massey University, 2011), 162.

205 Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 220.



Figure 78. Elliot Collins, Owairaka/Mt Albert (or Te Puke-o-Ruarangi), 2016, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland

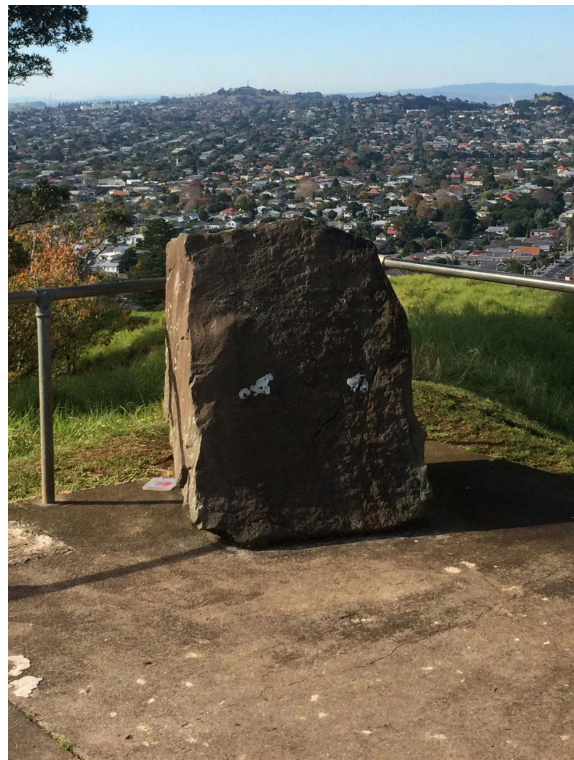


Figure 79. Elliot Collins, Detail of empty plaque, Owairaka/Mt Albert, 2016, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland

## Waiting for Godot

*A rock placed on top of Owairaka Mt Albert greets visitors at the top of four steps that lead to a four square meter concrete platform bounded by a metal barrier. The rock has four evenly drilled holes and some old adhesive holding two screws into its basalt face, the plaque is missing. I consider a new plaque to go in its place that would write about the rocks yearning to descend the mountain and make its way to sea.*

*A pohutukawa grove runs to the left, obscuring the view yet providing birdsong, perhaps an agreeable compromise and outcome. Despite the pleasant setting I am aware of a forceful removal here. The afternoon sun, bathing the summit in warm light, makes the deficiency more profound in the high contrast of the crisp, winter morning. The Hitchcockian tension of slow moving shadows and action happening, just off screen, creates a disquieting panorama.*

*Is this the setting for Beckett's Waiting for Godot? A boundaried purgatory containing a pebbled concrete bench and a trig point painted in customary black and white. A structure to which Vladimir considers tying the noose. Do these places still need trig points? Did they ever? Technology has progressed but the remnants of survey and mapping remain as emblems of colonisation. In the distance persists Maungakiekie / One Tree Hill's obelisk which casts a sundial shadow over Onehunga. It must be ten o'clock. I run my hands over the rock sitting uneasily on its concrete stage, appearing to wait for its lines. Everything on this mountain seems to be waiting for something. The seat is unoccupied and the trig point is ready to be climbed like a jungle gym or by a visitor wanting another perspective.*

*There is an orange road cone that has travelled from the neighbourhood, below the mountain; it is a strange temporary addition to this gathering, an unnecessary prop for an absent actor, it crowns the black and white paddles of the trig sign.*

*I think of asking the rock where it came from, half expecting a reply. Is it like me, a stranger in a place not its own? Was it pulled up from the mountain which it surveys? In that respect is it pertinent that its Owairaka's true apex and therefore the visitor does not diminish its importance by asserting dominance but instead is made to stand just slightly below it?*



Figure 8o. Elliot Collins, *Northland Not Flooded*, (2016), acrylic on linen, 2100 x 3600mm, AUT



## Motifs from Elsewhere

There is a distinctive decorated style or motif<sup>206</sup> of dwelling and way of life within the landscape that exists in what I call ‘memory marker country’. This unique appearance is found in parts of the country that are less populated, less caught up with fads of taste and style. The houses, churches and whare (houses) in rural Aotearoa NZ are painted with colours not dictated by a local body corporate or publically agreed-upon colour range. It is as if the rural inhabitants of Kaeo, Ruatoria or Helensville have collectively agreed to go off script. These brightly coloured weatherboard swatches, or intricately detailed and paua-shell-inlaid structures speckle the landscape and materialise in a blur of colour through the car window on my way to somewhere else. Grimshaw reminds us that landscape is a modern, urban creation and that it is defined by our vision and translated by our minds while we move through it. ‘Strictly speaking we are never in it, it lies before our eyes and it becomes real only as we become conscious of it’.<sup>207</sup>

This regional New Zealandness cannot be undervalued or adjusted to contemporary life. These dwellings sit at odds with the landscape in a declaration that they don’t belong here or, if they do, they are *in* but not *of* the environment where they appear placeless in their sites. They are a reprieve from the monstrous subdivisions that threaten our main cities in greater urbanisation and gentrification writing down on the landscape a beige array of new ideas that serve a capitalist agenda and little else. These motifs represent distinctiveness and imagination by exercising colours and styles untroubled by corporate convention. These structures and sites are unusual and resourceful and often purely practical, with decisions being made as to their construction based on what was available at the time. They speak of the utopic outlook I mentioned earlier and Foucault suggests that:

They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces. There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.<sup>208</sup>

It is also important to remember that those living in proximity to their motifs may not be aware of that which surrounds and informs them of who or what they are by what is depicted and written about in local motifs. It is important to consider the lens that an individual’s world is viewed through and to maintain an unfamiliarity when looking at the images I have collected. In a *Landfall 100* interview, Ian Milner questions Brasch about what caused him to feel so intensely about New Zealand; he replies;

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<sup>206</sup> A motif is a decorative image or design, especially a repeated one forming a pattern. It can also be a dominant or recurring idea in an artistic work.

<sup>207</sup> Mike Grimshaw, “The Antimodern Manifesto of the Rural Flaneur: When D’Arcy and John Go For a Wander,” *The Journal of New Zealand Studies* 0, no. 13 (2012): 146.

<sup>208</sup> Foucault and Miskowiec, “Of Other Spaces,” 24.



Figure 81. Elliot Collins, The Robinsons Bay Saw Mills, Akaroa, Banks Peninsula

How can you help loving the world around you when you grow up in a country as beautiful as this?  
When I travelled, I instinctively referred everything I saw to New Zealand, which is the alphabet of the world for me.

Whilst travelling to other countries I have noticed the different styles of motifs in the landscape that cause me to modify my reference, that is, my Aotearoa NZ experience, to something that is particular and remarkable to each place. Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes experience as a 'chiasm,' an intertwining of what is sensed with the one who is sensing.<sup>209</sup> In this research the 'chiasmic space' of memory is contradictory in isolation and mysterious, which reinforces my assessment of a buried identity of the 'New Zealander'. Without removal from familiar surroundings, experience, and therefore identity, is not examined. Winterson writes that, 'in the home, nobody looks at the furniture, they sit on it, eat off it, sleep on it and forget it until they buy something new'.<sup>210</sup> In the same way, marks or motifs in the local landscape are walked on, walked past or walked through without much thought. It seems like a function of our minds to work continually to, 'label and absorb what we see and to fit it neatly into our own pattern', writes Winterson. 'That done, we turn away. This is a sound survival skill but it makes it very difficult to let anything have an existence independent of ourselves'.<sup>211</sup>

Usually missing in other countries are recognisable fruit-and-vege signs or a statue of a giant carrot or kiwifruit (Ōhākune and Te Puke) that occupy the established patterns of our landscape.<sup>212</sup> There is a discernible lack of familiar words and place names in Māori and English when travelling overseas. Colloquialisms that the traveler takes for granted in their place of origin are missing. The landscape 'speaks' differently in faraway places even where 'roadside signs welcome us to small towns and ornamental gates beckon the sightseer to explore further'<sup>213</sup> they do so with an accent or local custom not our own.

I suggest that the ruins of Europe or the Middle East are memory markers, both monument and motif and as Young suggests, 'in the rhetoric of their ruins, these memorial sites seem not merely to gesture toward past events but to suggest themselves as fragments of events, inviting us to mistake the debris of history for history itself'.<sup>214</sup> As a reminder of this slippery invitation that Young suggests in a self-titled work called *Northland Not Flooded*, 2016, acrylic on linen, 2100 x 3600mm, I have used a paint colour taken directly from houses and buildings observed in the rural Northland landscape. I have used a colour that Resene calls 'Riptide' to fashion a large billboard-like work that holds the complicit statement. It holds an irony because it makes a bold and simple statement that Northland is not flooded, inviting the viewer to mistake this 'debris' as a statement of historical or contemporary fact. However, like someone caught in the guilt of a lie the statement seems unwarranted and out of place, and so the viewer should begin to question the artist's intention. It is a diversion,

209 M. Merleau-Ponty, C. Lefort, and A. Lingis, *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*, Northwestern University Studie (Northwestern University Press, 1968), 138.

210 Winterson, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*, 143.

211 Winterson.

212 Pound mentions this parochial recognition that artists from the 1930s began to rely on: 'The wool shed and sheep that are its economic *raison d'être*. Even if they are not familiar with this particular place, New Zealanders will know – will *recognise* – such a shed: they will be familiar with its purpose (shearing and bale making), its materials, (wood, corrugated iron, Red oxide paint), and its vernacular grammar.' (2009, p. 62)

213 Papastergiadis, "Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place and the Everyday," 115.

214 Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 120.



Figure 82. Elliot Collins, Mitimiti beach, (2016), Mitimiti



like someone spontaneously saying, ‘nothing to see here’, the implication is that there *is* something to see here, but an attempt is made to conceal it. Northland is flooded but maybe not as we might think.

In a similar way, the ironic nature of a graveyard situated over the road from a school is not lost on Braunias. So too is his detailed reference to hard rain, rusted countryside, a thrush singing, as well as the Māori/Pākehā ratio in the chapter called Mercer Fog. All are poetic devices as well as statements; they signify a greater mystery that may never be revealed. They ‘speak’ to a larger story and cast the country into an unmistakable light, and a new depth of understanding is formed. There is great reverence and respect, I even intimate love, for the inclusion of these details. Even Braunias’ observations of inscriptions in the cemetery speak of who we are, ‘Grave markings blamed the Waikato River, which flowed past the town: George Sellwood drowned at Mercer, 1900; Roy Carter drowned, aged 27, in 1920: “Sometime we’ll understand”’.<sup>215</sup> This poignant observation of the markers that people create as reminders begins to fold into contemporary comprehension of these ‘ruins’ as a form of haunting. Pound comments on this propulsion of ideas that loop back around, reinterpret and paradoxically reference failed Nationalist symbols like the ‘sign’ of the dead tree, that these will reappear only as mere citation and as part of a critique of the system. He affirms that it did achieve the enduring sentiment that grips a people enough to create an indelible mark on a national psyche. It instead marked in time what New Zealandness meant in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>216</sup>

Pound suggests that art made to address this failure can only exist in its reference to another when he writes that ‘we have here a case of what Proust calls several *thicknesses* of art, where the one work exists only in its reference to another. If landscape appears, it can do so only at a remove’.<sup>217</sup> There are unaddressed tensions and conflicts, brought about via appropriation and misrepresentation, that the history of these works reflect that are only beginning to be addressed by contemporary art. It is difficult to tell someone else’s stories accurately and this should be avoided, which is a growing awariness in contemporary academia. Stories that are not your own are potentially open to creative inclusion, omission or embellishment, to the detriment of the story’s original ‘host’. Braunias also indicates the medium of the graveyard as analogous to the inscribed messages.

Ian Hamilton Finlay’s work, as well as laying words and texts (motifs) onto the land, also draws on the landscape around it, widening its scope beyond its physical form. The different language motifs within memory markers contain their own ‘haunting rhapsodic tone’.<sup>218</sup> They call to each other or are a distant echo replying with innocent-seeming words like, ‘Here’, ‘Sacred’, ‘In Loving Memory’ and ‘To’. But where is the ‘here’? And what direction is the ‘to’ moving towards? Morton probes the uncanny sensation of these words when he asks, ‘what is the “it” when we say “it is raining”? The “it” is Being for Heidegger, “a presence of absence,” since it cannot exist on its own’.<sup>219</sup> My text based works similarly do not seem to function without a reader. Morton also reminds us

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215 Braunias, *Civilisation: Twenty Places on the Edge of the World*, 123.

216 Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970*, 361.

217 Pound, 363.

218 Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, 59.

219 Morton.



Figure 83. Elliot Collins, Jerusalem/Hiruhārama, (2017), Whanganui



Figure 84. Elliot Collins, Ātene/Athens, (2017), Whanganui



Figure 85. Elliot Collins, Rānana/London, (2017), Whanganui

that the environment happens around us without our intention, so the intentional markers and signs (motifs) placed on the landscape speak *via* this implicit nature of the environment as well *with* and *through* it. Finlay's works reference 'their' location (writing about), to an unseen other that exists beyond the artist (writing to) and the work is placed in space, literally laying language upon the surface of the earth (writing upon).

## Motif as Named Places

I am interested when words that could act as motifs manage to hold a multiplicity via the implication mentioned above. In conversation with Elisapeta Heta about, 'Since 1984: *He aha te ahurea-rua*', Jack Gray notes that words, or in this case the date, are a vessel that holds greater meaning than is first apparent:

That's not actually 1984, like how Mitimiti is not Mitimiti, it's *Mitimiti*.... I had a thought about 9/11 as another significant point in time. How come we reference points of trauma as a way of remembering, so that when people say, oh since 1984, there's an implication to it?<sup>220</sup>

Where Gray highlights the implication of names and words within the Aotearoa NZ context, Heta continues to examine the shift that occurs so that the language possesses newfound substance in terms of directly influencing identity-forming:

I think it's centered on the moment where the Māori context expanded into the New Zealand context. Possibly the thing that's most interesting about that moment in time is the fact that the Māori context was no longer siloed as separate to New Zealand identity or what it meant to be from this place. There was finally an acceptance by contemporary, colonial New Zealand.<sup>221</sup>

From such a perspective, my project investigates the power of naming, as a container, in relation to place as an aspect of the overall notion of landscape contextualised by Heta. In this respect, someone can name a place on behalf of someone else i.e. the Crown. The naming of a place can emerge as a way to remember a story or event that happened in a place and time. It was customary for Māori to record, places of arrival, of different waka (canoes) or actions of notable figures of particular iwi (tribe), by 'giving' the different features of the land a name or bestowing it a certain title. Ranginui Walker tells, 'when Ngatotirangi and Tia, another ancestor from *Arawa*, went inland to explore, they competed against each other in claiming the land'.<sup>222</sup> There are cultural tensions at play that manifest in the form of street signs and place names where a layer of naming and over-naming occurs. As in the case for Rangipuke Pa, which is now the site of Albert Park in central Auckland, no reference to the original inhabitants or title of place is observed. The abundance of settler motif within the park counters the lack of contemporary examination about this place as an 'over-named' location supports

<sup>220</sup> M. Langdon, *Unfolding Kaitiakitanga: Shifting the Institutional Space Within Biculturalism* (ST Paul St Publishing, AUT University, 2016), 67.

<sup>221</sup> Langdon.

<sup>222</sup> Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* (Penguin Books, 2004), 50.





Figure 86. Elliot Collins, 'Replica' of Maketū Fisheries, (2016), Maketū



Figure 87. Elliot Collins, Another version of Maketū Fisheries (my projection), (2016), Maketū



my opinion of invisibility mentioned in previous chapters. Currently, the boundaries of the historic pa site are identified by Eurocentric street names.<sup>223</sup> All of these names have adopted stories that are overlaid from historical narratives from a distance rather than acquired from the location itself that already contained names. Because of the layering of symbols in a place like Albert Park, the uncovering of stories and histories through naming could be a fascinating exercise that could be part of a wide study in the area.

Paintings like W.A. Sutton's *Dry September*, 1949, or Robin White's *Fish and Chips, Maketū*, 1975, suggest exact places that have definite 'place-ness' rather than earlier in the century where the location was obscured in favour of the romantic gesture or representation, like Christopher Perkins' *Taranaki*, 1931, or almost one hundred years earlier Charles Heaphy's, *Mt Taranaki (Egmont)*, 1840. These are layered complexities that this project seeks to highlight and contextualise. 'As Bauman notes, the *flâneur* is the mirror-image, the imitation, the product of the stocktaking, the forced adjustment and mimicry of the modern world – which is itself the original *flâneur*'.<sup>224</sup> All are simulacra in their copying of a place and are an alteration of the original, however in essence all exist and all are true – some silence – some give voice. A greater sense of a New Zealand 'self' begins to emerge within the 1950s when Pound suggests that, 'so many of the covers of *Art in New Zealand* should have been landscapes.... since landscape painting, above all other genres, comes to be made and to be evaluated in terms of *New Zealandness*'.<sup>225</sup> Pound also notes that 'Māori forms too, as the issue of the country's only indubitably indigenous culture, are co-opted as national signs'.<sup>226</sup> The copy and to copy is never a neutral action, because of its referent to an original via a simple relation of resemblance it is also an 'index' as Stephen Bann writes, 'related by direct contiguity in such a way that, like a death-mask or a footprint, it remains a material trace of its referent.'<sup>227</sup>

## Isolation

Do contemporary Aotearoa NZ artists make 'stand-ins' of language until isolation is remedied, or until somehow there occurs a transplantation of our 'isolated' islands from the Pacific to the centre of Europe or America? Jacky Bowring writes that,

The word 'isolation' is rooted in the Latin *isola*, meaning island. They have a unique place in our psyche, and John Gillis observes that:

*We attribute to islands atemporal, liminal qualities that we would never associate with mainlands. Despite our efforts to historicize them, to pin them down to our geographical coordinates, islands continue to be projections of the deepest layers of our subconscious.*<sup>228</sup>

The artist mediating the landscape is participating, to some extent, in a psychic innovation. Even the observation

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<sup>223</sup> Prince (now Princes), Kitchener (originally Coburg but switched to Kitchener when the British royal family dropped their Germanic name during World War I), after Lord Horatio Herbert Kitchener, a British war hero who visited Auckland in 1910 to report on the state of the country's defense force, and Wellesley (named after Field Marshal Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, who fought in the Napoleonic Wars).

<sup>224</sup> Grimshaw, "The Antimodern Manifesto of the Rural Flâneur," 144.

<sup>225</sup> Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970*, 3.

<sup>226</sup> Pound.

<sup>227</sup> Stephen Bann, "Anthony Gormley - The Raising of Lazarus" (Tate Gallery Publications, 1993).

<sup>228</sup> Baird and Phillips, "Contained Memory," 253.



of 'space changing' creates art that marks identity. This is where we witness photographers like Mark Adams, Haru Sameshima and Laurence Aberhart strike an equilibrium with their environment. They have documented space changing by recording a present moment or documented motif that recurs periodically like a Masonic lodge or rugged landscape. Within my practice I make a series of decisions in the way Gerhard Richter describes as a 'large number of yes and no decisions'.<sup>229</sup> I decide in my practice which motifs to draw on and which ones to pause on, temporarily, and deciding not to respond to each image captured every time. The plaque inscription, the single line of text, or the statement for or about someone or something are created to open another space outside of the art work, and this reinforces the nature of my practice as a 'place/non-place' to locate memory. McCahon conflated different places, times and frames of reference, write Wystan Curnow and Robert Leonard in the exhibition catalogue for *Colin McCahon: On Going Out With The Tide*. In paintings like *The Days and Nights in the Wilderness Showing the Constant Flow of Light Passing into a Dark Landscape*, (1971), the work:

is ostensibly a Muriwai landscape, but is inscribed 'Ninety Mile Beach with Haumu Hill' (referring to Northland) and 'Homage to Van der Velden' (recalling the nineteenth-century Dutch artist's favourite landscape, Otira Gorge) suggesting these landscapes are somehow linked, interchangeable, entwined.<sup>230</sup>

McCahon has enacted what Peters suggests is the artist's 'yes' which, 'is not about the placing of an aesthetic object in space, but, rather, the enactment of what Derrida describes as a process of '*espacement*' the opening of, or spacing of space'.<sup>231</sup> As seen in drawings like, *Moby Dick Is (Was) a Volcano*, c.1971-3 and *Oaia Sits and Nibbles the Sea*, c.1971-3, McCahon opened the motifs, available in Van der Velden's work as well as Oaia island, Muriwai's horizon and gannet rocks, to engaged an act of *espacement*. Yet, Peters argues that the 'final 'yes' does not negate all the 'noes' that preceded it, on the contrary they are all held in abeyance, present as the prior work of erasure that marks the space that is affirmed.<sup>232</sup>

My work called *Island Monument*, 2017, consisting of non-drying clay and a framed book, is made to be changed by the viewer. As Aotearoa NZ is an island nation, the utopia of distance is ever present and implied with this work yet the utopic dream is in constant tension because of what it never was and never will be. The visitor is encouraged by the tactile nature of the material to alter the 'island', to leave a mark and change its appearance. The visitor is aware of the temporal trace they leave upon the surface. The modelling clay does not dry and so the potential for removal of marks is always possible, yet it comes at the expense of a previous mark.

In a kind of mapping and remapping, the island changes shape, reflecting the interactions upon it. It is an isolated 'landmass' in the middle of an 'ocean'. This island is unknown and its location is not grounded with any other codex or reference. It appears as a 'discovered land', and as a place to explore.

<sup>229</sup> Gary Peters, "'Yes', 'No', 'Don't Know'," *Parallax* 16, no. 3 (2010): 4-15.

<sup>230</sup> Wystan Curnow and Robert Leonard, "Colin McCahon, One Going Out With the Tide" (City Gallery Wellington, 2017), 13.

<sup>231</sup> Peters, "Affirming Art: Heidegger and the Sense of a Beginning," 595.

<sup>232</sup> Peters.





Figure 88. Elliot Collins, Pear tree, Planted by missionary Samuel Marsden, (2016), Kerikeri



Figure 89. Elliot Collins, Fence on the East Coast, (2016), Raukokore



The clay is the holder of temporal memory. It is a silent recorder of touch and movement. The framed book, *Distance Looks Our Way*, open on page one of the chapter *Flora and Fauna*, reinforces the isolation of the landmass at the bottom of the Pacific in relation to Britain. The book is, however, stuck on page one with no option to turn the page. The beginning of an observation or geolocation that is arrested and caught in its time. This memory marker does not reference the obelisks that protrude into the Aotearoa NZ landscape. It is latitudinal and unstable, and it can be reinstalled on any wall, as opposed to vertical and fixed. Like historical monuments, it still holds the potential to hold stories and memories because though the vessel has changed, its ability to carry or hold space is the same.

## Memory Reservoirs

My practice is traversing an affirmed space that is active within the realm of *espacement*. The work sits on unstable terrain because it occupies an absence but, as Peters continues, ‘this does not constitute an ultimate affirmation of negation because erasure and negation are not synonymous terms’.<sup>233</sup> Though he omits the word ‘invisible’, Peters goes on to suggest that, ‘as brute negativity, negation produces absence; as speculative dialectics, negation produces presence’.<sup>234</sup> From this perspective, my work occupies the invisible present space implied here because ‘erasure produces neither absence nor presence, but, rather, the presence of absence’.<sup>235</sup> Foucault writes about the archetypal colonial ship as an extreme type of heterotopia because the boat is a ‘floating piece of space’<sup>236</sup> and while critical of this closed-in space upon a vast ocean also describes it as one of the ‘greatest reserve of the imagination’<sup>237</sup>

During my exploration I engaged with a memory reservoir of words combined with landscape in Aotearoa NZ art. The artist who paints words upon landscape cannot avoid a history of painting with nationalising tendencies. It is a hazardous venture to navigate this middle ground of outside and inside, and challenge the dialectics of yes and no within a history of binaries. A Nationalist history placed English text upon the landscape as a speech act via poetry, writing and painting in an attempt to create a nation. I maintain that it created a temporary national identity that suffocated what lay beneath an already-established, multifarious and distinct identity. ‘Over-speaking’ occurred, and lies in contrast to an indigenous worldview that asserts that a land with a voice of its own has no need of reinvention or discovery. The veil of language was placed over previous motifs, a tree, rock or river, and repressed original voices, or voices that emerged from a genuine place of connection of its inhabitants. The identity placeholders of faux motif, like that of British names, substituted the Māori names but these are slowly being exchanged and restored via Treaty negotiations and reconciliation.

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<sup>233</sup> Peters.

<sup>234</sup> Peters.

<sup>235</sup> Peters.

<sup>236</sup> Foucault and Miskowiec, “Of Other Spaces.”

<sup>237</sup> Foucault and Miskowiec.



Figure 90. Elliot Collins, Inland river, (2016), East Cape



Figure 91. Elliot Collins, Te Wheoro Monument, (2016), Ngāruawāhia

Pound suggests that this construction or ‘signature’ of ‘*place*’ within the Nationalist painter’s methodology is ‘feigning as it does to be an *objet trouvé*, or found object, a piece of lettering observed on a station or AA sign, on a hotel, shop, gate, or truck’.<sup>238</sup> This ‘foundness’ implied that it had always been there and that the prior story of naming, over-naming and silencing did not concern the identity builder who produced images loaded with motif as if these places had always-already existed. Pound notes that it seems, ‘these twentieth-century artists turned a fifteenth-century device for dissimulating the signature of the maker into a device for dissimulating the signature of a place’.<sup>239</sup> Conceivably the New Zealander of the 1950s and 1960s wanted so badly to believe in a self-produced identity that they suspended their disbelief and overlooked the artificial labelling that occurred. Some may suggest that the settler acquiesced either knowingly or through ignorance or torpidity. Unfortunately, history’s record paints more a picture of deliberate forgetting and removal.

Bauman addresses this ‘choice of identity’ that happens in a crisis of place when he writes, ‘One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure of where one belongs; that is, one is not sure how to place oneself among the evident variety of behavioral styles and patterns’.<sup>240</sup> This often results in the individual appearing to have two choices, assimilate or isolate; both, I believe, create loss. Even after making a choice, the individual can’t know how to make sure that people around would accept this placement as right and proper. Hence ‘identity’, writes Bauman, ‘though ostensibly a noun, behaves like a verb, albeit a strange one to be sure: it appears only in the future tense’.<sup>241</sup> The task of ‘identity’ for the settler was to be performed in a fractured state, without all the necessary tools of creation – this might be important to remember, so as not to repeat, but is no longer useful for any kind of identity-forming discussion in contemporary art. It is more important to consider what Sidney Moko Mead illuminates when he writes:

together with other named features of the land... they [i.e. symbols of Māori identity] form a cultural grid over the land that provided meaning, order and stability to human existence. Without the fixed grid of named features, we would be total strangers on the land – lost souls with nowhere to attach ourselves.<sup>242</sup>

Visually the land is marked with viewpoints and reminders of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. Those insides and outsides include churches that instil beliefs, marae with practices of tikanga, sheds with inventions, houses with family stories, fences of corrugated iron reverberating the ocean sounds, shops, bowling clubs, small towns, signs or plaques; even trees can hold significance for the locals. Pound mentions the desire for artists of the 1970s to give a voice to the residue or echo the Nationalist attempt at identity, for instance to refer to the ‘hard light’ that seems to illuminate the factory, railway station and burnt-out trees. These writers and artists tried to construct their world out of light as elusive as the ‘barely articulate, New Zealand vernacular speech’.<sup>243</sup> It also often happens that important sites such as Te Wheoro’s monument, a cannon on a beach in Maketū or Pihā’s Lion Rock are preserved, but those who preserve them do not know for whom or for what purpose. Remarkably, the significance is intact when knowledge of memory

<sup>238</sup> Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970*, 66.

<sup>239</sup> Pound.

<sup>240</sup> Hall and du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*: SAGE Publications, 19.

<sup>241</sup> Hall and du Gay.

<sup>242</sup> Mead and Arts, *Te Maori: Maori Art from New Zealand Collections*, 20.

<sup>243</sup> Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970*, 4.





Figure 92. Elliot Collins, Pou, (2017), Ruapekapeka

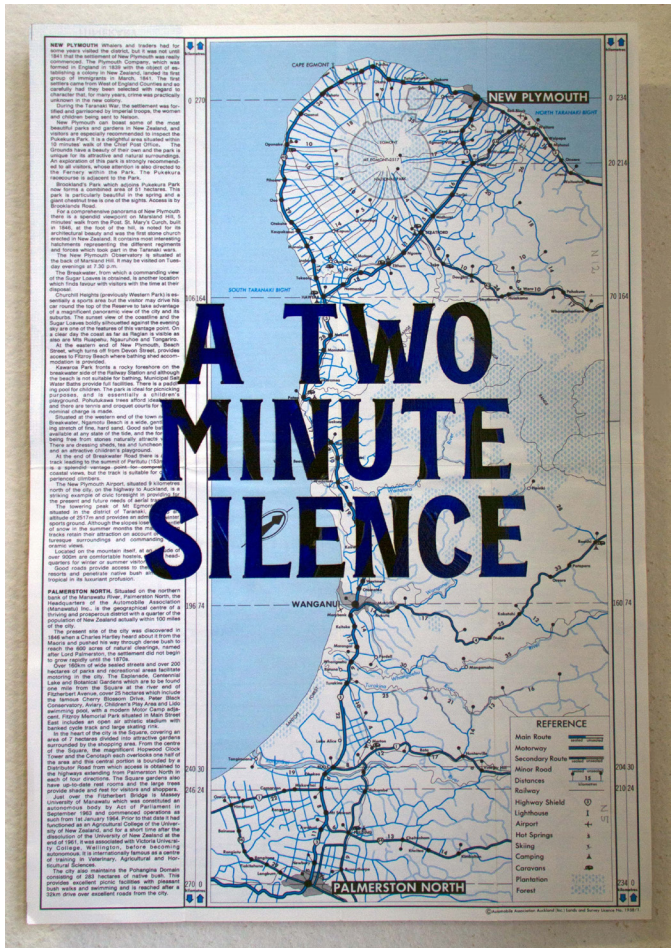


Figure 93. Elliot Collins, A Two Minute Silence, for Parihaka (Missing), (2017), 415 x 280mm, map and oil on wood



is absent. Trees are also noteworthy markers. To the erudite, some trees are important links to the past and act as natural markers. There was, for instance, a sacred tī kōuka (cabbage tree/*Cordyline australis*) planted in a place called Te Ti Tuhahi, now Newmarket, on the slopes of Khyber Pass in Auckland. People from the nearby school cut it down to make room for more buildings. This tī kōuka was the cipher to the wahi tapu site, where the umbilical cords of the children of the chieftain of Waiohau tribe were buried. This story is now subjugated and the place, now called Newmarket, treats the history that is buried beneath it as invisible. Without the motif of the tī kōuka the way of remembering has been removed.

There is a language of signs that seep into the national psyche and seem, like sedimentary layers, to slowly harden and solidify identities, or they are aspirational motifs placed in the landscape to perform one function while covertly performing another. Consider the roof of the Rātana Church in Ruawai, ‘a roof tells its *raison d’être* right away: it gives mankind shelter from the rain and sun he fears’.<sup>244</sup> Bachelard writes of the roof as a protective layer in both the literal and metaphorical sense. This is what can occur when ‘the New Zealander’ looks out to the landscape. They look for the protective and reassuring qualities of shelter and safety and find it in the structures dispersed on the landscape and recognisable motifs that run through a collective history.

‘Our contemporary landscapes are filled with representations of the past’, writes Russell Rodrigo, ‘objects, places, and events that are intended to evoke memory’.<sup>245</sup> It is these interruptions or implications of the past that occupy a large portion of my practice. Because of this it is important to note that, as Rodrigo writes:

Memorial spaces are sites where memory is condensed, producing convergences and conflicts in their attempts to define the past in terms of the present. For any society, the construction of memorial spaces is a major cultural and political undertaking. They are potential sources of cultural healing, as well as possible sites of cultural contestation.<sup>246</sup>

The political nature of landscape is never far from my mind because, as Calder writes, ‘in Aotearoa/New Zealand “the landscape”, and indeed any specified site, is constitutively political and contested, both historically and in the present’.<sup>247</sup> This space of cultural contestation or recovery is an opening where my artwork functions. As Winterson writes, ‘to test experience against language and language against experience’.<sup>248</sup> This, she argues, is a task that has ‘traditionally been the job of poets. It is the poet who must work at the image until image and meaning can no longer be separated’.<sup>249</sup> In the same way, I am working with the language and meaning, additionally folding in memory, to create a succinct, yet open reading that draws out motifs and ruptures their comprehension.

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<sup>244</sup> Bachelard and Jolas, *The Poetics of Space*, 18.

<sup>245</sup> Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 273.

<sup>246</sup> Baird and Phillips.

<sup>247</sup> Smith and Wevers, *On Display: New Essays in Cultural Studies*, 116.

<sup>248</sup> Winterson, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*, 79.

<sup>249</sup> Winterson.



Figure 94. Elliot Collins, Vacant house, (2016), Kerikeri

### **Northland House Green**

*This house is off just off highway 10. Like many church grounds and memorial sites, it is well mown and the grounds are free of debris. There is a fence-post, but few other markers of boundary. Even though access is available I do not go beyond the boundary of the overgrown driveway. But from this position I can see the windows are broken and the paint is flaking.*

*The building is empty but does not seem hollow. Apart from the absent windows the house is kept relatively weather proof. The roof, which has mismatched corrugated iron sheets, is secured firmly. A plum and a nectarine tree grow at the left of the building. Swallows fly in and out of the openings made possible by the absence of glass. The weatherboards are painted a pale lime green with a butter yellow apex above the main windows.*



Figure 95. Elliot Collins, Rātana Church, (2016), Ruawai



## Faith and Vision

*I spied this small red-roofed church down a gravel road, off highway 12 from Dargaville to Brynderwyn. I slowly made my way down the road, dodging potholes. The church is set in from the road and surrounded by overgrown grass. Some attempts have been made to preserve the area with a fence on three sides, horses graze in every paddock. The building has the recognisable form of a Rātana Church. It has one main unit with two other smaller sections of equal size and shape at either end. One end contains a large window at waist height that allows full view of the interior. The small unit at the rear of the building has a door on its left side with a set of three windows. These are broken and boarded up. The roof is patched with corrugated iron in different-coloured reds, as well as a new silver section, a recent addition. The gables of the church are painted a pale yellow.*

*This church is in disrepair. Swallows fly around it and nest in the rafters. The white paint of the weatherboards is faded, peeling and rotting. The lancet windows on the side of the building are tall and narrow, capped by a sharply pointed arch, and one can peer through them though they are smeared with bird droppings, dust and cobwebs. Though only metres from the road, this place is quiet. And the horses graze peacefully along the tree line. A calla lily bush sits to the left of the large window as if waiting patiently for spring. The exterior of the building displays no signs of religious iconography. There appears to be a humility to its stature in the low-lying grassy landscape. Its very 'set-apartness' echoes its apparent intention; unforceful and modest, the building appears to wait.*

*Even in its heyday it would have appeared as a simple marker which would contain a community meeting once a week at 11am. It appears that no one has met here in a long time. Why do I feel calm in its presence? I can smell horse manure and rust. Circumnavigating the perimeter, closely along the weed-sprayed dieback of bordering grass, I wonder what will happen to such a special building. Touching the weatherboards and pressing my hand against the glass reminds me of the isolation of its interior space repeating the isolation of the building itself. The room viewed from the window is from the position of the altar. It is completely painted, with a white floor, a bright buttercup-yellow band that wraps the room the width of five planks. A crisp white is painted above the yellow and from the exposed rafters to the apex of the ceiling is painted a bright cerulean blue.*

*Chairs, a ladder and other building supplies are scattered around the room. There is a tee-shirt intentionally laid on the altar space that is bright red with the words:*

**Home Of The Brave**



Figure 96. Elliot Collins, Interior Rātana Church, (2016), Ruawai



Figure 97. Elliot Collins, Waireia Church, (2015), Lower Waihou, Hokianga

printed across the chest in grey. It has been there some time, undisturbed. The internal doors are open and they display yellow and white trim. The only other details are those in the main altar space. On the wall is painted the Rātana Church tohu (symbol), the whetū mārama, which is the symbol of the star and moon.

Each colour represents enlightenment through the Christian trinity, te Matua ('Father' in blue), te Tama ('Son' in white with blue outline) and Wairua Tapu ('Holy Spirit' in red), with ngā Anahera Pono ('The Faithful Angels' in grey). On the wall of the window is Te Mangai [māngi] ('Mouthpiece' or 'Prophet' in purple). Above the Māngai is a five-coloured whetū mārama with the word Arepa (Alpha) and the same on the other side with the word Omeka (Omega) Both of these have the moon shape on its side.

## Solitude

It is this solitude that allows me to call this church building a motif. It is now an iconic shape in the landscape that speaks to many of a hidden world. A religious faith born out of Christianity and yet uniquely Māori. I am of course viewing this building within my contemporary context and understanding of Rātana; the man himself must have felt isolated by the weight of responsibility being both prophet and political adherent.

But I want to speak of the aspects of isolation that occur in these places. There is something of the silence required for hidden peace and considered thought. There is little to distract the mind via the eye with many of these markers. More often this is because single structures, a church, a rock, a plinth, an obelisk are set in a place and aside from everyday life. All singular, all contained and contain, some hollow, some resoundingly occupied. All coloured in various ways yet all take on the weathered patina of time outdoors. Even though I may never return to these markers again, it is their very 'fixedness' and reliability that makes these motifs remain as stable touchstones of identity consideration. They do not necessarily tell us who we are but might give us a location to consider those things. It is this naming of characteristics of markers, I want to propose, that can lead the viewer to more accurately understand themselves.

These places, unburdened with technology and productivity of contemporary life, make available to the pilgrim/visitor a space to also exist without those things. A kind of communion occurs, where the markers appear to ask nothing of the viewer other than to exist. Even that seems to hold the caveat of only needing to exist temporarily, an action in which the visitor obliges involuntarily to participate.



Figure 98. Elliot Collins, St Peters Anglican Church, (2016), Te Kopuru



## Provincial Variations

*The sun began to set and radiated the billowing clouds behind St Peter's Anglican Church on the main street of Te Kopuru. This was my original reason for stopping. The building was thrown in stark afternoon light and the four metal crosses cast long shadows creating doubles of themselves against the building or, where they met the sky, seemed to pierce the atmosphere. These buildings contain and are intentioned for a certain type of Christian belief, but to the passer-by they can also just reinforce the notion that belief is on offer. Something rather than nothing. The building is cream painted weatherboard with white trim. The windows are small with triangular tops. The church is a simple rectangular wooden building, with a square entrance porch facing the road (southwest). It has a square belfry tower with pyramidal roof on its northern side. Designed by the architect and priest Henry Barnard Wingfield, it was said to be built as an expression of religious faith and community pride by the local Anglican community.*

*These gorse flowers were photographed on the foreshore of Cape Foulwind. Their yellow flowers, full bloom in the midday sun, seemed to reflect and absorb the sun simultaneously. They have colonised the hillside and their beautiful yellow glow belies their thorny leaves. These plants have choked the landscape yet there have been places cleared for native planting where the gorse is used as a nursery plant to shelter the young plants from the wind that often blusters off the ocean.*



Figure 99. Elliot Collins, Gorse flowers, (2017), Cape Foulwind, West Coast

## Things from Far Away, Imported Religion – Imported Plant

*Both of these subjects are foreign concepts. Both imported from halfway round the world with the Church Missionary Society formed in London sending its first Anglican missionaries, William Hall, John King and Thomas Kendall, who arrived in the Bay of Islands in December 1814.<sup>250</sup> Gorse can be assumed to have been introduced not long after religion, with Charles Darwin recording it growing in hedges in the Bay of Islands in 1835.<sup>251</sup>*

*Both are now motifs from elsewhere that contain troubling undertones. The church has had a troubled past with Māori, in its pushing through of religious laws and customs that were often at odds with indigenous ways. However, the church missionaries also learnt te reo as a way to preach the gospel, and the church was also used as a form of respite from what seemed like a harsh world to live in. Henry Williams who arrived in 1835, often acted as go-between in dealings with local Māori and the Crown in what were the first disturbing interactions concerning land sales.*

*Gorse seed was imported into New Zealand to use as hedging, as it was in England and northern Europe, without the concept that it would take over. The temperate climate and rich soil meant the gorse quickly spread and multiplied, and invaded the space of slower-growing native plants. This can overwhelmingly be viewed as a theme mirroring the massive influx of European settlers who quickly outnumbered Māori by 1858, ‘suffocating’ the Māori population with introduced diseases and British rule.<sup>252</sup>*

*Perhaps because these motifs persist in the landscape, the onlooker can barely notice their impact. They permeate our stories yet often on the periphery. They are reminders of past ideas that went astray. They are aspects that we assume have always already existed in our world, but before the 1800s we would have found a very different place.*

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250 Lineham, “Missions and Missionaries.”

251 Kevin Worsley, “Pest Plants and Their Control” (New Zealand Plants and their Story, Wellington Regional Council, 1999), 29.

252 “Overview of NZ in the 19th Century: 1840-70 - NZ in the 19th Century | NZHistory, New Zealand History Online,” 2014.



Figure 100. Elliot Collins, War Memorial monument, (2016), Cardiff, Taranaki



Figure 101. Elliot Collins, Marble insert with lead texts, (2016), Cardiff, Taranaki



## Source of Dreams

*On our way to a revered waterfall with a close friend we passed a monument that sits at the intersection of roads that lead back to Stratford or on to New Plymouth. Cars speed past this nondescript site in this strangely named township of Cardiff. The white wooden road barrier contains the traditional motif of a war memorial structure. This memory marker is in the form of a concrete rendered obelisk that stands three metres tall, atop a one-metre-high base also made of concrete, that steps down to another concrete-tiled platform, as well as rocks taken from the nearby mountain and surrounding area held together with more concrete. Each side of rectangle supports a white marble plaque at its centre, that is weathered and darkened by exhaust smoke. They read:*

*The south face, IN LOVING MEMORY OF THOSE WHO DIED*

*The west face, EVER GRATEFUL*

*The north face, IN HONOUR OF ALL WHO SERVED 1914-1919, 1939-1945*

*The east face, TO THE G[L]ORY OF GOD*

*What I am more interested in however is the 'donut' marks made by a car that recently performed a certain handbrake manoeuvre that cuts into the grass and leaves divots of earth upturned. The temporary marks exist in tension with the permanence of the monument.*



Figure 102. Elliot Collins, Water in a pool from, Te Rere o Kapuni (waterfall), (2016), Taranaki

## The Retreat of Memory

The waterfall was a place that T.W. Rātana would go to receive and revive his healing powers. I walked around the Cardiff monument reciting the inscriptions and smiling at the missing L of 'glory' that modifies the context yet paradoxically highlights the gruesome nature of war. I am witnessing the traces of history caught up in memory. Cadava writes that both are beginning to withdraw from sight or understanding which is:

not to say that history is what is past, but rather that it passes away; not that it has disappeared, but rather that it 'threatens to disappear'; it is always on the verge of disappearing, without disappearing. The possibility of history is bound to the survival of the traces of what is past and to our ability to read these traces as traces.<sup>253</sup>

The movement of the water holds symbolic reference, a constant movement that seems to echo the pilgrim's progress. The river as motif always seems purposeful, flowing towards the sea, vibrantly like this one that appears to jump over rocks, or slow and languid like the Waikato in Rahui-Pōkeka/Huntly. The most redeeming feature of the Cardiff monument is the donuts that ring the grassy clearing that is bordered by fencing. A traveller with time to kill has entered the grounds and spun their car in circles, gouging tyre marks that repeat the zero symbol which seems to perpetuate the non-placeness aspect of the site. A trace of a people who had something to say and articulated it by marking the land in their particular way.





Figure 103. Colin McCahon, *I and Thou*, (1955-6), photographed at Pātaka, (2017), Porirua  
Image courtesy of the Colin McCahon Research and Publication Trust



Figure 104. Elliot Collins, *Westie*, (2017), Raetihi



## Where Am I in This?

A dilemma exists for me as a text-based artist. I am influenced by McCahon and his peers, aligned with their evident love of the landscape and Māori. Yet, I am operating in a world where Māori do not need to be spoken for as McCahon assumed in his time. His clear respect of te reo Māori is perhaps countered by a claim of the New Zealand landscape as silent, empty, and ‘unhistoried’. Pound follows this by further discussion of New Zealand being observed as a ‘silent’ place where he alludes to the removal, destruction and suppression of te ao Māori, writing, ‘the Maori tragedy was, of course, the loss of land, and the consequent loss of language and culture – a loss larger than a portrait could suggest’.<sup>254</sup> As a way of partly resolving my dilemma, I endeavour to reveal the *inscriptio inferior* or underwritten ‘text’, questioning the invisible, removed or palimpsest writing of a previous memory. I am mindful not to perpetuate personal silencing that can occur when doing this research; learning about a silenced ‘other’ has led me to look closer and listen better to voices other than my own. My works endeavour to discuss boundaries for dialogue, points of engagement that can hold meaningful illumination into an area of cultural denial or blindness.

As indicated at the beginning of this exegesis, I also uphold the sacred vein of my journeys. The ruins of colonialism are therefore not desanctified to the point of banality. In this respect Foucault writes that contemporary space,

is perhaps still not entirely desanctified (apparently unlike time, it would seem, which was detached from the sacred in the nineteenth century). To be sure, a certain theoretical desanctification of space has occurred, but we may still not have reached the point of a practical desanctification of space. And perhaps our life is still governed by a certain number of oppositions that remain inviolable, that our institutions and practices have not yet dared to break down. These are oppositions that we regard as simple givens: for example between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work. All these are still nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred.<sup>255</sup>

Speaking of a hidden sense of the sacred, John Reynolds’ real/fictional road-sign drawings in *Epistomadologies (II)*, 2001, inhabit one place, yet point to another. They appear to stand where you are and point to someplace that you might want to go. They give the name of those places and point the way, but that is about it. In a similar way, I try to engage in an art practice that performs a similar task – standing

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<sup>254</sup> Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970*, 87.  
<sup>255</sup> Foucault and Miskowiec, “Of Other Spaces,” 23.



Figure 105. Elliot Collins, Wharekai, Te Pou o Rongo, (2017), Rānana

in one place and speaking, pointing or gesturing to another time, event, person, sensation or memory. These works are not a form of permission giving, or access granting, but they do invite the viewer to engage with naming, trace and the invisible nature of memory.

As previously said, this denotes a certain 'non-memorial' with differing degrees of opacity amid fluid historical backgrounds, at times remaining silent. This process of meaning making in the pursuit of entangled identities comes up against a contemporary resistance. The snag, writes Bauman, 'is no longer how to discover, invent, construct, assemble (even buy) an identity, but how to prevent it from sticking'.<sup>256</sup> This can be represented in the exoticism or fetishising of indigenous cultures and identities, which can influence and condemn a people or group. They become 'trapped' in a 'traditional/past' mode of operating. Progress or contemporary development is criticised or discouraged and misunderstood from within *and* without these cultures. 'Well constructed and durable identity turns from an asset into a liability. The hub of postmodernism life strategy is not identity building, but avoidance of fixation'.<sup>257</sup> This drift away from identity that promised flexibility and plenty has lead to a culture that wants it all, but appears to have ended up with a lot less than it started with. I experience resistance within the contemporary art community when suggesting that memory markers have the ability to define identity. What I am suggesting is a more complicated inclusion of memory-making identity symbols. I am interested in the accumulation of symbols and the multiplicity of selves that the individual exists within. This moves my practice away from appropriation of identity via the use of symbols and motif (that denote a certain group) and arrives at a generous place of play without fixed identity markers such as new locations, ways of religious expression or collective celebration or remembrance.

Memory markers reflect a desire to understand ourselves in relation to each other. Edmond writes of his time growing up in Ohakune and mentions that the idea of place is buried in time, 'even if that time is the present'.<sup>258</sup> The question of place *and* time as well as place *in* time are now implied in the 'where' of my question, 'where am I in this?' 'Some kind of excavation is required', writes Edmond:

or a decoding. As to the future places, they are prospective and so equivocal: something yet to be realised that may or may not come to being. *Who's your name?* the kids used to ask me when I moved to a new town. *Where you from?* This might be followed by: *Where you stay?* Which interrogations encompass time, space and identity.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Hall and du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*: SAGE Publications, 24.

<sup>257</sup> Hall and du Gay.

<sup>258</sup> Horrocks and Lacey, *Extraordinary Anywhere: Essays on Place from Aotearoa New Zealand*, 211.

<sup>259</sup> Horrocks and Lacey.



Figure 106. Elliot Collins, *The Journey is Saturated*, (2017), 30mm diameter, enamel and nickel brooch



It is important that these questions of place or statements of time, either written or verbal, are words and not signs or images. These words seem to attempt an exactness that images do not request because they are in the world and are available for comprehension. Words in the landscape that represent the individual or group of people are more often impenetrable, and their implications are evasive; their futility is part of their purpose. The failure of words is the void that we occupy to carry across meaning. Curnow explains:

The difference between words and images is that words as signifiers make no pretense to resemble their signified. The word 'cross' does not in any way resemble what we mean by the word, either as a group of sounds or a set of graphic symbols.<sup>260</sup>

The signified person, contained within the memory markers, acts as an individual but also as a collective 'non-I' or 'not-only-I'. The link that these markers make draws the contemporary viewer into relation with the time of the signified other. Bachelard writes:

When the dialectics of the I and the non-I grow more flexible, I feel that fields and meadows are with me, in the with-me, with-us. But forests reign in the past. I know, for instance, that my grandfather got lost in a certain wood. I was told this, and I have not forgotten it. It happened in a past before I was born. My oldest memories, therefore, are a hundred years old, or perhaps a bit more. This, then, is my ancestral forest. And all the rest is fiction.<sup>261</sup>

I find Bachelard's comments useful in thinking about the properties of memory markers, troubling the oppositional structures of invisibility versus visibility concerning the self in time. Here, presence, absence, visibility, invisibility, memory, forgetfulness and haunting are all part of a contestable identity.

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260 Wystan Curnow et al., *The Critic's Part: Wystan Curnow Art Writings 1971-2013*. (Wellington : Adam Art Gallery, Te Pātaka Toi : in association with Victoria University Press ; Brisbane, QLD : Institute of Modern Art , [2014], 2014), 187.

261 Bachelard and Jolas, *The Poetics of Space*, 188.



Figure 107. Elliot Collins, *Jump*, A response to Lake Taupō, Okuta Bay, (2017), Taupō

## Response Not Collaboration – Methodology

My methodology is not one of collaboration. Either with other artists or communities. The trend at the moment is to respond collaboratively with your surroundings and become part of them, to become a participator in the artwork as reciprocal engagement. However, I maintain a growing concern with this type of work, if gone unchecked, becoming its own type of problematic ethnography or cultural tourism. Without rigorous scrutiny or examination, the participant can become an actor and mimicry or role-play can fall into pantomime or parody. The sacred or ritual act becomes a show; the artefact or relic becomes a commodity.

I instead respond to materials, ideas and subject at a distance, engaging only as much as I am invited to. This is an important observation, for the practice of boundary making is important to establish so that individuals or groups can maintain autonomy, therefore identity is not co-opted by ‘the stranger’. This approach is supported by Wittgenstein, who notes in *Philosophical Investigations* that, ‘An indefinite boundary is not really a boundary at all.’<sup>262</sup> Considering other indefinite boundaries, Mike Grimshaw alerts us to the pākehā subject in what he calls an ‘antimodern crisis of loss’.<sup>263</sup> In this I am confronting the problem of loss of the pākehā New Zealander –which is essentially the only time the term pākehā holds relevance – faces:

the loss of coming here, the loss of staying here, the loss of being over there but longing to come back to here, the loss of not being Māori, the loss of not being European, the loss of being modern: in short too often a form of antimodern negative identity politics.<sup>264</sup>

My interest in memory markers and access points is challenged through my methodology and yields an on-going commentary around notions of identity making and memory connection. I am concerned with building a respectful practice that allows access into discussion that can be difficult and challenging to my audience. For this reason, through my work I employ strategies that position myself in the role of the pilgrim. I choose or have actively created, this way of being as opposed to that of the tourist or vagabond,<sup>265</sup> yet even these ways of seeing offer insight into an identity that is forming a multifaceted cultural lens.

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<sup>262</sup> Wittgenstein and Ogden, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 45.

<sup>263</sup> Grimshaw, “The Antimodern Manifesto of the Rural Flaneur,” 151.

<sup>264</sup> Grimshaw.

<sup>265</sup> Hall and du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*: SAGE Publications, 28.



Figure 108. Elliot Collins, Taketakerau, (2016), Waioeka



A Note by M. H. Holcroft, *The Deepening Stream*

*At the bottom of the hill I saw a mound which marked the grave of a chieftain, buried with a treasure of greenstone. Thereafter my nights at the farmhouse were uneasy. I heard rappings on the walls that may have been nothing more than a creaking of old timbers in the summer heat, and my dreams were disturbed. Would I have grown aware of faintly sinister undertones if I had not discovered the burying ground? Probably not. And the scope for such experience is necessarily limited. The flame shadows of a past time fall rarely across the path of the New Zealander.*<sup>266</sup>

*Yet there must be moments when the lonely camper feels something of their influence as he sits at dusk and watches the light of his fire reaching to the undergrowth, or hears a morepork up the gullies and curses the bird for its eerie cry. Such moments can be dismissed as a chance nervousness, or rationalized into nothingness.*

*We grow fond of the native bush and like to camp along the streams which divide the foothill; but we are not really at home there. Perhaps I should speak here for myself; it is not easy to know what other men think secretly. I have sat by camp fires and listened to companions talking of prosaic things against a backdrop of primeval silence. The owner of a motor caravan has strolled over to share the tea from our billy, squatting in the glow of the fire to drink, and talking in a nasal drawl of business matters in the distant city, naming friends suddenly discovered to be mutual, referring to the doubted solvency of some retail house, and bringing the harsh echoes of paved streets to a place threaded though with a quiet sound of running water. At such times I have wondered if these men are really impervious to the remoter influences of the bush. Or is it possible that our own conscious response to them is merely a stronger apprehension of something which comes so faintly to other men that it can be shrugged away as a chill breath out of the night?*<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Holcroft, *Discovered Isles: A Trilogy*, 24.

<sup>267</sup> Holcroft, 25.



Figure 109. Elliot Collins, *WEARY WITH YEARS* (right-hand bar) *AGED 104 YEARS A WAIUKU - CHIEFTAN - "TIME TELLS"* (left-hand bar) *WRINKLED AND FURROWED WITH HABITUAL THOUGHT*, Elliot Collins, (2016), walking sticks, brass screw



Figure 110. Elliot Collins, *Putauaki/Mt Edgecumbe*, (2015), from Kawerau

## The Hidden Thing

This work is in response to viewing a Charles Goldie painting, *Weary with years: Aperehama Rairai, Te Uri Ngahu, Ngati Te Ata*, 1939. I was struck by the inscription on the back of the work mentioned on the Auckland Art Gallery website. It seemed to me almost poetic and gave a particular amount of information to describe the painting. For copyright reasons the image is unavailable; though I have seen the work many times, it was a practice of memory or half-memory. This inscription spoke to something else, of a faraway place that seemed mystical and old.

This is as close as I've ever been to Putauaki. The clouds hugged the top of the mountain as I pulled the car into a private road. The gate was open but this seemed to be the place that I was to photograph the mountain from, any closer and I would be interfering where I was not welcomed. This image seems to be of great importance to me especially in the exercise of trying to study the divergence of language. Imagine this image is blank, this mountain with all its stories, mana, tradition and responsibility is not there and I attempt to tell you about this scene. How do I describe the majesty of the cloud formation, the humble beauty of the wild grasses and weeds to my right that grow to waist height and dance responsively in the breeze? The way the gate points onward and the curve of the road, the vast paddocks that hold small corrugated-iron structures that contain and are contained by the view of the sacred mountain.

## Word Pictures

To Alain de Botton, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is a 'plea to speak more carefully and less impulsively'.<sup>268</sup> However, in his posthumously published book, *Philosophical Investigations*, he suggests that we use language to not only make pictures but also as a tool to play 'games', which are like 'patterns of intentions' and that there are endless kinds of language games one can play. Memory markers reveal this level of understanding that often serves a wider purpose. There are areas in life that remain unnameable and 'un-languageable'. I can borrow German's *schadenfreude* to explain the pleasure derived from the misfortune of others, or the untranslatable Czech expression, *Litost*, meaning the humiliated despair we feel when someone accidentally reminds us, through their accomplishment, of everything that has gone wrong in our lives. An ungraspable vista or an evasive feeling that refuses to be defined is perhaps what Barthes was referring to in the writerly text, 'its counter value, its negative, reactive value: which can be read but not written: the readerly'.<sup>269</sup>

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268 Alain De Botton, "Philosophy - Ludwig Wittgenstein," Video, *School of Life*, 2015.

269 Barthes, *S/Z*, 4.





Figure III. Elliot Collins, Arai-te-uru, (2016), Hokianga



## **Sisyphus**

*On the southern side of the Hokianga Harbour on the peninsula called Arai-te-uru, sits a commemorative memorial made in 1995, stating that the planting of native trees in the surrounding area is a living memorial to those who died, 'in service of their country'. The bronze plaque is cemented into the rock, which seems to have been sourced from the area. Its Sisyphean appearance is negated by the concrete pad it is set into. The base sitting at odds with the curved, wind-formed landscape, the soft and dry sand/dirt is falling away at its right side. The plaque sits in the hollow of the rock, which has been wind and sandblasted in its exposed position. The rock is various shades of brown and is sporadically covered in black and pale grey lichen. In the plaque are the symbols of an anchor and a fern contained in the centre of a cross, the symbols for the Royal New Zealand Air Force and the Merchant Navy.*

*The memorial faces inland, up the Hokianga River looking towards Panguru and disappears at the bend of the river, which meets the Whirinaki River. Both sites, very close to each other, gave reason to pause but for very different reasons. One was an observation of trees planted that will outlive their planters to commemorate a war in the distant past that was fought somewhere else. The other almost birds-eye view overlooking a bay, watching the world make its way into the future.*

*The only sound was of wind blowing through shrubs and therefore, in a sense, the water and people below were silenced by distance.*

*The language began to impact on me, beginning with the open-ended reference to this being an 'historic place'. In this instance and with great economy the author declared its history open. There is almost a refusal to observe the settler tactic of naming an exact location, thereby compressing it. The community has elected to use an established form of remembrance, the plaque, to reference the planting of trees, a changeable and varied process of growth. Then there is a final, firm statement, that seems the most forceful and is slightly larger point size, that says,*

## **HOKIANGA REMEMBERS**



Figure 112. Elliot Collins, View looking down from memorial to Martin's Bay, (2016), Arai-te-uru/Hokianga

## Memory Stone

*In noticing the simplicity of these parting words, I recall what Young wrote as he referenced Otto Schirn, a holocaust survivor: 'Indeed, even the desire to remember was born in conflicting needs. "At first, we wanted to forget," writes Otto Schirn.<sup>270</sup> This wanting to forget seems all too natural a position, not sharing the horrors of war and the loss felt both at home and abroad makes sense to a people connected directly to those whom the pain is localised in one generation. However, Schirn continues, 'when we realized that our forgetting might lead to others never knowing... we began to work on remembering – both for ourselves and so that others would know what happened'.<sup>271</sup>*

*This rock does not reference the people, records or even its own presence as being the agent to which remembrance happens. It conveys that Hokianga, the place, remembers. In doing so the author has personified Hokianga or at least co-opted the place, its people, objects and things to do the remembering in place of those who can't.*

*I memorialise the edge of the rocks that project into the harbour's teal blue water. The rocks are a seemingly constant point of reference for the small bay, and have acted as a platform for fishing and recreation for many generations. The 'problem' of any site is that of knowing relations of propinquity, what type of storage, movement, markings, and classification of engagement. Our epoch, writes Foucault, 'is one in which space takes for us the form of relations among sites'.<sup>272</sup> This rocky outcrop must have also been witness to every vessel from the first arrival of explorers to 'Opo' the dolphin, entering the harbour mouth to the left of the rock about a kilometre away. This small scene is a microcosm of life in Hokianga and represents a way of life that the memorial seems to observe. Not because its existence is threatened, though the locals are vehemently opposed to deep sea-oil drilling off the coast, but because it is an identity marker, a cultural characteristic that exists the world over but with its own unique flavour on the edges of the Hokianga.*

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<sup>270</sup> Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 302.

<sup>271</sup> Young,

<sup>272</sup> Foucault and Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces," 23.





Figure 113. Elliot Collins, Mr Morris, Cemetery, (2016), Paeroa



Figure 114. Elliot Collins, Pārekereke - Seedbead, *(Please take a seed and care for it once it germinates. It is recommended that the seed shell is scarified then soaked in water overnight.)*, (2016), 180 x 120 x 120mm, Kōwhai seeds (endless supply), water hollowed rock



## Repeat, Recite, Return!

*The dilapidated grave has long been forgotten and is badly neglected. Though the decaying aesthetic might be appealing, the visible signs of decay are troubling. The cracks in the concrete and the dry clay muddy the surface of the greyed gravestone marker. Eroding ochre clay threatens to reveal 100-year-old bones. With distance, of both time and location, I look at this inscription 'In Loving Memory' and 'At Rest' as both a site where someone lies, but also a place that stands in the place of this person who has left the world.*

*The double or replica that occurs within this work is the seedpods that have been collected from Te Henga/Bethells, Waitangi, Piopio, Waitara, Remuera, Tongaporutu and Pirongia. The knowledge that each of these seeds contains the DNA required to replicate a kōwhai tree captivated me. Each seed is a vessel of information. They are yellow, or kōwhai in Māori. The hard shells need scarification in order to germinate. Seeds are a vital metaphor for my practice and the research concerning death, burial, memory, silence and the double.*

*The hollowed-out rock found at Tapu, a small coastal settlement on the shores along the Coromandel Range/Te-Tara-o-Te-Ika a Maui. The word pārekereke meaning seedbed in Māori was an allusion to the idea of dormancy and sleeping. That each seed was asleep, as we talk about people taking the 'eternal sleep'. Because this work also uses the excerpt by Elsdon Best, it references the forest and trees. There is also a story of the kōwhai tree's miraculous ability to flower when the tree looks lifeless. This memory contained in a story upholds the ideas of incantation, belief and scared mysteries.<sup>273</sup>*



Figure 115. Elliot Collins, Frederick Beattie, Cemetery, (2016), Paeroa

## Also Alice

On the hill overlooking Paeroa at the end of town is Paeroa cemetery. More directly, the grave of Frederick Beattie. This gravestone is made from white marble and stands over two metres above the burial plot. A representation of a crucified Christ hangs from the cross that sits on top of the main post of the stone. The exhausted Christ as depicted and placed has an excellent view of the movements of vehicles in and out of town; the constant flow of tourists, antique collectors, truck drivers and farmers keeps the town active. The Christ figure, carved in the round, is smooth and bright, in contrast to the rough and darkened marble of the cross. This, like the rest of the stone structure, is witnessing the slow creep of lichen. The grey clouds that hug the hills of the Karangahake Gorge add a dramatic element, though I get the feeling that this is nothing unusual for the town and its inhabitants.

Below the statue and below another smaller cross, carved in relief, is the inscription in four different typefaces made out of now-brittle lead letters that reads, Sacred To The Memory of FREDERICK BEATTIE. WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE, 1ST JUNE, 1914 AGED 52 YEARS. Frederick missed the beginning of World War One by a month, though dying at 52 seems young it also seems very lucky at this time in history. It is odd that even the gravestone does not mention death. The use of poetry is employed, 'departed this life', as if Fred simply boarded a train to somewhere else. This is echoed by the highway, which seems to encourage people along. Below the name is a Catholic prayer for the dead, to hasten the progression of the soul of the faithful departed in purgatory to their place in heaven,

ETERNAL REST GRANT TO HIM O LORD  
AND LET PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE  
UPON HIM.

Below this is an addition to the life of Frederick with the small leaded inscription,

also  
ALICE,  
DIED 12th NOV. 1893.  
Aged 2 Days.

This grim conclusion to the gravestone is further emphasised by the black staining of the concrete base that sits on top of the grave, which is also made from concrete, with lime deposits leaching down the sides. Alice Beattie is not given much else other than a note that she had life.



Figure 116. Elliot Collins, Cemetery, (2017), Paeroa



## Time Spent in Graveyards

*It may seem peculiar to some, why it seems necessary to me to visit cemeteries and places where the living have been laid to rest. I have found that one of the main reasons, and I am borrowing a Heideggerian thought, is that I have forgotten to notice that I am alive. I know it in theory but I am not ordinarily confronted with the mysteries of existence, and therefore death, in everyday life. The exercise of documenting and art making has brought me up close to the uncanny strangeness of everything. I have new questions of why things exist as they do and for whom, why we exist here at this time and not another, why the world is like it is. These memory markers appear to exist to remind us of the opposite of what we are running away from, Das Nichts, and instead highlight what Heidegger called Dasein, or being. Over the boundary fence our eyes maintain contact in this silent exchange, the donkey's eyes calmly observing me whilst his ears swivel, continually monitoring sounds around himself.*

*It is amongst these markers, animals and plants that Heidegger's idea of 'Throwness' or Geworfenheit is subdued and I step outside of this infinite loop not of my making and interact with something of the real, even if only momentarily.*

*In a lecture in 1961, when he was asked how we might recover authenticity, and in a way live better lives, Heidegger replied tersely, that we should simply aim to spend more time in graveyards.<sup>274</sup> Unwittingly this is what I have done for the last three years and many more undocumented moments before deciding to undertake my Ph.D. I have headed towards graveyards and other quiet places of the world in order to better understand my existence and connection to the world. Foucault has a lot to say about cemeteries when he writes about these sacred places being, until the eighteenth century, at the heart of the city, next to the church and therefore the central 'theme' to daily life. Part of me thinks this served this historical population very well, yet the contemporary cemetery, housed inside the sacred space of the church, 'has taken on a quite different cast in modern civilizations, and curiously, it is in a time when civilization has become "atheistic", that western culture has established what is termed the cult of the dead'.<sup>275</sup> In a mass system of resurrection and 'the immortality of the soul', there is little reason to consider the body after the soul has left it yet Foucault continues:*

*On the contrary, from the moment when people are no longer sure that they have a soul or that the body will regain life, it is perhaps necessary to give much more attention to the dead body, which is ultimately the only trace of our existence in the world and in language.<sup>276</sup>*

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<sup>274</sup> Hope Wilson, "Post #2: How Can We Live Authentic Lives? (Heidegger)," accessed September 24, 2017.

<sup>275</sup> Foucault and Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces," 25.

<sup>276</sup> Foucault and Miskowiec.



Figure 117. Elliot Collins, 'German' Mine, (2015), Mōkau

## A Central Tyranny

*This monument is situated at the bend in the road on the way out of Mōkau towards Taranaki. The bright red painted globe is unmistakable and an iconic symbol of the small West Coast town. It rests on a concrete platform atop three concrete steps. The grass around the base of the steps has been sprayed with weed control and appears to have died off, creating a dead brown border. The steps have been painted white, perhaps upon the mine's installation and seem not to have been repainted. Golden lichen grows where it can on the steps. Just below the sphere is a plaque that reads,*

LET THIS GERMAN MINE FOUND  
DECEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup> 1942 REMIND US  
IN THE DAYS OF PEACE. WITHOUT  
VISION THE PEOPLE PERISH  
Plaque donated by  
MOKAU PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION

*The lower section of the mine is rusting due to moisture. It has been repainted more than once. The concrete pad it sits on is also painted the same red but is not smooth like the body of the mine. The air smells of fresh ocean water and hot oil frying fish and chips close by.*

## Maintaining the Enigma

*In my opinion the Mokau mine uses dilatory morphemes, that Barthes describes as delaying devices, to maintain the enigma of its history, purpose and story; its myth is supported by the following terms which I have expanded on from S/Z.*

*The snare (a kind of deliberate evasion of the truth), which the plaque at the base of the mine incites. The seduction, the display manipulates the viewer into believing it is a memory marker, 'truth is brushed past, avoided, lost'. The equivocation (a mixture of truth and snare which frequently, while focusing on the enigma, helps to thicken it), is the parting words on the plaque, 'Without Vision The People Perish'. While this is true, it is not true in the contexts of this object because its provenance is disputed. The partial answer (which only exacerbates the expectation of the truth). Giving the mine a founding date implies a factual existence. As if this mine holds historical significance because its was given a date, and calling it German locates it in a place and time that was seen then as 'the enemy'. The suspended answer (an aphasic stoppage of the discourse), this mine has no way of disputing its purpose and is therefore at the whim of the storyteller or myth-maker. The jamming (acknowledgement of insolubility), the inevitable truth that appears via research creates a layering and 'jamming'; even the historian implies that the truth shouldn't get in the way of a good story.<sup>277</sup>*





Figure 118. Elliot Collins, THE GLORIOUS DEAD / WE SHALL NOT FORGET, Rugby Field, (2015), Te Kopuru



Figure 119. Elliot Collins, Dry Stone wall, St Michael's Church, (2017), Ōhaeawai



## Death and The Memory Marker

This chapter discusses ideas of inscription and erasure in a process of memorialisation on the land. I have focused on the materiality of the monument and the way it contributes to how they function as memory markers. There is a complex relationship between erasure, absence and death that you will see folds back on itself, as well as ideas of identity arranged with notions of death. This section focuses on the idea that memory displaces historical events just as the materiality of monuments become erased over time. In this way, singular memories are rendered collective. As Peters argues, ‘we are the *producers* of memory’.<sup>278</sup> In the sense an emphasis on notions of erasure, absence and death also gives way to ideas of a personal or individual death that then might become part of the collective.

Morton writes of placing a word under erasure a *sous rature*, Heidegger’s word *Being* which appears in a state of repudiation. ‘How do you pronounce a crossed-out word? Or as Stéphane Mallarmé does in *Poème: Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard* (*Poem: A Dice Throw At Any Time Never Will Abolish Chance*)’.<sup>279</sup> ‘The erasure compels us to pay attention to the word as graphic mark, and to the paper on which it is written (and the silence of the unspoken).’<sup>280</sup> Foucault notes that, since the nineteenth century, everyone seemed to have the right to personal, individual burial, in ‘her or his own little box for her or his own little personal decay’.<sup>281</sup> I have noted the movement of cemeteries away from city centres and towards the suburbs. This might be in connection with the individualisation of death and what Foucault calls ‘the bourgeois appropriation of the cemetery’.<sup>282</sup> In this respect, all ‘borders’ begin to give way as cemeteries have come to no longer speak of the ‘sacred and immortal heart of the city’<sup>283</sup> but rather where each family occupies its own dark resting place.

Emily O’Hara’s work draws on notions of death, silence and mourning and our ongoing collaboration has opened out some unexpected areas of investigation. An artwork made in collaboration with Emily O’Hara, *Memory Vessel/Silent Exchange*, 2016, functions as both a memorial and a memory container. Stainless steel tubes, sealed with native-wood plugs, contain messages written by O’Hara but unknown to me. Accordingly, there is a gap of knowledge within this collaboration, yet a trust that there is something written on the messages within. The vessels cannot and will not be opened, promoting an active haunting of memory or trace of an event concealed. The notes have been laid to rest for all time, and are therefore participating in a kind of death. The third participant in this collaboration is the viewer, who is also agreeing not to destroy the work to reveal the secret notes’ contents, which would desecrate the hallowed space of the vessels within. In this way, we have emphasised the power of the memory marker and a language of haunting. This work references what Bowring writes when referencing islands that, like painting, are ‘bearers of the weight of memory and emotion, which far exceed their apparent physical size’.<sup>284</sup>

<sup>278</sup> Baird, Phillips, and Peters, “The Cultures of Memory,” 15.

<sup>279</sup> S. Mallarmé et al., *Collected Poems and Other Verse*, Oxford World’s Classics (OUP Oxford, 2008), 139,

<sup>280</sup> Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, 45.

<sup>281</sup> Foucault and Miskowiec, “Of Other Spaces,” 25.

<sup>282</sup> Foucault and Miskowiec.

<sup>283</sup> Foucault and Miskowiec.

<sup>284</sup> Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 254.



Figure 120. Elliot Collins and Emily O'Hara, *Memory Vessel / Silent Exchange*, (2016), steel tubes, wood, concealed notes, St Paul Street, Gallery Three, AUT

I have witnessed countless gravestones that have been almost completely worn away by weather and damage and consider the following quote by David Eagleman: ‘There are three deaths. The first is when the body ceases to function. The second is when the body is consigned to the grave. The third is that moment, sometime in the future, when your name is spoken for the last time.’<sup>285</sup> The movement from inscription to erasure in the graveyard speaks of this third moment when all trace of your name has been erased and is unable to be read. From this perspective, memory markers act as a double or mimetic construct to stand in the place of an event, an identity or a memory. They metaphorically ‘hold’ space. This relates to earlier arguments in this exegesis about our ability to forget needed reminders as well as the strange search for identity in the motifs that we find in the landscape, relating, in turn to notions of silence and invisibility. In this respect, memory markers displace historical events with an interior or singular memory, not unlike the haunting secrets encased in *Memory Vessel/Silent Exchange*. From a similar perspective, Morgan suggests that, ‘New Zealand produces the sensation of living amongst homesick ghosts’,<sup>286</sup> ghosts that we invent to haunt *for* us, so as to make a distancing tool for any kind of death or suffering. Peters reinforces what Morgan writes by affirming that:

Cultures of memory cultivate our memory by encouraging the displacement of exterior historical events by the interiority of singular memory, rendered collective through an ethics and politics of empathic communicability. The assumption being that, while we are the *products* of history, we are the *producers* of memory, and thus can be held responsible for what we produce.<sup>287</sup>

Morgan reminds the reader that, ‘Plato, of course, argued that mimesis was untruthful impersonation and could only result in hollow simulacra whereby “truth” was simulated but not present’.<sup>288</sup> This occurred early in our colonial history where New Zealand became a mimetic landscape, aspiring to Englishness, but falling into parody, or, as Foucault explains, moving to compensation. He considers that certain colonies function within the belief of a ‘perfect other place’<sup>289</sup> that exists to compensate for the extreme of their original locations that, in hindsight, appear as distopic pasts.

Yet, Morgan continues, ‘in an attempt to maintain the myth of the “Britain of the South”, the settlers created a mnemonic landscape’.<sup>290</sup> Calder understands landscape as a ‘social practice of place’ in which a collective inserts signs and markers to force the unknown into the ordinary.<sup>291</sup> I have written earlier about the loss of symbols and stories that needed to be reborn or resurrected on the journey to New Zealand by many travellers, however, ‘it becomes clear that mnemonics cannot function without access to the original referent’.<sup>292</sup> A new ‘language’ or way of speaking was necessary to function and carry on memories after the great voyages. I wonder whether this necessitated a loosening of historical mnemonics and the embrace of new ones, thereby letting go of older place-holders and inventing new ones. Papastergiadis explains that, ‘Meanings formed in one language cannot be transported across to another, because of either the unavailability of semantic secrets

<sup>285</sup> D. Eagleman, *Sum: Tales from the Afterlives* (Canongate Books, 2009), 23.

<sup>286</sup> Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 108.

<sup>287</sup> Baird, Phillips, and Peters, “The Cultures of Memory,” 15.

<sup>288</sup> Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 108.

<sup>289</sup> Foucault and Miskowiec, “Of Other Spaces,” 27.

<sup>290</sup> Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 108.

<sup>291</sup> Smith and Wevers, *On Display: New Essays in Cultural Studies*, 125.

<sup>292</sup> Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 108.





Figure 121. Elliot Collins, War Memorial Rest Room, (2016), Whakatāne



Figure 122. Elliot Collins, detail inside restroom, War Memorial Rest Room, inscription loosely translates to: 'Do not disturb our treasures' or 'Do not hurt our store', (2016), Whakatāne



or the fragility of specific chains of association'.<sup>293</sup>

Like the memorial to the soldiers of the 'Taranaki War' in Omata (fig. 37), 'various physical forms such as objects, texts, and images have the potential to trigger the recollection of events, individuals, and relationships from the past' even when obscured by other forces, in this case moss and lichen.<sup>294</sup> 'Acknowledging and demarcating historical moments' writes Rodrigo, 'are phenomena that are common in many cultures. It has been generally understood that memories can be encapsulated in solid objects, which come to represent memories',<sup>295</sup> but I am mindful to underscore that the object or text is not the memory itself. This is perhaps what we were at pains to emphasise in the collaborative work *Memory Vessel/Silent Exchange*, that the visible tubes fall short of the haunting secrecy that might lie inside them. Robert Musil states that there 'is nothing in the world as invisible as monuments'.<sup>296</sup> The irony of my research is that I have found that monument and memory markers are created to focus our attention, often towards a death, yet they inevitably become 'part of the visual blur' of contemporary life.<sup>297</sup> In this way, death, via the memory marker, shimmers and shifts to the periphery of the community. And even with monuments in the centre of town, they seem to retreat instead of participating in everyday life. Perhaps this ordinariness is the way memory markers function beyond their original purpose, undying in a world full of mortality?

In relation to making artwork that addresses these insights, Papastergiadis writes that, 'art cannot be simply reduced to an example of either a predefined political practice, or a prior theoretical abstraction. It has to be measured in its own terms'.<sup>298</sup> This involves an emphasis on an artwork's materiality and what it stands for in its own manifestation: 'The material presence of the artwork itself is where its own constellation of meanings resides. These meanings resound within a broader social context, but the manner in which they "speak" is never direct or transparent'.<sup>299</sup>

*Memory Vessel/Silent Exchange* is an example of supposed 'empty space' that is assumed to exist within the sealed tubes, potent with messages of sacrosanct importance. Though there is no way to prove that the space is not merely a void, just as William Schafer writes of New Zealand whose 'empty spaces.... are weighted with a willed silence that precedes epiphany'. Schafer suggests that the land, 'has a haunted history, and it is like a 'godzone,' *tapu* like the nave of a church or a hold space before an oracle, like the open sacred spaces before meetinghouses [*marae atea*] by Māori'.<sup>300</sup>

From the mihimihi (formal introduction), to an inscription in stone, people mark the land to carry over stories of where they have come from in order to see where they are going. This *writing* on the land engages language in which 'we' are fluent, though 'we' as a collective may not be completely aware of it. It is at this point that I use

Holcroft's warning when using the collective 'we':

293 Papastergiadis, "Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place and the Everyday," 87.

294 Baird and Phillips, "Contained Memory," 273.

295 Baird and Phillips.

296 Baird and Phillips.

297 Baird and Phillips.

298 Papastergiadis, "Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place and the Everyday," 33.

299 Papastergiadis.

300 Schafer, *Mapping the Godzone: A Primer on New Zealand Literature and Culture*, 15.



Figure 123. Elliot Collins, Hall / Church, (2017), Ahuriri/Napier

We must be careful to remember those real distinctions which make it unwise to speak of a people as merely a collection of individuals. The collective mind is compounded of many separate minds; but it also develops an extraneous identity that can be recognized in the imagination. It would be idle for me to seek to describe the New Zealand mind as it now exists. If I attempt to build up a composite view, based on evidence painstakingly collected, I shall be in danger of setting up a list of unrelated particulars, and will remain as far as ever from discovering the essential principles which alone could provide them with unity and significance.<sup>301</sup>

Given the impossibility of a composite view, practices of inscription and erasure call to our attention the possibility that empty spaces are ‘full of presence’ and ‘active with potential’. There appears a great awareness of absence following the great distance travelled by early pioneers from faraway shores and arriving in Aotearoa NZ that is explored within, and underlies many text-based artworks made in Aotearoa NZ since the 1940s. Morgan writes about an early emigrant to New Zealand:

Without these [identity markers] she perceives herself to be cut off from her memories and, consequently, her very identity. For her, every element of the natural environment of England was a mnemonic, a link to her past and her own history, and without that landscape and all its intricate elements she was bereft, pining for “sweet monotony where every thing is known, and loved because it is known... these well-remembered bird-notes; [...] such things are the mother-tongue of our imagination, the language that is laden with all the subtle, inextricable associations the fleeting hours of our childhood left behind them.”<sup>302</sup>

A death of memories occurs through this distance and detachment from the Homeland, as opposed to the cutting off of memories through the destruction of language, customs and traditions that occurred when colonial militaries enforced British rule upon New Zealand. It appears to Park that the landscape is where we confronted this danger, that of ‘falling between the two poles of Māori hope and Pākehā fears’.<sup>303</sup>

Spoken memories and stories have the authority, and I use that word intentionally, to adjust to the audience for whom they are telling. Contrasted with history, which is a discourse that involves debate and criticism, ‘memory, is a process of selection, omission, and construction’ write John Lehr and Natalia Aponiuk, ‘Memory evolves and changes over time, repositioning events and actions to accord with the desired narrative’,<sup>304</sup> thus allowing the teller to negotiate the impossibility of death in the mind of someone living. ‘It can justify the past in a way that history cannot, for the shackles of evidence and the scrutiny of scholarship burden history. Memory is seldom challenged in the same way because it selects its own “facts”.’<sup>305</sup> The minuscule deaths that appear in spoken stories, through alteration and adjustment (to new ideas or different audiences in a

301 Holcroft, *Discovered Isles: A Trilogy*, 21.

302 Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 105.

303 Park, *Theatre Country: Essays on Landscape & Whenua*, 98.

304 Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 213.

305 Baird and Phillips.



Figure 124. Elliot Collins, Rahotu World War One Memorial Arch, (2017), Rahotu School, Taranaki



different time) are barely noted and they are usually replaced by births of new ideas and parts within stories. The written word, however unguarded and fluid, contains ‘anchors’ that, for better or worse, fix it to a time. However, Lehr and Aponiuk suggest that, ‘historical memories of nations are seldom static... that history is a process of reappraisal of the past and is constantly rewritten.’<sup>306</sup> In this context, my practice is influenced by this idea of the historical monument as seldom static, and where evocative statements about memory might be a more valuable contribution to national and personal ‘histories’. ‘The meaning ascribed to monuments therefore varies according to the perspectives of the observer’, writes Lehr and Aponiuk. Since these observers:

cannot be fixed, time becomes a critical element affecting the way in which society, in a broad sense, perceives any monument. If left in place, they become a physical record of the dominant political perspectives prevailing at any given time, and their removal, relocation or reconfiguration similarly records the shifting sands of memory and political orthodoxy.<sup>307</sup>

Is it the artist’s role to watch closely who is doing the rewriting? Holcroft writes of the poet’s sensitivity to atmospheric suggestions, ‘they are made restless and uneasy by the earliest warnings of any electrical disturbance in the life of nations’.<sup>308</sup> Another truth remains that, ‘although poets are not widely read, they are read by serious writers and thinkers,’ and, hopefully, I add, artists, ‘who in their turn amplify the spiritual tone absorbed from good verse, until its faint echoes and nuances are to be discovered in newspaper columns, and in voices heard in the streets’.<sup>309</sup>

The neglect of memory markers seems almost a badge of honour in some communities and testament to how attitudes have changed. If not critically reviewed within a community, when the artist or researcher revisits these markers, the past can then be reassessed and reinterpreted, so that ‘history is (re)written, and myths are created’.<sup>310</sup> When examined within a community, and in a trusted space, it is reasonable that the relationship between memory, history, and myth becomes ‘central to an understanding of the process of memorialisation’.<sup>311</sup>

To reiterate, this practice-led project discusses how memories are left in the New Zealand landscape, as well as their continued presence in contemporary art. In the quote below from Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space*, I have traded the word ‘images’ for the word ‘markers’. In doing so, I’m giving insight to a way of framing the importance of memory markers:

Great *markers* have both a history and a prehistory; they are always a blend of memory and legend, with the result that we never experience [a] *marker* directly. Indeed, every great *marker* has an unfathomable oneiric depth to which the personal past adds special color. Consequently, it is not until late in life that we really revere [a] *marker*, when we discover that its roots plunge well beyond the history that is fixed

306 Baird and Phillips.

307 Baird and Phillips.

308 Holcroft, *Discovered Isles: A Trilogy*, 156.

309 Holcroft, 154.

310 Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 213.

311 Baird and Phillips.



Figure 125. Elliot Collins, Torch of Progress, (2018) Te Kao, Northland



Figure 126. Elliot Collins, Torch of Progress (detail), (2018), Te Kao

in our memories.<sup>312</sup>

This seems to suggest a kind of personification of monumental markers, which helps to connect the viewer with their surroundings. Like the static marker, the lamp, suggests Bauman, 'keeps vigil, therefore it is vigilant'.<sup>313</sup> 'The narrower the ray of light', or humbler the marker, 'the more penetrating its vigilance', writes Bauman.<sup>314</sup> The patient memory marker waits for the viewer to approach and does not force itself upon the onlooker regardless of where a town planner or committee decided to place it. As Zepke writes, they are 'always already part of a national discourse'.<sup>315</sup>

This idea of the monument as a blend of memory and legend is key to how memory markers go beyond what I referred to in the Introduction as historical continuity. This is where I want to trouble the oppositional structures of presence and absence, of inscription and erasure. Rodrigo, quoting Nora, seems to drive this point home even further when he argues that, 'rather than holding memory, the monument displaces it. The less that memory work comes from within the individual or the community, the more it exists externally in "exterior scaffolding and outward signs"'.<sup>316</sup> Rodrigo continues, 'In facilitating the making of memorials, we are in danger of being more forgetful. The motivation to remember events through memorialisation can be seen as an equally strong impulse to forget them'.<sup>317</sup> I believe that we are already forgetful and memory markers (and visual art) can, in different ways and in varying degrees, sustain memory, though it shifts into a state that can be viewed from multiple perspectives. Furthermore, I hold that art-memory markers can be created as memory triggers rather than agents of amnesia.

Such memory triggers extend to a kind of reinvention of New Zealand in the face of on-going failure. Francis Pound suggests this is a hallmark of early explorers when he writes in *The Invention of New Zealand*:

Only by means of the knowledge accumulated in countless expeditions, each in some part a failure, only in successive self-sacrifices, each insufficient, in which the voyager is immolated in the quest, and only in the perpetual peril of loss on the rocks of New Zealand fact, might 'further acts of discovery... be made possible'. As the poet and critic C.K. Stead remarked in 1961, these voyagers may have been 'mapping the coasts of mind', but everywhere there are 'apparent gestures of defeat'.<sup>318</sup>

So many of our stories are about being defeated by death, and are therefore stories of loss run beneath our 'national identity'. Fernando Pessoa reminds the sojourner that any road, 'even this road to Entepfuhl, will take you to the end of the world. But the Entepfuhl road, if taken in its entirety, and to the end, goes back to Entepfuhl; so Entepfuhl, where we already are, is that very end of the world we were seeking'.<sup>319</sup> To derive a truth from this statement is to realise that there are reasons for journeying. This thesis has been a journey to

312 Bachelard and Jolas, *The Poetics of Space*, 33.

313 Hall and du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*: SAGE Publications, 33.

314 Hall and du Gay.

315 Stephen Zepke, "McCahon's Promised Land: The Politics and Aesthetics of Bicultural Mistranslation," *Landfall* 211 (2006): 73.

316 Baird and Phillips, "Contained Memory," 274.

317 Baird and Phillips.

318 Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970*, 20.

319 Horrocks and Lacey, *Extraordinary Anywhere: Essays on Place from Aotearoa New Zealand*, 221.





remember what I have not been able to forget because it was never knowledge in the first place. It was invisible and lost. Because of this loss, writes Vanessa Fredricks, ‘there is a need to re-remember historical narratives in order to recreate... national identity’.<sup>320</sup> Babu Ayindo writes that, for indigenous people dealing with ‘mid-colonial’ life, indigenous identity happens first by ‘re-discovery’ and ‘recovery’ of what is lost or forgotten, as if mourning those things, people, and ideas, point by point. Ayindo outlines that there is a methodical process to this in order to address each aspect and properly mourn it. For example, after rediscovery and some kind of recovery, ‘dreaming’ then occurs, which is full of hope and anguish, for this contains the full spectrum of what might be possible. Then a ‘commitment’ to fully embrace this ‘return’ to an unknown identity occurs. And lastly, ‘action’ needs to happen in order for this not to have to be repeated by a later generation or lost to a later generation without the ability to re-discover or recover.<sup>321</sup>

The witness, with the memory marker, can in this way ‘remember together’ a historical narrative or identity story that has the potential to be more ‘true’ than that which went before it. Displacing any falsehood of facts for a fiction could possibly bring the observer closer to a truth. Facilitating the mourning process because, ‘like memory, mourning is a communal practice’.<sup>322</sup> Along similar lines, Fredricks writes of Derrida, ‘there is no culture without a cult of ancestors, a ritualization of mourning and sacrifice, institutional places and modes of burial’.<sup>323</sup> From this perspective, the pioneers of both pākehā and Māori set up systems of memory and mourning. These were either new inventions that their new home necessitated, or carried over as translations from their original source, but always acted in negotiation with death. As Fredricks writes, ‘there can be no community that is not somehow haunted by death’.<sup>324</sup> *Memory Vessel/Silent Exchange*, 2016, now sits on a shelf, undisturbed. The messages intact yet slipping from reach of Emily, who wrote them, and weighing heavily on my mind as to how I am to protect these concealed ideas. Tony Whincup unravels this question in a way that does not promote denial or loss of memory when he discusses the inevitable gulf between the living and the dead, while leaving open the idea of identity forming:

Underpinning this... is the belief that being able to remember lies at the heart of our survival, our humanity, and our individual identity. It is argued that self-definition is closely tied to memory and the maintenance of memories is of vital concern to social groups and individuals.<sup>325</sup>

320 Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 200.

321 Babu Ayindo, “Comparative Study between Communities of Nairobi, Parihaka and Mindenau.” (Parihaka Puanga Rau Kai, Te Niho o Te Atiawa, Parihaka, 2016).

322 Baird and Phillips, “Contained Memory,” 200.

323 Baird and Phillips.

324 Baird and Phillips.

325 Baird and Phillips, 59.



Figure 127. Elliot Collins, Memory Marker for the Great Meeting House of Herepiti Aotea Marae, Aotea/Shelly beach, (2015), Kaipara

## Kaipara

*At the bottom of the hill as I round the corner to Shelly Beach there is a black marble memorial site, alien to its seaside setting. It has four sides and a flat top. The worn concrete at its base is well cleared and the upkeep of the area seems considered. This memorial was the first object that began my interest in memory markers and invisible histories, and it is an important Rosetta Stone for the unfolding of my practice and research. This pyramid-shaped monument sits on the site of the great meeting house of Herepiiti Aotea, the original marae that once occupied the foreshore at Aotea/Shelly beach. Long before my childhood adventures along the foreshore. It is the replacement for an earlier stone that sat in place of the marae. It is a symbol three times removed. This is a place that desires to be remembered. Maybe people were beginning to forget. A kind of haunting takes place where there is now only a fish and chip shop and caravan park. Trailered fishing boats judder past a standard-issue wooden DOC sign that is covered in lichen and moss a few feet from the monument. The sign sits on posts deteriorated by salt air, with the word AOTEA inscribed upon its surface, with its back to the water.*

*The strange arrangements of objects in the region of the monument act as symbols of action as well. A round concrete table with wooden-post seats suggests communal gathering and eating. A square metal rubbish bin painted in an unnatural 'regulation' blue, in this context, seems to talk about the idea of waste and death being mutually exclusive. A pōhutukawa that grows out at every angle, planted purposefully next to the simple wooden sign, speaks of growth and reinforces the edge-dwelling that these trees are known for. This tree appears to have been planted at the time of the sesquicentennial commemoration. This tree is the opposite of memory seeming to grow in opposition to history.*

*Each symbol suggests occupation and each plays with time. Temporal and permanent time are enmeshed within the parts of the grassy area that overlook the mangroves with the tidal Kawau Parua inlet beyond. This area is calm and shadowed by the cliffs of the headland set back from the street.*





Figure 128. Elliot Collins, 'Rest Easy Troy!', (2016), Pongakawa



## Obscure Persons

On highway 2, before you reach the coast, there is an old, boarded-up service station in Pongakawa. Its forecourt and awning still offer some protection from the weather, although holes are beginning to develop in the roof. It is a sprawling L-shaped building, originally painted light cream with blue detail that has turned powdery and is flaking off in places.

The astounding feature of this building is its graffiti-covered surface. Almost every space is filled with different 'tags'. They are of differing colours and sizes, and form a conspicuous impression within the context of the surrounding farmland. Anonymous people have made marks upon this solid surface with spray paint, much like the innocent scratching of names into cliffs of the Kaipara or concrete in Waihi, where there appears no order or theme. These names are unique to the makers so they also seem to represent the makers' voices, interacting with each other as the colours overlap, and gestures, angles and curves are contrasted with different names and shapes. The collection of names amplifies the reading; they appear to shout over one another in an attempt to name the building.

As I approach the concrete forecourt from where I pulled over, a train hauling logs rushes past on tracks a short distance away, sending out hot dust carrying the smell of diesel, bark and rust. Standing in front of the barred entrance I see debris of past visitors and cracks in concrete that have given way to various opportunistic plants. There is rust on the metal surfaces of the structure and the windows have all been boarded up. An incongruous CLOSED sign remains attached to what looks like a flagpole, but serves another purpose of channelling vapour and gas away from the ground and into the atmosphere, this pipe is now defunct and empty.

On the boarded-up doors in the centremost part of the building is the phrase, REST EASY TROY! The exclamation point emphasising the writers' desire for Troy to hear and for us to know he has gone, perhaps to a better place. The black spray paint seems to call out to the road as traffic speeds by, most travellers unaware of the memorial tome. This sedate, monumental building seems like a colloquial mausoleum, with the quirky eccentricities that occur in the context of the bordering suburban/rural landscape.

This could potentially be a site for ritual or ceremony, as it sits in the flux of being a non-space. An opportunistic mourner seems to have turned it temporarily into a sacred space. This monument to 'Troy,' has been given the updated Rest In Peace translation of 'Rest Easy'; it is the only writing that is not overwritten.



Figure 129. Elliot Collins, *Clouds Over Whanganui*, (2017), Whanganui

## Death Part Two

A memorial to/for death and the existence of art within this conversation are intrinsically linked. Papastergiadis writes that, 'The critical work of art is related to its ability to expand the contours of perception and experience, rather than to reinforce or accentuate political views on existing social divisions'.<sup>326</sup> This is where I see the re-working or re-thinking of monuments as an important aspect of cultural reflection and production, rather than leaving the monument to perpetuate a locked position or singular cultural 'outlook'. The 'many voices' that appear on the Pongakawa service station walls echo or amplify a sentiment to a lost comrade. It has dissolved an older culture of memory marking in a singular feature, that one expects to find in cemeteries and community centres, and has reimagined it in a new way. 'Acknowledging and demarcating historical moments,' writes Rodrigo, 'are phenomena that are common in many cultures.'<sup>327</sup>

As witnessed through the pentimento of previous graffiti, this memory maker (the spray-painting of a building) is a participatory event. The memorial fluctuates and changes, often, I assume, in the dead of night. An illegal action is used to make marks that say of the individual artist, just as Troy existed, that 'I too mattered, I was also here and one day I will also be gone.' Their presence though only witnessed posthumously enriches the memorial. The service station seems to be writing to the absent person or departed soul; as Barthes mentions, when the writing begins, 'the author enters into his own death'.<sup>328</sup> Furthermore, this memorial is written to someone from the past and to those who remain in the future, offering a kind of solace, either way they are both so particularly invisible that writing takes the place of the speaker, speech and gesture. Considering this as both a way to navigate a creative dialogue and a way to mourn further compounds the link with the memorial and text in Aotearoa NZ art. Young suggests that, 'We are reminded that destruction', though in this case defacement, 'is part of memory-construction'.<sup>329</sup>

326 Papastergiadis, "Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place and the Everyday," 19.

327 Baird and Phillips, "Contained Memory," 273.

328 R. Barthes and S. Heath, *Image-Music-Text* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), 142.

329 Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 323.





Figure 130. Elliot Collins, Miniature Mānuka, Maungaraho, (2016), Upper Wairoa, Dargaville



Figure 131. Elliot Collins, Small plaque on seat, facing the harbour mouth, (2015), Kaitarakihi, Huia



## Finally, Together Again

The Spragg memorial is a short walk up a rough clay driveway. It winds around a corner and you do not witness the spire until you emerge from a mānuka and gorse forest out into an opening on top of the hill. The grass is mown and the trees are kept to a boundary. The Manukau Harbour mouth is out to the west and there are unimpeded views out to the horizon. The weather is calm, but the harbour entrance is notoriously dangerous.

The base of the memorial is made of volcanic scoria rocks and shell-blended concrete. Small weeds find places to take root in its crevices. Green and white lichens cling to the surface. Sitting on the base are two more platforms that have neatly-worked corners that step up and meet the structure. The memorial is a large obelisk made from rough-hewn stone, like the platform stones below it. It is made of four parts that appear to be granite, sitting precisely on top of one another. These do not have lichen growing on them but seem to have lime stains at the joins. Below the spire a larger four-sided rectangle contains writing on all sides. The largest block of writing reads:

*This Kaitarakihi Park, consisting of 761 acres 2 perches was given to the body corporate called the mayor councillors and citizens of Auckland as a park to be the inalienable possession of the people for their use and benefit as an enduring memorial to Lieutenant Wesley Neal Spragg who was killed in action in the great war. The body corporate has by deed of this date undertaken the custody of this monument promising to protect maintain and if necessary fully restore or re-build in its original form and in or near its present position and at all times to maintain the surrounding lands so that all views here from over all aspects both distant and near shall be free, open and unobstructed.*

Major J. H. Cunson  
6th day of February 1919.

The low wooden seat sits on the well-mown reserve on the top on the hill at Kaitarakihi. It faces west and looks directly out to the West Coast over the Manukau Bar, notorious for ship strandings. The wind blows hot salty air over the mānuka flowers at the edge of the grass. Small gorse seedlings threaten to consume the grassy common. The pine planks are sawn down and are about two metres long. This seat is big enough for two people to sit comfortably. The concrete base the seat is embedded in is stable and ordinary, though moss and lichen are beginning to grow, and the clay soil it is set in is eroding at one end. The small oval plaque in the middle of the top back-rest is no more than 100mm at its widest point. Two square-headed stainless-steel screws hold the bronze token in place.

The little plaque is a small note that dedicates the set to the names of two people I have never met and yet the phrase below, 'FINALLY TOGETHER AGAIN', seems poignant and touching. In discussion with Emily O'Hara we observed that even this encounter with a discreet dedication, screwed to a park bench outside of the sleepy settlement of Huia, on a ridge overlooking a beautiful yet treacherous harbour, has created space that is outside of possibility.



Figure 132. Elliot Collins, Kaitarakihi Reserve View and Seat, (2015), Huia



Figure 133. Elliot Collins, Spragg Monument, (2015), Kaitarakihi, Huia,

## A Space Outside of Possibility

*Perhaps it is the location of this marker and the sentiment it contains that seem to vibrate beyond a simple war memorial. It is essentially dedicated to a single person. Standing lonely through all weather and waiting for the occasional visitor. I can surmise that the relatives of the man to whom it is dedicated rarely visit. This poignant marker allows me to shift outside a time of constant reminders of the present. There are very few aspects of contemporary life here.*

*The dedication of this memorial is made even more profound when I wandered over to the smaller and less-obvious memory marker. The small plaque pressed into my back and I allowed time to pass. I participated, metaphorically, in the space outside of possibility. I cannot enter the space of absence that the memorials were denoting yet I was welcomed to consider that space of absence. Maybe the absence of trees or the lack of humans in such a vast view of the harbour suggested to me a place of great peace. It is as if the patrons of the land knew what power the setting apart of space for the purpose of remembrance would hold.*

*Peters writes that, ‘according to Heidegger, all being is being-with (Mitsein): the other is always proximal, the voice is always double-tracked, the song is always overdubbed, the lyrics are always co-written, the composition is always a com-position, a collaboration’.<sup>330</sup> In the same way my being, climbing up to the obelisk or sitting on the seat, is being with these markers. Where I am caught up in the delay or looping of memory, each day repeats regardless of the weather or occasion. This is the resounding gravitas of this space, always ready to receive visitors. And the writing on the landscape is heightened by the magnitude of the panorama kept in full view by the landscapers who diligently trim the grass and keep the gorse at bay.*



Figure 134. Elliot Collins, World War memorial, Elliott Street, (2015), Ōpōtiki



## Neglected Spirit

*These two sets of photographs are an exercise in contrast. And one that attempts to emphasise the different approaches to how the small town of Ōpōtiki looks outwards and inward at itself. If these markers are perpetual reminders of collective identity what are they saying and with what tone are they saying it? They appear to me as open sites that suggest Heterotopias that everyone can enter, 'but in fact that is only an illusion – we think we enter where we are, by the very fact that we enter, excluded.'<sup>331</sup> Excluded from detail and nuance, its is also always at a distance, even to get the whole object into the viewfinder I had to retreat.*

*The World War One memorial is situated just off the main street next to a large playing field in the centre of the once thriving town. The towering pillar is made of concrete and the detail of the top is repeated again at the base of the tall tribute. This Corinthian-style structure sits upon a larger rectangle that is liberally decorated and supports the names of those from the town fallen in 'The Great War'. There are other angles and supports, which are all painted a dazzling white, and feel smooth and cold. At eye level are placed concrete wreaths on each of its four sides. The wreaths have all been freshly painted in deep green and cadmium red to emphasis the leaves and berries of the relief, the many coats of paint have smoothed out the details.*

*In contrast, the 'Maori Wars' memorial is hard to find. Situated in a small park that was once a cemetery, this monument is set in the middle of a sort-of-straight concrete path. There are houses to one side and a broken-down wire fence on the other. The grass is well mown. This monument is small in size, no more than two metres tall. Its light grey marble is blank on all sides except for brief lead lettering. As I walk around it I notice a slight tilt to the form, as if it is leaning in towards the township. It is warmed by the perpetual sun of the East Cape summer and feels like fine sandpaper to touch.*



Figure 135. Elliot Collins, New Zealand Land Wars memorial, Kelly Street Cemetery, (2015), Ōpōtiki

## Death part Three

Both memorials speak of death. This shows me the memory markers, 'as a highly heterotopic place'.<sup>332</sup> In rereading the monuments, the cemetery activates a strange heterochrony, the loss of life, and then continues – as Foucault suggests – with a 'quasi-eternity in which her permanent lot is dissolution and disappearance'.<sup>333</sup> They discuss the purpose of those deaths and infer different attitudes according to their production and construction. One is a rather odd yet commanding pillar that represents an ancient romantic way of viewing death during war. David Lowenthal calls nostalgia 'memory with the pain removed' And in a way, the pain of 'The Great War' was perhaps meant to never be forgotten, by the placement of the memorial there soon after the event. But now that pain has been forgotten or removed over time, a forgetting that somehow becomes compounded by the very monument itself, and the impetus of the construction of monuments in honour of the dead. I am not implying that these memorials be now torn down as their time is up, or in any way diminishing the importance or magnitude of sacrifice that those men and women of that era faced. As Stewart writes,

that in denying or at least degrading the present, nostalgia makes the idealised and therefore always-absent past into the site of immediacy, presence and authenticity. Nostalgia sanitises as it selects, making the past feel complete, stable, coherent, and safe from the 'unexpected and the untoward, from the accident or betrayal' – in other words, making it so very unlike the present.<sup>334</sup>

The marker for the Māori Wars however does not hold the same nostalgic virtue that the World War One monument appears to. Its very physical structure seems to imitate its instability of memory. It is heavily weighted to one side of the racial divide. This has been witnessed so continuously throughout my journey I have become accustomed to it. Accustomed to not finding the reference to the suffering, bravery or death of Māori throughout this time. Every marker seems to hold an unspoken question. Or contain a secret that lets the conscious viewer know that there is more to this story. An invisible memory seems to be indelibly inscribed on the other 'blank' sides of the marker. I struggled with these markers for a long time, as they were unrelenting in their space-time shifting. Kyla McFarlane writes about artist Anne Ferran's knowledge of the 'slipperiness of the past', that it sometimes appears to wrestle with her, 'as if resisting representation'. I heed the suggestion of Ferran, who rather than struggling against this slipperiness instead embraces it and holds on to its silences and pauses, 'as if entering into a wordless conversation'.<sup>335</sup>

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332 Foucault and Miskowiec.

333 Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *The Visual Culture Reader*. Psychology Press, 2002, 234.

334 Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Cultural Studies/Literary Criticism (Duke University Press, 1984), 23.

335 Smith and Wevers, *On Display: New Essays in Cultural Studies*, 140.





Figure 136. Elliot Collins, *Toroa-nui marae ātea* (dawn), (2016), Parihaka, Taranaki



Figure 137. Elliot Collins, *Te Pou o Rongo* (dawn), Rānana, (2017), Whanganui River, Image with permission from Haami whanau



## The Sleeping House

Standing pūkeko  
Taking off shoes  
Drawn in by the whare  
On a mid-winter's night  
One light on,  
All night.

Sleeping on Marae  
Is settling down  
Next to strangers,  
Eye masks and ear plugs  
Breath and warm hair  
Kia tau.

Portraits of the departed  
Look down  
To you  
As you rest  
Your eyes  
Meeting theirs  
From a long time ago,  
Like yesterday.

Outside in the dark  
Are noises and movement  
Foreign and new  
Yet somehow the warmth of the room  
Lulls you to sleep  
Safe,  
Regardless,

Woken by light  
Coming through  
The window  
Curtains drawn  
You get up  
To greet the day  
Though your body  
Hazy and recalcitrant  
Longs for unbroken  
Peaceful sleep.

Step outside  
Ata Mārie  
Breathe cool air  
Gumboots on  
To greet the  
Dawn.



Figure 138. Elliot Collins, Rongo stone, Te Toka-i-Tawhio, (2015), Maungakiekie/One Tree Hill

## Poetic Language About Somewhere

The sites and memory markers – and artworks researched and made during this project – exist within the challenging spaces of questioning identity, cultural propositions and multifaceted problem making, using poetic language to discuss ideas that refuse to stay put. Morton discusses ambient poetics which make, ‘the imperceptible perceptible, while retaining the form of its imperceptibility – to make the invisible visible, the inaudible audible’.<sup>336</sup> Memory markers contend with contemporary and historic occurrences, translations, observations and actions, such as the John Ballance statue in Moutoa Gardens beside the Whanganui river (see fig. 136) or the Nixon Memorial in Ōtāhuhu, South Auckland, that recently attracted an online petition for its removal.<sup>337</sup>

Often, these contentious notions fold together, addressing one another in a tangle of networks. The use of poetic language or experimental prose in my practice acts in the rift between knowledge and untruths. Works of art, writes Burn, ‘are about another kind of knowledge production, perhaps one not so readily classifiable despite all the industries of academia. While the practices of art may be institutionally contained, the forms of silent knowledge engendered by art remain *déclassé*, not always halved by a horizon’.<sup>338</sup> These varieties of silent knowledge enhance and play with the ambiguities of an enigma that dwell within the myth that might be perceived as elegiac truth. Factual records, poetry and myth are *all* truths in the sense my text-based practice discards dualisms in favour of a more contemporary undertaking – where restoration and understanding can materialise and form a better view of how an identity might be constructed.

What is a poet? An unhappy man who hides deep anguish in his heart, but whose lips are so formed that when the sigh and cry pass through them, it sounds like lovely music.... And people flock around the poet and say: ‘Sing again soon’ – that is, ‘May new sufferings torment your soul but your lips be fashioned as before, for the cry would only frighten us, but the music, that is blissful’.<sup>339</sup>

Poetic language performs the task of the verb; memory markers and paintings *do* something and we the reader ‘do’ the thing through the poem in the silence of the marker, not through the action that the text speaks of. The poem remembers for us. Not in a historical sense but remembers who we are for us, reminding the reader what the ‘other’ and therefore themselves, are communally capable of. This could be the performative action of storytelling enabling time to be detached – in order for the audience to take part in distant stories that connect them to an ancestor – via the story. Pound writes that, ‘McCahon’s texts are most commonly biblical, sacred rather than profane. Sometimes, too, though less often, he takes his texts from the high art of poetry – nearly

336 Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, 96.

337 “Remove Nixon Memorial, Auckland, NZ,” Change.org, September 16, 2017, <https://www.change.org/p/mayor-auckland-govt-nz-remove-nixon-memorial-auckland-nz>.

338 Wales and Gallery, *The Boundary Rider: 9th Biennale of Sydney, 15 December 1992-14 March 1993*, 33.

339 A. Hannay, *Kierkegaard: A Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 169.



Figure 139. Elliot Collins, John Ballance statue, Moetua Gardens, (2017), Whanganui



always from New Zealand poets'.<sup>340</sup> This taking of 'New Zealand words' and reinserting them into his painting vernacular became a defining feature of his work. I think this inclusion of New Zealand poetry was fundamental during the 1950s and 60s in the recognition of who 'we' might have been. Poets 'spoke' what they perceived the country was trying to articulate and McCahon 'repeated' them onto the surface of the landscape. Even with biblical references, McCahon recites the text upon a New Zealand landscape in all its different forms; from the green hills and valleys of *Northland Panels*, 1958, and *Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury*, 1950, to the night-time view of *The Lark's Song (a poem by Matire Kereama)* 1969, where Pound writes, 'the landscape survives as only a bright sliver, above which Māori words are inscribed in the darkness, or its only remnant is cloud sliding across a night sky, as in *The Lark's Song (a poem by Matire Kereama)*, 1969'.<sup>341</sup> This is not construction on McCahon's part, or if it is, it is borrowed or taken from the childhood perception of place or space of another. The painted words:

come from a song published in Kereama's book *The Tail of the Fish*, and are given McCahon's usual Christian twist with the further inscription, on an inset tablet of sky blue, of the title of a Peter Hooper poem: 'Can you hear me Saint Francis?' Intermittently shadowed with thin black glazes, and unpredictably lit with additional flashes of white, the song's words come like notes arriving and fading in the dark air.<sup>342</sup>

Painted stories, via words taken down, read from a gifted book, and made into sounds are carried over to the viewer by this painting. Pound observes a shift in attitude when noting that McCahon does not insert Māori words into his work until 1962. However, when they commence, McCahon's landscapes 'show a further effort to give his paintings a Māori voice'.<sup>343</sup> Park notices the trembling question in McCahon's *Urewera Mural* (1975), when he writes, 'So where are *you* from?' *Urewera Mural* interrogates us. Signs – OUR LANDED INHERITANCE COMES FROM TOI – OUR PRESTIGE FROM TUHOE – sit among the dark hills like the kānuka of the old Tūhoe clearings sit among the national park's forest'.<sup>344</sup> The inscriptions also memorialise two Māori leaders and prophets, Te Kooti and Rua Kenana whose stories are tied with the Urewera and its people. Pound reveals signs that McCahon studied and held great reverence for Māori, as shown in his association that his painting made between Moses and Māori prophetic figures. The Māori prophetic traditions of Ringatu and Pai Mārire had themselves identified with the Old Testament prophets.

In this tradition, Māori were the chosen people, and the calamitous time of colonisation was the time of the Egyptian captivity. It is surely significant that McCahon now proposes Māori prophets, rather than the Pakeha painters and poets he had once put forward, as the great figures in search of a New Zealand Promised Land.<sup>345</sup>

<sup>340</sup> Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970*, 233.

<sup>341</sup> Pound, 325.

<sup>342</sup> Pound.

<sup>343</sup> Pound, 324.

<sup>344</sup> Park, *Theatre Country: Essays on Landscape & Whenua*, 59.

<sup>345</sup> Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970*, 326.

## RAIN

I can hear you  
making small holes  
in the silence  
rain

If I were deaf  
the pores of my skin  
would open to you  
and shut

And I  
should know you  
by the lick of you  
if I were blind

the something  
special smell of you  
when the sun cakes  
the ground

the steady  
drum-roll sound  
you make  
when the wind drops

But if I  
should not hear  
smell or feel or see  
you

you would still  
define me  
disperse me  
wash over me  
rain

## Ua

Ka rongo au i a koe  
e hanga kōwhao iti ana  
i te marino  
e ua

Mēnā he turi ahau  
ka puare aku kōputa  
ki a koe  
ā, ka kati

Ko hau hoki  
me taunga ki a koe  
ki tō miti mai  
me i kāpō ahau

ka pā mai  
tō kakara rere kē  
anō nei he whenua  
i toka i te rā

ka mau tonu  
te rongo o te tangi pahū  
i a koe  
me ka mutu te hau

Engari ina kore au  
e rongo  
e hongī e pāe kite  
i a koe

ka riro tonu māu  
e iriiri i ahau  
e wehe I ahau  
e horoi rawa I ahau  
e ua

There emerges an adjustment of perspective, that the critic, historian or contemporary viewer should allow McCahon to observe. In this respect Bachelard writes that, 'poetic reverie, unlike somnolent reverie, never falls asleep',<sup>346</sup> it is active, as seen in McCahon's work during the 1970s. 'Starting with the simplest of images, it must always set the waves of the imagination radiating. But however cosmic the isolated house lighted by the star of its lamp may become, it will always symbolize solitude'.<sup>347</sup> The difficulty or joy of McCahon's 'reverie' was that it radiated out from his singular source. McCahon speaks from the 'I' to his credit, and not arrogantly the 'We', but as a consequence only speaks for himself from his small corner of the world. Arguably a better position than that of the Nationalists, and McCahon observed the country at the time with greater accuracy and authority but he lacked the 'answers' that the nation at the time desired. However, as in the powerful yet diminutive work, *A Candle in a Dark Room*, 1947, 'the corner becomes a negation of the Universe' writes Bachelard, in one's corner one does not talk to oneself. When we recall the hours, we have spent in our corners, we remember above all silence, the silence of our thoughts'.<sup>348</sup> This emphasises the silence of the New Zealand thought, set alone in our 'corner' of the Pacific. The concept of an idea or thought being a light in the darkness, a flickering flame which burns away in the mind of the viewer, wavering sometimes but never going out, filling the thinker with other thoughts. Bachelard quotes Noël Arnaud who writes, 'in *L'état d'ébauche*:

Je suis l'espace où je suis                      [I am the space where I am].<sup>349</sup>

A little closer to home I recall the poem *Rain*, by Hone Tuwhare used by Ralph Hotere in a work of the same name in 1979. The poem which is transcribed on the painting reads: (see opposite page).<sup>350</sup>

Words and poetry seem to produce a combination of signs and signifiers that tremble understanding and facilitate in the reader a connection to that which they do not normally have relationship with. If words left on the landscape produce enigma it may be because they operate in a rift between the poetry of the language and supposed truths in the land. Bachelard suggests that, 'each one of us, then, should speak of his roads, his crossroads, his roadside benches; each one of us should make a/surveyor's map of his lost fields and meadows'.<sup>351</sup> If produced in the poetic way that Bachelard suggests these maps could be viewed widely but probably only specifically locating to the maker. Bachelard also notes that 'Thoreau said that he had the map of his fields engraved in his soul. And Jean Wahl once wrote:

*Le moutonnement des haies*

*C'est en moi que je l'ai.*

(The frothing of the hedges / I keep deep inside me.)

346 Bachelard and Jolas, *The Poetics of Space*, 36.

347 Bachelard and Jolas.

348 Bachelard and Jolas, 136.

349 Bachelard and Jolas, 137.

350 Hone Tuwhare, *Small Holes in the Silence: Collected Works* (Random House New Zealand, 2011), 88.

351 Bachelard and Jolas, *The Poetics of Space*, 11.



Figure 140. Colin McCahon, *The lark's song* (a poem by Matire Kereama), (1969), 1630 x 1980mm, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
 Image courtesy of the Colin McCahon Research and Publication Trust



Thus we cover the universe with drawings we have lived. These drawings need not be exact.<sup>352</sup> It is with this last line that I am reminded that the mystery or nebulousness of poetry and poetic language or even poetic images are as accurate as *necessary*. Bachelard continues to unpack the mystery of language and the inability of words to accurately explain a memory and this I believe is their magic. It is in their very failure that the unexplainable is exposed and explored but language can only take the witness to the edge of language's existence. He writes:

I alone, in my memories of another century, can open the deep cupboard that still retains for me alone that unique odor, the odor of raisins drying on a wicker tray. The odor of raisins! It is an odor that is beyond description, one that it takes a lot of imagination to smell. But I've already said too much. If I said more, the reader, back in his own room, would not open that unique wardrobe, with its unique smell, which is the signature of intimacy.<sup>353</sup>

Deploying Māori and English words in my work as provocation and celebration in its relationship to the landscape moves language, as Bachelard writes, to '[bear] within itself the dialectics of open and closed. Through meaning it encloses, while through poetic expression, it opens up'.<sup>354</sup> I acknowledge te reo Māori as having ethical, social, political and cultural implications.

In the work *The Lark's Song* (a poem by Matire Kereama), 1969, McCahon enacts the use of small dashes that stroke upwards representing bird flight and small U-shaped dashes among the text, as well as cloud forms that suggest a pause and silence. Zepke suggests that, 'McCahon, like many in the small avant-garde community in New Zealand at the time, saw their country as a vast silence, an empty landscape waiting to find its own cultural voice'.<sup>355</sup> This work is full of text and yet – for a non-Māori reader – is silent, writes Brown, except for the 'brief coda, in the bottom right, quoting the poet Peter Hooper: "Can you hear me St Francis"'.<sup>356</sup> This kind of statement needs rethinking as now even if understanding isn't gained the contemporary Aotearoa NZ reader/viewer can attempt the sounds that the word forms suggest.

The relevance of this artwork for my project is that it operates in both realms of language. It is speaking *about* something and can be read aloud and yet, as with any unknown language, we can only attempt at making the sounds that these words make; it is a poem that is un-translated so we instead study the word forms, and the signifiers of the words are also yielded, to all but a specific audience. 'What was important for McCahon is not a translation of meaning – which is anyway impossible,'<sup>357</sup> as translation from Māori to English is problematic at best, 'but the *experience* shared by both [languages' holders] of translating their outside into language' into an internal understanding.<sup>358</sup> This experience of reading a painting in silence internalises the act of speaking and listening so that absorption of the words in the viewing process can begin. This highlights the relationship

352 Bachelard and Jolas.

353 Bachelard and Jolas, 13.

354 Bachelard and Jolas, 222.

355 Zepke, "McCahon's Promised Land," 72.

356 G.H. Brown, *Colin McCahon, Artist* (Reed, 1984), 159.

357 Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970*, 74.

358 Zepke, "McCahon's Promised Land," 74.



Figure 141. Elliot Collins, Waioeka River, (2017), Waioeka

between silence and invisibility. The words are not spoken and the speaker is dead.

Poets often introduce us into a world of impossible sounds... Rene-Guy Cadou, who lived in the Village of Happy Homes, was moved to write:

*On entend gazouiller les fleurs du paravent*  
(You can hear the prattle of the flowers on the screen.)

Because all flowers speak and sing, even those we draw, and it is impossible to remain unsociable when we draw a flower or a bird. Another poet writes:

*Son secret c'etait*  
*D'écouter la fleur*  
*User sa couleur.*  
(Her secret was  
Listening to flowers  
Wear out their color.)

Like so many poets, Claude Vigee hears the grass grow:

*J'écoute*  
*Un jeune noisetier*  
*Verdir.*  
(I hear  
A young nut-tree  
grow green.)

All these images cobbled together with language, Bachelard writes, 'must be taken, at the least, in their existence as a reality of expression'.<sup>359</sup> In a local context this imagery gets hybridised by biculturalism and a rich, third, in-between centre exists that cannot sustain binaries. Turner states that, 'Whether or not the widespread use of Māori insignia to identify "New Zealandness" is a matter of fruitful borrowing or appropriation, cultural plagiarism makes Māori culture integral to settler identity in a way that settler culture is not integral to Māori identity'.<sup>360</sup> Maintaining the idea of borrowing or appropriation, I employ Dennison Lopes' attitude: 'Words are born. Words die. Words are forgotten. Words multiply and generate other words'.<sup>361</sup> A multitude of words has been either created, blended or borrowed in the New Zealand vernacular. These are pronounced/ mispronounced in many different ways but a general understanding is comprehended. And it is with this, even slight, understanding of a different world view that Aotearoa NZ has a unique way of making and observing art and defining itself. In support of a multiplicity of meaning generated through words, Papastergiadis writes

359 Bachelard and Jolas, *The Poetics of Space*, 122.

360 Baird and Phillips, "Contained Memory," 122.

361 Denilson Lopes, "From the Space In-Between to the Transcultural," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 16, no. 3 (December 1, 2007): ,





Figure 142. Elliot Collins, Window, St Michael's Church, (2017), Ōhaeawai



Figure 143. Elliot Collins, Pews, St Michael's Church, (2017), Ōhaeawai



that the meaning of art does not come just from within, 'it also comes from without, from the parallel, or even contrapuntal, efforts to investigate the third space within the realms of action and reflection'.<sup>362</sup> In an extract from *Fauna and Flora*, E.J. Godley notes the geographical isolation of Aotearoa NZ when he writes,

New Zealand is isolated from South America, its nearest neighbor to the east, by some 4500 miles of ocean, while to the south there are 1600 miles of sea to the Antarctic continent; Australia lies 1230 miles to the west and 2500 miles to the north-west is New Guinea. On the east, west and south, beyond the shelf of islands, the seas are of great depth but in the north, submarine ridges are evident, the Lord Howe Rise stretching to the north-west, and the Kermadec Ridge to the north-east. This isolation and this degree of remoteness have lasted for at least 70 million years.<sup>363</sup>

One function of poetic language in my practice is to emphasise a rift between informational language and experimental prose such as the 'word portraits' written by Gertrude Stein. This serves to enhance and play with the ambiguities of the enigma within bicultural poetry and discussion. By 1903 Stein had begun a kind of literary Cubism. Dan Piepenbring writes that Stein, '*steeped herself in the art of Picasso, Matisse, and others. These pieces saw her evolving approach to aphorism and especially to repetition*'.<sup>364</sup> *Matisse Picasso and Gertrude Stein, 1911-12*, shows Stein's way of using language that plays with poetic language and prose to disturb the assumed method of texts.

To lie in the cheese, to smile in the butter, to lengthen in the rain, to sit in the flour all that makes a model stronger, there is no strangeness where there is more useful color, a description has not every mission.

Leaning together and destroying a principle preciousness which is not mangled, this is so loaned that there is no habit, not at all and yet there is the late way, there is an instance of more...

Left hand and right, the knee and no chapter, the pleasure of prophecy is in the direct adhesion of most of the pearls. This is so attending and the mixture which is as yet a marigold has the proof and the price it has all the constitution and the west of the dinner.

This does not mean more harm. It means the lingering station, it means appetite and ice-cream. It does not.

Plaque which is not municipal and ardent is not more a stroke than any birthday. So much is there no moon in the evening. Name and place and more besides makes the time so gloomy, all the shade is in the sun and lessons have the place of noon. There is no gender...

An alarm has no button. This means that where there is undoubtedly a magnificent heap of cats there is more there than any place there is. There does show the authority that has no substitute. It must be

<sup>362</sup> Papastergiadis, "Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place and the Everyday," 34.

<sup>363</sup> K. Sinclair, *Distance Looks Our Way: The Effect of Remoteness of New Zealand*, University of Auckland Winter Lectures (Paul's Book Arcade, 1961), I.

<sup>364</sup> Dan Piepenbring, "To Lie in the Cheese, to Smile in the Butter," *The Paris Review*, February 3, 2015,



Figure 144. Elliot Collins, *Passed a bitter morning...* (2011), 400 x 300mm oil on canvas, (lost in forest) Rotterdam

expressed that there is a difference between that which is seen and that which is mean. Something must be the other. There is a name that is written and printing does not mean. It means that very often and it shows the same metal as the trial.

There is so much use. When is there more betrayal. The answer is always.<sup>365</sup>

The two writers use vastly different ways of unfolding space and time. Roman Jakobson writes that ‘the supremacy of the poetic function over the referential function does not obliterate the reference but makes it ambiguous’.<sup>366</sup> In my practice and through my travels it is the ambiguities of artwork, markers and locations that produce the most significance and ‘speak’ the most, thereby making the greatest connection. This connection helps my practice as it gives me a subject and location to point to, implying that this is what ‘our’ identity might be. Yet the poetic nature of the experimental prose used means that the reference, or original, I begin from is made ambiguous. This disturbs a linear path towards identity building and creates more rigour in its contraction.

Richard Killeen’s early artworks (*The Glorious Dead*, 1968 and *Man Reading a Newspaper*, 1968) rupture the ‘silence’ of the scene which the artist has represented by inserting language onto the surface that both informs and complicates the viewing process, and highlight identity construction. This use of language, for lateral reason within visual art, first appears in the Dada and Surrealist movements of the 1920s. Started by the writer Hugo Ball in 1916, both movements began as literary projects before they expanded into visual arts. The Dadaists inserted texts in experimental and provocative ways in a desire to say something, or nothing, of their political stance and antiwar sentiment. Tristan Tzara wrote *The Dada Manifesto* 1918, and reinforced that ‘Dada does not mean anything’, and writing in the manifesto:

DADA – this is a word that throws up ideas so that they can be shot down; every bourgeois is a little playwright, who invents different subjects and who, instead of situating suitable characters on the level of his own intelligence, like chrysalises on chairs, tries to find causes or objects (according to whichever psychoanalytic method he practices) to give weight to his plot, a talking and self-defining story.<sup>367</sup> Dada was not concerned with the old ways of literature or prose and so dissolved them into disorder where something like my painting that feature interrupted or not finished phrases would happily belong.

With a continued interest in the ‘not-finished phrase’ in my work I have noticed that these exist in monuments and road signs like interruptions, often as accidental damage to materials resulting in the over-painting or covering up of words or phrases. I particularly like open-ended, ‘entangled words’<sup>368</sup> that are used in artworks to

365 G. Stein, *Matisse Picasso and Gertrude Stein: With Two Shorter Stories* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), 157.

366 Thomas A. Sebeok, *Style in Language*. (Cambridge : Technology Press of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, [1960], 1960), 17.

367 Tristan Tzara, “Dada Manifesto,” 1918.

368 Laurence Simmons and Heather Worth, *Derrida Downunder*. (Palmerston North, N.Z. : Dunmore Press, 2001., 2001), 181,



Figure 145. Elliot Collins, *MMXVI*, (2016), Fluorescent tubes, electrical components, Tauranga Art Gallery Toi Tauranga



act as suggestion of the enigma. In this context, John Reynold's artwork *The Trouble With Words*, 2009, is relevant to the project because of the way in which vernacular phrases are propositions that interrupt each other at an intersection between painting and installation practice. It is from this perspective that Barthes observes that, writing involves destruction of individual voices and origins such that specific identities slip away; he remarks that,

writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.<sup>369</sup>

There seems to be a resonance with getting lost, then found, then lost again tied up in what Barthes is saying; an experience akin to experiencing Reynolds' *The Trouble With Words*. In this respect, the artist can attempt to influence meaning with the knowledge that the multiple readings will grow outwards well after the words have reached their literal limit, referring to what Barthes calls the infinite nature of the 'text'. He continues:

The *infinity* of the signifier refers not to some idea of the ineffable (the un-nameable signified) but to that of a *playing*; the generation of the perpetual signifier in the field of the text is realized not according to an organic progress of maturation of a hermeneutic course of deepening investigation, but, rather, according to a serial movement of disconnections, overlappings, [sic] [and] variations.<sup>370</sup>

Referring to ideas of disconnections and overlapping, Zepke writes, 'In this context McCahon's work affirmed, from the beginning, *mistranslation* as the productive linguistic mechanism producing any particular expression of an abstract truth'.<sup>371</sup> The rift of understanding expands the work *Northland Not Flooded*, 2016, referenced in an earlier chapter, which also references Barthes' essay in *Mythologies*, 1957. In particular, an essay titled *Paris Not Flooded*, where the author proceeds to describe the flooding of Paris by the River Seine, in January of 1955, which he calls 'more of a celebration than a catastrophe'. Barthes celebrates this flood because it has given the city that he knows so well a new perspective. I made *Northland Not Flooded*, 2016, as a celebration to suggest that we might look upon Northland, with its high rates of poverty, unemployment, low education standards, drug use and suicide, with a new perspective. It is a brief billboard-like painting as it is evident that when artists or 'metaphysicians speak briefly,' writes Bachelard, 'they can reach immediate truth, a truth that, in due course, would yield to proof. Metaphysicians, then, may be compared and associated with poets who, in a single verse, can lay bare a truth concerning inner man'.<sup>372</sup> Turner writes about this broader social context by suggesting that, 'we are not to be blasted out of history, awakened from our settler slumber into a messianic, crystalline constellation of memory'.<sup>373</sup> He continues rather poetically that, 'the dream is rather disturbed by abandoned

<sup>369</sup> Barthes, *S/Z*, 142.

<sup>370</sup> Barthes, 158.

<sup>371</sup> Zepke, "McCahon's Promised Land," 71.

<sup>372</sup> Bachelard and Jolas, *The Poetics of Space*, 232.

<sup>373</sup> Baird and Phillips, "Contained Memory," 119.



Figure 146. Elliot Collins, Whananaki South Road, (2017), Whananaki



Figure 147. Elliot Collins, Mother, Cemetery, (2016), Paeroa



individuals, peoples, and places, which give us pause to stop and think'.<sup>374</sup> While the plight of Northland should 'concern inner man', the statement that my painting makes is both true and not true. But the 'not trueness' makes even more of an impact. Northland does regularly flood and many farmers are affected, with communities cut off from supply routes. Because it is sparsely populated and not of huge social benefit to the nation, it also gets ignored by central government. At the same time, I argue that a flood is only a flood when it affects us. Rivers in natural equilibrium will overflow and spread nutrients to the surrounding lowlands, but this is very different in attitude to a flood. The concept of a flooded Northland and the concept of memory, like that of nature, writes Morton, is always 'over there' which in turn preserves its furtive allure.<sup>375</sup>

The poem by Matire Kereama, painted by Colin McCahon, operates within the context of children using the skylark's song as a way of reciting stories and songs in a single, unbroken breath, mimicking the action of the skylark, which was introduced to Aotearoa NZ from Europe. The skylark's most striking feature, and the one that gives the birds its name, is its song in flight. The song ceases just before its final descent. Kereama recalls:

'Lark Singing' was almost a daily ritual. All Māori children knew the song in those days and many of the elders remember some of the words even now. The point of the game was to see who could sing the song of the lark with the fewest breath pauses. I could manage the work of this song in two breaths.<sup>376</sup>

This knowledge helps those reading the work, as Panoho states, 'to understand the complex, layered nature of Māori art in connection with land [and language] already inscribed with many different tribal narratives and histories'.<sup>377</sup> The poet has engaged an introduced bird species and layered another story over the top. This layering highlights the ease of a culture based within an oral narrative structure to adopt and adjust to new cosmologies. This idea of the lattice of identity in te ao Māori and broader Aotearoa NZ art has become a unique characteristic of text in its contemporary visual art practice.

<sup>374</sup> Bachelard and Jolas, *The Poetics of Space*, 119.

<sup>375</sup> Bachelard and Jolas, 19.

<sup>376</sup> Matire Kereama, *The Tail of the Fish : Maori Memories of the Far North*. (Auckland [N.Z.], Oswald-Sealy, [1968], 1968), 60,

<sup>377</sup> Panoho, Adams, and Sameshima, *Māori Art: History, Architecture, Landscape and Theory*, 41.



Figure 148. Elliot Collins, Rātana Church, (2017), Raetihi



## **Raetihi**

*The Rātana Church on the outskirts of Raetihi sits on a hill overlooking the landscape. This was the first miniature temple built outside Rātana Pā. The Morehu members from Raetihi supplied Tahupōtiki Wiremu Rātana by gathering food for the workers who were helping to build this replica of the temple. Rātana would stop at Raetihi when travelling north and on his way home. He referred to this temple as his second door or gateway through which he would pass many times. It is a commanding monumental structure at contrast to its rural setting and sits next to a marae within paddocks and farmland. Two old ladies sit on a bench outside a house to the side of the marae, and I greet them and ask if I can walk up the hill to the church, they reply with an “of course, the door’s open”. A church, a tree, a hill, power pole, the smell of wet hay midday, the rain clouds coming, everything about this site and the objects within the picture are drawn upwards with an aspirational quality that would sit well in a Samuel Beckett play.*

*The symmetrical building is painted white and is kept looking fresh with touch-ups of the same paint visible on close inspection. The light, pale-blue paint of the front and side doors is also used on the frames of the triangular-headed windows. The two front towers have windows on the face and sides of the external walls. The roof is corrugated iron painted a bright red oxide. Atop those two towers are the whetū mārama, the moon and five-pointed star shape.*



Figure 149. Elliot Collins, Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira, (2016), Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland



Figure 150. Elliot Collins, Shed, (2015), Ahititi

## Anatomy of Freedom

*The Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira sits on top of Pukekawa, a grass-covered volcanic hill in the Auckland Domain, and overlooks the Waitematā Harbour. It holds a commanding presence on the hill above the city and was designed by returned servicemen who were architects, to fully encapsulate the sentiment and mood of the region at the time of construction in 1929. The inscription high above my head reads:*

MCMXIV MCMXVIII  
THE WHOLE EARTH IS THE SEPULCHRE OF FAMOUS MEN  
THEY ARE COMMEMORATED NOT ONLY BY COLUMNS AND INSCRIPTIONS IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY  
BUT IN FOREIGN LANDS ALSO BY MEMORIAL GRAVEN NOT ON STONE  
BUT ON THE HEARTS OF MEN

*The world is a sepulchre but it is so many other things. I have found that the idea of the monumental memory markers is a mutable and adaptable concept, its authority and ‘volume’ is experienced differently by different generations. It is explained by Young, who writes that these pillars are never completely mute, even in their solitary setting on the hill. ‘But as part of a nation’s memorial rituals, they are invested with national soul and significance. Memorials... serve as landmarks in and around which histories are woven and a people’s past is explained to itself’<sup>378</sup>*

*Three hundred kilometres away a small shed in Ahititi sits next to a weatherboard house on the low-lying plains next to the river. Its fluted corrugated iron echoes the pillars of the museum. Its diminutive stature in this context of the greater museum only enchases and enhances its potency as a monument/marker. The cloudless sunset outlines the rectangular shed and flattens its appearance. The white paint is worn and rusty in areas and the windows appear as dark eyes looking out onto the gravel road. The evening smells of cool river and flowers that bloom in the night. The small white shed stands in opposition to the encroaching native bush that threatens to enclose upon it. Set back from the road and over a small bridge, where it appears in the middle of nowhere, the little marker holds its ground and waits for morning.*



Figure 151. Elliot Collins, Memorial plaque, (2016), Domain drive, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland



## Moving Monuments Marking Memory

It was Barthes who said in *S/Z* that to, 'read is to find meanings, and to find meaning is to name them'.<sup>379</sup> Both buildings have been read and named. One holds the memory of war for a nation, the other holds the mystery of rural New Zealand, of secret lives lived in privacy and relative isolation. Both appear still in their respective landscapes. But Young comments that, 'neither time nor its markers ever really stand still. Even as I write, chunks of mortar holding these monuments together crumble and fall away, lichens cover their surface, and grass grows high around their bases'.<sup>380</sup>

Interestingly, Auckland Museum noted on their Twitter account some stalagmites and stalactites 'growing outside the museum' (3 May 2016), and the rust stains from oxidation on the corrugated iron slowly reaching down to the earth echo the movement of these seemingly fixed materials. 'All the while, hundreds of miles away, a political regime is toppled, and a whole generation of monuments suddenly becomes obsolete, their past meanings now irrelevant to the new order'.<sup>381</sup> And so, we continue to name the meanings of these memory markers in these new orders, but these named meanings 'are swept toward other names; names call to each other'.<sup>382</sup> The meanings of memory markers were always changing along with the markers themselves, but in every regime, writes Young:

even the new, hopes that the meanings in its monuments will remain as eternal as it imagines itself to be... the fall of old regimes and the rise of new throughout Eastern Europe have made the fragile and transient nature of monuments all the more apparent.<sup>383</sup>

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379 Barthes, *S/Z*, 11.

380 Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 208.

381 Young.

382 Barthes, *S/Z*, 11.

383 Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 208.



Figure 152. Elliot Collins, Cass turn off, (2014), Arthur's Pass



Figure 153. Elliot Collins, Cass, (2014), Arthur's Pass

## Rita Cook

*I drove past the sign to Cass, missing its standard-issue cadmium-yellow road-sign with black letters. Having to veer into a ditch to double back and turn into the isolated and empty road back. A little way down the road that now looks little more than a driveway I observe some low-lying houses and sheds to the left. They seem lived in but neglected, functional yet weather-beaten. Parking the car in an empty but purpose-made car park I walk over to the iconic shed as it begins to rain. The rain occasionally turns to sleet then back to rain. The sun is hidden behind clouds and so only a faint yellow hue lights the trees, snow drifts collecting in mountain crevices. The train tracks run parallel to the shed and for some strange reason, maybe just because of the way mythology works, I realise that the shed is facing the wrong way. Or at least not the way I had imagined it. Like the Rapanui/Easter Island statues, the direction they face has become adaptable. While standing here I am straining to remember the details of Rita Angus's painting of Cass, 1936. I remember two doors. One closed and locked the other open that appears as a void or absence. The dark rectangle stands in contrasting abstraction to the surrounding landscape though is a suitable surrogate for the absent figure that appears in Angus's painting. The faceless figure is long dead though many have tried to replace it. The mountains in my view are snow covered and swathed in low-lying cloud obscuring all sense of scale. A single lamppost remains, though even this is a replica of the original. The platform too has disappeared from the scene. The hot red of the shelter has faded and in a final act of submission has stepped down to the gravel like the rest of us.*

*Entering the shed, which I equate to a ritual that is experienced by artist and art historian alike, I think of the others who have also stood where I stand. Once inside the cloister, the small, enclosed space bears down on me because of the overwhelming coverage of paint on every surface. The wind and rain bluster the outside of my shell. Scratched onto the soft red wall is,*

*Kiss the ground you walk on*

*AM 05 KO 05*

*The 'flesh'-coloured cupboard is the only non-red object in the room; its drawers are locked and its top is covered in bird droppings. A train sounds in the distance and I venture outside again. It rushes past carrying logs and containers bound for the West Coast. It will not be stopping here today; it rarely ever does.*



Figure 154. Elliot Collins, Interior shed, Cass, (2014), Arthur's Pass



### Mythology of an Un-Remembered Place

There is an appeal to our myth-making habit that happens when naming of places transpires and then, through the repetition of that naming via the act of painting, these now, named places become a part of a cultural identity. Angus's Cass which as Pound writes, has its name literally inscribed in the work as its largest signature, seems to locate itself in national memory as if it has always been there.

It is a potent legend. A more perfect answer may hardly be imagined to Curnow's and the general Nationalist belief that 'the signature of a region, like that of a witness written below the poet's, can attest value in the work'.<sup>384</sup> In fact, Cass goes further than Curnow suggests, since the signature of the region is written above that of the painter, rather than below, with its letters bolder, and picked out against the red-oxide station in black against white; and it is written twice, once on each visible face of the building.



Figure 155. Elliot Collins, Bridge, remnant, (2015), Maketū

## Maketū

*Approaching the Maketū memorial is a strange event. The Maketū River is flowing swiftly and bubbling with fish, who break the surface every now and then. The remnants of a bridge across the narrow river-mouth sit wilfully in the middle of the current, unwilling to budge. The rock and concrete form with a wooden plank clamped down by weathered copper plates seems to hold its own stories of the past. It watches with vigilance the moving tide. Driving past this accidental monument, the traveller sees the official Centennial Memorial, which was erected in 1940 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in the area. The grass area the monument rests in is separated from the road by a low post-and-plank line painted white, to keep the cars off the reserve. Two pohutukawa trees grow on either side of the structure, which looks out to the east, across the river mouth out to sea. The monument is set on two stone and concrete bases and then made of stone and concrete in a spire shape. At the apex of the spire is a metal rod with a metal cut-out shape that resembles the waka of Te Arawa.*

*On one side there seems to have been a plaque removed, as the cement or glue to hold it in place remains but a rectangle void exists where a plaque once sat. On the other side facing away from the water is a plaque that reads:*

### Maketū Centennial Memorial

1840 - 1940

Erected on this site to commemorate the historic landing of the Arawa canoe in 1340 AD after a voyage of 2000 miles under Tamatekapua, navigator, and the high priest Ngatoroirangi. This memorial is dedicated to the Arawa confederation of tribes and their pakeha friends in grateful recognition of their valuable services rendered in peace and war, to a century of great spiritual advancement and wonderful material progress. 2 January 1940



Figure 156. Elliot Collins, Maketū Centennial memorial, (2016), Maketū



## Identity Places

This monument is an identity marker for the people of Maketū. Kynan Gentry suggests that place is ‘multifaceted. It exists as both real and imagined, and it lies at the heart of both individual and collective history’.<sup>385</sup> This place is both a waka landing site and a holiday destination, a place where the local school bus stops and the place that locals wander past on the way to drop a line into the river. Gentry continues: ‘we all come from some place, and we all live in some place. Our identity and our very sense of authenticity, it seems, are inextricably bound up with the places we claim as “ours”’.<sup>386</sup> It is only standing at the edge of the marker that I comprehend the very essence of this place as being one that is layered with memories that I argue are not in a chronological order. The view looking over the river mouth reminds me of a note made by Morton regarding the word *ambience* which derives from the Latin *ambo*, ‘on both sides’.<sup>387</sup>

In terms of the stone form itself, Young writes about the piling of stones, recalling ‘both the very first monument cited in Genesis, a *gal’ed* (witness heap of stones), and the Jewish custom of piling small stones on the flat surfaces of *matzevoth*. As Yosef Lishinsky reminds us, the rawness in such material also recalls the biblical commandment forbidding chiselled stone for the temple altar.’<sup>388</sup> The conglomeration of stone seems to recall the confederation of tribes all contributing to the making of place. However, with this observation of the materiality, the arrangement of rocks, informing my perception of symbolic importance, I am reminded by Gentry that, ‘it is important to understand that what we read from the past, how we interpret it, and what elements of it we preserve, often says more about us now – collectively and as individuals – than it does about the past.’<sup>389</sup>

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385 Kynan Gentry and Gavin McLean, *Heartlands : New Zealand Historians Write about Where History Happened*. (Auckland, N.Z. : Penguin, 2006., 2006), 13.

386 Gentry and McLean.

387 Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, 34.

388 Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 253.

389 Gentry and McLean, *Heartlands : New Zealand Historians Write about Where History Happened*., 25.



To then be standing in a location and perceiving a memory marker that mimics the ‘original’ (painted) shop is an unnerving exercise in déjà vu. Like Angus’s Cass, I know this place via its representation, but now the truth of the image betrays my recollection of a painted place. The only truly correct aspects of the Robin White painting that remain, on the day that I visit Maketu, are the colour of the sky and the slow non-threatening clouds. The title of the current shop tells me its name but muddles the paintings original aesthetic. The authority for me exists in the painted fiction rather than in the real-world example. I wander over and across a roundabout in the road and witness another smaller building that I imagine once occupied the space of the original shop the painting represents; at least this building faces in the correct direction, with the ocean at its back.

Rather than hold a place-name in the collapsed time and space (available to Māori via their traditional concept of time) of Natalie Robertson’s road signs, such as her 1998 **Prophet** series or 2000’s **Whakatere – Across the Great Ocean of Kiwa**, I have photographed the places and names with their colonial baggage intact. My photographs confirm Robertson’s position and acknowledge mine as a maker with a pākehā presence. I am only allowed, I am only able, to see a certain part of the present world in which this place exists. I do my own ‘seeing’ through my own cultural lens and traditions. Byrnes describes landscaping as a ‘transformative or translational process whereby “artistic conventions applied to the land determine the way that the land is seen: it remains invisible without these conventional genres of reading”’.<sup>390</sup> Kylie Message writes that, ‘although both the map and sign are designed to record and convey information, and despite their tabula rasa appearance, they suggest the experience of myriad other stories and experiences’.<sup>391</sup>

As has so often occurred along the way, I have realised that I am photographing a kind of cosmological failure of Western colonial thought. The failure to see or read a place beyond its superficial appearance. Uncomfortably, I have come to realise the similarities echoed in Carter’s (1987) argument, like ‘[Captain] Cook’s geo-graphy, his writing of lands,’ I have been unable to separate my conditioning and way of thinking, or even my way of language, from my inquiry onto the landscape. ‘This was the essence of the maps he made, that they did not mirror the appearance of natural objects, but preserved the trace of encountering them.’<sup>392</sup> By way of correction, I acknowledge the steep learning curve undertaken within this research and the revised retrospective writing should go some way to prove this adjustment in understanding.

390 Byrnes, *Boundary Markers: Land Surveying and the Colonisation of New Zealand*, 61.

391 Kylie Message, “Message, K 2005, &#39;Are We There yet? Natalie Robertson&#39;s Road Signs and Redirection of Cultural Memory&#39;; *Space and Culture: International Journal of Social Spaces*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Pp. 449-458,” 2005, 454.

392 Message, 23.



Figure 157. Elliot Collins, DEKA sign, (2016), Rahui-Pōkeka/Huntly



## That DEKA Sign

*On their way through Rahui-Pōkeka/Huntly, the only way one experiences such a place, the passerby witnesses the rare sight of a branded monument that seems to have slipped out of fashion in so far as the business has fallen from financial grace. DEKA was a nationwide chain of general merchandise stores in Aotearoa NZ. It was launched in 1988 by L. D. Nathan and on 30 July 2001, the brand ceased to operate in Aotearoa NZ. Its demise was due to fierce competition from The Warehouse and continual trading losses. Somehow though the sign seems to perpetuate boundless optimism, as it towers above the small township. Set against a backdrop of hazy blue sky the white double-sided sign with the DEKA logo of black letters supporting a magenta, yellow and light blue triangle between each letter respectively. The memory of a particular way of life and era continues six metres overhead.*

*The rusted metal legs that hold the sign aloft have anti-climb wire around them and on one leg a plaque arrogantly commemorates the ‘relighting’ of the sign by a national radio station. Though mimicking the electrification of streetlights this event further enhanced the regression and decline of the small town. A publicity stunt for sure, but maybe a profound act of remembrance, a beacon to warn passersby to avoid crashing on of the metaphorical rocks of small-town Aotearoa NZ.*



Figure 158. Elliot Collins, Mokotahi bach, Māhia township, (2014), Māhia Peninsula



Figure 159. Elliot Collins, Mokotahi hill (2014), Māhia Peninsula

## Acclimatising the Muse

*The wine-red house with corrugated-iron cladding sits below the damp green hills of Māhia Peninsula. The doors, windows, trim and fencing are all painted a crisp white. The curtains on the only window that faces the street are drawn. The sign on the house reads, Mokotahi, which is also the name of the hill that was once the site of Tirotirokauika Pā. It rises out of the sea and is a popular tourist attraction, though now in mid-winter the hill is deserted, a storm approaches.*

*There is a special place in the psyche of the New Zealander for corrugated-iron cladding. There is the D.I.Y attitude and the thrifty nature of using a material in a new way. There is a malleability to this material that lends itself to thrift and resourcefulness. It keeps the rain out but that's about all. It is a wind breaker but terrible insulator. But it goes further than that. The architecture of this image is one of reliability and connection to a past that apparently makes sense from this vantage point of its future and apparently was then under control. There was a beginning and an end to the days when the workers of the land would retreat to the relative safety of their rippled iron houses.*

*A flagpole sits devoid of flag at the apex of the roof.*

*Directly opposite the corrugated-iron house and standing on the grass field in front of Opoutama Beach I look beyond the black-and-white pole that seems to stand as modernist monument over the bay out to the distant Waikokopu. Māhia loosely translates to 'indistinct sound', and this could be referring to the waves on the beach and the wind rushing through the grasses, the indistinct sound of the approaching storm rumbles in the distance. The weather reinforces the reminder that I am not from here. The water is calm but the raindrops make their way effortlessly across the bay making small holes on the surface of the dull eggshell-blue water.*



Figure 160. Elliot Collins, Opoutama Beach, (2014), Māhia Peninsula



## The Indistinct Sound

*These images communicate with symbols of identity and origin, yet contain no traditional communiqué, at least not directly. The house is diminutive and safe yet bold and bright, and faces the storm head on. I am aware that on any other day it could face the sun-kissed shore 'head on' as well. But on this day the ocean view is multifaceted as it rises and falls, aspects are hidden under water or behind thick, low cloud. All is present yet invisible at the same time.*

*It is this fixed yet faint language upon the landscape that has come to symbolise a culture of being from here and nowhere else. It is in an embrace of all its parts that the richness of place is revealed. The practicalities of ocean travel, the mystery of closed curtains, the meteorological observations met with trips to the fish and chip shop, just down the road, all collide and are integrated in order to reveal the encrusted symbols of identity. All are held as a sum of their parts making a whole rather than a collection of ideas to be ordered, categorised and eliminated. To attain what Palinurus calls 'two-faced' truth:*

*we must be able to resolve all our dualities, simultaneously to perceive life as comedy and tragedy, to see the mental side of the physical and the reverse. We must learn to be at the same time objective and subjective – like Flaubert, who enjoyed what Thibaudet called 'le pleine logique artistique de la vision binoculaire' [The full artistic logic of binocular vision], or with that 'double focus'... Today the function of the artist is to bring imagination to science and science to imagination, where they meet, in the myth.<sup>393</sup>*



Figure 161. Elliot Collins, Punakaiki, (2017), West Coast

## Conclusion

This thesis has explored the ways in which places of memory merge into invisibility and an inability to ‘read’ the underlying qualities of marked places. The idea that the traveller has been or has not yet arrived does not discount their presence. My artistic practice explores the lingering effect that memory markers have on the witness as I position the viewer in the place of pilgrim or flâneur. Doing so, I contend with the problems of making art in and living in Aotearoa as a place with multidimensional concepts of time, place, memory and connection. This highlights a contribution to Aotearoa that pākehā can make in materialising an identity that is cognisant of tangata whenua. In this way, the project has opened up a post-colonial reading that Byrnes says ‘aims to unsettle and challenge the authority of colonialism and highlights its ambivalence and diversity. The “post” in postcolonial does not, as it is sometimes assumed, imply that we have somehow passed out of the colonising phase and are now in one of “decolonisation”.’<sup>394</sup> I have used a method that allows for variation and linguistic slippages; not languaging silence but languaging the boundaries within which silences can dwell. It is this addressing of silence that provokes new engagement with identity politics of a non-indigenous artist in Aotearoa NZ.

This approach incorporates an awareness that memory markers are precarious vessels that slip and swerve, challenging established systems of history and power. This thesis contributes to the ongoing discussion of how to record memory that is multilayered and complex. It also contributes to dialogue about the value hierarchy of memory that exists within any colonized landscapes. The ruinenlust of decaying and decomposing structures is looked upon with romantic fondness, and this begins to bolster a ‘placeness’ that suggests a deeper history and connection to the land. I am reminded throughout the journal that these decaying ornaments are merely accoutrements that also crumble and fall silent yet I have found that memory is far more pliable and resilient than its representations in the landscape.

At the core of my work, and translations of the landscape, exist a dis-stilling of memory and time to its most concentrated formulation to form a construct that paradoxically opens up ‘toward’ the depth of an elsewhere. This specific ‘elsewhereness’ troubles binary opposition which presume to lock a fixed site to a fixed time.

In an otherwise historical continuity, my work brings attention to a false split of memory and distance and examines colliding views of Māori and European understanding of time and significance of place. I have found the backwards-and-forwards-looking nature of memory markers is a difficulty when attempting to address the



Figure 162. Elliot Collins, New Zealand's first bridge, constructed c. 1860, Kohukohu, Hokianga



present. The role of the artist within the landscape is to give voice again to these memory markers. The term voice is not the voice of the surveyors or ancillary narrators to the Aotearoa NZ story but a considered voice that is learning to speak slowly in both te reo Māori and English not in translation but in complementary modes. New Zealand was a wilderness, or at least there was a wildness within her. Tracking the paths of artists in the 1950s and 1960s gave insights into how a contemporary pākehā artist might inhabit the landscape in a contemporary way and add to the history of art in Aotearoa. The modernist painters of New Zealand did not save the wilderness and in a sense the viewer has to now figuratively wade through a fiction that impeded a generation with a form of amnesia, holding them in a kind of cultural stasis. This idea of the lattice of identity in te ao Māori and broader Aotearoa NZ art has become a unique characteristic of text in our contemporary visual art practice. Ironically, language has also been used to defy colonisation and ‘it has enabled colonised peoples to appropriate, transform and subvert the discourses of the colonisers’.<sup>395</sup>

A significant contribution to the field of contemporary visual arts in Aotearoa NZ has been the use of the travel journal relating to ‘no-place’ but recording concrete places for the exploration of colonial and postcolonial memory. In this way, my transdisciplinary practice across photography, painting and sculpture holds significance in terms of the concepts of invisibility, trace and unmemory. Heidegger affirms these ideas when discussing Dasein, for as soon as it ‘exists,’ ‘in such a way that absolutely nothing more is still outstanding in it, then it has already for this very reason become “no-longer-Being-there” [Nicht-mehr-da-sein]’.<sup>396</sup> The creation of artwork about these states of being is a powerful visual expression and poignant method of navigating the ‘thrownness’ that occurs in the ongoing denial of ‘the nothing’ that so many of these memory markers stand to represent. In this context, I have welcomed the ‘problem’ of how to explain and produce work throughout my research that discusses the non-binary nature of memory. Death, like silence, is an impossible state to experience firsthand. We are always adjacent to death and arrive after silence as the memory marker concludes its auxiliary connection to the dead. The marker becomes the borderline or limit of comprehension as well as the metaphorical access point.

The ‘non-memorial’ memory markers have been of the greatest influence in my work over this time. They leave a palimpsestic trace and I have learnt how to use differing degrees of opacity and materiality to draw on fluid historical backgrounds. Remaining ‘silent’ – or at least attempting to mimic silence via stillness and contemplation – can be a powerful tool for understanding a greater cultural connection to a place and its people. Poetry and silence appear to antagonise history, yet they are entwined. In this way poetry is a vibrant aspect of creative production and a more autonomous tool for revealing identity.

395 Byrnes, 12.

396 M. Heidegger, J. MacQuarrie, and E.S. Robinson, *Being and Time*: Translated by John MacQuarrie & Edward Robinson, Library of Philosophy and Theology (S.C.M. Press, 1962), 280.



Figure 163. Elliot Collins, Rangihoua Pā, Oihi Road, First Missionary Settlement, (2016), Bay of Islands

The images that accompany this journal have been used to document my travels and act as memory markers of my explorations and thoughts throughout this journey. They have uncovered memory where it has been hidden or concealed, and reminded the reader of the way memory can exist in a landscape beyond perception.

The images that accompany this journal have been used to document my travels and act as monuments to my positions and thoughts throughout this journey. They have uncovered memory where it has been hidden or concealed, and reminded the reader of the way memory can exist in a landscape beyond perception.



Figure 164. Elliot Collins, 'Surveyor' installation view, St Paul Street Gallery 2, AUT, 2017



Figure 165. Elliot Collins, *Outside the mind of the world (intact and pure amid the flow of wind which bring only the sound and distilled moisture of the sea)*, (for Holcroft), 2017, kanuka essential oil, oyster shell from French Bay, Titirangi and brass in book (*Shock of the New* by Robert Hughes)



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Figure 166. Elliot Collins, *Surveyor*, Installation view, St Paul Street Gallery 2, AUT, 2017



Figure 167. Elliot Collins, *Surveyor*, Installation view, St Paul Street Gallery 2, AUT, 2017



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Figure 168. Elliot Collins, *The Is Land*, non-drying clay, 2017, Surveyor, St Paul Street Gallery 2, AUT

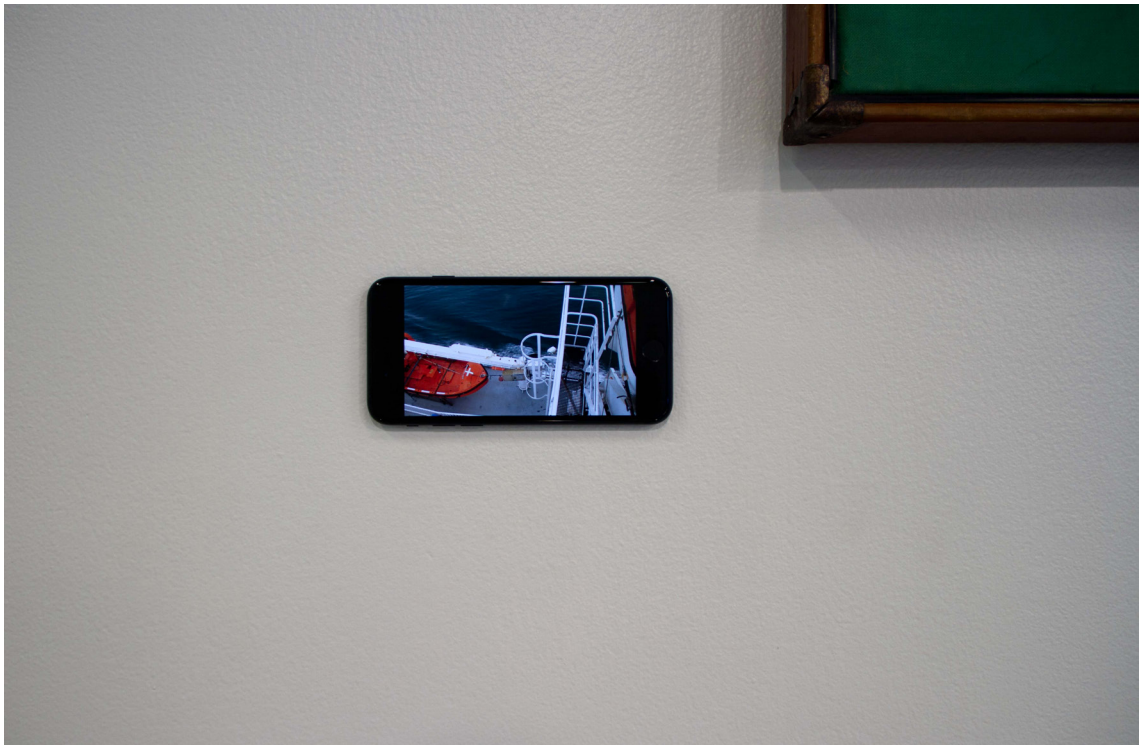


Figure 169. Elliot Collins, *Bodies of Water 2014-17*, 2017, duration 10.12, Surveyor, St Paul Street Gallery 2, AUT



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