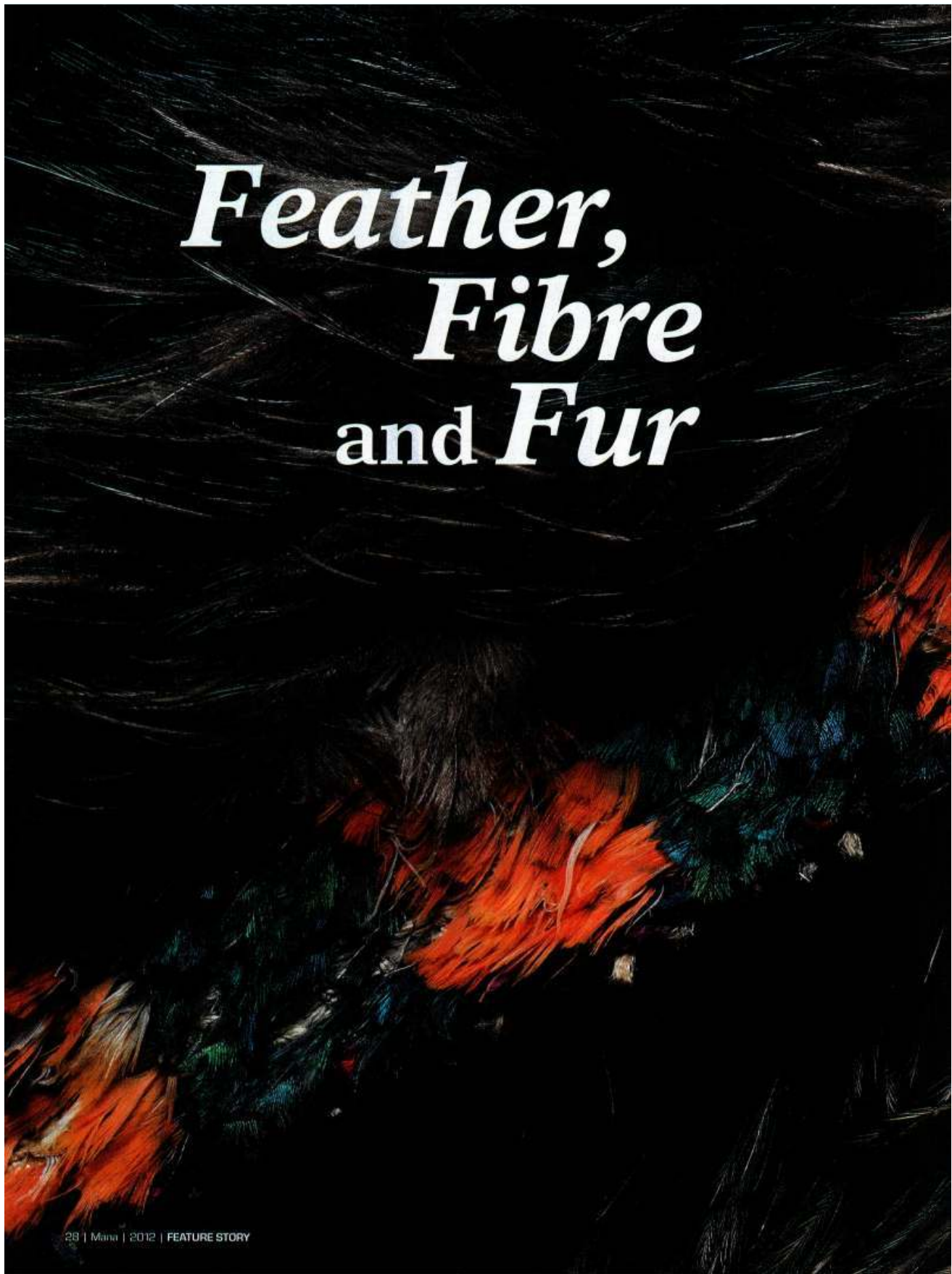


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Feather, Fibre and Fur



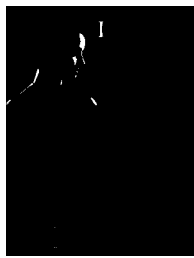


Below: Kahu kiwi (kiwi-feather cloak), 1800s, iwi (tribe) unknown, New Zealand, muka (flax fibre), brown-kiwi feathers. Te Papa (ME001378)



They are beautiful works of functional art that took months and sometimes years to make. And they have stories that are woven through the history of Aotearoa. Now Te Papa is opening its storehouse of woven cloaks for the public in a stunning exhibition. Aaron Smale spoke to the exhibition's lead curator Awhina Tamarapa. Photography by Norman Heke.





It's the smells that she most vividly remembers. Awhina Tamarapa's childhood memories are imbued with the aromas of flax processing and weaving materials. Her grandmother, Katarina Tamarapa, of Ngati Ruanui, would prepare harakeke and gradually introduced her to the intricacies of the craft.

"I was lucky growing up so closely with my grandmother. She was always weaving- tukutuku, kete, taniko, piupiu, kakahu. I used to love watching her fingers fly between the leaves as she wove her kete, and the smell of the green harakeke, and the boiling of piupiu in her big copper outside. My grandmother taught me kete weaving and taniko when I got older."

Now Awhina (Ngati Kahungunu, Ngati Ruanui, Ngati Pikiao) is a Curator, Maori at Te Papa and part of a team that takes care of some of the oldest extant examples of the craft that her grandmother taught her.

Te Papa has the largest Maori cloak collection in the world with over 350 cloaks. The collection ranges from the earliest documented said to have been collected by Cook's 3rd voyage to New Zealand in 1777, through to today's contemporary wearable arts.

Researchers, students, weavers, descendant and interest groups over the years had expressed the need for more information to be made available on the taonga held by Te Papa.

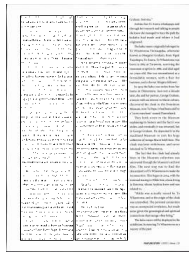
The survival of the older kakahu now in Te Papa's collection bridged a time when traditional weaving practices had waned during the late 19th and early 20th century through colonisation and the introduction of other forms of textiles by Europeans. However, the practice held on in some areas and then enjoyed a revival in the second half of the 20th century.

"In the past, weaving knowledge was closely guarded, and like other traditional art forms were sacred practices. There are tikanga associated with every aspect of weaving. Over time, some leading practitioners freed their teaching from former restrictions to allow an opening up of the art form to a wider group of people, in order for it to continue. In the 1950's, Dame Rangimarie Hetet and her daughter Diggeress Te Kanawa, of Ngati Maniapoto, began to teach people outside their own tribe."

There was a hui in Tokomaru Bay called by Ngoingoi Pewhairangi for Maori and Pacific weavers, in 1983 which drew over 300 people. From this hui the Aotearoa Te Moana nui a Kiwa weavers was formed, the predecessor to Te Roopu Raranga Whatu o Aotearoa, the national Maori weavers' collective. Many weavers from this time

Atareta Te Rangimarie Sciascia, a descendant of Rawinia Ngawaka Tukeke and a member of the Tutaki whatau of Porangatjau, Hawke's Bay, wears a kahu kiwi (kiwi-feather cloak) named Plata. Gift of Judy La Marsh, Te Papa. (MED11807). Photograph by Norm Heke. Reproduced with the kind permission of the descendants of Rawinia Ngawaka Tukeke.

Previous page: Detail of the same cloak.



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have shared their skills, teaching through the education system, arts organisations and independently.

Te Papa held a wananga in 2007 initiated by the committee of Te Roopu Raranga Whatu o Aotearoa. The research, sharing of information and access they had to Te Papa's collection guided further research which culminated in the publication in 2011 of *Whatu Kakahu: Maori Cloaks*.

The publication features essays by prominent practitioners and experts including Awhina, Kahutoi Te Kanawa, John Turi-Tiakitai, Toi Te Rito Maihi, Patricia Te Arapo Wallace, Maureen Lander and Margery Blackman complimented by over 300 images by Te Papa photographer Norman Heke. Forty cloaks from the Te Papa collection are featured.

There was so much momentum behind the project that it seemed only logical to organise an exhibition to celebrate Maori cloak weaving and weavers. The exhibition won't be just a static affair though and a number of contemporary weavers will be working in the exhibition space over the time it is on. The weavers and members of Te Papa staff will be available to talk to the public and Awhina says people are welcome to inquire about kakahu of their own that may need restoration or want to find out more about.

Besides their artistry the garments often have complex stories attached to them, some well-documented others not, while others had tiny clues that lead to an unraveling of a history. Because of the mana associated with an intricate cloak they were often given as gifts to honour relationships. Some were presented to important early pakeha and then found their way into collections overseas before coming back to Aotearoa again.

One story is of a kahu kiwi (kiwi feather cloak) that belonged to Rawinia Ngawaka Tukeke of Ngati Kere, Ngati Pihere and Ngati Hinetewai of Porangahau. Rawinia was a wahine rangatira for her community at a time of social and political change around the mid 1800's. She adopted the first European baby to Porangahau, whose descendants are the Lambert family. According to the information that came with the cloak, Rawinia 'threw' the kahu kiwi at the feet of James Henry St Hill, a prominent resident magistrate in Wellington. St Hill's relations are the Porangahau St Hill-Warren family.

St Hill returned to England, where he died in 1866. His widow gave the cloak to a Mrs McDonald. When she passed away, her nephew inherited the cloak. He later emigrated to Canada around 1900. His daughter, Mrs Dorothy Carmichael, inherited the cloak when he died. For about 65 years the cloak was stored away in a

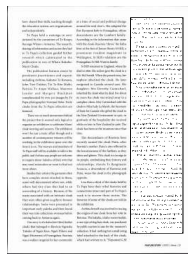
camphor chest. Mrs Carmichael sold the cloak to Miss Judy La Marsh, the Secretary of State for Canada who gifted the cloak to the New Zealand Government in 1967, in gratitude of the hospitality she received while on tour in New Zealand in 1966. The cloak has been at the museum since that time.

The descendants of Rawinia have recently named the cloak Piata, after Rawinia's mother. Piata is also reflected in the luxuriousness of the feathers, as they shine and glisten. This cloak is a taonga to its people, symbolising their history and relationships. Atareta Te Rangimarie Sciascia, a descendent of Rawinia and Piata, wears the cloak in the photograph opposite.

Less than a third of the cloaks held by Te Papa have their tribal histories and connections intact and part of Te Papa's work is to recover those stories. The histories of some of the cloaks are told in the exhibition.

Awhina herself was involved in tracing the origins of one cloak from her rohe in Rotorua. The kakahu, a kahu waero/mahiti, a rare type of dog-hair cloak, was purchased by public auction in 1991 for the museum's collection. It had nothing but a small swing label attached to the back of the cloak, which had written on it, "Deposited G.M

→



Graham. Rotorua.”

Awhina has Te Arawa whakapapa and through her research and talking to people she knew she managed to trace the path the kakahu had made and where it had originated.

The kahu waero originally belonged to Te Wharetoroa Tiniraupeka, otherwise known as Margaret Graham, from Ngati Tunohopu, Te Arawa. Te Wharetoroa was born in 1863 at Tarawera, surviving the mountain eruption in 1886, and died aged 101 years old. She was remembered as a formidable woman, with a flair for business, and a devout Ringatu follower.

In 1909 the kahu was stolen from her

home in Ohinemutu. Just over a decade later, she and her partner, George Graham, a lawyer with an interest in Maori culture, discovered the cloak in the Dominion Museum, now Te Papa. It had been sold by a ‘curio merchant’ named Dannefaerd.

They both wrote to the Museum explaining its history and the fact it was stolen, and eventually it was returned, but to George Graham. He deposited it in the Auckland Museum to join his large collection of taonga Maori held there. The cloak was later withdrawn, and never returned to Te Wharetoroa.

The fact that the cloak had already been in the Museum collection was

uncovered through the Museum’s archival files. The next step was to find the descendant’s of Te Wharetoroa to make the reconnection. This began in 2004, with the eventual tracing to Hilda Inia, a kuia living in Rotorua, whom Awhina knew and was related to.

“Hilda was actually raised by Te Wharetoroa, and so the origin of the cloak was unravelled. The personal connection was an unexpected revelation, but made sense given the genealogical and spiritual connections that taonga often bring.”

The kahu waero will be displayed in the exhibition, honouring Te Wharetoroa as a weaver of the past.



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Kahu Ora / Living Cloaks

Opens 8 June to 21 October, in the Visa Platinum Gallery, level 4, Te Papa, Wellington.

The exhibition is approximately three quarters customary taonga, and approximately one-quarter contemporary Maori items, including Maori art, through the work of multi-media installation artist, Maureen Lander. There will be 36 cloaks from the Te Papa collection on display including one Aboriginal Possum Skin cloak, and 14 loans from private collections and museums.

The exhibition themes and knowledge have been drawn largely from the cloak book research. There are six segments that explore different aspects; the cultural and spiritual symbolism of weaving for weavers and the wearers of prestige cloaks, the connections and relationships between people and cloaks, the science and technology of cloak weaving through the ground breaking work of Te Papa textile conservator Rangi Te Kanawa (Ngati Maniapoto), Te Papa bicultural science researcher Hokimate Harwood (Ngapuhi) and Maori textile scholar Dr Patricia Wallace (Ngati Porou), and the innovation from European influence through to the revival of cloak weaving from the 1950's to today.

Peter Love, Te Atiawa, wears a kahu kuri (dog skin cloak). Gift of W.Leo Buller, 1911. Te Papa (ME2053). Photograph by Norm Heke. Reproduced with the kind permission of Te Atiawa.



Rare cloaks

On loan from the Puke Ariki Museum, New Plymouth is a dog skin cloak of eight whole dog pelts, stitched together with dog hide. A man named Rawahotana, from Te Namu pa, Opunake, made the skins into a cloak sometime between 1810-1815. The dog skins were collected and tanned by an ariki named Kiore, also from Te Namu pa. It is the only one of its kind in existence.

This exhibition is a rare opportunity to see another significant cloak, loaned from the National Gallery of Art, Canberra, Australia. This cloak is a large kaitaka (fine, silken cloak with undecorated foundation, edged with taniko patterning), with multiple taniko borders that make the cloak appear like three cloaks, one on top of another. Kaitaka, also known as parawai, were prestige cloaks, probably at their height in the first half of the 19th century. By the 1840's they were scarce-probably due to the incredible length of time and skill required to make them and the increasing influence of European dress, style and materials. Kaitaka usually had one taniko border around the edges, more rarely two, called kaitaka huaki. This cloak has three. It also features taniko techniques and construction that are not practised today. Variations of a 'black on black' or reverse taniko weaving has been studied by textiles scholar Margery Blackman.

Contemporary cloaks

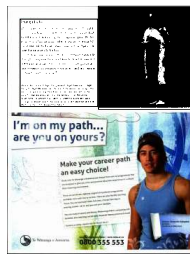
There is a range of contemporary cloaks that are from the Te Papa collection and also loaned from families, individual weavers and other museums. One distinctive cloak is an Australian wild dog Trans Tasman cloak, woven by Keren Ruki (Ngati Maniapoto, Ngati Tuwharetoa, Ngati Mahanga). She moved with her family to Australia in 1975. In 2004 Keren was the recipient of a NSW Ministry for the Arts 'Western Sydney Artists' Fellowship' in which she proposed to weave a Trans-Tasman kakahu that melded the weaving practices of both lands:

"I wanted to create a kakahu slightly different from ones I'd seen, something that expressed the duality of my experiences in life, of feeling a sense of belonging to both Australia and New Zealand but staying true to my roots".

Keren researched customary Maori dogskin cloaks in museum collections. She travelled back and forth over the next two years harvesting and preparing muka (harakeke or NZ flax fibre) for the foundation of her cloak. Keren spent 8 months weaving the compact muka base. The Australian wild dog skins were 6 whole skins obtained from trappers in the NSW Alpine country. They tanned the skins using a mix of natural, black wattle bark and synthetic solutions. Keren cut the strips free-hand using a Stanley knife, holding it up on the pelt side. One whole skin was used for the kurupatu (collar). Keren sewed the strips onto the muka base with a needle and thread, as done customarily. This took her 3 years, but what an achievement and an inspiration for weaver's today.



Weavers' wananga, Te Whare Pora storeroom, Te Papa, 3-5 August 2007. Left to right: Tina Wirihana, Edna Pahewa, John Turi-Tiakitai, Fiona Collis, Kataraina Hetet, Dion Peita, Toi Maihi, Lisa Ward, Awhina Tamarapa, Kahutoi Te Kanawa Sonia Snowden, Matekino Lawless (absent: Rokahurihia Ngarimu-Cameron).



Living cloaks

The weavers will be available to engage with the public between the hours of 12-4pm, Wednesday to Sunday. Each month a local weaving group will occupy this space. The first group will be Nga Tapuwae o Hine te iwaiwa- Whitireia NZ/ Hongoeka, led by Kohai Grace (Ngati Porou, Ngati Toa, Ngati Raukawa and Te Ati Awa).

There will also be a long term online resource available through Te Papa's website called Kakahu/Maori Cloaks that

will feature detailed information about all Te Papa's cloaks, recent research, expert weavers, researchers and information on how to care for cloaks. ↵ ↗

Weaver Karl Leonard (Ngati Rangiwewehi, Ngati Ngararanui, Ngati Pahipoto, Ngati Raukawa) will be one of the weavers working in the exhibition space during the exhibition. Karl was selected for the 2012 Toi Sgwigwialtxw (pronounced sgweg-voi-out) Residency in North America, where he will spend six weeks at Evergreen State College collaborating with Native American and Alaska Native artists. Photo courtesy of Te Arawa Charitable Trust.

