

TOI NGĀPUHI

FEATURED TOI NGĀPUHI CREATIVE



FEATURED: KURA TE WARU REWIRI
NGĀPUHI, NGĀTI KAHU, NGĀTI RANGI,
NGĀTI KAUPHATA

Kura Te Waru Rewiri is an acclaimed artist, academic and educator who was born in Kaeo in 1950.

Her tribal affiliations are to Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Kahu ki Whangaroa and Ngāti Rangi ki Taiamai, whilst her grandmother Miriama Mita shares a whakapapa connection to Ngāti Kauwhata in Feilding.

Kura is currently based in Palmerston North where she is Associate Professor of the Māori Visual Arts programme, Toioho ki Āpiti, at Massey University.

Kura is the eldest of nine children born to Samuel and Geneva Davis nee Renata. Both her grandmothers, Ida Wetere Renata and Miriama Mita, were very much a part of her upbringing. Ida Wetere Renata in particular was an influential presence in her early life when the family lived next to their marae, Mangaiti, in Kaeo. Kura is currently the Chair of the Mangaiti Marae Trustees.

Kura loved art from a young age and this was instilled not only through her family life but through her schooling. This began at Paihia Primary School then carried through to Northland College where she had Selwyn Wilson as an art teacher and finally to Bay of Islands College where her art teachers were Beresford Pick and Buck Nin. Kura saw Buck Nin as a great role model because he painted in the classroom, taught in front of his easel and had a fine reputation as an artist.

Buck Nin was the one who arranged for Kura to attend the University of Canterbury Ilam School of Fine Arts in Christchurch where she gained a 4-year Diploma in Fine Arts (Hons) in painting with a thesis on pre-European art specifically stone tool carving.

The Ilam period was an important time for Kura: it was where she started to find her own voice as an artist and as a scholar, and where she was able to research carving which had previously been seen as a restrictive genre for Māori women. Kura said of this,

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Today we are informed by Tohunga Whakairo that women have always carved. As Māori women we have to redefine our past so that we know where we stand now.

During her University years Kura was in Ngā Tamatoa, the Young Māori Activist Group.

After Ilam, Kura trained as a secondary school teacher. She taught at Tamaki College in 1975 and had her first son Michael Rewiri Thorsen later that same year. Her partner got his first teaching position at Te Kuiti High School. Kura taught art part-time and had her second son Samuel in 1978. In 1980, the family moved to other teaching positions,



ABOVE: *He tohu tuatahi*, 1991
- Auckland Art Gallery Collection

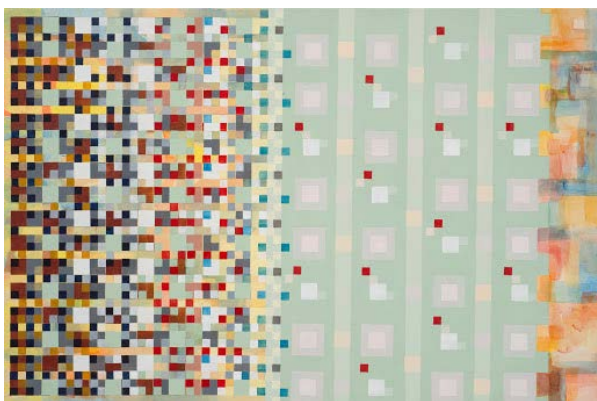
Kura, to Western Heights High School and her partner to Rotorua Girls High School. In 1981, Kura was appointed Head of Art at Tangaroa College in East Tamaki while her partner became the 2nd Field Officer at the Post Primary Teachers Association. Kura taught art at Tangaroa College until 1985 when she started to paint full-time.

However the full-time painting was short-lived because in 1986, she was appointed PR3 Director of Te Puke o Tara Community Centre. This was also the period of the Te Hokinga mai - Te Maori exhibition and Kura was seconded into the role as Education Officer at the Auckland Art Gallery which was the last venue for the world-acclaimed exhibition. It was also during the late 1980s that Kura was asked to initiate the first cultural exchange with Hawaiian artists alongside Eric Tamepo, Project Manager for MASPAC (Māori Arts and South Pacific Arts Council) which was part of the funding agency, the Queen Elizabeth Arts Council.

During Te Hokinga mai-Te Maori Kura reconnected with taonga that she had written about in her thesis however naïve that might have been at the time. This was an important turning point in her artistic career as a figurative painter influenced by the carving style of Ngāpuhi and Ngāti Whātua.

Since then, Kura has gone on to have a significant career as an experimental and award-winning artist.

KURA TE WARU REWIRI



LEFT TOP:

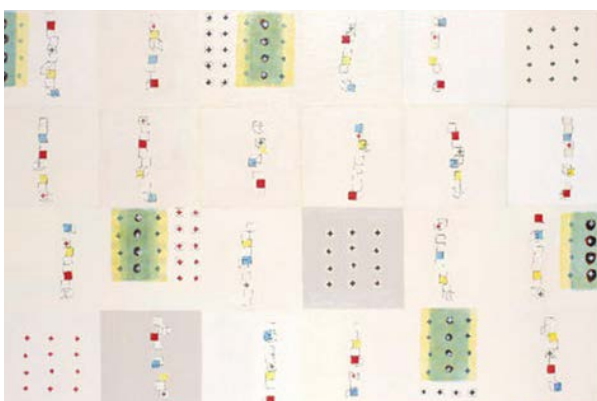
Patipati, 2005 acrylic on canvas,
3000 x 1998mm

LEFT BOTTOM:

Attachments, 2006 acrylic on
canvas, 2000 x 25000mm

BELOW:

Ki mua, ki muri, 2005 acrylic on
canvas, - 2500 x 2000mm



From 2006 to 2016, Kura worked in Whāngarei at Northland Polytechnic. She returned home to take care of her mother and offer relief to her younger siblings who lived with her mother. During that time, (2007 to 2014) Kura was appointed to the Board of Te Waka Toi at Creative New Zealand. This was the last Board for Māori Arts before all of the Arts Boards became an Arts Council under a unitary governance model.

In 2015, Kura project managed and was a major contributing artist to the refurbished and completed whare at Northland Polytechnic which opened on Dec 5th.

Kura's work has been shown in ground-breaking exhibitions of contemporary Māori art both within New Zealand and overseas. Her paintings are held in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa o Tongarewa, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Waikato Museum Te Whare Taonga o Waikato and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

In 2012, Nigel Borell curated a survey exhibition of Kura's work at the Mangere Art Centre, Nga Tohu o Uenuku. This exhibition was a selected retrospective that covered 26 years of Kura's art and it was accompanied by the publication, *Kura: Story of a Māori Woman Artist*.

In 2014 her work was included in the Toi Tamaki exhibition of Five Māori Painters alongside Robyn Kahukiwa, Emily Karaka, Star Gossage and Saffron Te Ratana.

Kura's latest involvement has been with the Kauri Dieback artist project in Te Taitokerau and the Paraikete works by Whangaroa mana wahine in response to the Waitangi Tribunal Hearings, Te Papa o te Raki.

Today Kura leads the College of Creative Arts Māori Visual Arts, Toioho ki Apiti programme at Massey University, which celebrates its 25th Anniversary this year.



TOI NGĀPUHI

Inspiring excellence in
Ngāpuhi cultural and
creative expression
across Te Taitokerau

Te whakaoho i te ihiihi,
mō te kounga o ngā
tikanga, me ngā
auahatanga o Ngāpuhi,
puta noa i Te Taitokerau.

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