Audio-described Guide Transcript

**Lisa Reihana: Kura Moana** - Aotearoa New Zealand Festival 2022

This document contains the text for the audio description of Kura Moana by Lisa Reihana. You can listen to the audio description recordings at ​​https://www.festival.nz/events/all/lisa-reihana-kura-moana/

The audio description is made up of three tracks:

Track 1 describes how the artwork is encountered.

Track 2 introduces Lisa Reihana’s concept for Kura Moana.

Track 3 is made up of six individual tracks, specific to each installation, and describes the key visual elements in each.

# Track 1

Kura Moana by Lisa Reihana

Aotearoa New Zealand Festival 2022

This work is a promenade installation. It will be described as though we are walking from the Taranaki Street Wharf on the waterfront, beginning at the statue of Kupe Raiatea, skirting Whairepo Lagoon, on to the City to Sea Bridge, and ending at Te Papa.

In Lisa Reihana’s own words: ‘Kura Moana - art and the gift of ocean knowledge’ encourages people to walk along Wellington’s waterfront to encounter new works of art and to reacquaint themselves with familiar landmarks. The Tahitian navigator Kupe Raiatea, his wife Hine-Te-Aparangi, and Te-Wheke-a-Muturangi, the female octopus they chased, are explored through sculpture, video and song. Their great odyssey across Te Moana Nui a Kiwa, and the discovery of Aotearoa is told from a nuanced, feminine perspective’.

For each installation you will be offered a description of the art work during the day, and following that, how the installation changes, if this is significant, at night.

# Track 2

Lisa Reihana’s artistry is being highlighted and celebrated by The Aotearoa New Zealand Festival. As an Artist in Focus for the Festival in 2022, three exceptional video works by Reihana complement and contextualise the Kura Moana suite.

At Te Papa Tongarewa, Reihana's seminal project Native Portraits n.19897, can be seen, as well as the internationally acclaimed in Pursuit of Venus [infected]. This massive work is being shown in its completed form in Aotearoa New Zealand for the first time. in Pursuit of Venus [infected] has been audio described, and is available to listen to on the Te Papa website: tepapa.nz/ipov

Pataka Art + Museum exhibits Nomads of the Sea - He Wai Ngungurua. This artwork is based on Charlotte Badger, the first European woman to live in Aotearoa. These works are all inspired by great characters, fearless travellers crossing oceans to discover new worlds and a different life

# Track 3

## Kupe Raiatea - Taranaki Wharf

The first sculpture we encounter in Kura Moana is one which is a familiar landmark on the Wellington waterfront, but has been augmented and enhanced by Reihana so that we encounter it afresh. The bronze sculpture is by William Trethewey. It is called Kupe Raiatea, and shows Kupe, his wife Hine-Te-Aparangi and Pekahourangi, a tohunga, at the moment of sighting Aotearoa New Zealand from their waka.

Reihana has introduced two new features to the statue. While you are here at the half hour, the song you hear is Ngatai Huata’s waiata Aotearoa. This waiata brings a feminine focus to Kupe’s exploits, and honours his wife, Hine-Te-Aparangi, who named New Zealand, and was also a navigator. You will hear sounds of a waka and sea birds alongside the waiata. Additionally, the sculpture is adorned with lei, and ei-katu. The lei are garlands worn around the neck, and ei-katu are wreaths worn on the head.

The statue is massive, towering above us. It is comprised of three figures, in a roughly triangular formation, each of whom are at least one and a half times an average human size. The group of three figures all face the moana, and are mounted on a granite plinth. The plinth is head high, and the corner that protrudes towards us is finished in a broad vertical band of bronze. A curved backdrop with a smooth cream plaster finish forms a screen behind the three figures, so that the viewer is invited to regard them from the front.

With the sea at our backs, the sculpture is viewed standing alone. The nearby trees and buildings are far enough away to not impact on the sculpture. It sits on steel grating and has wharf piles on the ground encircling it’s base. A bronze plaque on the plinth says:

‘Matahourua Te Waka, Ko Kupe Te Tangata, Ko Hine-Te-Aparangi Te Wahine. Kupe Raiatea the Explorer, his wife Hine-Te-Aparangi, and Pekahourangi the Tohunga, sight Aotearoa, New Zealand, from their canoe Matahourua. This Kupe group statue was created in plaster of paris by sculptor William Trethewey and featured at the 1940 New Zealand Centennial Exhibition at Rongotai. In 1999 the statue was cast in bronze as a Millennium project and unveiled on 4th March 2000 as a tribute to all who have come to these shores’.

A further plaque on the wooden wharf piles lists those involved in the Millenium Project.

Reihana has invited local communities to honour the voyagers with traditional lei and ei-katu - garlands made to welcome, honour and celebrate. All the figures wear a wreath around their heads of fresh green rauti, a green foliage of Cook Island origin, this is an ei- katu. They have a further garland of the same material around their necks, hanging down as far as their midriff. Kupe’s rauti lei is a full circle, while the other two are open at the bottom. The surface of the sculpted figures is a weathered metallic bronze, which has shades of blue and green patina among the bronzed browns of the metal. The darkness and solid density of the bronze metal sculpture provides a powerful contrast to the delicacy of the lei and ei-katu, all of which are made from natural fibres: soft cream and brown colours for the tapa and fresh green for the ei-katu. Some of the tapa cloth flowers have black pearls at their centre and feathers as additional decoration.

The three figures are closely grouped. They are all looking intently in the same direction. All are fit and lean with clear muscle definition. They wear traditional clothing. Hine-Te-Aparangi points intently with her index finger, her left arm outstretched. Her arm has three cream coloured tapa lei looped over it, two of them are swished across to sit over the top of Pekahourangi’s hands. Above and behind her, standing tallest in the group, is the figure of Kupe. He grasps a taiaha in his left hand, and looks towards the land his wife is pointing at. He has a green lei around his neck, and a further cream coloured one made of individual flowers. The flowers are made of creamy white tapa cloth, and strung so that they are seen as individuals, interspersed with fronds of brown tapa cloth.

Pekahourangi, a tohunga, is the lower figure of the three. He sits, his hands resting on top of a paddle, which he holds vertically. The paddle has a carved end, the shape of a quarter circle. He is looking a little to the left of where Kupe and Hine-Te-Aparangi are focused. He also has two garlands, a fresh green lei around his neck, and a cream one made of tapa, of a similar design to the one that Kupe wears around his neck.

I will describe the sculpture in detail as William Trethewey made it. All the figures are in a hybrid form of European dress and Maori kakahu. Kupe and his wife are in their youthful prime. They wear loincloths, which are gathered between their legs so that their legs are exposed to the waist. They are both bare chested. Kupe has clearly defined muscles in his torso and strong, muscular arms and legs. Hine-Te-Aparangi has beautiful, conical breasts, a lean belly, and shapely legs. Her weight rests on her right leg, and the left is at a slight angle, the foot resting on something, so that her knee turns slightly inward. Over her right shoulder, a length of woven material, interspersed with two-stranded tassels with fringed edges drapes the right hand side of her body, falling to her mid calf. She grasps the material in her right hand. Her hair is gathered at the nape, and she has two slightly curled feathers tucked in above her ear, pointing upwards. Around her neck, below the collar bone is a string of widely spaced triangular beads, rather like teeth or seeds. She has a moko kauae on her chin.

Behind her, Kupe stands on something that is covered by a length of fabric, to get a better view, making him half a body taller than his wife. He has a length of material over his left shoulder, which falls clear of his body. His arm is almost fully extended upwards, making the taiaha in his hand the tallest thing in the sculpture. It has a pointed tip, with a substantial base, which tapers down to form the main body of the weapon. His hand grips just below the spearhead. On his head, at an angle, protruding forwards out of his top knot is a feather-shaped ornament that seems to be carved from something, as it has traditional patterns on it. A long earring drops from his ear. This has a tassel shape. His right arm is extended behind his wife’s head.

Seated at the right of the group is the tohunga Pekahourangi. He seems older than the other two, his cheeks a little sunken. Less muscular, though still lean. He has a beard and moustache, the beard curling under his chin. His hair is also in a topknot. He has a woven cloak wrapped around him, across his chest. Both hands rest on his paddle. One leg is extended, while the other is drawn up and bent at the knee, facing inwards.

Two wreaths have been placed on the ground, leaning on the two front faces of the plinth. These are ornate, made of the same green foliage with small pink, yellow and white flowers.

At night the statue is lit from below, with a further light to the left. The signage from the festival is also illuminated.

## Te Wheke-a-Muturangi - Whairepo Lagoon

Following the Whairepo lagoon around towards the City to Sea bridge we find Te Wheke-a-Muturangi, Kupe’s opponent - a huge octopus that he chased across the ocean. The octopus was sent by the sorcerer Muturangi to cause chaos in his village by stealing the villagers’ fish. Kupe chased her across the Pacific Ocean to Aotearoa.

Te Wheke-a-Muturangi, as Reihana has created her, is a giant inflated sculpture, whose eight arms are animated by the current and by the wind. The sculpture is huge. Te Wheke-a-Muturangi is about five metres tall, and her arms extend out into the water - each one is about five metres long, giving her a span of over 13 metres.

She truly seems alive as she stirs the water with her eight arms, all independently moving in response to the movement of the sea, and rears her head up assertively as the wind nudges her.

Her massive balloon-like body is a pinky-red colour. Close to where her arms converge, she has a face, with two bright yellow eyes, with black horizontal pupils. On either side of her head are orange ovals, the size of a skateboard, about where we have ears. These are her funnels - used to swim and steer. Above these features, she has a large bulbous form, that rises high to form the central mass of her body. It is adorned with silver-grey lines, of a consistent width, which make complex maze patterns, some of which are concentric squares. These are outlined by more lines that chase part way around the square and then divert at right angles. Her yellow arms have the same kind of lines running up them, they are the same width, but a pinkish colour and run in chevron formation, like individual arrow heads in a line. Underneath her yellow arms she has a double row of round yellow suckers, which have pink between the rows. As her arms meet her body, the background colour of her body changes to pinky-red. She looks across the lagoon towards Wharewaka and Taranaki Street.

At night Te Wheke-a-Muturangi is illiuminated in red and orange lights making her stand out on the water. She also has blue lights below her, which look as if she has eggs underneath her in the water. The lights enhance the patterns on her body. The graphics are from Reihana's funky digital tukutuku patterns.

## Pūrākau - City to Sea Bridge

This is an AR - augmented reality - installation that is accessible through smartphones. Scanning the QR code will allow you to hear the Pūrākau or ‘story’. This is the story told by the magical presence of Te Wheke-a-Muturangi. Scanning the QR code also makes the image visible to the sighted audience. The spoken words you hear, and the image you see is that of artist Jahra Wasasala’s response to Ngatai Huata’s waiata Aotearoa, which was heard in the Kupe Raiatea installation.

In this incarnation Te Wheke-a-Muturangi has a human face, that of a beautiful woman, fully made up with a regal presence, who has seven arms. Each arm which twists and undulates expressively, crossing and twinning as she speaks, her hands circling at the wrist gracefully and constantly. Like an octopus, her body constantly changes colour, she shimmers, the outline blurring slightly and reconfiguring as she moves. Like Te Wheke, her body ends below her arms.

She hovers above the pouwhenua - the tall wooden poles topped with navigational symbols - stars, crescent moons and circles - which are a well known feature of the City to Sea Bridge created by artist Para Machitt. She holds a blue cell phone in her third hand, sometimes swapping it casually to her fifth hand.

Her silver hair is piled up on her head in elaborate curls. It is a kind of fabulous, towering bouffant, which is adorned at the back with a whole turtle shell. This echoes Te Wheke-a-Muturangi’s body shape. Around her neck she has a multitude of pearl necklaces of different lengths, while her torso is dressed in a sheer top with white bands that crisscross around her arms. This has a stand up collar with round edges which meet at her throat.

As she speaks, she sometimes pauses to adjust her lipstick, or touch a curl. She seems very self aware as she intermittently poses for selfies and pursues the ideal angle and expression. When the camera clicks on the cell phone, a flash of light washes across her.

All the while, tiny silver bubbles float up, dancing across her body as she moves and speaks.

This installation is the same at night - more visible, in fact against the night sky.

## Tableau Vivant - Te Papa Lagoon

Lisa Reihana calls this installation Tableau Vivant. It references her earlier work, currently showing at Te Papa Tongarewa: Native Portraits n.19897

The video plays from 8pm, It is projected on the granite wall of Te Papa lagoon, which faces the harbour.

The figures we see in this video are all dressed in historical clothes from the nineteen-twenties. They are clearly artist models, creating a composition and testing poses. The lighting throughout is low and moody, isolating the figures as though they exist independently in a dark space. They maintain an impassive facial expression throughout.

The words ‘Inspired by the statue Kupe Raiatea by William Trethewey’ in white writing on a black background, then the words ‘Tableau Vivant’.

The screen goes black. A male figure appears, in a wide shot. He is dressed in a white shirt, waistcoat and trousers, with a cloak over his left shoulder. He grasps a taiaha, shifting his hands along the shaft, turning it clockwise and stepping forward while turning slowly. This is the model for Kupe.\

Out of the darkness at his right another figure, an older man, appears. We realise that the first man is on a platform, beside two stacked boxes. The second man is white haired, similarly dressed, but with spectacles, holding a hoe or waka steering paddle, which he rotates slowly to vertical. He settles himself on the platform. This is the model for Pekahourangi. Simultaneously the model for Kupe opens his cloak and places his right hand on his hip, as his left hand plants the taiaha vertically on his left.

Out of the darkness on the left of the screen a woman appears. She is in a oyster coloured camisole and jodhpurs, with a cloak draped over her left shoulder. She wears black T-bar shoes. Her wavy Pacific hair is in a loose shoulder length bohairstyle .She has a feather in her hair. She takes a pose, her right hand at her hip, grasping her cloak, her feet firmly planted.This is the model for Hine-Te-Aparangi.

The older man rotates the paddle, cradling it and looking along it. All the models slowly turn their bodies and look off to the left of the screen. The woman raises her arm horizontally, they hold this pose.

The woman turns, and looks towards us. The models all shift position slightly, turning their gaze so that each of them gazes in a different direction, outwards.

The model posing for Kupe places a cloak on the woman’s right shoulder and they both turn to look out to the right of the frame. All now looking in the same direction.

The older man now shifts his paddle onto an angle, looking down as he makes the adjustment, while the woman gathers the cloak to one side and places her right hand on her hip, as the left comes up to horizontal.

This final composition most closely approximates the finished sculpture Kupe Raiatea.

The image slowly fades to black.

When the image reappears we see more detailed portraits of the models for Kupe and Hine-Te-Aparangi in a mid two shot. He helps her adjust her cloak and they look off into the distance. The image dissolves to refocus on the man posing for Pekahourangi. In a mid shot he looks along his paddle and slowly rotates it. We dissolve to black. The man playing Kupe appears, lifts his taiaha and sights along it. Dissolve to black. The woman appears in head and shoulders, she turns her head slowly. We see the feather in her hair, and a great quantity of wavy, shoulder length hair.

The image fades once more to black before showing us the model for Hine-Te-Aparangi in a loose mid shot, assuming exactly the position that we recognise from William Trethewey’s sculpture.

The screen fades to black and the credits come up: white lettering on a black background.

Kupe Raiatea - Charles Koroneho

Pekahourangi - Teokotai Paitai

Hine-Te-Aparangi - Jahra Wasasala

## Te Wheke - The Battle - Te Papa Lagoon

This installation plays on the same screen as the Tableau Vivant, on the screen beside the waterfall outside Te Papa.

This installation only plays in the evening, from 8pm. The video is just over two minutes long. Two majestic taiaha like the one Kupe was holding are being wielded in the centre of the screen, but we cannot see who is moving them. They circle and strike against each other in whirling patterns. Each time they hit, we hear the crashing sound of their impact. One has a green light emanating from it, and the other a soft orange, the light encircles them like an aura. Smoke billows up from below and blows across the screen as the taiaha clash and the battle continues. The Te Papa Lagoon reflects the projected video images making the battle appear to take place in the water.

## Ngā Kaikanikani ō Te Rangi - The Skydancers - Waitangi Park

Among the complex textures of the foliage in Waitangi Park, six figures dance energetically, towering over the waterfront gardens. They are colourful inflated geckos. They are interspersed at random intervals between the wooden boardwalk and the tarmac of the waterfront promenade. Each gecko is at the top of an approximately five to eight metre inflated tube. The tube is as thick as a person. The geckos’s bodies occupy the top two or three metres, with the remainder below being their thick tails and a dark brown bark pattern.The geckos have bulging eyes and wide open mouths, with long red and orange tongues that wag in the breeze, and four little feet with splayed toes sticking out at the side and moving constantly. The geckos move vigorously and frenetically as the tubes that form their bodies alternately inflate, partially collapse and are blown side ways over and over. The movement is both comical and frenetic. Each gecko has a different colour and print which are taken from Reihana’s diamond patterned tukutuku designs over bodies that are bright green, orange, purple, blue and yellow. Their bellies are a more muted pale grey.

At night the Geckos have lights in them, which illuminate the tubes of their bodies, shining out particularly clearly from parts that are paler, like their bellies and mouths. Some of the light spills onto the nearby foliage and is echoed by lights in the city beyond.