

From the collection

One of the most iconic images of a New Zealand subject is *Mt Egmont from the Southwards*, painted in September 1840 by 20-year-old Charles Heaphy.

As draughtsman for the New Zealand Company, Heaphy had the task of encouraging immigration to "the little Britain of the South" by showing pleasant scenery and arable pasture. Settlement of New Plymouth in 1841 led to tensions between Te Ati Awa and the new colonists, with the Taranaki Wars and corollary land confiscations ensuing.

Nearly 160 years later, Julian Hooper's oil painting corrects Heaphy's earlier watercolour representation with a double rendition of the symmetrical volcanic peak. Below, the mountain appears as Heaphy described it – impossibly steep and Mount Fuji-like. By sweeping white paint up the peak from the end of the cocked carbine rifle held by the Forest Ranger in the foreground, Hooper implicates his artistic predecessor in the alienation of Māori land in the province.

Atop this history-laden scene, the mountain looms again, this time with its contours more naturalistically described, allowing Fantham's Peak to be discerned on the right. Lower slopes extend horizontally beyond the picture plane on both sides, making the mountain seem benign, enduring and implacable in the face of human history. Above all, Taranaki reigns supreme as the inescapable geological feature of the region.

Titled *Taking Taranaki*, this work uses the typically postmodern strategy of appropriation, quoting the work of another artist to create a new work. The "taking" of its title refers to Cook's renaming of the mountain as Egmont, and the use of force in imposing colonial rule which resulted in the taking of ancestral lands.

As an artist, Julian Hooper continues to be interested in history. His exploration of his Hungarian and Tongan ancestry in the exhibition *Liliu* features as part of "Turbulence: the 3rd Auckland Triennial", on exhibition at the Gus



JULIAN HOOPER, *Taking Taranaki*, The University of Auckland Art Collection