

From the collection



Lisa Reihana (b.1964, Ngāpuhi/Ngāti Hine/Ngai Tū) *Top Hat* (from *Memoranda*), 2003 Laser etched on granite, edition 2/5, 600 x 400mm The University of Auckland Art Collection.

Lisa Reihana is a New Zealand pioneer of media art, utilising technology to create new ways to explore Māori culture.

Reihana graduated from Elam in 1987. Her practice has encompassed video, animation, storytelling, sculpture, textiles, performance, sound and photography, increasingly with a digital emphasis.

In 1997 she created *Native Portraits n.19897*, a large gateway comprising 11 video monitors, commissioned for the opening of Te Papa Tongarewa and forming the waharoa of her ongoing Digital Marae project. From these 11 videos, Reihana created five projected dramas and six granite portraits, which form part of her *Memoranda* project, first shown at the Singapore Art Museum in 2003.

Etched by laser onto granite from video stills to resemble photographic plates, these portraits are based on 19th century studio photographs of Māori taken by the Burton Brothers, often using models in inappropriate costume. By using relatives and friends to recreate these images, Reihana challenges modes of Western portrayal and the romantic notion of long-lost civilisations, replacing it with a dynamic view of a living culture. From this series, the University last year purchased *Top Hat*, 2003, which is now on show at the George Fraser Gallery as part of *Full Circle*, an exhibition of Elam graduate works recently acquired for The University of Auckland Art Collection until 29 March.

A suite of six new large-format digital photographs were added to Reihana's Digital Marae for an exhibition last year at the Govett-

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Brewster Art Gallery, two of which (*Maui and Ranginui*) have also been purchased for the University's Art Collection. These photographs are like the carved poupou that line the walls of a meeting house, representing significant figures from the artist's whakapapa, whanau and friends. The exquisite black-on-black detailing, Reihana says, acknowledges the influence of senior Māori artist Ralph Hotere.

With execution like that of fashion photography, Reihana works with a team of experts including models, costume designers, photographers, makeup artists and hairdressers, crediting them all in the exhibition much as a movie director acknowledges the team at the end of a film. Working in this way, incorporating friends and helpers both in the work and the production, Reihana celebrates the idea of a marae as a vibrant community place where people come together, as well as side-stepping the traditional Māori convention that prevents women from being carvers. Working with new media, she is creating a virtual, portable marae that can occupy new territory in new ways, creating a place to gather in galleries and even in cyberspace. She continues to add to the project, progressively working towards her *Virtual Marae 20/20 AD* - a project that will be the culmination of 25 years work.

Andrew Clifford