



Maureen Lander



Te Roopu Raranga o Manaia

*Ka puta ko te Whānau Mārama
Ko Te Rā, ko Te Mārama,
ko Ngā Whetū, ko te Hinātore
Nā Kewa te Whānau Mārama i tiki
I Te Maunganui, i a Te Āhuru
I whakatō ai i te rangi
Ko Rauru-rangi
Ko Te Kauhanga
Ko Te Ikaroa*

*Tangotango and Wainui
Begot the Family of Light
The Sun, the Moon, the Stars,
and the Moonlight
Kewa fetched the Family of Light
From the peak of Te Maunganui,
from the guardian Te Āhuru
And planted them in the heavens
Rauru-rangi, the basket holding the sun
Te Kauhanga, the basket carrying the moon
Te Ikaroa basket containing the stars
Anthony Karauria*

Whetūrangi evolved over several months of collaboration with members of Te Roopu Raranga o Manaia (Manaia weavers). We worked in an interactive ‘wānanga’ way, learning from and helping each other. The original concept was based on a design to showcase the many kinds of harakeke used by weavers, with a focus on local varieties. The completed artwork is made up of repeated harakeke forms (which we have called ‘kitsets’ because the set-up is the same as for weaving a kete). The final size and shape of every kitset is similar, but each maker’s individual style and creativity shines through in their weaving.

Our first four-day wānanga in February was followed by the COVID-19 lockdown in March. We were no longer able to work alongside each other or use our favourite harakeke. Instead, those of us with no pā harakeke (flax garden) of our own resorted to scoping out suitable varieties we could find in walking distance of our homes. Undaunted we continued to weave alone, in small groups as restrictions eased, and through connecting on Zoom. When we met again in June we were well on the way to completing forty-eight kitsets. An amazing effort!

As Matariki approached we challenged ourselves to include star patterns in our final designs, an idea that caught on and resulted in all of our kitsets magically transforming into ‘whetū’ to help create a new concept, a starry sky. We hope that Whetūrangi will inspire young and old in future years to explore star knowledge and the amazing potential of harakeke for creating new artworks and ideas.

Maureen Lander

I stand for a moment and I look around,
I have a touch of the harakeke.
One side of the river the wind picked up.
Ooh, I can’t harvest there.
The other side of the river was calm as.
Sometimes the harakeke leaf tips wave to me,
saying “come here”!

Gloria Maxwell

I felt really nervous about harvesting harakeke in winter for my kitset with whetū (stars) overlaid. I said an extra karakia, and it must have worked. I thought carefully as I made the kitset; making sure my whenu (lengthwise harakeke strands) were dull side up, splitting the whenu for each star, getting stars of different sizes and achieving truly random placement. If you look carefully at my kitset, you will see the star pattern of Matariki, including Puanga (the seventh brightest star in the sky) out on the plait.

Dale Cousens

I found a great length of harakeke but it didn’t want to play. So, I went back to my tried and true harakeke from Titahi Bay beach. I find it fits the purpose for any project. I love its colours and the whole peacefulness of the beach. As I harvest, the people walking along the beach like to stop to chat. They ask what I am going to make.

Karen Tutty

For our roopu (group), weaving is about sharing, and not just knowledge of raranga (weaving). I finished my first two kitsets with the help of my weaving mates – gifts of long harakeke, hands-on help, even loading my car and cleaning up around me so I could concentrate on weaving.

Deborah O’Connor

Prior to Whetūrangi, I would never have considered my muka harakeke suitable for weaving. Now I look at my harakeke with new eyes - how lovely it is to prepare and weave. I have come to better understand the ebb and flow of each harakeke plant. Each variety and process has its time and place. And sometimes the harakeke has a mind of its own and will direct me.

Gerry Ogle

When I weave, I think about the generations of past weavers, their knowledge and the mahi (work) it takes to nurture raranga into future generations.

Wendy Evans

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Whetūrangi will inspire young and old in future years to explore star knowledge and the amazing potential of harakeke

The roopu has been weaving together with many discussions about how to weave the kitsets, and what patterns and designs we would use. It has been such a lovely challenge for us. Maureen has challenged me to extend my weaving abilities. It has been exciting to see what I can do with plain harakeke.

Linda Scott

As a non-Māori explorer of raranga, weaving pieces for this contemporary installation has reignited my interest in creating sculptural forms with harakeke. Whetūrangi uses and extends traditional weaving techniques. Harakeke has its challenges, as does working to specific dimensions. It is a learning journey. Being able to complete a woven piece is a miracle of tenaciousness, grit and sheer determination. Kia kaha!

Ros Wech

The process of weaving has always created space in my wairua (spirit/soul) for me to draw closer to the tūpuna (ancestor) histories in our whānau world today. In the 1820s, my tūpuna brought their favourite harakeke from Taranaki to Paraparaumu where I now live. I continue this practice to ensure the best harakeke is present for the next generations of weavers.

Takiri Cotterill

A challenging piece of weaving has a mind of its own. Think, measure, set to complete. Do not unpick or it turns to custard right in front of your eyes. At last I did it, completed one piece. One is better than none!

Sharon Wright

My favoured harakeke is across a narrow, one-person-wide, pedestrian bridge on the eastern side of the Hutt River Te Awa Kairangi. Due to the COVID-19 level 4 restrictions on movement, I had to instead source harakeke within walking distance of my house in Alicetown, on the western side of the river. I was relieved when we got to alert level 2. I could finally cross the footbridge again!

Vanessa Tanner

Mō tēnei kaupapa – Whetūrangi – ka whakamihi i ngā pūkenga o te tangata, ka whakanui i te mahi ngātahi, ka whakamiha i ngā mahi a te whare pora, ka raranga i te whāmere o Te Roopu Raranga o Manaia.

Anthony Karauria

About the artwork

Whetūrangi is a significant new artwork for Waitohi Johnsonville Hub by Maureen Lander in collaboration with Te Roopu Raranga o Manaia. Commissioned by Wellington City Council in 2020, this site-specific artwork is comprised of forty-eight woven harakeke forms stretching across a large internal wall at Waitohi. The title Whetūrangi refers to the starry sky, where the harakeke forms become whetū (stars) against the ‘sky’ backdrop of the wall.

About the artists

Born in Rawene, Hokianga, Dr Maureen Lander (Ngāpuhi, Te Hikutu, Pākehā) is a leading exponent of raranga (weaving) and installation art. She has exhibited, photographed, written about and taught Māori art since 1986. Lander was awarded a New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) in 2020 for her services to Māori art.

Te Roopu Raranga o Manaia is a group of weavers from Te Whanganui a Tara (Wellington) who meet regularly at Hikoikoi, Petone. The group focuses on facilitating the cultural and social wellbeing of the Taranaki whānui of Wellington Tenth Trust and Palmerston North Māori Reserve through the traditional and contemporary practice of raranga toi Māori.

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