



WHAKAREREKETANGA

- transitions -

An Installation by Mark Sykes



***He kokona o te whare ka kitea
He kokona o te ngakau kaore i kitea***

*The corners of the house can be seen
But the corners of the heart can not be seen*

From the earliest contact with colonists Māori culture, like other indigenous cultures, has been in a continuous state of flux. Trade with Pākeha colonists opened a whole world of opportunities in which Māori were able to appropriate and adapt new materials to their needs.

In his book, *A History of New Zealand*, Keith Sinclair describes some of the ways Māori adapted new materials, “a nail flattened for a chisel. Red cloth was pulled to pieces to weave into cloaks. European blankets were used as cloaks”.

In this exhibition, various media are used to reflect the transitional changes that have occurred in Māori material culture.

The Kete is a significant icon of cultural identity and over the years the form has essentially remained the same. Its function as a “vessel “ may be traced from Tane Mahuta and his quest for the three kete of knowledge, through to the present.

The kete examples in this exhibition denote tangata whenua (people of the land), tipuna (ancestors) and their relationship with Papatuanuku (Mother Earth). They are manifestations of Mātauranga Māori (Māori Knowledge) associated with the practice of weaving, conservation and resource management. The materials used for this exhibition articulate transitional changes in colour and patterning that occurred in line with the introduction of alternative dyes to Māori society.





This exhibition considers the theme of “Tangata” and the effects of colonisation on Iwi (peoples), and kākahu (clothing forms).

In the late 1700’s the appearance of the blanket signalled the acceptance of European goods to create a new definition for kākahu.

Michael King states, “their clothing is a mixture of traditional (rain and dogskin capes), transitional (blankets worn as kilts, shawls and toga-like garments) and European (skirts and blouses)...“the fashion of wearing bandoliers and blankets as kilts dated from the wars of the 1860s”.

The advent of the blanket saw a significant decline in the manufacture of customary clothing. Replacement of these items by the blanket meant that kākahu were used only on ceremonial occasions.

This exhibition attempts to capture the startling, surprising and delightful results of the quick adaptation of new materials and technology by a people who are in no way restricted by customary practice.

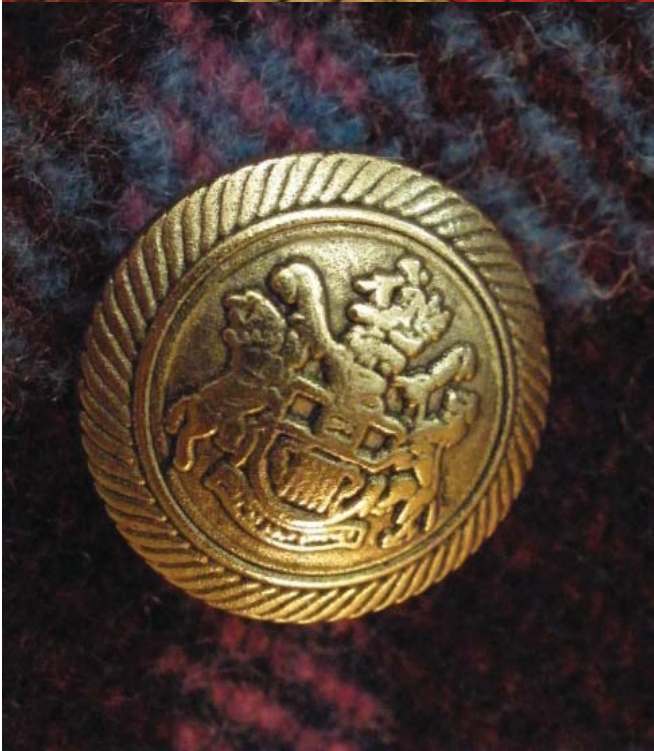
Tangata Māori continue to celebrate the convergence of old and new as they blend the two into fashion statements, historical appraisals and other outlets.

It has been a great journey to challenge and explore these ideas and synthesize the thinking through an exhibition.

na Mark Sykes

Sinclair, K (1988). *A History of New Zealand*. Pelican Books, Hong Kong, (p 39).

King, M (1983). *Māori, a Photographic and Social History*. Bookprint Consultants Ltd, Singapore.



This catalogue was produced on the occasion of the exhibition ‘Whakarereketanga - Transitions’ by Mark Sykes held at the Whakatane District Museum & Gallery from 31 May - 4 July 2008.

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