HUMcard

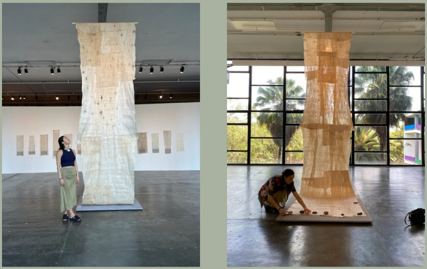
Notes from an artist

Tēnā koe. Welcome to our fifth HUMcard *for 2023, and the 30th edition of these special mailouts. We started producing these features five years ago as a way of thanking you, our supporters, and to give you an insight into some of the international projects by contemporary artists/curators from Aotearoa New Zealand.*

For our last HUMcard, *Fiona Amundsen wrote to you from the Micronesian islands of Tinian, Saipan and Guam. For this edition we've invited Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland-born artist* ***Nikau Hindin*** *to share her experience producing work* ***for the 35th Bienal de São Paulo in Brazil****.*

Curated by Diane Lima, Grada Kilomba, Hélio Menezes and Manuel Borja-Villel, choreographies of the impossible*, open from 06 September—10 December 2023, invites participating artists and visitors to imagine the unknown; to think about what constitutes as im/possible. Scroll down to learn about Nikau Hindin's poetic work that attempts to realign our understanding of time and space and our positioning within it.*

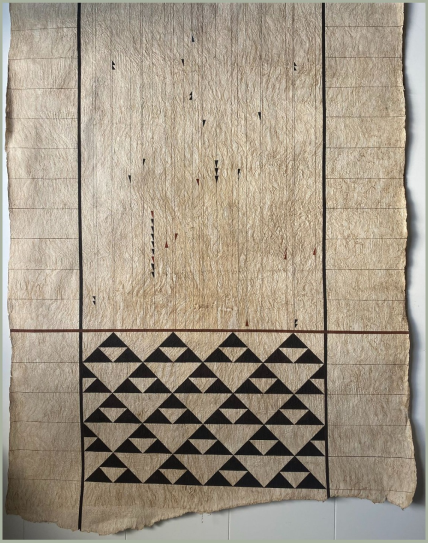
From Nikau Hindin
at the 35th Bienal de São Paulo:
choreographies of the impossible

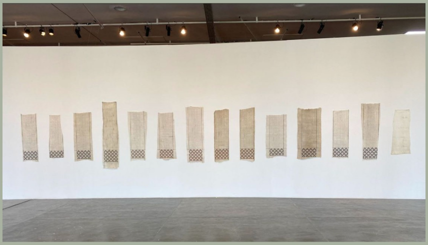


Images: Nikau Hindin with *Rākau Nui*, 2023. Installation view, 35th Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil, September 2023. All images courtesy of the artist unless stated otherwise.

"When I spoke with curator Helio Menezes about the *choreographies of the impossible,* for the 35th Bienal de São Paulo, I felt drawn to propose a series I had been thinking about for a few years now. To present the possibility of decolonising our sense of time with a suite of 12 star maps, tracking the movement of stars over a full revolution around the sun. As it turned out, the year leading up to the Biennale was what Rangi Mātāmua calls 'Tautoru', which is a year that consists of 13 moon cycles, occurring every 3 years.

I first began exploring this idea in 2020 for my solo exhibition *Kōkōrangi ki Kōkōwai*, which was also a year with 13 months. I only managed to make 7 maps but it was compelling seeing how the stars rose earlier and earlier each month and how each Lunar cycle was named after one particular morning star. Since then I have been wanting to map out the stars for the full duration of our annual rotation."





Images: (top, #1) one of the star maps presented at *choreographies of the impossible*; **(bottom, #2)** installation view, 35th Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil, September 2023.

"While my journey with stars began in relation to navigation and voyaging, I began to see how the stars are also vividly related to the land and keeping time to dictate daily activities. I realised that the Maramataka Māori is the overarching body of knowledge that many of our knowledge systems were born from, including celestial navigation.

The space and scope of the Biennale allowed me to think more expansively. Fortunately I had just emerged from an intensive four month apprenticeship program, we called Te Uru Aute, where I was able to pass on the practice of aute making to Rongomai Grbic-Hoskins.

The production of the work was very intense, it always is because we are working with the aute plant and it relies on timing. Due to all the rain we had over Summer we didn't get to harvest till March. Rongomai and I led two big harvests with our friends, pia and apprentices, on the full moon. Thirteen trees from these harvests eventually became part of the *Rākau Nui* piece in the biennale. Rākau Nui which literally means Big Tree, is also our name for the Full Moon."

All images: various stages of making aute - Māori tapa cloth (bark cloth/ Broussonetia papyrifera).

"For the star maps we re-beat fibre and used pieces from previous harvests and painted these over an intensive period of time. Together with Rongomai, who painted the niho taniwha bases, we worked methodically. I drew up the frame of each piece and Rongomai painted the star houses, and mixed the next colour. We created a gradient with the colder months in black, warming up to the Summer months which are red ochre. While Rongomai painted I did the research for each map, documenting when stars rose and set between certain star houses on the new moon, called Whiro. After painting each star line, I would plot out where each star rises in relation to time within a 24 hour period. If you look at all the pieces you should be able to see the pattern of stars rising earlier and earlier and changing over the year and coming back to the beginning. If you look very closely you will be able to see a different blue star in each map, which is the morning star significant to that month."

Images: (L, #1) Nikau Hindin holding aute ready for painting; **(R, #2)** Rongomai Grbic-Hoskins painting the star houses of each piece.

"The maps present the reclamation of our Stellar Lunar Calendar, our Maramataka Māori. When our Maramataka, our ability to count time in relation to our environment, was colonised by the Western calendar, our connection to our land and the ocean was disrupted. Being able to locate oneself within time and space from a Māori worldview, is the ultimate pathway of decolonisation for our people and for how we take care of this land, Aotearoa."

Images: (above L, #1) harvested, beaten and dried aute; **(above R, #2)** detail of Hindin's *Rākau Nui* piece consisting of aute sewn together with muka aho (cordage), that is extracted from harakeke (flax) and woven by expert hands into lengths of 50m; **(header)** materials used by Hindin in her practice, inlcuding muka aho. Photo: Holly Burgess; **(below)** Nikau Hindin. Photo: Holly Burgess.

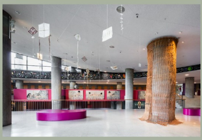
More on the artist

Nikau Hindin (Ngai Tūpoto, Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi) is a multi-disciplinary contemporary Māori artist deeply engaged in the renewal of the Māori aute (bark cloth) making tradition in Aotearoa. Hindin's mission to re-learn this practice was influenced by the revitalisation of voyaging, navigation and her involvement with waka haurua, Māori migration canoes.

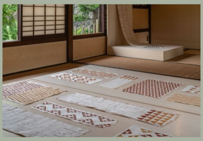
Hindin practices this artform according to its traditional logic, while inscribing it into broader contemporary art discourses, and produces all of the technological aspects in her barkcloth making process; from the cultivation of the plants, extraction of the cloth, fabrication of her wooden tools, production of her pigments, and the final painting of the work.

Recent exhibitions include *O Quilombismo*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany, 2023; *STILL ALIVE,* 2022 Aichi Triennale, Japan, 2022; *4th Kathmandu Triennale*, Nepal, 2022; *Naadohbii: To Draw Water*, WAG-Qaumajuq, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Canada, 2021-22; and *Koloa: Women, Art, and Technology,* Para Site, Hong Kong, 2020. Nikau Hindin lives in Tūranga-nui-a-Kiwa Gisborne, Aotearoa New Zealand.

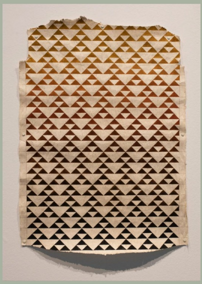
Learn more about the artist here...



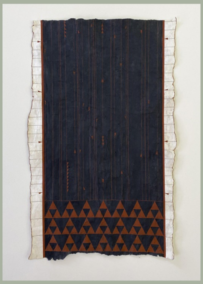
Nikau Hindin, *Manu Aute: Rere Runga Rawa: Ascend to the Higher Realms* (2022–23). Installation view, *O Quilombismo*, HKW, Berlin, Germany, 2023.
Photo: Laura Fiorio/HKW



Nikau Hindin, Aichi Triennale, installation view, 2022. © Aichi Triennale Organizing Committee. Photo: ToLoLo studio.



Nikau Hindin, *Te Wheiao III*, 2021, paper and pigments, 82cmx95cm. *Naadohbii: To Draw Water*, 2021, Winnipeg Art Gallery/Qaumajuq. Courtesy WAG/Q.



Nikau Hindin, *Te Uranga (The rising and setting of the sun due East and due West. Autumnal Equinox. 20.03.2020)*, from the series *Kōkōrangi ki Kōkōwai: From Celestial Bodies to the Earth*, 2019. *Koloa: Women, Art and Technology,* Para Site, Hong Kong, 2020. Courtesy of the artist.

We sent out our first HUMcard *in December 2018, from Hikalu Clarke during his Gasworks residency in London. Since then we've featured projects from Aotearoa artists and curators in Switzerland, Hawai'i, Italy, Australia, Canada, the U.K., Germany, Japan, Belgium, China, Portugal, the U.S.A., Poland, Sri Lanka, the Netherlands, France and Micronesia.*

If you know anyone interested in New Zealand arts, and who might enjoy these mailouts, please consider sharing our* Support page *with them. *Every donation helps us continue our work championing New Zealand's creative practitioners working in an international context.*

HUM

HUM is the only platform dedicated to the international activity of creative practitioners from New Zealand. In December 2022, HUM celebrated 6 years of documenting and publishing about Aotearoa arts abroad!! Thank you for supporting us over the years.

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