

Robyn Kahukiwa

“Wāhine me Tamariki”



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Robyn Kahukiwa is one of New Zealand’s senior and foremost women painters and is currently one of the artist’s included in the major exhibition “Five Maori Painters” on show at the Auckland City Art Gallery (22 Feb to 15th June 2014).

While her paintings refer to Social History, they are vital and relevant to current events. A skilled and experienced practitioner the artist paints without compromise and for this she makes no apology.

“I want to paint the reality of Maori life today...”(1) Kahukiwa stated in an interview recently with the Auckland Art Gallery.

“My Maori Supa Heroes, Maui and Hina, represent Maori men and women who are fighting daily for Maori rights, both on the national scene and at the flax roots level. *2 Hina Supa Heroes 2014*, is a homage to Maori women who have committed their lives to the ongoing struggle of Maori to reaffirm ourselves as Tangata Whenua of Aotearoa/ New Zealand. Ka nui te mihi aroha ki a Papaarangi Reid, Annette Sykes, Leonie Pihama, Margaret Mutu, Mihirawhiti Searanche, Emily Karaka and myself”.(2)

There are many superb compositions in this exhibition and no better examples are the major works in the show *2 Hina Supa Heroes* and *Hapu*. “In *Hapu (Taranga)* 2014 I have painted a pregnant woman with her baby shown in the womb where the baby is already aware and learning. Taranga is the mother of Maui who has a kereru on her shoulder. The kereru features in the traditional story of Taranga and Maui.”(3)

Other paintings such as *Shame*, *Child Hunger/ Damaged Potential* and *Pikau* refer to topics Kahukiwa is particularly concerned with. Kahukiwa says “*Shame*” 2013 is a comment on the appalling fact that thousands of children are living in poverty in New Zealand today. The number has risen from 270,000 to 285,000 this year... The works on paper are a comment on the actual effects of child hunger on the children themselves. Their ability to learn is reduced and they will get sick more often. I see these children as truly damaged potential.”(4)

Kahukiwa has embraced modern technology as well establishing a “Kaupapa Kids Fund” on Facebook, a further initiative displaying the artist’s commitment and passion to a heartfelt cause. The artist’s ability to reach an audience and convey her message emphatically however, is by way of more traditional and enduring methods. This staunch Maori woman painter has a proven history of successfully constructing powerful and major narratives on canvas. “*Hina Supa Heroes*”, a feature work in this show (mentioned earlier) is just one example and the current exhibitions featuring Kahukiwa’s work embody several significant examples of the artist’s oeuvre.

Text Warwick Henderson March 2014

(1) Five Maori Paintings – Auckland Art Gallery Toi O Tamaki, interview with Robyn Kahukiwa. <http://www.aucklandartgallery.com/whats-on/events/2014/february/five-maori-painters/media>

(2) Email to Warwick Henderson Gallery 12.03.2014

(3) Ibid

(4) Ibid



Title: *2 Hina Supa Heroes*

Medium: Oil/alkyd oil on stretched canvas

Size: 213 x 121cm

Date: 2014

Price: \$17,500



Title: *Pikau*

Medium: Watercolour on watercolour paper

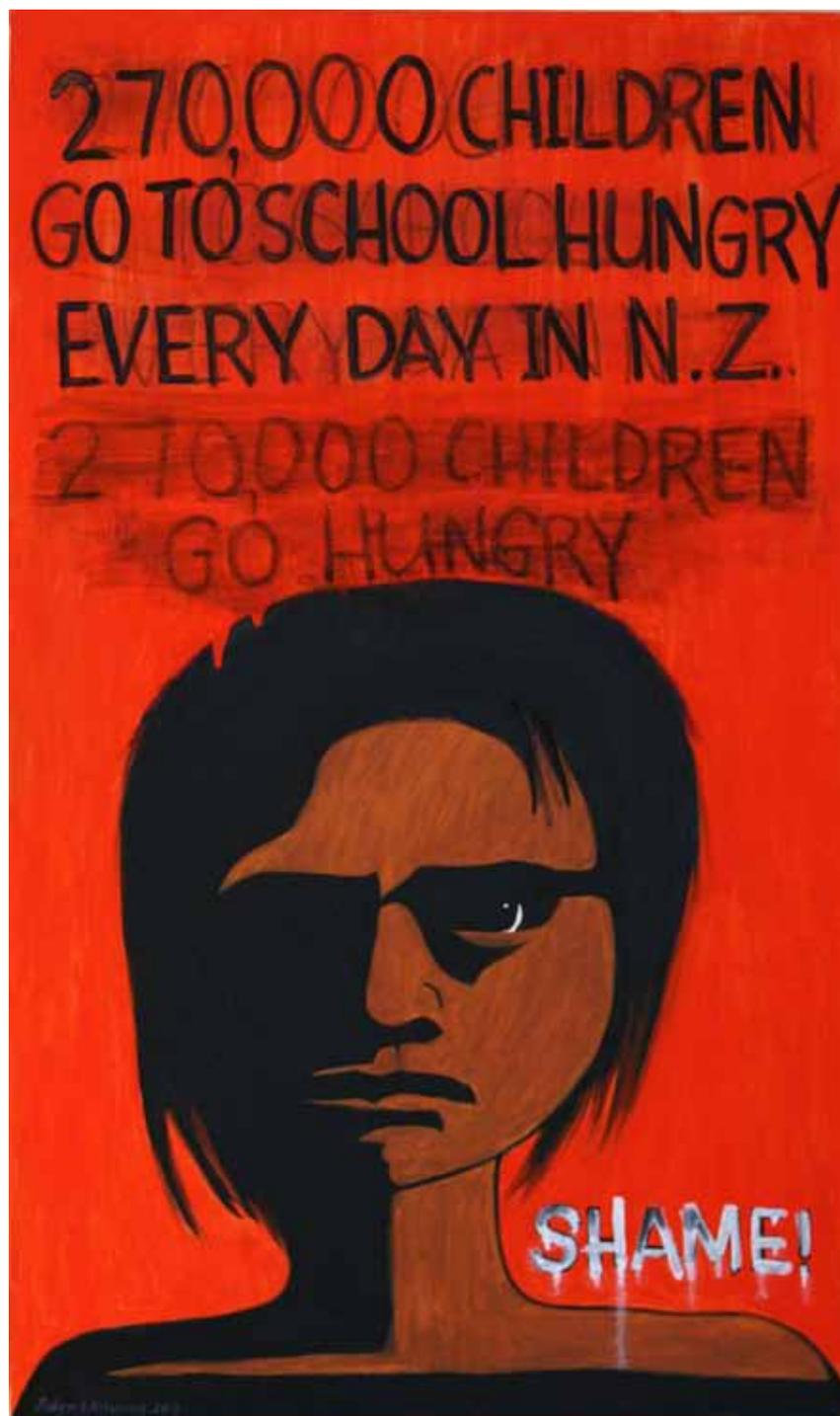
Image Size: 59 x 42cm (framed)

Date: 2013

Price: \$4,500



Title: *Hapu (Taranga)*
Medium: Oil/alkyd oil on stretched canvas
Size: 153 x 101cm
Date: 2014
Price: \$12,500



Title: *Shame*
Medium: Oil/alkyd oil on stretched canvas
Size: 100 x 61cm
Date: 2013
Price: \$5,500



Title: *Child Hunger/Damaged Potential series I*

Medium: Collage on silkscreen print

Image Size: 44 x 58cm (framed)

Date: 2014

Price: \$2,950



Title: *Child Hunger / Damaged Potential series II*

Medium: Graphite and watercolour on watercolour paper

Image Size: 44 x 46cm (framed)

Date: 2014

Price: \$3,500



Title: *Child Hunger / Damaged Potential series III*

Medium: Graphite and watercolour on watercolour paper

Image Size: 30 x 23cm (framed)

Date: 2014

Price: \$1,650