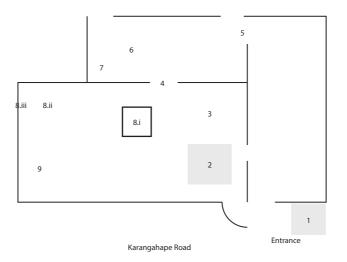


Wai Ching Chan is an Auckland based artist who recently graduated from Bachelor of Fine Arts in Honours at Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland. Her research has been informed by discourses around cultural identity, diaspora, displacement and post-colonialism. Reflecting on her relationship to Aotearoa, she hopes to recalibrate her art practice through the journey of learning as a tauiwi.



## The River Remains; ake tonu atu

Wai Ching Chan

## wúqióngwújìn wújìnwúqióng

Manila Rope 5 metres long

## What can I give you in return... (長長久久)

Mop string, Kākano o te miro o Whangateau (cotton seed), Miro o Whangateau (otton) 9metres in length

**Public Programme** 

Saturday 16 September 2pm - 3pm **Group Artists Talk** 

Tuesday 2 October 6pm - 8pm 1+1 = Many of Us: Knotting Workshop with Wai Ching Chan and Olyvia Hong

Thursday 11 October 6pm - 9pm Artweek: Electric Night

Level 1 / 300 Karangahape Rd. Newton, Auckland Aotearoa New Zealand

The Button Knot: Holding what was separated together The 'Caisson' Knot: Establishing connection to the 'world' and us The Endless Knot: Typically seen as the 'Good Luck Knot'; ultimate, eternal blessings, friendship and connection.

Beliefs disregarded as superstitions are here taken as a formal language, conveying goodwill and blessings. Symbolism and metaphors are carried in the knots - the ropes linking past, present and future; they are the material fragments of heritage, remembrance and connection in action.

I travelled, I arrived. Ship rope - to pull me closer to the land, to help me put down my anchor.

We were once the 'boat people' - the only thing I know of my ancestry. I knew that the school year would be ending when it was 'snowing cotton'. In Hong Kong, each school I attended had its own cotton tree. The tree became a guardian, to me, a companion planted especially for my journey of learning. I met it's cousin at Whangateau when I was having a weaving wānanga with my hoa Arapeta.

Cotton blossoms, a new door opens. I am now continuing my journey, steadily. Mop strings for practices, practice make perfect.

I returned to a language I know, with an inspiration from the meaning for Aho, the two pieces function as a love letter to our society, with the hope to transcend the constraints of time and space.

Knots were used for note taking before other writing systems were developed. I want to know remember the meaning of knots, these are something we need to remember. These knots, their traditional meanings and function, are often misconstrued as merely decorative arts. Their inherent purpose of binding us to 'eternality', 'everlasting friendship' and 'unionizing human to nature' are almost forgotten.

(-)

My uncle moved to New Zealand in the 90s to start a new life, he did not know about Aotearoa. He landed on Tāmaki Makaurau, but he did not know about that either. He is Auckland based.

My father sent me here to further my tertiary studies; however, my significant learning took place outside of the university, and was instead found in social bonds, in conversations with friends, in connectivity with the land and in my discovery of Aotearoa's history which was slowly and carefully told to me.

I learnt two things during a short stay with my uncle's family: firstly, my uncle and aunty put an enormous effort into preserving their Cantonese heritage. No English was allowed in the household. Secondly their view of tangata whenua was a conflicted one, as if they felt to assimilate here, they had to perform a certain type of discrimination.

Learning about the second one is difficult. My introduction of tangata whenua came to me from my well-meaning cousin as a 'warning of possible threat'. Soon later I learnt that this was a harmful imposed stereotype. I am still feel baffled by her 'kind reminder'. Essentially my uncle and aunty have built friendship with tangata whenua and other Oceania people. However you do feel that there is an imposed mistrust making them cautious of tangata whenua, whenever they remember that they are told about some stories. It was clear that trust and friendship was right in front of them but they were made to forget.

I wonder where that comes from.

My uncle came with the idea of New Zealand being 世外桃源, a haven far far away from the political turmoil that was happening in Hong Kong. Hong Kong was released from its colonial status in 1997. He bought his family here, where apparently there was no political instability. At least it was advertised like this, I remember seeing a similar advertisement on TV about migrating to Vanuatu. The ad was filled with sandy beaches, coconuts, portraying a 'life in paradise' - Cantonese actors played water sports. I didn't know about the Ni-Vanuatu, I wasn't told what language they speak. I thought it was located next to Maldives. We thought of New Zealand as it was a land of sheep and 'European' farmers.

I was very happy to come here at first because I had always hoped to lived in an English speaking country. The dream to be part of an English speaking culture seemed especially impossible after Hong Kong was no longer a British colony. Oh, we all remembered that we were promised a British identity, an unkept promise that became the biggest fantasy.

(=)

Nō Hong Kong ahau. I hunuku ahau ki Aotearoa i te tau e rua mano tekau mā rua. Ko Wai Ching Chan taku ingoa.

I have been trying recite this and use it so I would have a great command of it, like when I am speaking Cantonese, my mother tongue. I found that I was not made uncomfortable when I was asked about my origin by a kaumātua. The question was clearly seeking potential connection rather than establishing differences. I am manuhiri but I wasn't made the Other'.

Whakawhanaungata, manaakitanga, aroha... These are kupu Māori but they are not new to any of me. I had them in my heart but I had forgot about them, just as relations with the environment to history and to each other where forgot.

The relationship between Chinese and Māori relationship was friendly². However, maintaining friendship is hard when both voices are muted in speaking a language that isn't your own. The only time we hear from/about each other, it was mediated by a colonial lens. Stories untold will be forgotten.

The Chinese - Māori relationship <u>is</u> friendly. We need to learn and remember.

We were too busy being taught who is 'us' and who is not.

(三)

入鄉隨俗 - manuhiri follow the tikanga of tangata whenua.

四海之內皆兄弟 - whakawhanauatanga is complemented when there is great respect and humbleness

A 君子<sup>3</sup> would be respectful to the host, by following the host's house rule. That's 人鄉隨俗. 四海之內皆兄弟 is also something 君子 would be able to do. Tikanga Māori should be respected, it is the manaaki from tangata whenua we are receiving first.

We need to ask ourselves, if we enter New Zealand as a visitor, why are we only respecting the Pākeha protocols and not tikanga Māori?

Why is having friendship with Pākeha is essential but not the friendship with tangata whenua?

Wai Ching Chan

I te tuatahi, ngā mihi nui ki ngā tangata whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau me te motu katoa. Nā Te Tiriti o Waitangi i āhei ai mātou kia noho i tō koutou whenua, ā, kua tae mai ki roto i te horopaki o te whakataiwhenuatanga Pākehā. Ngā mihi nunui mō te manaakitanga me te aroha.

The first time I learnt the names of my grandparents and where they were from was when I had to write a pepeha in a Māori language course. Ko Zheng Yin Bao rāua ko Ma Gui Zhen ōku tūpuna i te taha o tōku māmā. Nō Henan rāua. Ko Fu Zheng Gu rāua ko Wang Yun Cai ōku tūpuna o tōku pāpā. Nō Sichuan tōku matua tupuna. Nō Guizhou tōku whaea tupuna. It's through working with Māori activists that I've come to understand the importance of knowing who you are and where you come from to be able to relate to others.

I sometimes wonder what Aotearoa would look like, feel like and sounds like if colonisation never occurred. Would there be half the problems that exist today? I wonder what the Chinese immigrant experience would be like if Māori retained their tino rangatiratanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi was upheld. I probably would not have spent the formative years of my life distancing myself from Chineseness and assimilating into a racist Pākehā culture that falsely promises a sense of a belonging if you shed your cultural identity and act like them. I would probably be writing this entirely in Te Reo Māori, and I would probably not struggle so much with 我的导语。

If indigenous rights are first and foremost respected and honoured in Aotearoa, all immigrants would be much better off than under the current colonial system.

"If we were to perceive Aotearoa as a marae, then we no longer view immigrants from an economic worldview that is at the heart of border imperialism and the exploitative machinations of late-capitalism." - Aaryn Marsh Niuapu, Racial Equity Aotearoa

If we are guests on this marae, we also need to respect the tikanga of tangata whenua who are hosting us. But all immigrants since 1840 have come under a settler colonial system and Māori have been largely excluded from decision-making on immigration policies. To become a citizen of New Zealand, you must swear allegiance to the Queen and there is no mention of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, let alone He Whakaputanga (The Declaration of Independence 1835). We often don't get to learn about the history of colonisation unless we search for it or until others reach out.

The ongoing Māori resistance to colonisation has meant that at least my generation has some access to the histories of treaty breaches that we were never taught in school. So what can we do as people who might understand colonialism and imperialism from our own histories in Asia as well as racism in diaspora? The least we can do is practice solidarity.

"It seems like solidarity cements through building community by whakawhanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and holding onto what is sacred. It's about connection. Strengthening relationships and friendships might not seem like revolutionary things but they are." - Aaryn Marsh Niuapu

I encourage all tauiwi Asians to learn more about what's happened here, to learn more about the indigenous culture of Aotearoa, to challenge and question those racist narratives against Māori and make direct connections with tangata whenua. Together, we can work towards a future that recognises and centres the dignity, sovereignty and culture of ngā tangata whenua o Aotearoa. 我们可以从家人和朋友们开始。

风雨同舟, 齐心协力⁴ Fēngyǔtóngzhōu, gíxīnxiélì

付梦竹 Mengzhu Fu

<sup>1 &</sup>quot;Othering" means any action by which an individual or group becomes mentally classified in somebody's mind as "not one of us". Rather than always remembering that every person is a complex bundle of emotions, ideas, motivations, reflexes, priorities, and many other subtle aspects, it's sometimes easier to dismiss them as being in some way less human, and less worthy of respect and dignity, than we are.

 $<sup>^{\</sup>mathbf{2}}$  lp, Manying. The Dragon and the Taniwha: Maori and Chinese in New Zealand. Auckland: Auckland Univ. Pr., 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A simplistic translation is 'person of good moral'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> He kīrehu e pā ana ki te āhuatanga o te kotahitanga, rerea mā runga te waka kotahi i te ua me the hau, kia kotahi ai ngā ngakau, kia kotahi ai ngā kaha.

An idiom describing solidarity through thick and thin, surviving wind and rain on the same boat, working together by combining hearts and strength/power