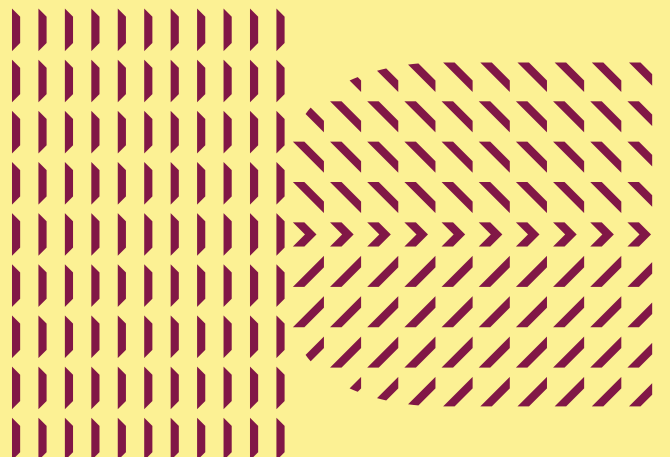
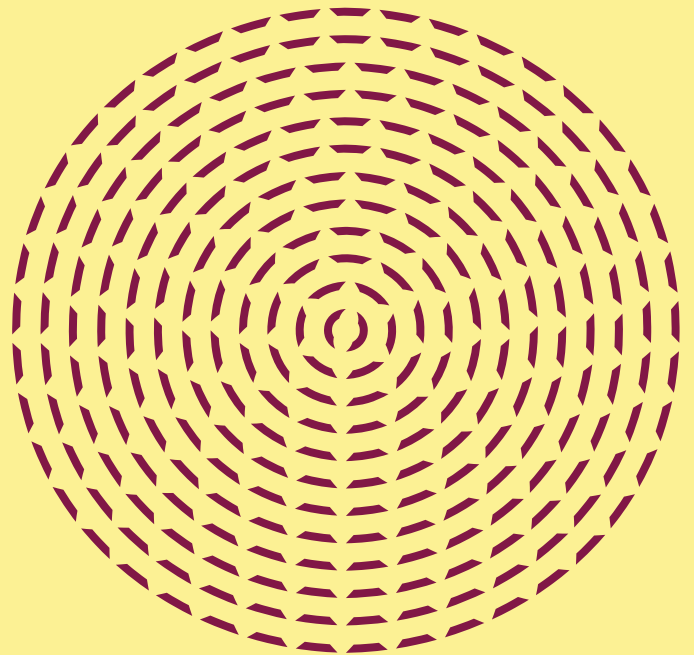
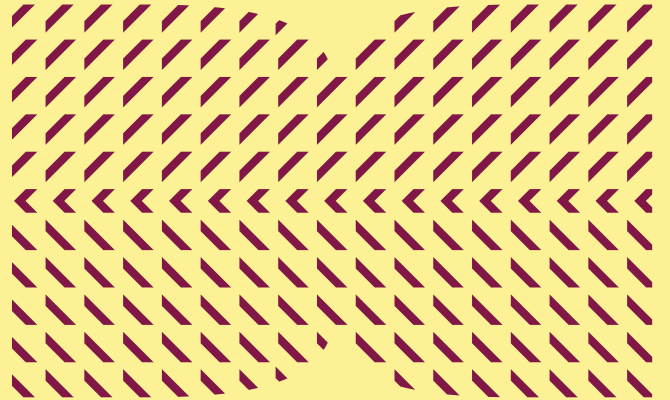


Heidi Brickell
Māturuturu Trick



Taratahi:

A response to Heidi Brickell's

Māturuturu Trick

Taratahi
For Uru
After Heidi Brickell

I whānau mai au i te pō
Nāku anō tāku tangaengae ake i mahi,
he motunga pito,
he motunga whanaungatanga.
Ka tāuwhitia au ki te wai
me ngā toto e rere nei, hei tohi mai.
Ka puta au ki te pō hei mea hou,
otirā, kua wātea te punua atua nei
kia pūrere atu ki ngā wāhi ngaro,
ki ngā pūkorukoru o te kahu o Rangī,
ki taku nohoanga murikōkai e.
Engari, auē te mamae o te pīhore atu
i a koe anō i ngā whakapaparanga,
anō nei e tīhore ana i te kiri mai i te kiko.
Ko te anu o te ātea anake
hei hoa mōku.

Ka tau rawa au ki te taha
o tētahi puna matapouri
me taku ohore i te reka o te wai.
Ka noho tonu, ka noho tonu
me te whakatātūtū i tōna hōhonu,
engari he puna-takere-kore
tēnei mea te pōuritanga.

He mea hae ōku pāpāringa
e te mahi a te roi
e māturuturu iho nei i aku kamo.
Tirohia ngā awaawa nei i taku mata,
koinei ngā kaka o taku moko—
hei aha te wai hīnau, te pungarehu,
ko te hinu mangōroa me te puehu-whetū kē
hei waituhi māku.
Ko te rāwakiwaki hei uhi
ko te mokemoke hei kuru,
ko ngā taputapu ēnei hei tā i taku kiri e.

He amiorangi e rurutu nei,
he tangi atua, he putanga ao—
he mea takoha atu ngā uri ngangana rā
kia waihotia ai au i taku noho taratahi.
Engari, ki hea te māramatanga huna ai?

I was born in the night.
Chanted my own rituals
and cut my own cord,
connections severed,
then sprinkled the remnant
water and blood over me—
a dedication rite to myself.
I am born a new creature,
a godling now free to be lost,
to roam the folds of my father's cloak,
and make a new home at his crown.
But do you know the pain
of peeling yourself
out of the layers of your own kin?
Like tearing skin from flesh.
The cold of oblivion my only
companion now.

I settle near the edge of a gloomy pool
and am surprised by the
sweetness of the water.
I linger,
trying to sound its depth
but dark waters are always bottomless.

My cheeks are incised
by the constant trickle
of unceasing tears.
See the grooves they leave in my face,
they are the main lines of my moko—
leave the hīnau sap and ash,
shark oil and stardust will be my ink.
Grief is the chisel,
isolation the hammer,
the tools that mark my skin.

I weep celestial bodies,
cry worlds into existence
and give them away freely
to be left in my solitude.
But where do you hide
when you are the light?

- 1 Traditional origin stories, historical narratives
- 2 Deified ancestor, often associated with a particular domain of the natural world
- 3 Kopua, M., Kopua, D., & Cherrington, L. (2025). *Mahi a atua*. Huia Publishers
- 4 Sky Father & Earth Mother
- 5 Younger sibling of same gender

Pūrākau¹, in all their multiplicities, contain elements at their core which reveal something about our nature or the nature of the world we inhabit. How we interpret these pūrākau and the extent to which we can relate to or glean understanding from them is often determined by our own relationships with the natural world, other people, and how deeply we have explored our own humanity.

In this exhibition, '*Māturuturu Trick*', Heidi Brickell draws from the pūrākau of Uru-te-ngangana, an atua² associated with light. Specifically, Brickell engages with a retelling of Uru's story as offered by Mahi a Atua³ and Mark Kopua, provided in the context of navigating and discerning complex emotions like grief and loneliness. Uru comes into existence as the mātāmua, the first-born child of primordial parents, Ranginui and Papatūānuku⁴. Conspiracies of forced separation not yet formed, these lovers cling to each other in a tight embrace while Uru and his younger siblings populate the space between them. As the ages pass and more tēina⁵ are birthed into this dark reality, conflict arises when Uru is challenged by a younger sibling, Whiro. This rift between siblings intensifies, ultimately becoming intolerable for Uru who decides to remove himself entirely. Consumed by grief, Uru is said to have severed his

- 6 Woven baskets
7 Māturuturu (verb): to trickle or drip
8 Elder sibling of same gender

‘umbilical connection’ and escape into the folds of his father’s cloak. Eventually he makes his way to his new solitary dwelling at the back of Ranginui’s head, where he can remain hidden and fade into obscurity. In his isolation, Uru yields to his sadness and cries a deluge of tears that trickle from his eyes like stellar salt lamps, emitting light into the darkness of space. However, Uru quickly hides his glowing teardrop offspring in a series of kete⁶ and continues his self-imposed exile in silence.

As I began sitting with early renderings of Brickell’s works and the ideas she was teasing out in some of our early exchanges, I couldn’t help but note how successful Uru-te-ngangana has been in obscuring his own name and place in the lineage of atua. Even those with only a passing familiarity with Māori histories and genealogies may recognise names like Tāne or Tangaroa, and be superficially aware of their associations with the forest and ocean respectively. Though, I would speculate that Uru’s name and story will be unfamiliar to many who visit this exhibition. Brickell’s stirring of this conversation feels like both a calling out to Uru and an invitation to consider our own impulses for withdrawal and the wider impact of prolonged isolation, both for ourselves and the communities to which we belong. At times, the line between restorative solitude and restrictive seclusion gets blurry. Depending on the situation, withdrawing from community or relationships can feel like a solution, a failure, a luxury, a punishment, a necessity, or even all of these things at once. *Māturuturu Trick*, the exhibition’s title, of course references the ‘trickling’⁷ of Uru-te-ngangana’s radiant tears but also gestures to particular conditions that coax us into states of disconnection and the mental games that can keep us in that quiet security of a solitary life.

In a reality where supposed ‘trickle down’ solutions have proven to be nothing but tricks themselves, we are so often drawn into ourselves and into our work to survive the incessant demands of late capitalism. It can hence be easy to feel like connection is both an undeserved privilege and burdensome obligation. These are tricks the mind can sometimes play on itself.

Returning to Uru’s story — back in the confines of his parents’ entwined bodies, Uru’s younger siblings devised to separate Rangi and Papa, in pursuit of a world of enlightenment that would be suitable for different forms of life, including humanity, to develop and flourish. In many familiar recountings of this pūrākau, after several unsuccessful attempts by various atua, Tāne Mahuta is eventually able to break his parents’ embrace and the world is immediately flooded by light. However, in this version as told by Mahi a Atua, the light did not come. The universe was still dark.

Having already exhausted their efforts and ideas, Tāne sets off in search of his tuakana⁸, in the hope that, as the eldest and most experienced among them, he might hold a solution. While initially indifferent to his teina’s plight, Uru eventually offers Tāne two of the baskets containing his luminous tears, including those that would become the stars, the moon, and the sun. Tāne takes the baskets and affixes his brother’s roimata⁹ across their father’s body, illuminating the galaxy and bringing the rest of their siblings into te ao mārama¹⁰. Despite his propensity for gloom, Uru had become the source of light in the world.

Brickell’s abstract geometric forms sit suspended in the space of the gallery like Uru’s icy sharp-edged tears, hung from the expanse of Rangi’s chest — tangible representations of Uru’s isolation floating like great cosmic kites across the room. I opened this response with a poetic reflection on Uru-te-ngangana’s story, titled ‘Taratahi’. This word can mean isolated or alone, though it also happens to be the word for a triangular-shaped kite — a central theme and prominent physical form of the show captured in a single word. A familiar structural form in her practice, these new works comprised of multi-media components feature a range of interwoven elements including woodwork, tukutuku¹¹, and painting. Through experimentation with traditional creative methods, Brickell adds more layers to the whakapapa of both her own mahi toi and these traditional practices, demonstrating how they can be extended or repurposed in multiple ways in contemporary settings. The incorporation of deep, earthy reds, browns, and oranges into the colour palette provides a visual reference to where Uru hides in our everyday language, such as in our words for the ‘west’ (hauāuru/uru), where the glowing light of the sunset sits crimson on the horizon — this is Uru. Negative space cut into the works allows light to shine through the abstracted prismatic forms while the stand-alone placement of the pieces invites the audience to contemplate the tricks and tricksters that draw us into isolation.

Through the works of *Māturuturu Trick*, Uru-te-ngangana’s pūrākau is explored with an accompanying measure of grace. While there is a proposition to reckon with our personal realities and the wider social contexts in which fractures to our relationships can occur, there is no judgement. We see, however, an honouring of the beauty that resulted from Uru’s solitude. A reminder that, just as the value and potential of Uru’s tears was not realised until they were shared with Tāne, sometimes the lessons we learn and the things we make in isolation ultimately have meaning because of community.

—Hāwea Apiata (Ngāti Kura, Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Toarangatira)

- 9 Tears
10 The world of light and enlightenment
11 Lattice work



Image credit: Riki Gooch.
Artwork (reverse side):
Heidi Brickell, *Māturuturu*
Trick, 2026.

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Heidi Brickell (Te Hika o Pāpāuma, Ngāti Kahungunu, Rongomaiwahine, Rangitāne, Ngāi Tara, Ngāti Apakura, Airihi, Kōtirana, Ingarangi, Tiamana) is a contemporary visual artist based in Ōtaki, with a background in Māori education and te reo Māori revitalisation.

Playful and intuitive, Brickell's art practice connects the indigeneity of her Māori ancestors and how they saw the world, to the changing and shifting materialities of te ao hurihuri. Drawing from the oral and visual languages of island and ocean homes, she uses art to bring cultural dialogues and ideas into material forms, to places where language cannot reach alone.

Heidi's work has recently featured in major surveys of national contemporary art at Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Art Gallery and Te Puna o Waiwhetū Christchurch Art Gallery, who both hold her work in collections. Recent solo exhibitions include *Wā We Can't Afford* at Hastings Art Gallery, *A koru is a trajectory* at Enjoy Contemporary Art Space and *PAKANGA FOR THE LOSTGIRL* which toured from Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery in Tāmaki Mākaaurau Auckland to Ōtautahi Christchurch and Pōneke Wellington from 2022–23.

ISBN: 978-1-0672860-0-2

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