

ITI & SON

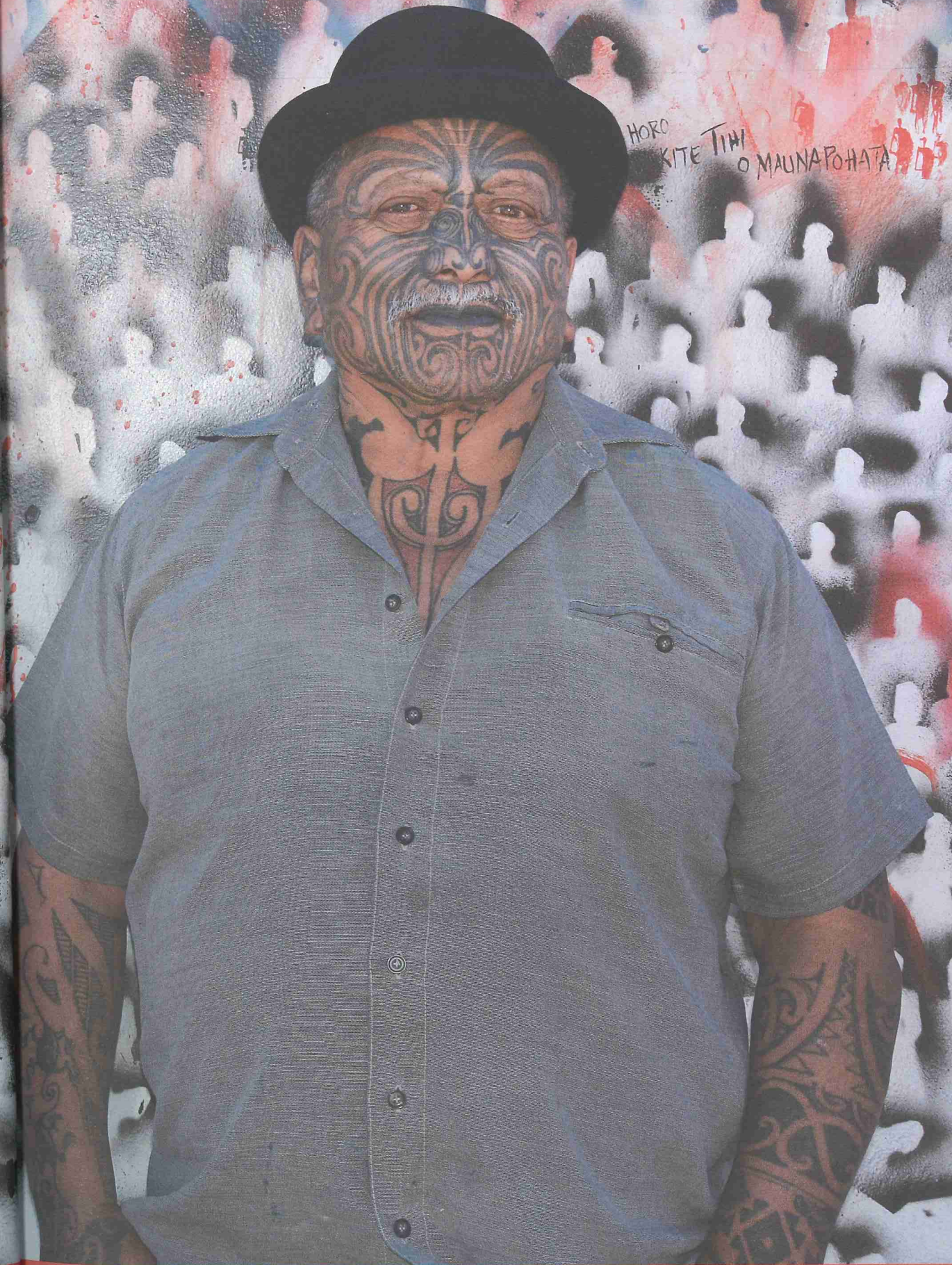


WORDS **KAY BOREHAM**
PHOTOGRAPHY **ANDY TAYLOR**

PLENTY FINDS THE FACE OF TŪHOE ACTIVISM clean-shaven, sitting in an antique barber's chair, and wearing his signature hat. Beside him is the younger male child of his first marriage, the patriarchal bloodline obvious, but the fine cheekbones of his Australian mother are evident, too.

This is Iti and Son: two hustlers raising the spirit of Tāneatua, fuelled by the belief that the past is where their future lies.

'Hustlers', I hasten to add, is a self-described nod to Tāme and Toi Iti's ability to make things happen. "Hustle can have a bad name," says Toi, "but to get things done, you have to have a bit of hustle. Dad's got it. I've got it. You don't sit back and wait for people to give you things."



Well used to pitching ideas in his career as an onscreen producer and presenter, and looking to diversify out of television, it didn't take Toi long to start looking for opportunities when he was drawn home. The Māori Women's Welfare League was running an Op Shop out of the town's former butcher's shop and had their sewing room next door. "Dad's sister was involved. The sewing room was all boarded up with no natural light, and the display space for the clothes didn't really work," Toi explains. The penny dropped, and he could see a win/win. A business plan and a bit of wheeling and dealing later, and the Tāneatua Hair Saloon opened its doors, beside a much better working environment and bright, fresh, corner retail space for the aunts.

Re-purposing the buildings started with removing the roller doors, a feature of many shops on the main street and a hangover from the time when drunken fights would spill from the (long-gone) pub across the road. "The landlord wasn't too sure when the barricades came down, but we saw it as an act of confidence in our community, that the growing sense of pride means that people will respect the space."

The Hair Saloon is totally charming, keeping some original fixtures and amping the vibe with macrocarpa slab benches, recycled timber framing, an old church pew, and framed photographs of the town's early years. The fit-out harks back to a frontier town – hence Hair *Saloon* rather than *salon*.

The enterprise is a clever, multi-layered amalgam of past and present, blending mythology with razor sharp marketing. "Tūhoe like to think of themselves

as cowboys," Toi says. "We still ride horses; you'll still see kids riding their horses up the street. That is their history. This is the same street that Rua Kēnana used to come out of Te Urewera to get into Whakatāne."

Even the incorporation of the word 'Tāneatua' is nuanced, referring not just to the place, but also to the ancestor Tāneatua, after whom the town is named. "Our tipuna, Tāneatua was half-brother of Toroa, captain of the Mātaatua waka. Tāneatua explored all around this area, famously accompanied by his dogs. Having his name inside our brand narrative allows us to honour him and retell his story, bringing him back to life for our young people," Toi says.

Some would say Tāneatua was a bit of a dude; reputedly strong, handsome and a hit with the ladies, you can imagine he might have swung by the Saloon for a skux trim.

Toi recognises that he might be in for a bit of flak from those who don't quite understand the concept. "You'll always get a bit of that, but the intention is tika (true); to reconnect to our ancestor, to our history, especially for our young people. We're facing a present and future where the information comes from online, in small, consumable bites, delivered rapidly. Look at the way young people connect with sports stars – Sonny Bill gets a new haircut and everyone wants it; the All Blacks use a certain deodorant and that's meant to make you invincible. Well, we have our own mythology of a progressive, adventurous explorer, and that's a really authentic brand." Signature cuts and a product range of hair and beard products made by Tūhoe from the mānuka and kawakawa of Te Urewera are also in the plan.

THE TĀNEATUA HAIR SALOON is just metres up the road from the Tāneatua Gallery, which now consumes a lot of Iti senior's creative energy. Both endeavours are thriving in a very exciting Tūhoe time.

THE FIT-OUT HARKS BACK TO A FRONTIER TOWN –
HENCE HAIR *SALOON* RATHER THAN *SALON*.

"Post {Treaty} settlement, Tūhoe have acknowledged that we are part of a wider community; that's New Zealand and the globe. There are no barriers any more. We are looking at healing, and thriving and our tipuna would like that. Our ancestors were very adaptive; we always saw opportunity, we saw ways to shift and change and unique ways to express ourselves," Tāme says.

He sees the gallery as both a vehicle for artist's expression and a place to bring people together. "It's bringing a lot of people to Tāneatua who wouldn't normally come here, other than to maybe stop in at the garage. You don't have to be Tūhoe to exhibit here. Tūhoe have a history of learning from others and others learning from Tūhoe – it's a two-way conversation."

Tāme's role at the gallery is essentially as consultant curator, lending his networks and experience to the gallery founders, Lawrence Hughes and Bernie Marr, although he does exhibit there too.

As an aside, not too many people are aware of Tāme's philanthropy; while his eldest son Wairere acts as his art dealer, Tāme is likely to be giving away a painting to a kōhanga reo, and Tāneatua Fire Brigade currently has an Iti work to sell to raise funds.

Since it opened, The Tāneatua Gallery has hosted exhibitions from local, national and international artists, quickly building a reputation as a place to be shown and to be seen. Don't be surprised to see work by Billy Apple and Shane Cotton in the future.

This is Tāme's third involvement in the gallery game and in many ways has taken him full circle. The concept of the Tāneatua Gallery has been in the back of his mind since the mid-90s, when he set up the Tūhoe Embassy, a collaboration of artists who created an outlet to sell their work to finance their aims for Tūhoe self-determination.

But this isn't a story about the activities and activism — some judged illegal — that took place between then and now. As Toi has already said, you can find information quickly online if you want to go there. Instead, we'll leave the last words to Tāme.

"Over time, I had to get smart about how to exercise my political consciousness, and I discovered that art is probably the safest way I'm able to do that."



Tāme and Toi outside the new Saloon.

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The Tāneatua Gallery

TE TIRA HŌU

(NEW GENERATION) is the latest collaboration between Tāme Iti and Kawerau-born, internationally recognised muralist, Owen Dippie.

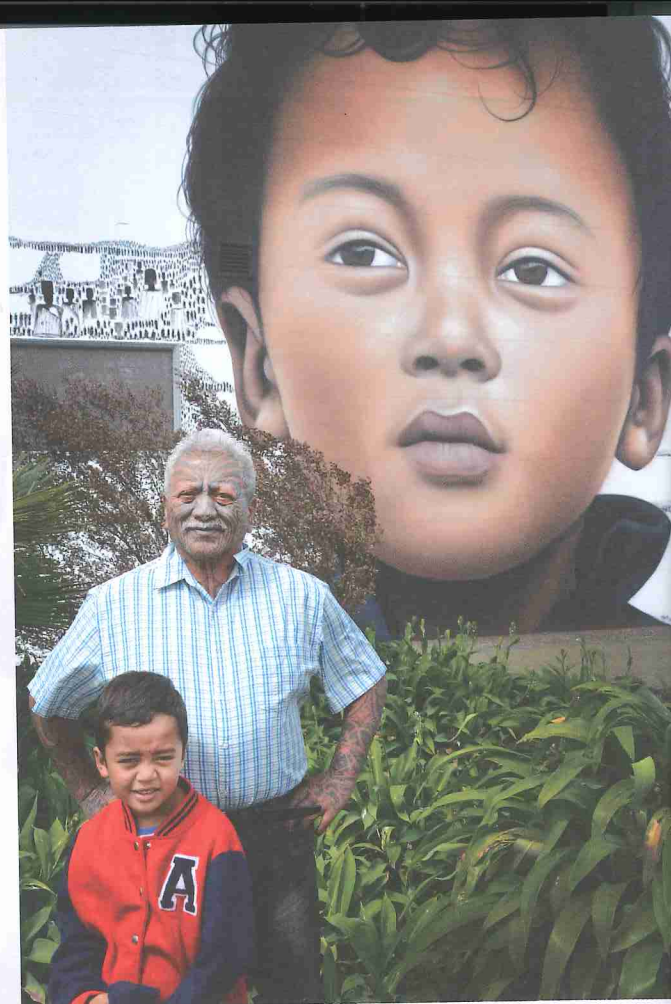
Watching over the corner of Whakatāne's The Strand and Richardson Street, it blends the artists' signature styles: Dippie's large-scale portraiture with Iti's drifts of people – ancestors standing in support.

Te Tira Hōu follows on from the striking Tāneatua mural featuring the 'face of Tūhoe women', and the exhibition Ko koe Ko Au (You and I) held earlier in 2016 at the OD Gallery in Auckland's Karangahape Road.

"I had the idea of pulling out the faces of the real people; this second one is the face of the future," Iti explains. That face happens to be Te Hawiki Reiner Rangihika-Hawea, surrounded by his Ngāti Awa, Tūhoe, Ngāti Pūkeko, and Dutch forebears.

Commissioned by the Whakatāne Rotary Sunrise Club, with funding from the Southern Trust, the artwork is guaranteed to be in place for five years, under an agreement with the building owners.

In front of the large scale portraiture of his likeness stands Te Hawiki and Tāme. The Strand, Whakatāne.

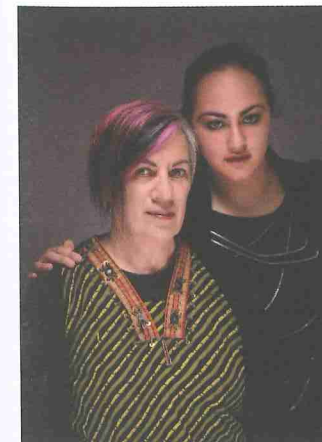


WEARING IT WELL

WORDS ANDY TAYLOR

Fashion designers have drawn their inspiration from many a muse – lovers, strangers, music, colours – but only Natura Aura found it through a scanning electron microscope.

To be fair, the microscope in question was merely the means to an end, and it might instead be better to credit the creations of the Rotorua design duo to art and craftsmanship, but it was nevertheless the melding of technology and tradition that saw this young company invited to the catwalks of Paris.

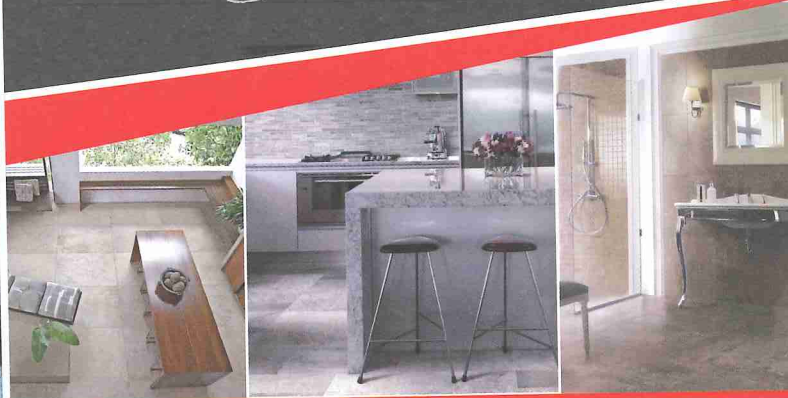


Formed just three years ago by Anastasia Rickard and her grandmother Leilani, Natura Aura picked up the Established Designer Award in the Miromoda Fashion Competition in Wellington and came to the attention of model and fashion show creator Jessica Minh Anh, who travels the world seeking out innovative and creative fashion brands. This led to an invitation to take their work to the 2015 autumn collection showcase in Paris.

“ Fashion should be about fun. You can't take it too seriously! ”

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