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Rebecca Rice and Mataraki Williams, *Ngā Tai Whakarongorua, Encounters: Te Pātū Kōwaiwai Kiritangata Ki Toi Te Papa, The Portrait Wall at Toi Art Te Papa*

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Rebecca Rice and Matariki Williams, *Ngā Tai Whakarongorua, Encounters: Te Pātū Kōwaiwai Kiritangata Ki Toi Te Papa, The Portrait Wall at Toi Art Te Papa* (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2021), 112pp. Paperback. NZ\$22.00. ISBN: 978-0-9951-1365-7

Ngā Tai Whakarongorua, Encounters: Te Pātū Kōwaiwai Kiritangata Ki Toi Te Papa, The Portrait Wall at Toi Art Te Papa is a guide to the Encounters portrait wall in the Toi Art section at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa). Toi Art is a series of galleries within Te Papa which opened in 2018 and was created specifically to house the national art collection. The galleries provide the museum with a dedicated space for 'art' for the first time. This compact yet richly detailed book serves as a visitor guide for the Encounters portrait wall and offers, a discussion of the curation of the gallery – the choice and placement of the portraits, and how they speak to the history of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The book is divided into four sections: Encounters and Collections; About the Artists; Glossary; and Further Reading. Importantly the text is provided in both Te Reo Māori and English. Te Reo Māori is also used within the English text and the Glossary provides an English translation for the words used. As the authors note, the book is a multivocal translation. The artworks are conversations both between the viewer and the subject but also between themselves.

The book opens with an image of the portrait wall, giving each artwork a number that can be referenced in the guide, a handy tool for those using the book in the gallery. The portraits selected consider the many reasons for which portraits were created for example 'a heroic figure who could inspire the public' (p. 11), 'an image to remind the viewer of its subject during absence' (p. 12), or a portrait commissioned 'out of curiosity' (p. 12), a means of sharing a new world with a public back home. As such the subjects of the portraits vary, they are colonial officials, artists, settlers, Pacific Islanders, and Māori leaders. Together they provide a snapshot of the history of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The display mimics a European salon style hang, yet the choice of artworks often challenges our assumptions of what we might expect to view there. The first portrait, a pūtātara (conch shell trumpet), subverts what we traditionally understand as a portrait. The pūtātara acknowledges that 'there are other ways in which' human beings can be represented (p. 8). The decision reflects the way that Māori Taonga (treasures) 'can, and do, represent tīpuna' (ancestors) (p. 8). The authors note that the other reason for putting it at the start was to make the point that the history of Aotearoa New Zealand does 'not start with James Cook, it starts with 'tāngata whenua' (people of the land) (p. 9).

Throughout the book we get little moments of revelation. On several of the portrait pages we are provided with zoomed in sections of the portrait, giving the reader a view that they might have overlooked when seeing the portrait in person. For example the signature on the portrait of Princess Charlotte Augusta of Wales. The authors explain that the letters RA seen in the bottom corner mean that the painter George Dawe was a member of the Royal Academy and that the word 'pinxit' is the latin for 'painted by' (p. 36). Interspersed throughout the portrait descriptions, are behind the scenes views of some of the portraits on display. These short interludes provide an insight into the work of museum conservators and analytical scientists. We learn how UV light can assist in conservation of the artworks and how testing of materials can reveal the age of an artwork. We are shown the back of Wilhelm Dittmer's portrait of

Taketake (Ngāti Ruaka) which reveals another portrait entirely, that of an unknown Māori child.

There are several portraits of unnamed or unknown Māori, including one by Dittmer, featured in the Gallery and their inclusion is purposeful. As the Gallery description states, the portraits exhibited 'carry with them stories from the past into the present' (Te Papa website accessed 22 December 2022). The authors write that they have included these unnamed portraits as they hope that viewers may be able to identify them and that 'their names and whakapapa [genealogy] may one day be shared again' (p. 74), bringing these additional stories into the present too.

The book will be of interest to those familiar with Encounters but also those who have never visited as it works both as a guide for visitors in the gallery but also those who cannot visit in person. It will also be of interest to students and researchers of art history, social and cultural history, and studies of Aotearoa New Zealand as well as the general public. A recommended read, it is a perfect introduction to the portraiture held by Te Papa.

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