

***Kāpuia ngā aho* 單絲不綫**

**Wai Ching Chan and Tessa Ma'auga**

**12 March – 24 April 2022**

**THE  
PHYSICS  
ROOM** CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

# ***Kāpuia ngā aho* 單絲不綫**

**Wai Ching Chan and Tessa Ma'auga**

**Exhibition runs: 12 March – 24 April 2022**

*Kotahi te aho ka whati; ki te kāpuia e kore e whati.*

*One strand of flax is easy to break, but many strands together will stand strong.*

單絲不綫 *A single thread can't make a cord.*

Employing a language of threads and knots, *Kāpuia ngā aho* 單絲不綫 is a collaborative exhibition that explores ancient Chinese narratives in connection with people, materials, and relationships in Aotearoa.

According to some Chinese origin narratives, the world began in a murky dark void, from which the dual forces of yin and yang and heaven and earth emerged and intermingled, giving birth to the myriad life forms in the ecosystem. Due to a period of crisis, a great deluge occurred, after which the serpentine goddess Nǚwā 女媧 patched up the heavens and cut off the legs of a giant turtle to use as pillars to prop up the sky. Nǚwā went on to form humanity from soil and rope. Thus, humanity was created to care for their ancestral heritage, in harmony with the natural environment.

In this exhibition, Wai Ching Chan and Tessa Ma'auga remake the four pillars of heaven using harakeke, silk, manila rope, wool, mop string, mulberry paper and pearls. Made from natural materials that speak to seafaring and migration, these pillars seek to reconnect cultural and historical links between China and Aotearoa. Nǚwā's scaly tail, made up of crocheted and papercut panels, embraces this primordial space. The installation also incorporates the voices of people with Chinese whakapapa across Aotearoa, who were asked to contribute an object and a statement that expresses the diversity and breadth of their experiences.

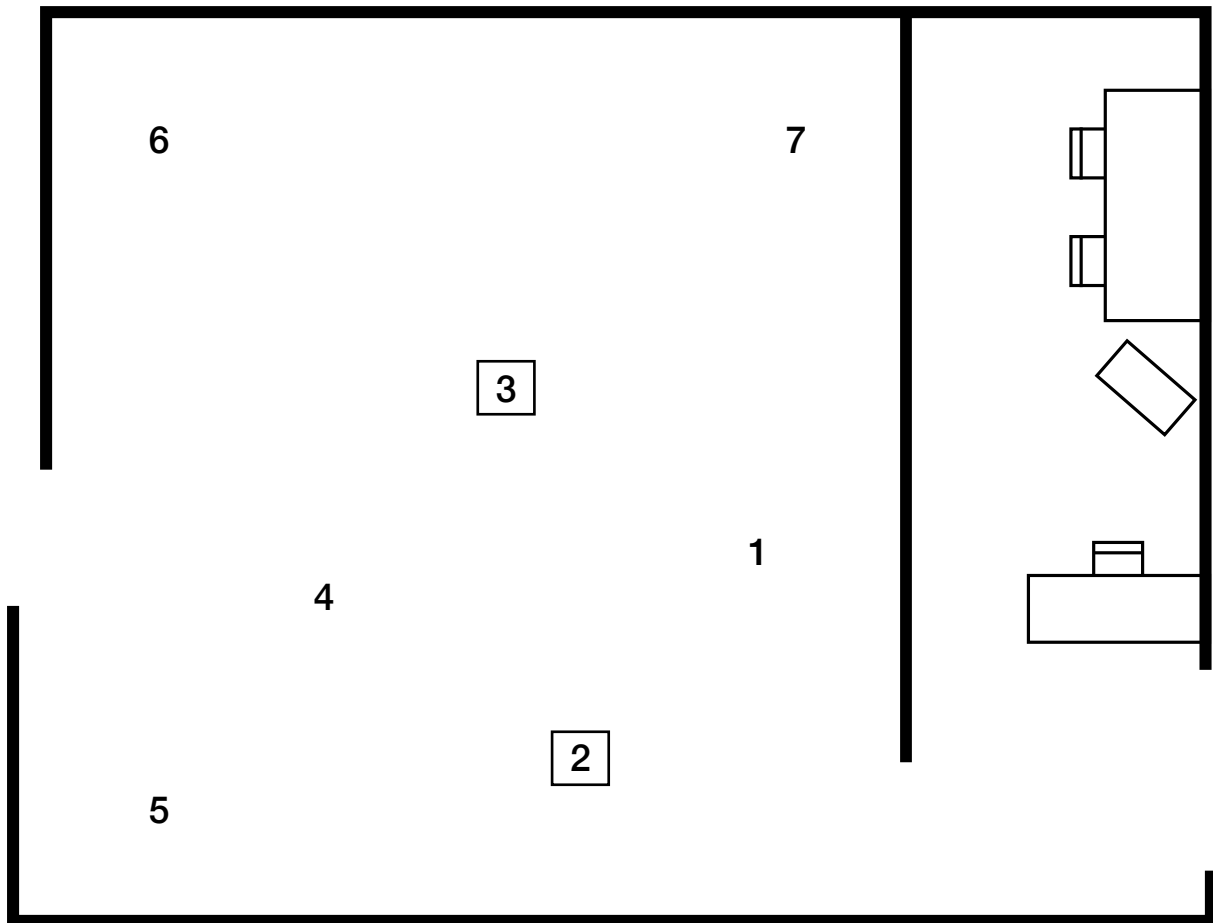
Built with friendship and love, the ropes in this exhibition aim to repair the relationships between tauwi and tangata whenua, and gather the voices of those with Chinese whakapapa in their threads. Every knot has a meaning and together they hold a message of whanaungatanga, kotahitanga, kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga, and aroha.

---

**Wai Ching Chan** is a Hong Kong born artist based in Tāmaki Makaurau. In her fibre-based installations she uses Chinese knots as her language to reconstruct and reinforce the connections and unity that exists between tauwi and tangata whenua in Aotearoa. Wai's recent exhibitions include *Ā Mua: New Lineages of Making*, The Dowse Art Museum, Te Whanganui-a-Tara, 2020; *Wishing Well*, Enjoy Contemporary Art Space, Te Whanganui-a-Tara, 2020; and *Hold*, Window, University of Auckland, Tāmaki Makaurau, 2019.

**Tessa Ma'auga** is currently completing her PhD in creative arts at Massey University Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa in Te Papaioea. Her artistic research employs a language of knots and fibre-based art to explore the nature of essential relationships within the universe, focusing on the connections between Aotearoa and Southern China. Her main occupation and passion is as a mother and educator in her neighbourhood. Recent exhibitions include *Waitangi, Whytangi, Whywetangi*, Square Edge Arts Centre, Te Papaioea, 2022; *National Contemporary Art Award*, Waikato Museum, Kirikiriroa, 2018; and *Fibres of our Ropes*, Massey University, Te Papaioea, 2018.

# WORK LIST



- 1 Wai Ching Chan, *善淵 shàn yuān*, mop string and tanekaha, 2022
- 2 Tessa Ma'auga, *Lineage of Nǚwā*, manila rope, 2022
- 3 Tessa Ma'auga, *Currents from Pearl River*, nylon thread, sea shells and sinkers, 2022
- 4 Wai Ching Chan, *百川 bǎi chuān*, wool and pearls, 2022
- 5 Wai Ching Chan, *若水 ruò shuǐ*, wool, 2022
- 6 Taonga from: Kerry Ann Lee, Campbell Gin, David Lew, Kim Lowe, Shane Hansen, Allan Xia, Jing Yi Chin, Amy Weng, Simon Kaan, Carmel and Maxine Chan-Salmanzadeh, Monica Wang, and Xin Cheng (left to right)
- 7 Tessa Ma'auga, *Longing for homeland*, paper cutting on mulberry paper, 2022

