

**Ashleigh Taupaki
& Tristen Harwood**

Gun, Paper, Obelisk

14 August – 4 October 2026

Curated by Jane Wallace

Gun, Paper, Obelisk brings together the work of Ashleigh Taupaki and Tristen Harwood. The exhibition's title riffs on the hand game rock, paper, scissors to echo the tripartite nature of the colonial project: militarism, administration and extraction. Taupaki and Harwood's intervention and reinterpretation of public records in Aotearoa and Australia indexes the material conditions and spatial encounters of the late 19th century. Through this research, *Gun, Paper, Obelisk* articulates ideas of colonial ambivalence, ideological justification and Indigenous self-identification.

Sites of exchange, compromise and dispute provide a structure for Taupaki's work. Through five extracted scenes, Taupaki emphasises the key events that trace an autobiographical history of Ngāti Hako resistance to Crown activity. The play opens with a meeting between a young girl and a taniwha, to whom she tells her story; the following acts set forth the circumstances of Ngāti Hako shooting a colonial surveyor's assistant and

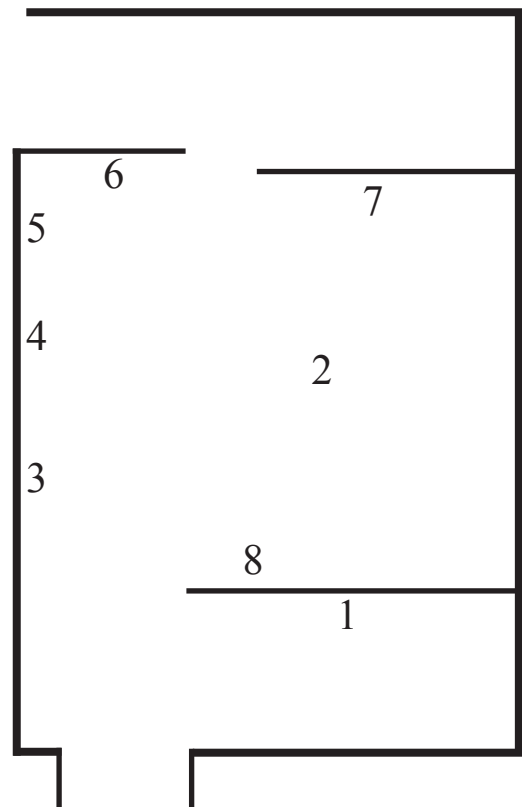
the unanimous agreement from the hapū that this action was warranted, as recorded in court proceedings. Working with a visual language that retains only essential relationships and directions, the work operates as a partial script with which to reenact the situation. *Te Whakatau* constructs the colonial encounter through a typographic blueprint of the wharenui Te Kotahitanga at Taupaki's marae. This discursive site spatially maps both physical and ideological points of contact between tangata whenua and the Crown.

Harwood's research concerns the direct relationship between late 19th-century labour prisons and concurrent international exhibitions, in particular the 1888 Melbourne Centennial Exhibition. These environments produced parallel developments in the category of Aboriginal art and the Australian national identity. The large-scale prints included in *Gun, Paper, Obelisk* register instances of display history that formed an aspirational vision of Australia connected to colonial industry, exploration and European cultural ideals. Harwood's more provisional works on paper likewise draw out the excess aesthetics involved in justifying the colonial project. By working anti-productively with the residual matter of this period, Harwood presents a counterpose to a singular narrative of colonial interests and Indigenous agency.

Ashleigh Taupaki (Ngāti Hako) is a multidisciplinary artist who works primarily in object, drawing and research. She has recently completed a PhD in Fine Arts at Elam School of Fine Arts and Design. Her work investigates complex relationships between knowledge systems and cultural understanding through visual and conceptual frameworks.

Tristen Harwood is an Indigenous Australian writer. He lives on unceded Wurundjeri Country in Melbourne, where he lectures at the Victorian College of the Arts. Tristen's art criticism has been published in *ArtReview*, *Memo*, *Artlink*, *The New York Times*, *Overland Journal*, *Un Magazine*, *The Saturday Paper*, *Art Monthly Australasia*, *Art + Australia* and elsewhere. He is a senior editor at *Memo Review* and has recently published a chapter in *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art* and co-authored the book *Variations: A More Diverse Picture of Contemporary Art*. His work concerns words; their textual form, theoretical and fictional content, and the materials by which they are transmitted.

With thanks to Signtech for their continued support.



1. Ashleigh Taupaki
Act one, scene one, 2026. Vinyl.
Act one, scene two, 2026. Vinyl.
Act two, scene two, 2026. Vinyl.
Act three, scene one, 2026. Vinyl.
Act three, scene four, 2026. Vinyl.
2. Ashleigh Taupaki, *Te Whakatau*, 2026. Vinyl.
3. Tristen Harwood, *The formalisation of the universe*, 2026. Digital prints on paper.
4. Tristen Harwood, *The model city*, 2026. Digital prints on paper.
5. Tristen Harwood, *The moon without a tide*, 2026. Digital prints on paper.

6. Tristen Harwood, *Art is dead: an Orphic victory*, 2026. Digital print on paper, acrylic on 19th century paper.

7. Tristen Harwood, *Brain Damage/The history of the trade*, 2026. Digital prints on tracing paper.

8. Tristen Harwood, *The well-executed counterfeit*, 2026. Digital prints on paper.