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Hybrid focus

LEFT:
Self portrait as Te Rahui, Digital print from 16x20in negative film, 100x120cm

PAGE 32:
(Erased) From an untouched landscape, Landscape #6, Inkjet print on hahnemuhle paper with hole removed to a black velvet void, 50x50cm.

When he was studying in Tasmania in 2012 he heard about gravestones on Maria Island – off the coast of Tasmania – where the words were in Maori. Until then he'd always believed that penal settlements in Van Diemen's Land were for white convicts only. Research led him to learn of Te Umuroa and six Whanganui Maori who had attacked a farm in the Hutt Valley in 1846, and under George Grey's orders, were subjected wrongly to a court martial. The men spoke insufficient English, their interpreter was inadequate and they were denied legal counsel. They pleaded guilty. Their crime was 'rebellion against the Queen and possession of one of Her Majesty's firearms.' They

were sentenced to be 'transported as Felons for the Term of their Natural lives', banished from their own island and incarcerated on another.

Displaced Rebellion is a series of self-portraits in which he represents himself as Maori who were sent to Van Diemen's Land. As an Australian of Maori descent, Tylor acknowledges the significance of their story to his own historical connection to Australia.

His most recent work is an investigation of his mythological origins. Names are important to him for what they reveal about identity and culture, and this series is *Aotearoa, My Hawaiki*. 'There's always a place where your ancestors come from. I

prefer to call mine Aotearoa for what it means – New Zealand is just a Dutch label.' It is fourteen black and white disarmingly serene invocations to the clouds which hover over landscape and acknowledge the significance of Aotearoa. The bottom third of each image, however, is dark and unknowable, and slicing through the darkness is a tear, a separation between land and sky. 'Ripping the landscape is,' he says, 'about not having a connection to these places – about displacement brought about by colonisation. Most of my work is about my mixed race and heritage – this is the first time I've really thought about being a Maori-Australian.'





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Hybrid focus

PAGE 33,
TOP LEFT:
*Twinkling eyes of
cunningness and
ferocity*, Becquerel
Daguerreotype, 11x13cm

PAGE 33,
TOP RIGHT:
*The missionaries
bright spot*, Becquerel
Daguerreotype, 7x9cm

PAGE 33,
BOTTOM LEFT:
Self portrait, Becquerel
Daguerreotype, 10x12cm

PAGE 33,
BOTTOM RIGHT:
*The missionaries wives
don't like tattooed
faces*, Becquerel
Daguerreotype, 11x13cm

James Tylor's work is meticulous, considered, and beautiful. Because his practice is grounded in history, he works with historical photographic processes from the 19th century, especially those used to document Aboriginal and Maori culture. Before he studied photography, he was a carpenter and a coexistent part of his art is the making of hybrid artefacts: in *Past the Measuring Stick, 2013*, he makes a kauri boomerang, a manuka gidgee, a harakeke dilly bag.

He is currently walking around Kangaroo Island, the third largest island in Australia after Tasmania and Melville

Island, and once a border of Kaurua territory – their name for it was Karta, or Island of the Dead. When it gets cooler, he plans another longer walk along Kaurua borders – from Cape Jervis to Port Pirie – and he wants to learn more of their language. 'You have to be in a place to understand its history and you want to speak words rather than decipher.' ■

In June, July and August, his work will be shown in *Some Australian Photographs* at the McNamara Gallery in Whanganui.

Jamestylor.com

- i Hughes, Robert, *The Fatal Shore*, London, Pan 1987, chapter 3, p59
- ii Hughes, Robert, op cit, chapter 1, p9