



Bottled Ocean

Eau et lumière

George Nuku

2017
Jack Chen



Festival du Pacifique de Rochefort, France 2012



'Mokorococco' – Journées du Patrimoine, Rouen 2017



"Whare Moana" - Sainsbury centre for visual arts, UK 2006



"Bottled Ocean 2117" - Kaohsiung Museum for fine art, Taiwan 2017

George Nuku

20 January 1964

"George Nuku is a highly regarded Maori Artist working in stone, bone, wood, shell, polystyrene and plexiglass. His works range from delicate jade and pearl amulets, life size stone & plexiglass sculptures, through to two story high Polynesian demi-gods and Maori culture heroes. He carries the tradition of his people handed down for thousands of years in an artform that promises to expand life and enhance survival. He is well known both in New Zealand and internationally. His work is highly regarded and sought after by both the rich and poor alike."

Exhibitions

- Te Ohonga Auckland War Memorial Museum (1986)
- 1990 -2000 solo and groups shows at Te Taumata and Mataora as Art Galleries, Archill Gallery, Maunga Whau, Compendium, Gallery Pacific, Strange Cargo gallery, El Puente gallery - Auckland NZ.
- Te Urupatu Maori contemporary art exhibition Ruatoki, NZ (1995)
- Te Ohonga exhibition world indigenous youth conference Waitangi (1998)
- Waitangi Day celebration exhibitions and Pasifika (1990 – 2000)
- Museum of Zooterneer Netherlands (2001)
- Featured Artist in One Giant Leap Documentary – UK – (2002)
- National Geographic Office Washington DC (2003)
- Trespassers will be eaten, exhibition at the Riviera gallery, New York (2004)
- Exhibition United Nations permanent forum indigenous people (2004)
- Pasifika Styles, Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, University of Cambridge (2006-2008)
- Pacific Encounters: Art & Divinity in Polynesia 1760-1860, Resource room, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich (2006)
- Power & Taboo, British Museum (2007)
- Pacific Treasures: Cook collections from the Kunstkamera, St. Petersburg: Captain Cook Birthplace Museum, Middlesbrough (2008)
- The Pacific Style of George Nuku, Captain Cook Birthplace Museum, Middlesbrough (2008)
- Mana Waka, Captain Cook Birthplace Museum, Middlesbrough (2008)
- Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, London (2009)
- NZ Room @ Venice, Venice Biennale, Italy (2009)
- Ethknowcentrix: Museums inside the Artist, October Gallery (2009)
- James Cook and the Exploration of the Pacific, Resource room: Kunstund Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, Germany (August 2009)
- Skin Wellcome Trust, London (June – September 2010)
- Felix Pakhuis, Antwerp, Belgium (2010)
- Mana Maori, Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden (2010-2011)
- Galerie Meyer, 17 Rue des Beaux-Arts, Paris (Oct 2011)
- House of Taonga @ Moa Room, 38 Rue de Malte, Paris (Oct 2011)
- Maori Linden Museum, Stuttgart, Germany (April – September 2012)
- Te Ao: les sept éléments de la lumière. Église St. Roch, Rue St. Roch, Paris (June – September 2012)
- Frieze Masters, Regents Park London (9-14 October 2012)
- Te Ao Marama, "World of Light", Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan (November 2012)
- Milano, School of Fine Arts, Fondation Mimondo, Castle Skorzeny (may 2013)
- Museum of Anthropology, University of Bergen Norway (December 2012)
- Te Ao Wairua "Spirit World", Museum of Anthropology Vancouver British Columbia (July 2013)
- Festival of New Zealand, Amsterdam Holland (May 2014)
- Atua Exhibition, National Museum Canberra (June 2014)
- Tulalip, Cultural Center, Seattle USA (July 2014)
- Parcours des Mondes, Galerie Meyer Paris (September 2014)
- Atua Exhibition, Saint Louis Art Museum USA (October 2014)
- Pulima Festival, Bottled Ocean 2114, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (November 2014)
- "Mata o te Whenua", Hastings City Art gallery (March 2015)
- Bottled Ocean 2115, Museum de Rouen, France (May 2015)
- Gold and Greenstone, Gold Coast Art Center, Queensland Australia (June 2015)
- Bottled Ocean, European Society For Oceanists, Brussels (July 2015).
- COP 21 - Paris climate change conference, UNESCO HQ, Paris (November 2015)
- Bottled ocean 2116, Te Pataka Art & Museum, Porirua NZ (February 2016)
- Bottled Ocean 2116, Tjibaou Cultural Centre, Nouméa (July 2016)

- Nuku for Kartell, Museo delle Culture & Kartell company, Milan (Sept 2016)
- Bottled Ocean 2116 / Te Ao Maori, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de La Rochelle (October 2016)
- Tù, des baleines et des hommes, Centre Culturel Tjibaou, Nouméa, (February 2017)
- Tangaroa Atea, Auckland City (march 2017)
- Design Days, Nuku And Kartell, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris (May 2017)
- Before Pacific, Musée du Quai Branly, (june 2017)
- Bottled Ocean 2117, university of New Caledonia (july 2017)
- Mokoroccoco, Journées du Patrimoine, Muséum de Rouen, (sept 2017)
- Bottled Ocean 2117, KMFA (Kaohsiung Museum Fine Arts), Taiwan, (October2017)
- Bottled Ocean 2118, Panorama XXL, Rouen, France (march 2018)

Permanent installations/collections

- Patoo Pato Pasifika, Pasifika Styles (2006); Te Ao Marama and Hinenuitepo (2012) re-opening of galleries, Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, University of Cambridge
- Heru, Cuming Museum, London (2008)
- Te Aonehe, British Museum, London (2008)
- Hei Tiki, Polynésie: arts et divinités 1760-1860, Musée du Quai Branly, Paris (2008)
- Tutira, permanent outdoor stone sculpture installation, Captain Cook Birthplace Museum, Middlesbrough (2009)
- Living & Dying, Wellcome Trust Gallery, British Museum, London (2009)
- Tewhatewha, Captain Cook Birthplace Museum (2010)
- Whare Toa, permanent installation for mokomokai, Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, Georg- August University, Gottingen (2010)
- Facing the Sea, National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland (June 2011)
- Power, Museum an de Stroom, Antwerp, Belgium (2011)
- Outer space Marae, Linden Museum Stuttgart (2011)
- Océanie, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de Rouen (2011)
- Pukaea, permanent outdoor stone sculpture installation, Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden (2011)
- Hei Tiki, Florence Nightingale Museum, London (2012)
- Ruatapuwhine, Omaha Marae, Hawkes Bay New Zealand (January 2014)
- Hei Tiki, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (July 2014)
- Hei Tiki, Saint Louis Art Museum, USA (October 2014)
- Omaha Festival of Art, Omaha Marae, New Zealand (February 2015)
- Auaha room, "Mata o te Whenua", Hastings City Art gallery (March 2015)
- 'Waka', permanent collection, Museum Für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig (July 2015)
- Permanent Collection, selection of works, Cultural Center Tjibaou (2017)
- Permanent Collections, selection of works, Museum La Rochelle, France (2017)

Forthcoming Exhibitions

- Bottled Ocean 2118, Taitung land art festival, Taiwan (June 2018)
- Bottled River – " Monsanto Mokotuararo Mutation ", EAST Art Biennale, Hastings City Art gallery (August 2018)
- Bottled Ocean 2118, MTG Hawke's Bay, New Zealand (August 2018)
- Bottled Ocean 2119, Muséum d'histoire naturelle de Bourges, France (April 2019)

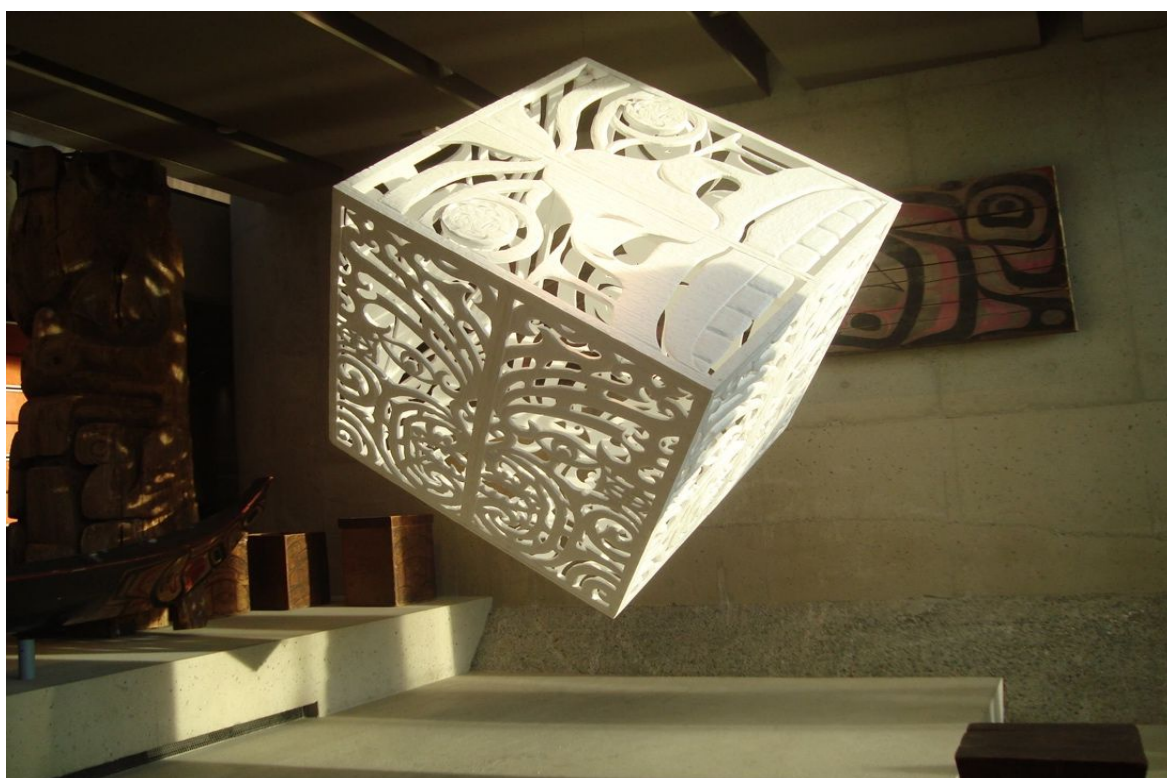
Publications

- Magazines:
 - In Style (NZ), Mana (NZ), NZ Fashion Quarterly, Vogue(USA), Elle (USA) Cosmopolitan (France). A supplement booklet on The House of TaongaCASA magazine (Italy). GQ New York, Elle (France).
- Journals:
 - Museum Ethnology Group Journal 2009
 - Pacific Arts Association Journal 2009
 - Routledge World Art Journal 2010
- Catalogues:
 - Pasifika Styles, Artists inside the Museum. Cambridge University, Museum of Archeology and anthropology 2008
 - Maori in Milan, salon ducal, catalogue Musee del Cultura, Milano, 2016
 - Bottled Ocean 2116, Te Ao Maori, catalogue Natural History Museum La Rochelle, 2016.
- Books:
 - Pacific Patterns 2007
 - Mau Moko Art of Maori Tattoo 2009

- La Collection Musee du Quay Branly 2010
- In Oceania 2012
- Atua 2014
- Pulima Art Award, 2nd edition, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, 2014



"Te Ao Marama" - Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver 2012



"Box of promises" - Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver 2012



Artselemental @ Omaha Marae



"Ruatapuwhine Wharekai" – Omahu Marae, Aotearoa / NZ 2014



"Te Ao Marama" - Kaohsiung Museum for fine Art, Taiwan 2012



"Outer Space Marae," - Aotearoa / New Zealand 2006



"Whare Tupuna" - Museum aan der stroom, Antwerp 2010



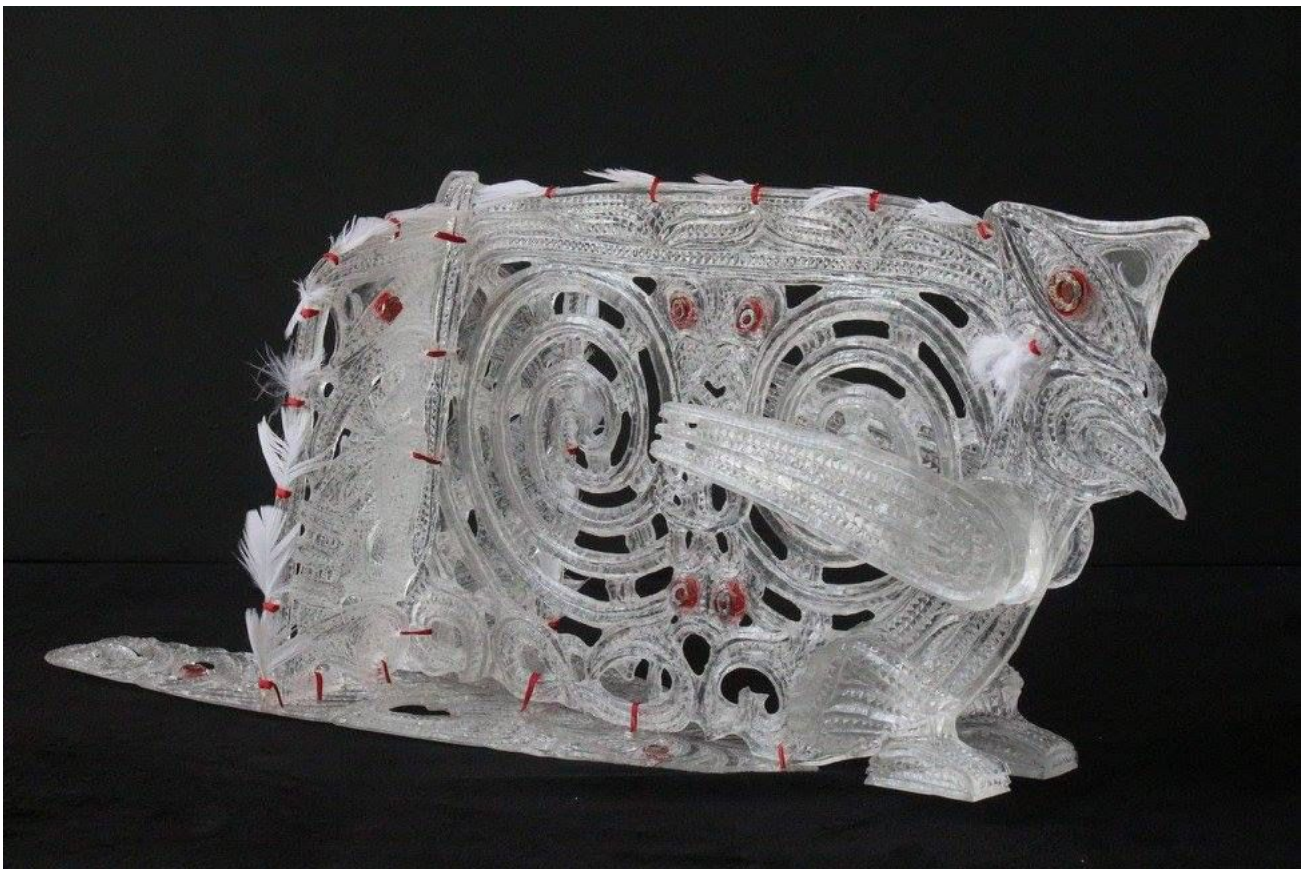
"Te Hekenga"- Gold and Greenstone exhibition- Goldcoast art centre, Queensland 2015



"Te Hononga"- National Museum of Scotland, 2010.



"Kotiate" - Rouen, 2015



"Tauihu" - Galerie Meyer, Paris 2017

'Bottled Ocean' - eau et lumière

My name is George Tamihana Nuku, i am from Aotearoa/New Zealand. I am of Maori, Scot & German descent. I am 53 years old and presently based between Rouen, Normandy and Hawke's Bay NZ. I travel regularly, exposing my work through projects around the world.

I began my career from art in 1984, carving bone, wood, stone & shell conveying traditional Maori artforms & motifs.

In 1990 i incorporated Polystyrene expanded foam and acrylic plexiglass into my art practice and these man made materials have shaped the course of my life's work. I continue to use the 'natural' materials also and in some cases fusing them together with the synthetic elements.

In 2006 i was included in a group exhibition titled 'Pacifika Styles' in the UK at the Cambridge University Museum of Archeology and Anthropology. This exhibit featured contemporary artists responding to Museum ethnographic collections and environments - i brought with me to the UK a full sized version of traditional Maori architecture carved from solid plexiglass.

I had transformed customary Maori art and for me there was turning back.

Museums and Art institutions responded in turn, by inviting me to create projects in both the UK and Europe due to both my ability and tendency to use the 'new' materials with an 'old' approach.

This is all evident in my curriculum vitae.

The 7 years following my 2006 furor saw a constant outpouring of work in both Styrofoam and Plexiglass. I kept pushing the boundaries of both the material and myself.

Through these creative processes i have afforded myself a glimpse of the spirit, the nature, the character, and the nuanced qualities of the plastic material, it is a journey i continue on...

In 2014 my work in plastic took a significant turn, i started creating colour illustrations of marine life - whales, sharks, dolphins etc drawing on my knowledge of Maori patterns and stories.

During this time i viewed for the second time a Hollywood B movie titled 'Waterworld', a film set in the future describing the world as a place covered by water as a result of environmental catastrophe.

This story struck me deeply as a story of change, of adaption and mutation; as a result I began to have visions of mutated sea life, altered by the proliferation of plastic in the sea. I started creating designs of marine creatures from plastic water bottles and carved elements of plexiglass.

During this time i was invited by the Indigenous Peoples Cultural Foundation of Taiwan to create a concept and installation for participation in a group exhibition in Taipei. Consisting of leading and emerging aboriginal contemporary artists, selected from Taiwan and four selected Maori artists from Aotearoa/NZ

The basis of the project stemmed from the concept of 'Austronesian culture' - This is the notion of a common language and culture family originating out of south China region and spreading eastwards over the entire region of Oceania encompassing the myriad islands of Te Moananui, the vast pacific ocean linked by voyaging and migration.

From this i created 'Bottled Ocean 2114'. a vision of the world 100 years from now, of a world covered by water containing mutated sea life, This entire installation was carved onsite in Taipei over the course of 2 weeks and was exhibited in the Museum of Contemporary art Taipei (MOCCA).

I was now no longer just responding solely to Museum ethnographic collections but i had created an entirely new concept, a new body of work to stand alone in its thinking and execution.

From this i was invited in 2015 to present the 'Bottled Ocean' installation in France at the Museum de Rouen. The culture of France is no stranger to the plastic water bottle for drinking; you could say that plastic bottled water in France is 'cultural'.

In this environment my ideas around water and plastic bottles both expanded and evolved. I added new creatures to my 'Bottled Ocean 2115', i started naming them as species, for example 'species rozana ika poisson mutation' - a fish created from the amazing blue colored plastic bottle of the rozana brand from France.

I began writing a series of texts for the exhibition installation to be printed on the walls - Here are some excerpts;

"The polar ice caps are melting; the world is undergoing a process of chemical mutation through the over-exploitation of fossil fuels, creating global warming and climate change, and with the increasing dominance of plastic which now permeates life on earth on every level."

"Every grain of sand on every beach on earth has a plastic component to its molecular structure; the blood of polar bears and whales contains plastic, as does the blood of humans and every other form of life."

"The accelerated dependence on plastic packaging has led to new mountains on the land and new atolls and islands on the world's oceans - made of discarded plastic bottles... The increasing overuse of plastic coincides with the decreasing of the world's supply and availability of suitable drinking water, the large conglomerates are turning more and more to the accumulation and monopolization of the world's fresh water resource. Eventually this will result in WaterWars."

"To contain, package, and supply the world's drinking water, plastic bottles are now a vital and necessary fact of life for humans in the 21st century. The plastic bottle begins to morph into a variety of cultural norms, they become the totems of modern life, they become forged into our new cities, our new cathedrals, our new temples, our new ancestors."

"The pace of acceleration speeds up rapidly, ultimately resulting in environmental collapse and catastrophe. The polar caps now finally melt completely, covering the entire world in saltwater. In this new world, those who adapt, will survive..."

2016 saw the installation idea travelling to New Zealand, New Caledonia and La Rochelle. By this stage I had created 2 separate installations to serve both the European and Asia/Pacific regions respectively.

During this time my thoughts and views towards water and plastic drinking bottles began to evolve further.

The plastic bottle as a receptacle or vessel of the most precious part of our life, also representing both light and water - the twin sources of life itself.

The plastic bottle being as sacred as the water it carries, the qualities expressed by the plastic bottle - light and water as proof of divinity itself.

The use of the plastic bottle in Art creation enables me to transmit these qualities through sheer beauty - a universal response transcending all cultures.

This in turn creates a shift in the mindset where people have another way to view empty plastic bottles beyond repulsion and/or denial. It has led me to the realisation that the pollution itself is sacred, the plastic being connected to us through genealogy, coming from petroleum, from oil, itself formed over time from primordial forests and the bones of dinosaurs etc.

Extracted from the earth and passing into our everyday lives from these ancient evolutionary origins, making the plastic an ancestor of us all. Something so incredibly old, yet in the same moment incredibly new. The space between this contradiction, this paradox, this irony - a place and a space where truth(s) can be found.

These truths revealed being more a discovery than an absolute.

My most recent incarnation, 'Bottled Ocean 2117' is currently being exposed in the Kaohsiung Museum for Fine Art in Taiwan.

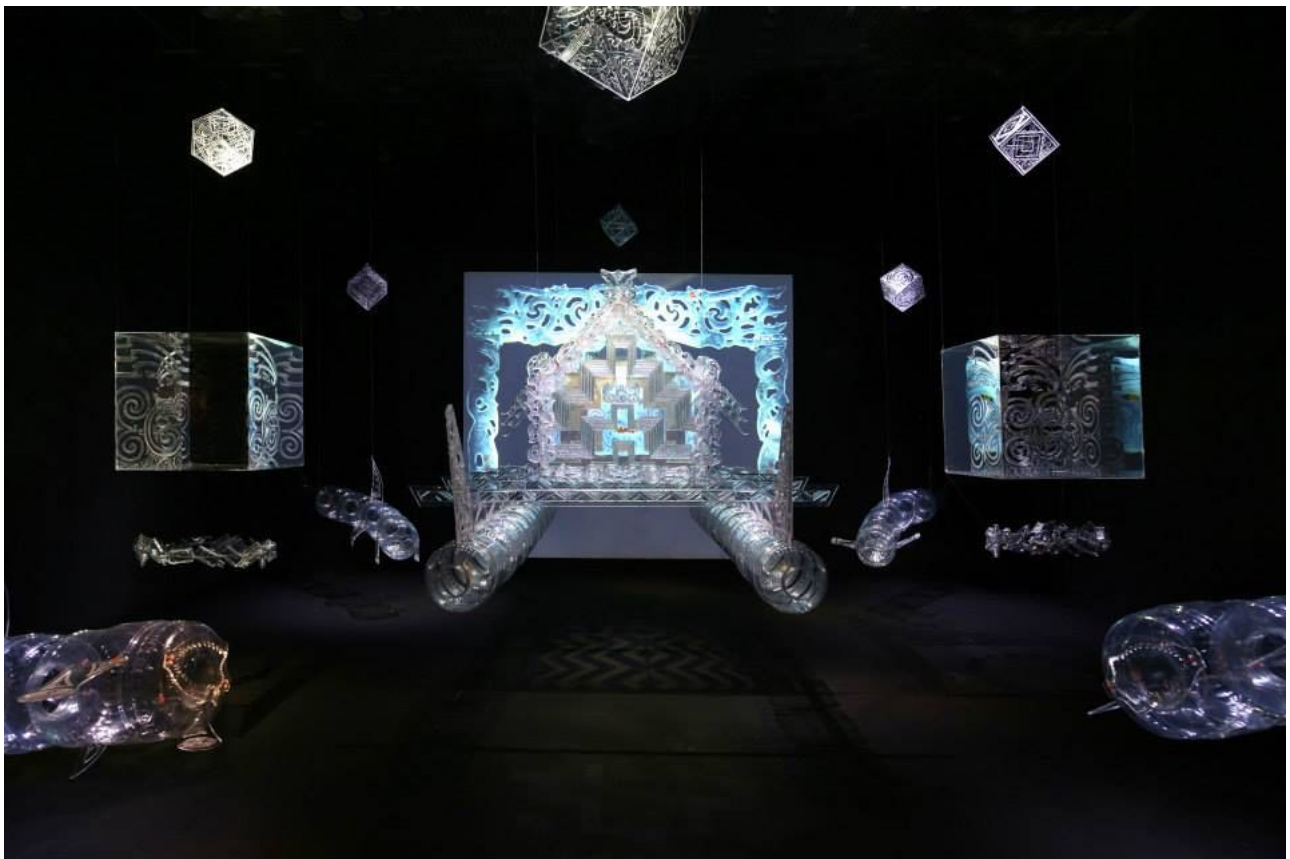
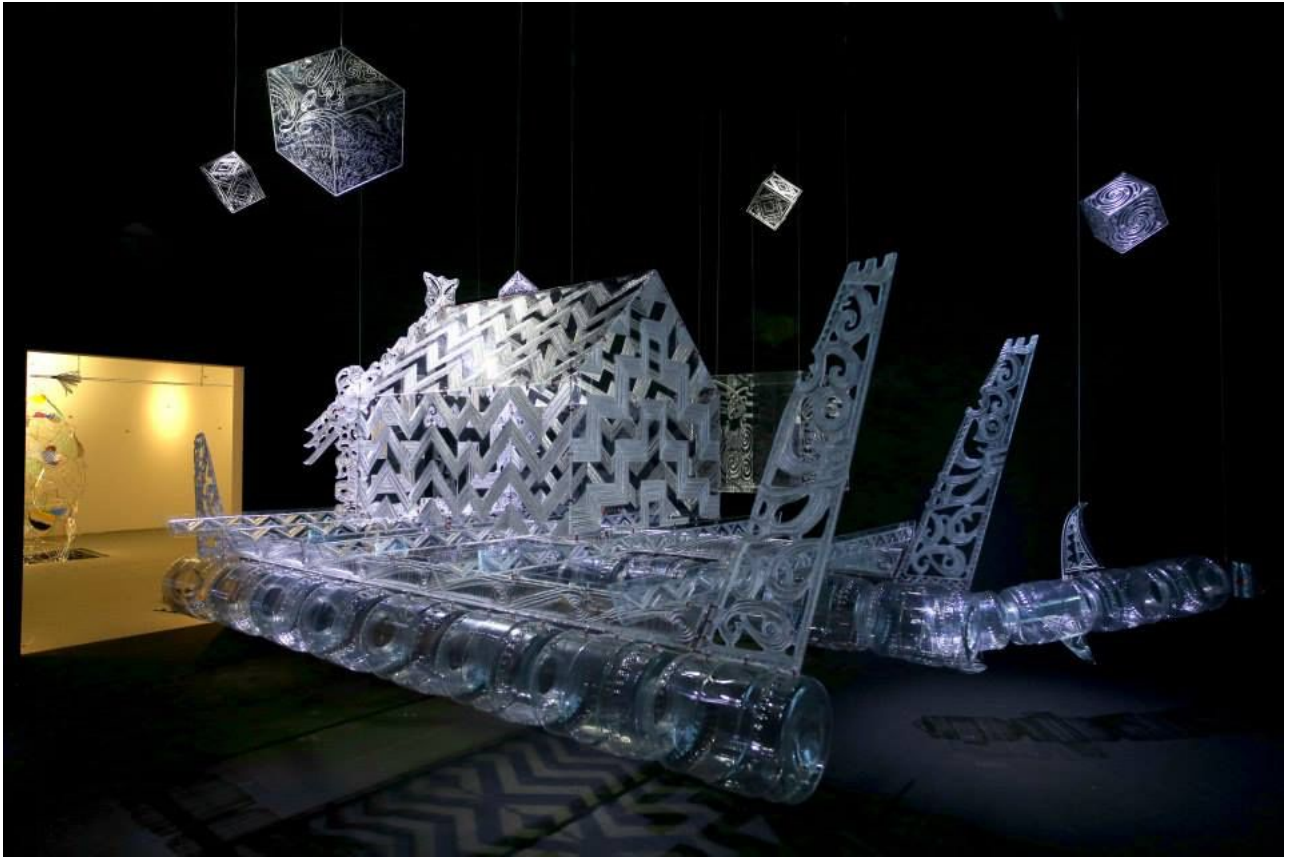
This work has seen the further development of the idea through the inclusion of a large totem figure over 4 metres in height, composed of carved plexiglass and plastic bottles.

The concept has morphed further from the initial portrayal of marine life and the voyaging canoe, evolving now into the representation of guardian sentinel beings belonging to the ocean itself. I have begun to create large scale mutated anthropomorphic figures thus bringing the human ancestor into the scenario of the plastic 'Bottled Ocean'

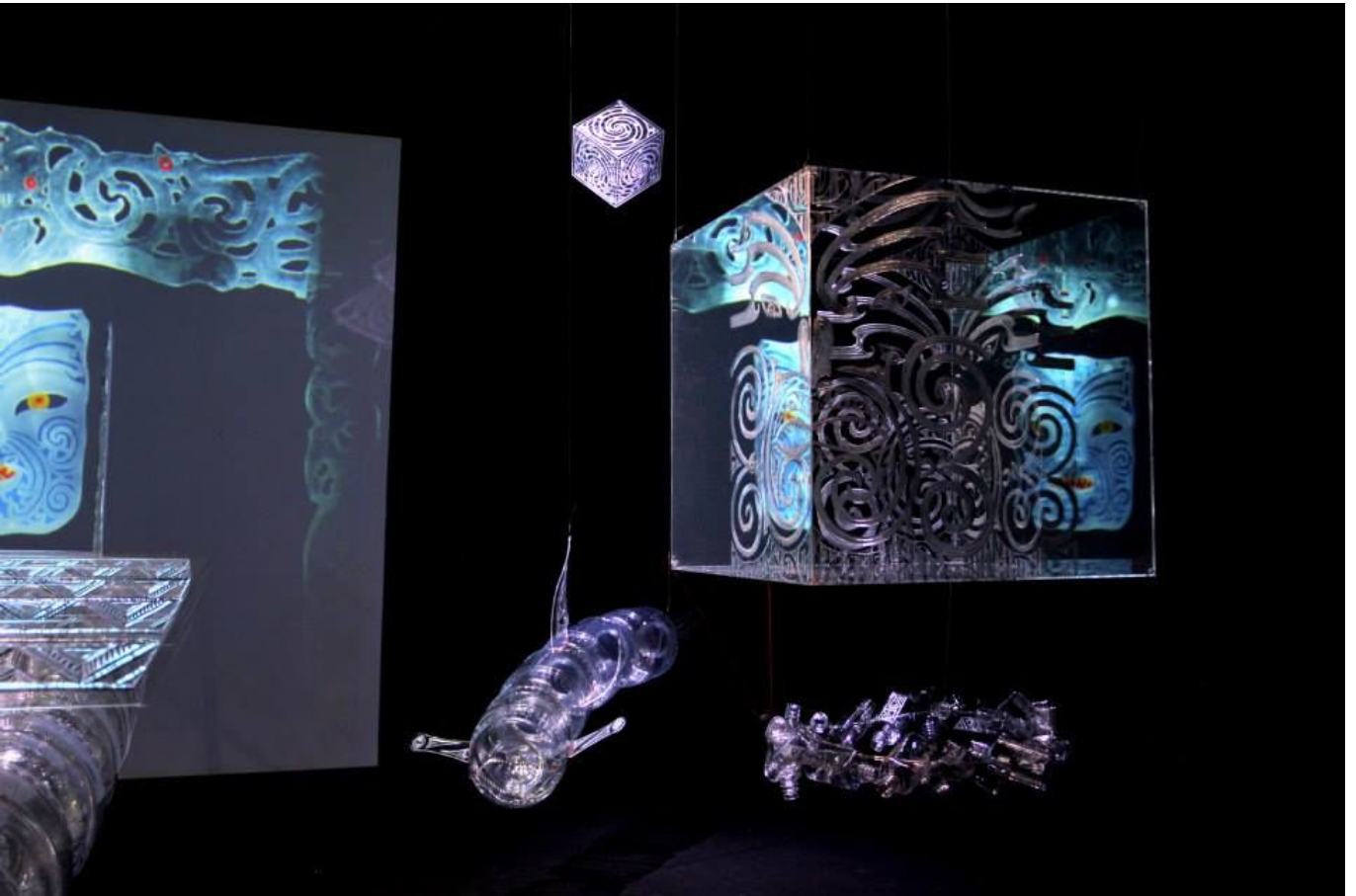
I say that I now speak fluently the language of both the plexiglass and the plastic bottle, further to that I make them both sing and dance.

Finally I say that this inseparable relationship to water through plastic ultimately sculpts me.

A relationship that redefines me with every moment, with every creative endeavour - on this voyage through and across the Bottled Ocean - 'eau et lumière.'



"Bottled Ocean 2114" Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei 2014



"Bottled Ocean 2114" Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei 2014



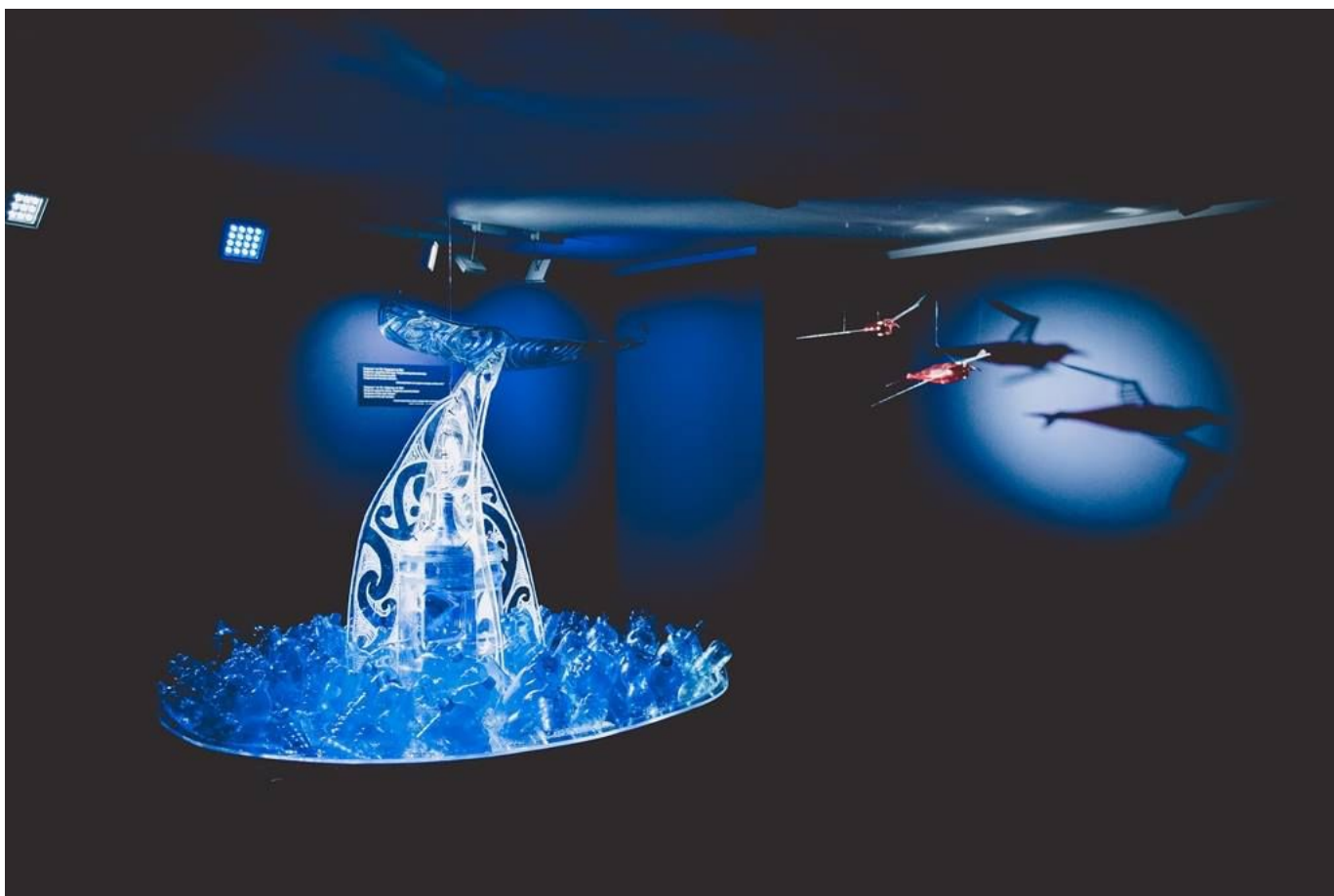
"Bottled Ocean 2115" Museum de Rouen, France 2015



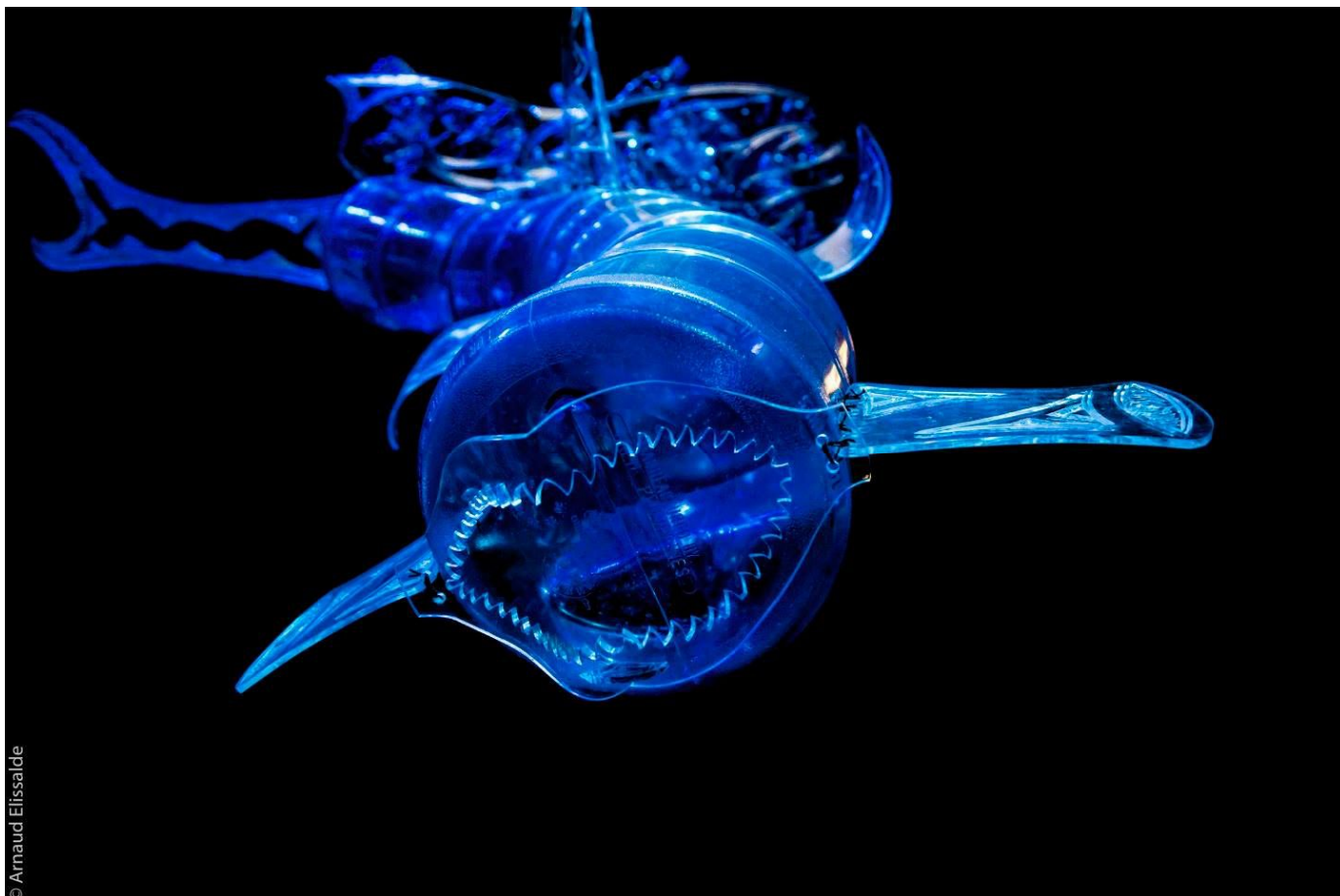
"Bottled Ocean 2116" Pataka Art Museum, Aotearoa /NZ 2016



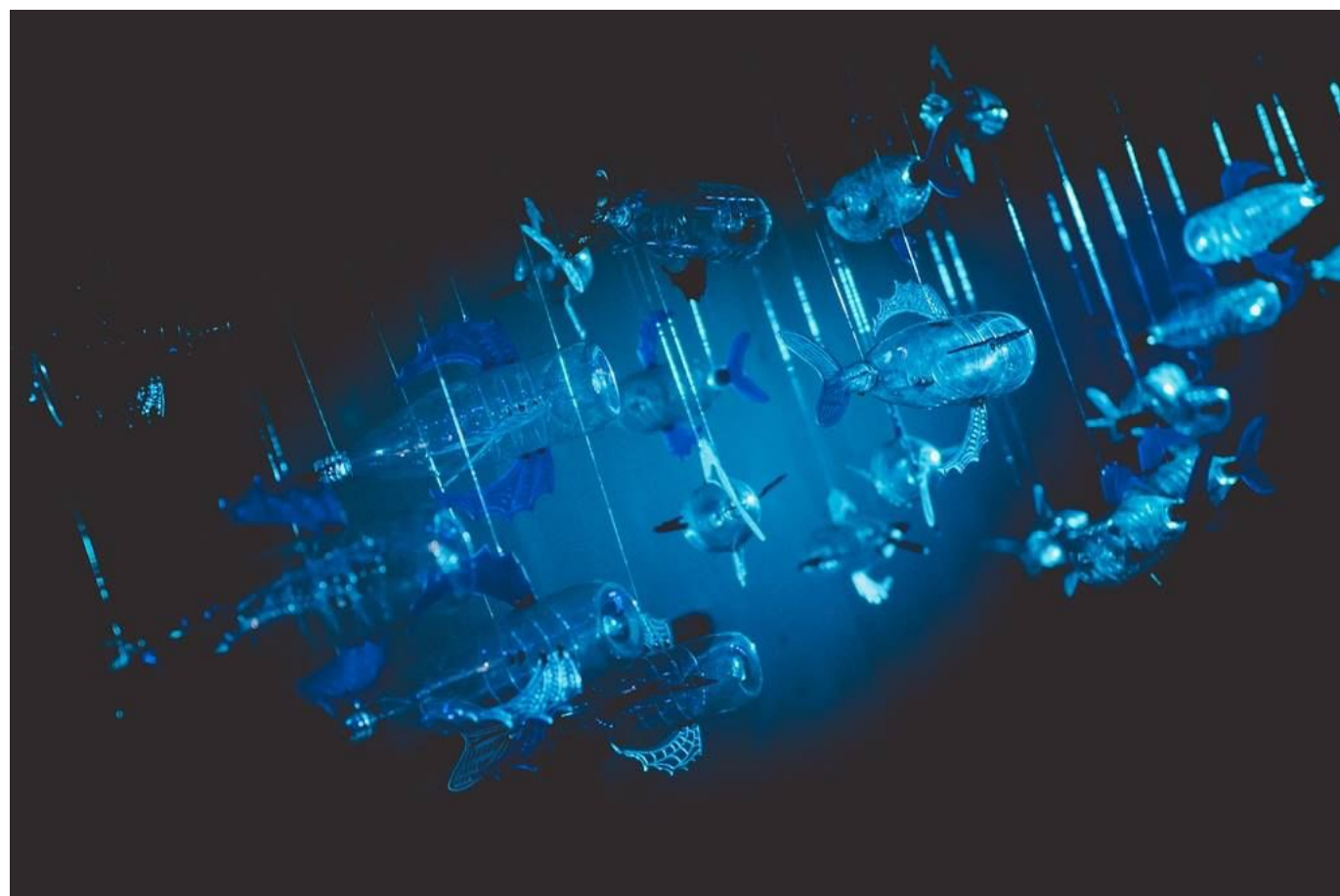
"Bottled Ocean 2116" Pataka Art Museum, Aotearoa /NZ 2016



"Bottled Ocean 2116" Tjibaou Cultural Center, Nouméa 2016



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"Bottled Ocean 2116" Tjibaou Cultural Center, Nouméa 2016



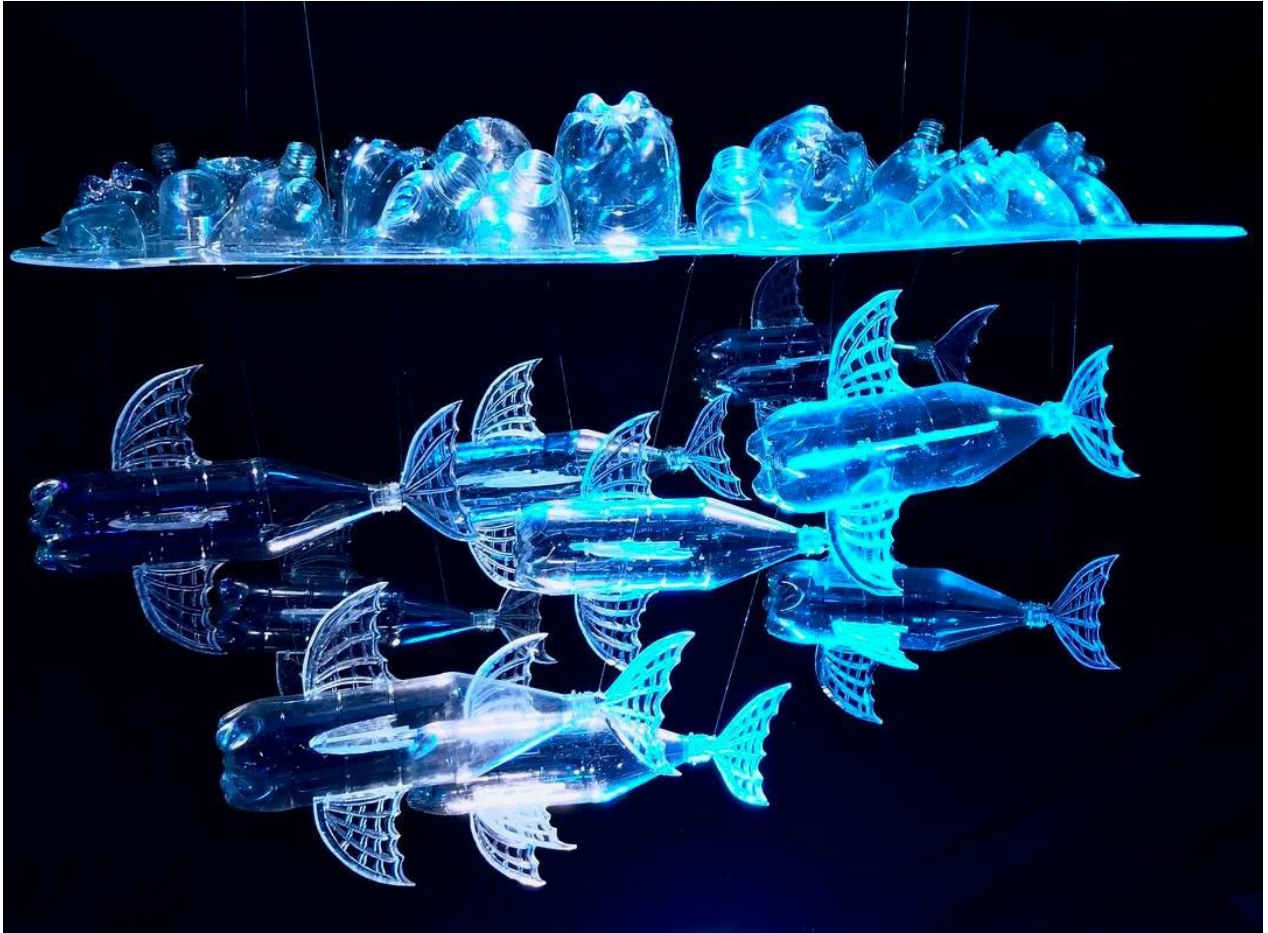
"Bottled Ocean 2116" Tjibaou Cultural Center, Nouméa 2016



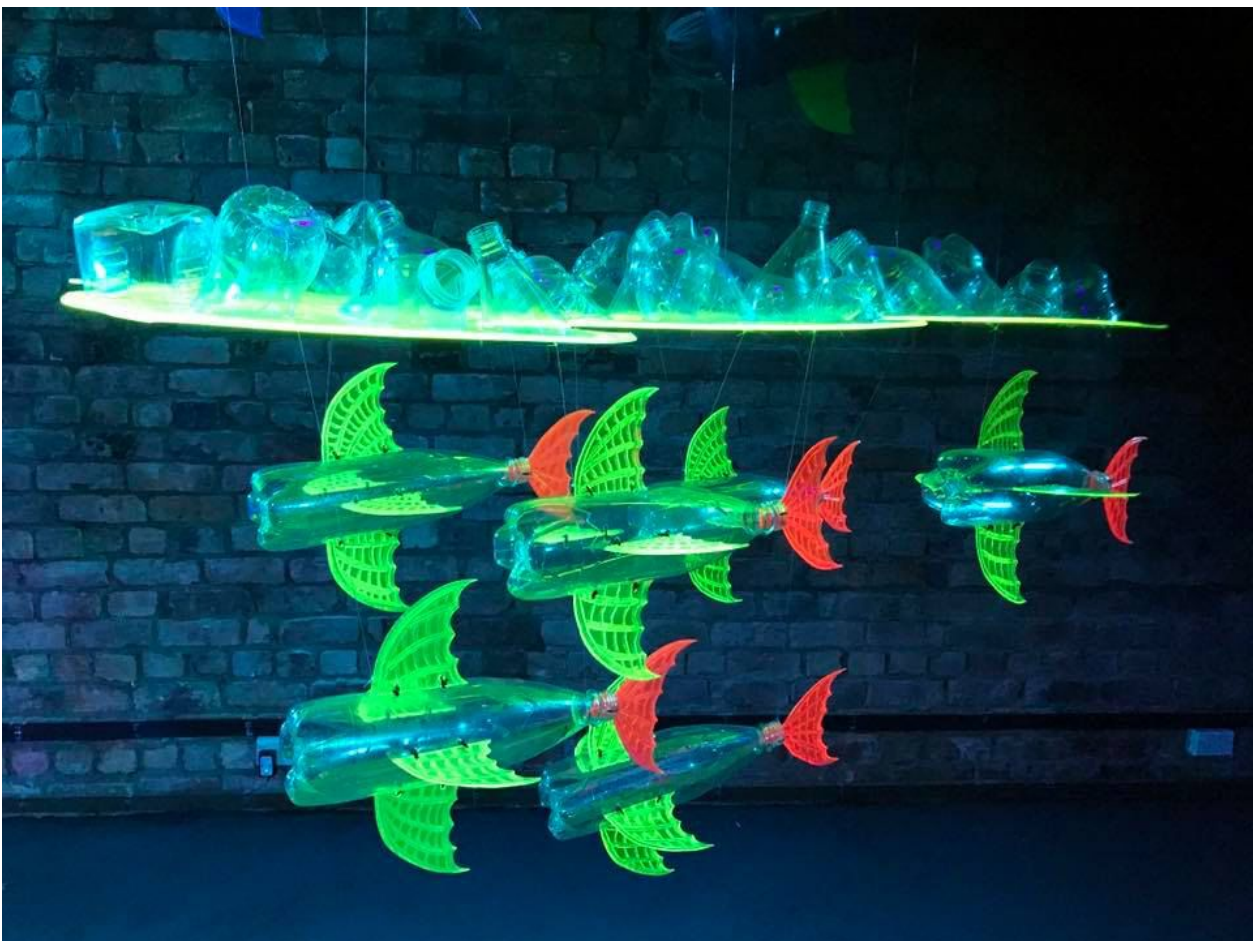
"Bottled Ocean 2116" Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de La Rochelle, 2016



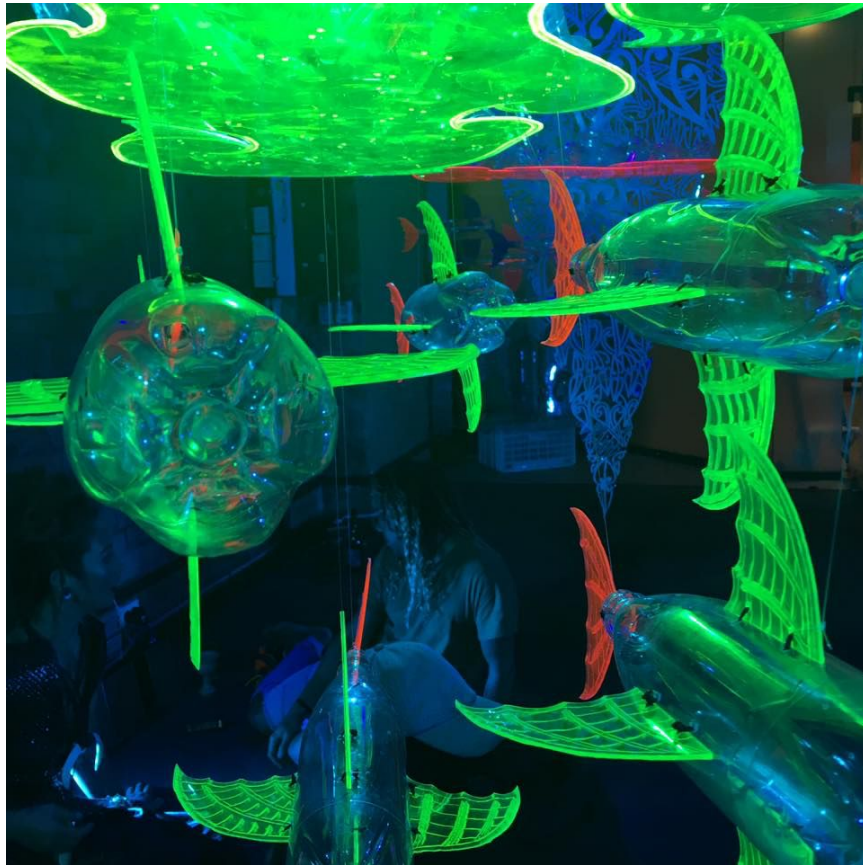
"Bottled Ocean 2116" Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de La Rochelle, France 2016



"Bottled Ocean 2117" - Auckland, Aotearoa /NZ 2017



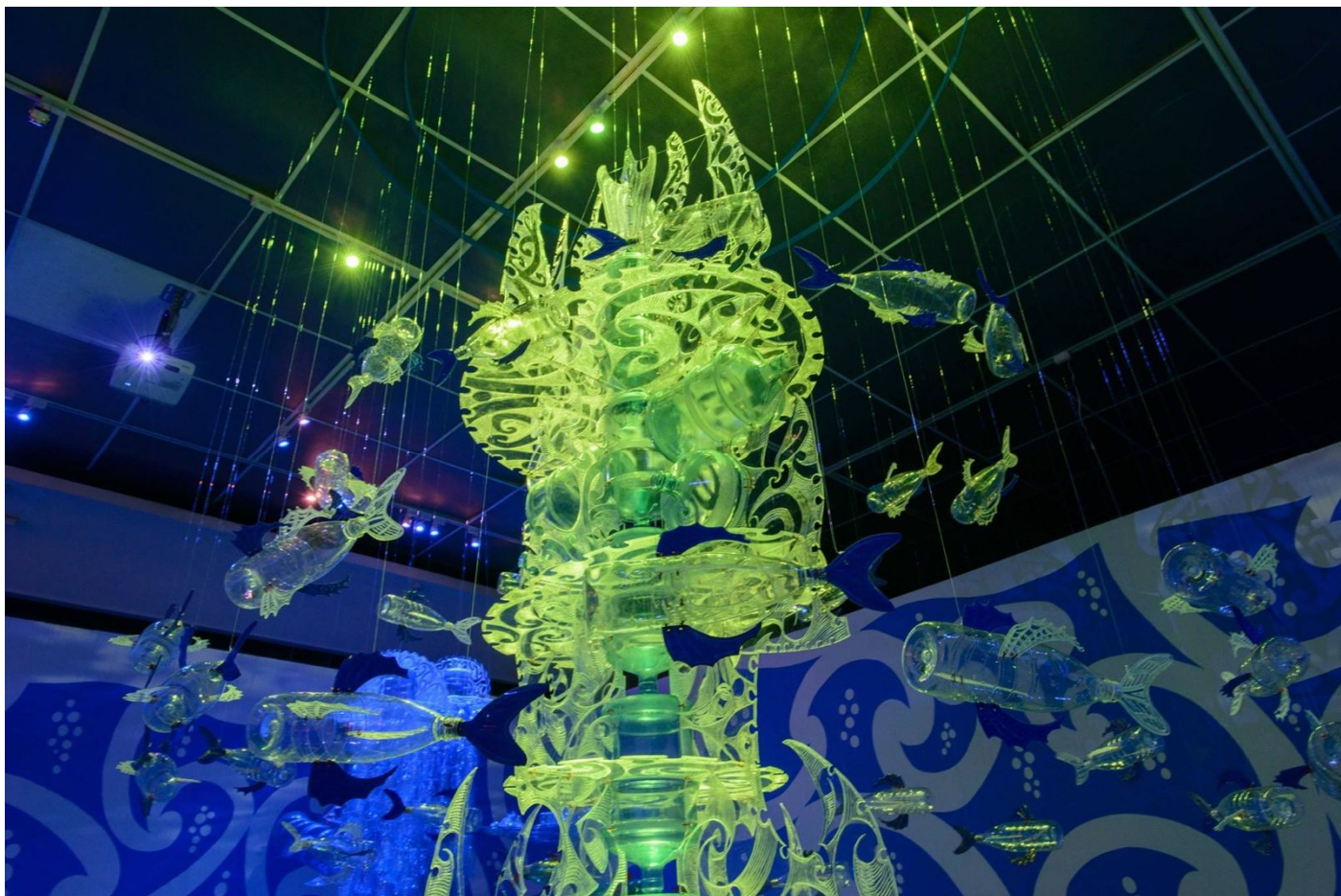
"Bottled Ocean 2117" - Auckland, Aotearoa /NZ 2017



"Bottled Ocean 2117" - Auckland, Aotearoa /NZ 2017



"Bottled Ocean 2117" Kaohsiung Museum for fine Art, Taiwan, 2017



"Bottled Ocean 2117" Kaohsiung Museum for fine Art, Taiwan, 2017



"Bottled Ocean 2117" Kaohsiung Museum for fine Art, Taiwan 2017

Education, outreach and public programmes

The treasure of 'Bottled Ocean' lies in the experiences of all the people who become part of the project on its many different levels.

The physical nature of the installation involves many people hands on to create the components of the marine creatures -

For example the creation of 'Tepatepa Meduse mutation' -the tentacles of the TMM consist of approximately sixty to eighty-four individual jellyfish made from plastic bottles.

They are created by cutting the bottom of the bottles and using this part to form the jellyfish head, the rest of the bottle is then cut with scissors to form its filigree appearance.

School children as young as eight years old participate in this process using a pair of scissors. The separate parts are then tied together with cord and strung together on plastic fishing line to form tentacles of between five and seven jellyfish each.

The tentacles (twelve in number) are then attached to the TMM sculpture, this element comprises of a large cooler bottle with carved plexiglass pieces all tied together with cord.

The final result and effect produces an ethereal creature that conveys beauty in a toxic content, they revolve as they 'float' in the room reacting with light.

The entire installation is achieved this way by attaching all the separate pieces together with cord.

Helpers and volunteers from the host institution are all involved in this, alongside members of the visiting public who are notified via the institution's communication and/or just watch the progress and join in.

Whole families and groups of the general public join in readily and the realisation hits them that this is beyond an 'activity', it becomes a group collaboration with the artist and they are actually participating in the creation of the installation itself.

The creative energy fills the space and people often return the following days to assist in the completion of the creation.

Long term relationships are formed between myself the artist and everyday people where ever the 'Bottled Ocean' project is presented.

A sense of achievement, pride and group ownership in the installation occurs.

The public involved then become themselves spokespeople for the messages and authorities of the meanings behind each element and the installation as a whole.

Without the involvement of schools, groups, members of the public and dedicated helpers from within the institutions the 'Bottled Ocean' installations would be near impossible to create, assemble and install in the timeframes given.

The same philosophy applies to the painting of stylised ocean murals on the walls surrounding the installations.

The advent of social media and mobile smartphones ensures that the progress is thoroughly documented by all attending and participating, these photographs and videos are shared widely and it adds to its own media momentum.

This in turn attracts more visitors and school groups, often returning daily more than eager to see and participate in the progress and completion.

My Maori culture informs and reinforces in me the importance of ritual and ceremony to mark important stages - the inauguration of the exhibition opening being one important example.

By the end of the project's creation i usually have had opportunities to teach the schools and public who are interested, cultural components of and for the ceremonies- for example haka powhiri - welcoming posture dances and waiata - songs and chants.

I believe totally in these aspects of my art practice and i am committed to educating and sharing with audiences the wealth of the Maori culture - they in turn feel this and respond in kind.

A climate of shared emotions and shared feelings becomes the norm - the notion of the visitor 'looking' is dispelled.

By virtue of entering the space the audience becomes literally a part of 'Bottled Ocean'

It goes without saying how enriched my life is, meeting and interacting with people this way where ever 'Bottled Ocean' takes me. It is a profoundly humbling and transformative experience that fills me with positivity and a continuing faith in humanity.

In particular the young people, they are the most important part of this and their involvement honors both my life and my art.



"Bottled Ocean 2116" Pataka Art Museum NZ, 2016



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© ADCK- centre culturel Tjibaou, fotogr. Allan Haeweng

"Bottled Ocean 2116" Tjibaou Cultural Center, Nouméa 2016



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"Bottled Ocean 2116" Tjibaou Cultural Center, Nouméa 2016



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© ADCK- centre culturel Tjibaou, fotogr. Allan Haeweng

“Bottled Ocean 2116” Tjibaou Cultural Center, Nouméa 2016



"Te Hekenga" – "Gold and Greenstone" exhibit – Goldcoast art centre, Queensland 2015



'Bottled Ocean 2116', Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de La Rochelle, France 2016



"Bottled Ocean 2117" Kaohsiung Museum for fine Art, Taiwan 2017

Video Links

<https://vimeo.com/235862761>

<https://vimeo.com/150240322>

<https://www.pataka.org.nz/george-nuku-bottled-ocean-2116/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uyq5VDWRk44>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUmIYStGuVs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4tlyGhNslw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6rfWj0m1QQ>

[vidéo](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omhIEZlcZY4&sns=fb>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omhIEZlcZY4&sns=fb>

Contact

George Nuku

georgenuku@hotmail.com

facebook George Nuku

Tel : +33 (0)630955872

Mathilde Denniel

mathilde.denniel@hotmail.fr

facebook Mathilde Denniel

Tel : +33 (0)630955872

