

"TE MAORI" COLLECTION ONE



MAORI ART FROM NEW ZEALAND COLLECTIONS

A N A L T E R N A T I V E M A O R I V O I C E

PRESS STATEMENT - embargoed till Sept 10 (Aotearoa/NZ time)
Sept 11 (Great Turtle Island/USA time)

" Maori culture has existed in New Zealand (sic) for over 1000 years" says Mr Kara Puketapu, Chairman of the Committee set up for the "Te Maori" exhibition, "but, this is the first occasion in all that time, that the Maori people have consented to their art work being taken from New Zealand and displayed in public. "

The above quote is a blatant, unadulterated, and offensive lie.

At no stage in the assembling of the Te Maori Exhibition were the Maori people even asked whether they supported the exhibition. Not the elders, not the young people. Had they been it is fact that much opposition would have been voiced. Solution - don't ask. In fact, owners of certain items had to campaign quite vigorously to stop there taonga being taken for the exhibition.

TRADITIONAL ART

Exhibiting traditional art serves mainly to highlight the romanticism in which the world views Maori culture. It ignores the current "unsavory" plight of the Maori people.

Without doubt there is much depth and richness in Maori works, and such works give our culture a lot in which to be proud, but as importantly, such things as our poor standing in many spheres of society should be emphasised to give a balanced and realistic view of the development of Maori people. Fine Maori Works are only as much part of Maoridom as our high unemployment, high education drop-out rate, and high infant mortality rate. Highlighting one and ignoring the other gives a false picture of Maori people.

PROMOTION

" Te Maori will focus US attention on NZ as never before. YOU can share in this exciting promotional opportunity. With Te Maori as the centrepiece, we plan to mount a number of associated activities." Suggested promotional activities include; "gourmet foods, beverages, consumer competitions, product demonstrations" etc.

Is this what our "living treasures" to be part of? Are our sacred taonga only the bait for further US/NZ trade? Is the Te Maori Exhibition the prostitute who lures an unsuspecting American public into the musty halls of crass NZ materialism?

It would seem all the hullabaloo about "living treasures" and classical works" is not unlike labelling fatty mince beef with an "export quality prime rump steak" label. Fancy dressing on a shoddy product. We have been conned...again.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The Te Maori Exhibition is to be attended by up to 200 Maori elders and supporters.

As tangata whenua o Aotearoa (people of the land of Aotearoa) ours is the right of first recognition. And yet it would seem that those who travel with Te Maori will be paying homage not to Native America, the long suffering guardians of the Great Turtle Island, but to the America that foots-the-bills/pulls-the-strings. If those who are there do not first thank their true hosts, the native peoples of the Great Turtle Island (USA) then their arrogance, their rudeness, and their ignorance of protocol means they certainly do not represent the majority of Maoridom.

GLOSS LOSS

The use of Te Maori as a prostitute for NZ/US trade and tourism, its emphasis on romanticism, its lack of balance, the resources spent on its staging, and the lies and half-truths associated with its promotion, take much of the gloss off what could have been part of a valuable international expose of Maori historical development.

PROTEST

TITEWHAI HARAWIRA is currently in New York where she will be voicing the protest of many Maori people to the staging of the Te Maori exhibition. While there she will be hosted by the International Indian Treaty Council, an organisation representing Indian rights and recognised by the United Nations. The IITC has also agreed to represent the struggles of various Maori organisations in its work within the U.N and in its contacts through other international forums.

This press statement is made in line with the policies and statements of the following organisations:

Waitangi Action Committee
Pacific Peoples Anti-Nuclear Action Committee
Maori Peoples Liberation Movement of Aotearoa
Mana Motuhake

contacts:

International Indian Treaty Council
330 Ellis St, San Francisco CA 94102
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International Indian Treaty Council
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The embargo dates are for simultaneous release to coincide with the opening of Te Maori in New York, Sept 10 1984.

12-9-84

STATEMENT FROM TITEWHAI HARAWIRA

New York

The Maori People have been used by Multi-nationals, New Zealand's Government and the United States Government to promote trade and tourism through the display of Maori Artifacts at the Metropolitan Museum. Our artifacts are not "art". They represent us, the Maori People yesterday, today and tomorrow. The Maori People are angry because we are being used by a country that does not recognize us as a People.

We have no treaty rights, our language has no official status and we have less than 2 million acres of land left to us, out of 66 million acres that we once shared together as Maori People. We have a very high drop out rate from the mono-cultural education system and unemployment is extremely high. In addition the housing situation is very poor.

New Zealand today is totally mono-cultural. We once had our own grain fields, flour mills and banks. We were once able to export our products. One hundred and fifty years after the British colonisation, we have been reduced to a non-people in our own land with no political power, no economic power and most our people with colonized minds which has been the most destructive force of colonization. Our history shows clearly that it was better and cheaper to colonize the minds of our People than to kill us. In this way, the British were able to retain their nobility and keep their hands clean.

Given this history, the anger of Maori People about having been used as a people and about having used our Sacred artefacts to promote trade and tourism will hopefully be better understood.

The fact that Maori People came with the artefacts knowing that our People were angry, knowing that our People did not understand the political implications of such an act, says alot for colonization and for the Maori People who support the very structures that oppress us as a People.

America has a long history of preserving Indian People's artefacts and destroying the People and that parallel applies to our arefacts being brought here.

Maori People did not come to walk hand in hand with the First Nation People of America (Indian Nations) but rather, to walk on them.

The Springbok Tour and visit of Bishop TuTu to New Zealand did much to awaken New Zealand people to the monocultural laws and disease of Apartheid in South Africa. The results are that a lot of People are now better informed, but nothing has changed to relieve the oppression of the Maori People.

MAORI PEOPLE DO NOT NEED MORE TOURISM.
WE NEED TO REGAIN OUR SOVEREIGNTY!

J. Harawira

NO ONE IS FREE
UNTIL EVERYONE IS FREE!

