

**CIDA overlay project**

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# **Ranginui & Papatuanuku**

**A meeting of Heaven and Earth**

**Kevin Helas**

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# proposition

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**Ranginui & Papatuanuku**, A meeting of Heaven and Earth, is a representation of an ancient Maori legend, which speaks of the relationship between Father Sky (Ranginui or 'Rangi') and Mother Earth (Papatuanuku or 'Papa.')

In the legend, Rangi and Papa were forced apart by their children to provide space for mankind to thrive in the space in between: 'Te Ao Marama' – the realm of Being and Light.

While inspired by Maori Art and culture, and closely linked to New Zealand's notions of identity, the work is also a depiction of commonly-held notions of Universal Law, the balance between Heaven and Earth, and our place within it.

**Kevin Helas**

# inspiration

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It will possibly be thought that the idea of Iā as the one supreme god creator of all things, is derived from the Christian teachers of the Maori people, and that it has been engrafted on to Maori beliefs in modern times since Christianity was introduced. But I am assured not only by the positive statement of the Native, but by internal evidence—more particularly perhaps by the prayers to Iā, which contain so many obsolete words, and differ a good deal in form of composition from ordinary *hymns*—that there is no foundation for such an idea. The doctrine of Iā is evidently a long-*old* relic of very ancient times, handed down with scrupulous care generation after generation, as the writer and one of the earliest teachers of the Whare-wānanga. Had this grand old legend been derived from European sources, there can be no reasonable doubt that the life and doings of Jesus Christ would also have been incorporated. But there is nothing like it; not the slightest hint of it. Even the two incidents in Polynesian traditions which at first sight might support the idea of a knowledge of our Lord's life—those of Tawhaki and Māui—can be shown to have nothing to do with it; the first named hero (who is not a god) can be identified with the Greek hero Pelops, and Māui's visit to Hāhau (Māui was not a god, but



# inspiration

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## Ranginui & Papatuanuku

Ka moe [a] Rangi i a Papatūānuku, te wahine o Tangaroa, i pūremutia e Rangi... Ka puta ki waho ko... Tānenui-a-rangi... Ka whakaaro rātou kia puta iho te rā i te kēkē o Rangi.

Ka mea [a] Tānenui-a-rangi 'Tēnei te rā kei runga e whiti ana'. Ka mea [ia], 'Me toko tō tātou matua kia waiho ko te wahine ko Papa hei matua mō tātou'.

Ka mea rātou, 'Tokona, wehea rāua, kia tau kē te wahine kia tau kē te tāne, kia tupu ai tātou ki te Ao'. Kātahi ka tokona te rangi. E tū iho ana a Rangi e takoto nei a Papa.\*

The sky (Rangi) cohabited with the earth (Papa), who was the wife of the sea (Tangaroa). She was seduced by the sky. They had a child whom they called Tānenui-a-rangi (Tane, great of the heavens). The family thereupon decided that the sun should be allowed to shine through the armpit of the sky. Tānenui-a-rangi said, 'The sun shines above'. He then said, 'Let us raise our father above and leave the female, Papa, as our parent'. They joined in and said, 'Raise him up, separate the two. Let the female be set apart, let the male be set apart so that we may prosper in the world'. The sky was then raised above. Hence, the sky stands above and the earth lies below.

\*This Ngāti Raukawa version of the separation of Rangi and Papa was dictated by Hūkiki Te Ahukaramū in the 19th Century. Source: [teara.govt.nz](http://teara.govt.nz)

# design concept

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# description

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The design is indebted to the Tino Rangatiratanga flag, and embodies the same principles as described by James Dignan in 1996

‘As a whole, the design represents the balance of the forces of nature, masculine and feminine, active and passive, potential and physical, air and earth. It can also be interpreted as symbolising the white cloud rolling across the face of the land, as in the Maori name for New Zealand, Aotearoa, 'Land of the Long White Cloud'.<sup>1</sup>

The components of the design are as follows (as described by James Dignan):

**Blue represents Te Korekore** (the realm of Potential Being).

It thus symbolises the long darkness from which the earth emerged, as well as signifying Rangi – the heavens, a male, formless, floating, passive force.

**White represents Te Ao Marama** (the realm of Being and Light).

It symbolises the physical world, purity, harmony, enlightenment and balance.

The spiral-like KORU, symbolic of a curling fern frond, represents the unfolding of new life, hope for the future and the process of renewal. This can also be seen as a representation of the white cloud rolling across the land, representing the ‘Land of the Long White Cloud’ translation of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

**Green represents Te Whei Ao** (coming into Being).

It symbolises Papatuanuku, the earth-mother, the sustainer of all living things, and thus both the land and active forces.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Otago University Student Newspaper The Critic, Issue 10, April 1996. James Dignan, 21 Aug 1996

# contact

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**Kevin Helas** is a London based artist, designer, illustrator born in Aotearoa (New Zealand).

Kevin worked for several years as a graphic artist and illustrator at the New Zealand Herald soon after leaving school. He completed a Graphic Design Degree before heading to London to embark on an MA in Communication Design at Central Saint Martins with the support of a Creative NZ professional development grant.

After a diverse range of roles working in leading creative agencies in London and Zurich, Kevin set up **roger design consultancy** in 2003, and offers a holistic, integrated approach to design, working with people to identify and communicate their visions.