

# Artists @ Work on Aotea

By Michelle Page B.A.A

## Jackie Peers Weaver

Jackie recently exhibited at the Raranga Toi 2022 Group Weavers Exhibition, which was held at the Great Barrier Island Community Art Gallery.

Jackie's journey to Aotea began below.

"As a child I first attended Rotorua Primary School and was sometimes the only Pakeha kid in my class. I was an enthusiastic exponent of Te Rakau! (stick games). But when my family moved to North Canterbury I completely lost touch with Kaupapa Māori.

My training and subsequent career in professional photography and computer graphics helped me develop my love of visual expression - a love that combined perfectly with my extensive travels. I ended up teaching photography in Hong Kong, and doing specialised tours into the abandoned villages there. I was also taking clients further afield to the jungles of Borneo, accompanying a friend involved in Orangutan Conservation.

A revelation occurred when my husband and I visited the Marovo Lagoon, Solomon Islands on our 45' classic yawl Brigadoon after ten years in Hong Kong.

Mat and basket weaving with the women and girls was such a wonderful social experience, and so satisfyingly hands on, with much selection, preparation and plying of the materials before the work was even embarked on.

How appealing the idea of returning to the Islands with a semblance of the same skills that they possessed!

So on return to Christchurch I commenced a new journey with the Nga Mahi a te Whare Pora diploma in Nga Toi up to Level 5 2017-2019 at Te Wananga O Aotearoa. The motifs were different, but the sharing and the processes were exactly the same.

Now that I'm a resident of Aotea/Great Barrier Island I am enjoying getting to know both the local weavers and talented arts & crafts people here on the motu. My husband and I sailed here in March 2021, and have taken up residence in Whangaparapara. I am yet to sort myself a dedicated studio. When the weather is on my side, I just weave outside on the deck. The process of raranga is not just about the weaving, but about the harakeke chosen, the harvesting and the process used to prepare it for weaving. It often takes as long to prepare the materials as it does to



do the final weaving. I am in the process of starting my own pā harakeke here around my home, with cultivars that I prefer to weave with. Currently I am using various bushes on a friend's property.

The inspiration I've gained for my weaving has often come from attending workshops. During my raranga journey I would attend weekend noho once a month, with up to 40 people all with varying levels of expertise. But everyone was willing to assist anyone in need. As a visual person I also

spend a lot of time looking at images in books, either from the library, or our own collection. Today no one particular artist inspires me, I get ideas from across the world using modern platforms to scour possibilities. I have a good collection myself of woven bags from many countries, and I research how these are made in those places.

I have just been part of the Raranga exhibition at the Aotea Community Gallery, and will leave some work there to be sold. In addition the Elephant Gallery in Tryphena has displayed my work over the summer months, and more can be sourced on [www.jackiepeers.com](http://www.jackiepeers.com).

Over the next few months I would like to work with fibres from our motu, like kie kie and raupo. For me I have no real routine to my art. My day starts with a walk, and I make a plan from there. Of course, I need to have my material prepared before I can

commence weaving. Once I do start a piece, I will often work late into the night, in order to get the structure of it completed. For me company is often an audio book.

We haven't got back to the Solomon's yet, but life is pretty good on Aotea/GBI!

**Nga mihi**

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