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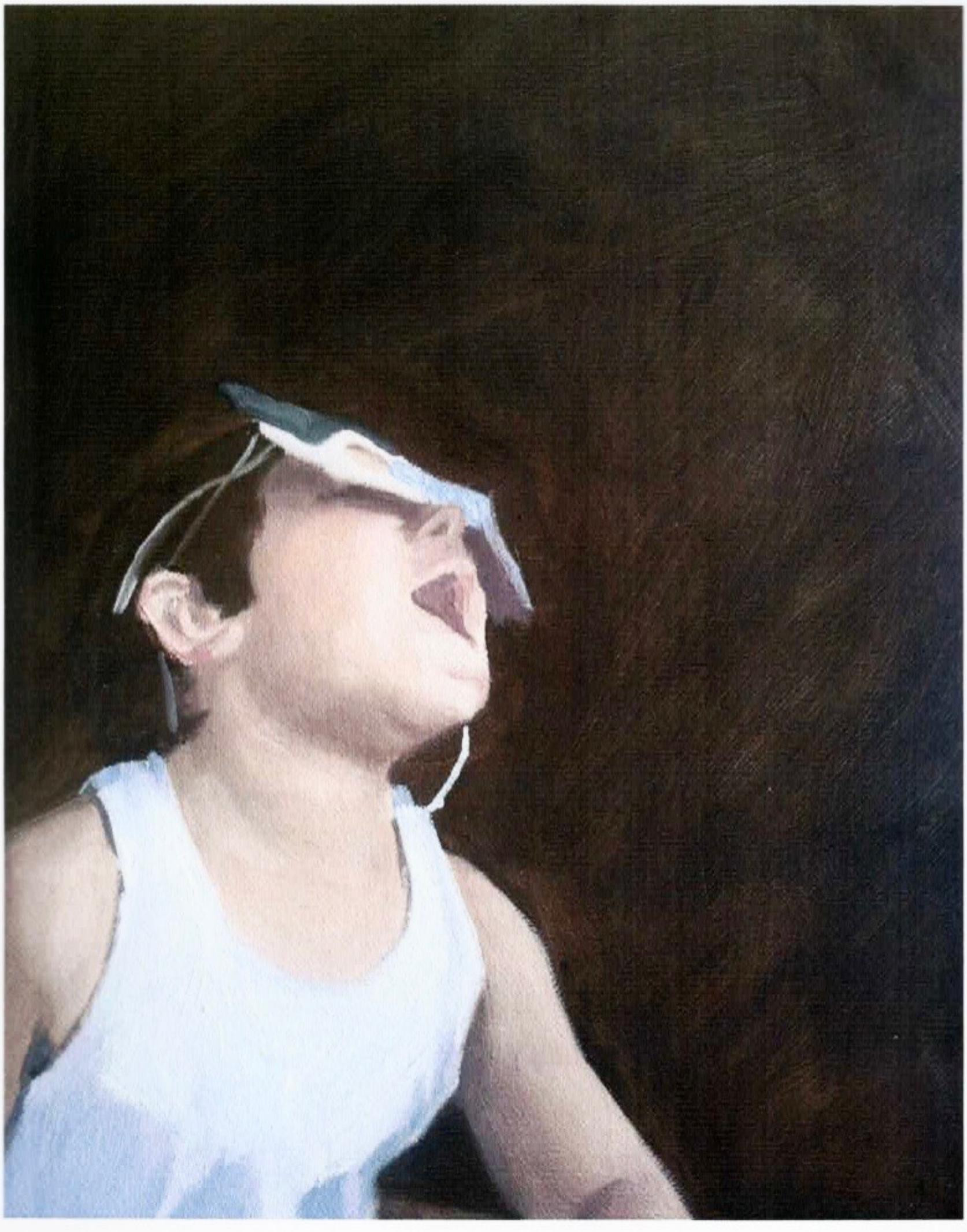
HIRIA ANDERSON

Anderson. *Mokopuna*.
Oil on canvas. 25 x
Collection James
ce Arts Trust.
TESY: THE ARTIST
TIM MELVILLE
RY, AUCKLAND.

When I first see a selection of **Hiria Anderson**'s (Rereahu, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Apakura) photorealistic paintings in the back room at Tim Melville Gallery in Auckland, I mistake them for tiny **Peter Siddells**. Much like his paintings of eerie colonial villas around Tāmaki, Anderson's paintings are finely detailed and distinctly of Aotearoa New Zealand,



Anderson's subject is treated with a softness and reverence one normally associates with the Dutch Renaissance, the ruddy patches of his skin carefully attended, the creases of his white singlet treated as though it were the finest drapery.

However, her depictions of marae (a communal or sacred place), the local takeaway joint, a butcher and the inside of a cheap Japanese import car are suffused with a mix of warmth and melancholy that is all her own.

While Siddell's settings are disquieting, seeming to have been swiftly cleared of all life, Anderson's seem to have been caught in brief moments between occupation – a car seat still warm, soft sagging sofas about to be flopped onto, pudding bowls freshly stacked on the shelf in the wharekai (dining hall) – or they capture people during moments of solitude and absorption. For example, in *A Māori World View* (2015) we see a young boy playing with a mask upon his face, his mouth stretched wide. Masterfully illuminated against a velvety black background, Anderson's subject is treated with a softness and reverence one normally associates with the Dutch Renaissance, the ruddy patches of his skin carefully attended, the creases of his white singlet treated as though it were the finest drapery.

While her work may be focussed on depicting the everyday, in concentrating on the minutiae, Anderson's paintings capture the nuances between Māori culture and 21st century living. Furthermore, in depicting the everyday lives of her community, these paintings interrogate the history of representation of Māori in European art, gently shifting the viewpoint from outside looking in, to inside, looking at one another.

Anderson graduated her Masters in Fine Art with First Class Honours from

Whitecliffe College of Art and Design in 2016 and was quickly picked up by Auckland dealer **Tim Melville** – shortly after which Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki acquired a group of her paintings.

Anderson's work is also included the exhibition *Puhoro ō mua, Puhoro ki tua* at Waikato Museum (closing 23 February 2020), and will be on display as part of the group show *Release the Stars* at Tim Melville Gallery, also in February.

Lucinda Bennett

OPPOSITE: Hiria Anderson, *A Māori World View*, 2015. Oil on canvas, 30 x 25cm.

ABOVE: Hiria Anderson, *Takaro*, 2019. Oil on canvas, 25 x 30cm. Collection Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND TIM MELVILLE GALLERY, AUCKLAND.