

HOME SWEET HOME

Home Sweet Home is an queer ontological experiment by multidisciplinary creative Arapeta that pulls together a plush collection of deeply considered movements, experiences and koorero, together into a new landscape in which dance, song, koorero, kapa haka and whatu kaakahu all come together to generate wholly new environment, with a foundational purpose of pure enjoyment. Like seafoam, churned up from the colliding of waves and tides, the birth of an entirely fresh experience can build outwards towards new discoveries.

The foundations of this project are built within kaupapa takataaui (the personal and shared) and is collective in its nature - a cohesive project that explores the legacies of whatu kaakahu - of which Arapeta is a master - and of whaanau kapa haka. In its most traditional iteration, whatu kaakahu are built from harakeke and time, an intensely delicate and considered process that creates an object of immense mana and beauty. They carry many stories and korero in their fibres. Weaving in kaupapa takataapui into these cloaks elevates them to metaphysical objects of experimentation and exploration, ripples in the roto of pakeha convention and interpretation, developing a new space in which to play

Here, kapa haka, korero, whatu kakaakahu and takataapui are all speculative tools thrown into a queer sand box for us to root around within and build the most riotous castle. Taking these tools themselves, Arapeta has constructed a whare tapere in which we can view, participate and unravel the fabrics of our coming together and reassemble towards a more holistic understanding of queer joy. Comprised of many (often contradictory) parts of longing, grief, distance, time, sex, dance and moana, we are able to interact within this space, swimming towards an immeasurable gulf of queer possibility. Unencumbered by the conventions of gravity and binary realities, we are able to transcend to parallelities more flexible.

A **sandbox game** is a video game with a gameplay element that provides the player a great degree of creativity to interact with, usually without any predetermined goal, or alternatively with a goal that the player sets for themselves. Such games may lack any objective, and are sometimes referred to as non-games or software toys [...] The term "sandbox" derives from the nature of a sandbox that lets children create nearly anything they want within it.

- Wikipedia 'Sandbox Game'.

In the water, what you are called can change. And like water, words will dissolve.

-Dylan Byron, The Homoerotics of Water

The space between land and sea is an inherently nonlinear theatre, the distance of the constant waxing and waning length of sand between concreted-over beachfront carparks and the eager fingers of an errant wave an open edged sandbox for experimentation and play. By nature, the beach is queer, a fluctuous space never one thing entirely. Between the body and the body of water, we are able to develop new realities. The beach contains multitudes, pushing and pulling and prodding its edges, competing for space, all encompassing and entirely not at all. It comes home with you in your togs, errant grains settling in the worn grooves of bodies puckered with movements unhindered.

Play and performance are often interchangeable collective activity, and can be witnessed as such in the contemporary interpretations of whaanau kapa haka, central to this exhibit. Different whaanau to whaanau, family to family, it diffies singular definition. Collectively, however, new modes of engagement are developed and acted out, brought into the whare tapere and illuminated for the participation and evolution of interpersonal relationships between the oceans of whaanau, community and broader Taamaki. It's a space for uninhibited euphoria, a monument to absence and private labours towards spaces of more mutual support.

Text by Divyaa Kumar

Special thanks to the Burnett Foundation Aotearoa, Pinkies Maori Performing Group est. 1960, friends and whanau.