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Jim Allen

The Skin of Years

Michael Lett
28 June – 4 August 2012
Tuesday-Friday 11am-6pm
Saturday 11am-3pm

“Beyond the Real”

“... points on a matrix that is configured by nodes of connections between antinomies that move in multiple directions at once, alongside and through each other, contemporaneously, such that each of these elements may come into adjacency with any other, interact with it, or pull away from it ... Above all, the flows between these vectors travel in a variety of ways, never in singular directions...”

Terry Smith, *Divine Violence Imagined by Contemporary Artists*, Reading Room: A Journal of Art and Culture, Art Goes On, 2009, pp. 35-36.

Jim Allen 2012

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...on reading “Redemption Songs” by Dame Judith Binney (first published 1979)

This book made a deep and lasting impression on my first reading in 1996. The book is a biography of Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki, born 1814 died 1893. Amongst the many issues surrounding his life, it celebrates him as founder of the Ringatu faith. My subsequent work was made out of profound respect for Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki, and for Judith Binney who had so painstakingly and meticulously revealed his life and times.

The paintings make use of certain symbols first noted on the 52ft. long ‘Te Wepu’ the flag captured of Ngati Kahungunu. Here the crescent moon is said to describe the Old Testament, and the cross to represent the New Testament (I have given the crescent moon a white tail to reference the dream that Te Kooti had of white light).

The flag also includes the drawing of a conical mountain which is said to refer to the land (see *p134*). In these paintings I have sought to reinforce the importance of land to Maori by harnessing the elemental energy of active volcanoes to the script of Te Kooti’s message. These symbols are repeated on Te Kooti’s flag captured at Te Porere where the additional letters W and I were used to mark the holy day (which from the 1860’s was from every tenth day in the Pai Marire calendar) in the King Country, and they probably stood for the Holy Spirit, Wairua Tapu.

WI is also understood to refer to the Holy Spirit in the Ringatu faith. The large crescent moon was presumably a tohu (portent) of a new world, the red cross presumably the fighting cross of the Archangel Michael (see *illustrations following p197*). Plates 6 and 7 show two battered flags from the Tapapa fighting. Plate 6 has three four pointed stars which represent the three islands of New Zealand in unity.

The painting which includes a white horse with a stone tablet on its back has composite origins. The white horse references the horse (Te Ia) ridden by the Maori prophet Rua Kenana 1869-1937, who claimed he was brother to Christ and son of Te Kooti Rikirangi. The stone tablet incorporating symbols adopted by Te Kooti refers to Mauri, the life principle sometimes represented by a guardian stone on the land.

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