

Layne Waerea as Itinerant Female-Maori-Artist-Activist (of sorts)
Chris Braddock



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This paper discusses the itinerant art practice of Auckland-based Layne Waerea. As Mori lawyer turned performance artist, Waerea's mobile public gestures escape clear categorisation; they are temporal and inscrutable. She will mow grass berms in the middle-class Auckland suburbs of Remuera and Drakei, advertise 'free' water on Queen Street, sell free air and create new Maori bus lanes. Her 'injunctions' (as she calls them) challenge ideas of artistic, legal and social discipline: Is she a council worker, is it street protest, Mori subversion, performance art, legal protest, and so on?

Waerea's mobile gestures in the public sphere might never gain or retain legitimacy. We cannot answer with any exactitude how they might return to the cultural archive. In a similar way, the ephemeral nature of performance art has often posed a similar dilemma to the disciplinary strictures of art and its collection as archive.

I argue that this mobile and peripatetic performance work creates tensions of global relevance to do with the rights of indigenous groups and the role of art practice in the not-so-classifiable arena of the public social sphere. I will resurrect some slightly forgotten theories of Australian academic Michael Carter, and his exploration of the codes of 'public' and 'private' circulation (public-public, public-private, private-public and private-private). For Carter, the Victorian male's mobile circulation through and across cultural boundaries of the home, club, office and brothel, lent him itinerant power. Accordingly, a question of the power of performance (as performative action and utterance) is foremost as I critically engage with Layne Waerea as itinerant female-Mori-artist-activist (of sorts).

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Layne Waerea (2010) Berm #14. Performance still, Auckland.



Layne Waerea (2012) Waitangi Day Spin. Performance still, Auckland.

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