



HAYDEN FOWLER Call of the Wild

The Call of the Wild series of photographs is the documentation of a week long performance that took place during the Auckland Festival in 2007. Fowler worked collaboratively with a tattoo artist within a sci-fi, futuristic set, to have a pair of extinct birds (the New Zealand Huia) tattooed onto his torso.

The Huia holds important significance to New Zealand Maori, with tail feathers traditionally worn as a sign of status. However, the gifting of feathers to the visiting Duke of York in 1901 resulted in a London fashion-trend, which led to the birds' final demise and extinction by 1907.

Fowler's performance captivated public attention. It was a modern voyeuristic experience, enabling spectators to watch the full and complex tattoo procedure unfold. While contemplating the permanence of the artwork Fowler was having transferred to his skin, people were simultaneously witnessing the resurrection of the Huia, an enduring symbol of Maori authority.

Fowler's practice is concerned with the increasingly estranged relationship between nature and culture. In *Call of the Wild*, the projection of tattooing tradition and animism into such a-natural, futuristic surrounds, acts to juxtapose the phenomena of resurgent 'tribal' practice against the increasingly sanitised contemporary human experience.

Hayden Fowler's interdisciplinary practice reflects on the consequences of the increasing separation between humanity and nature at a time when the natural is becoming increasingly difficult to define. He has twice been a finalist in the Helen Lempriere Travelling Arts Scholarship and last year completed a Gunnery Studios Residency through ArtsNSW. Sydney-based Fowler is the recipient of a 2008 Anne and Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship and is represented by Gallery Barry Keldoulis.