

# Who makes decisions for funding Maori art?

## Na Hiria Rakete

**H**ave you ever wondered who makes decisions about the Maori art world? Or have you ever wanted to be involved in some of the discussions surrounding the decisions?

The Maori and South Pacific Arts Council is the main body, but working behind the scenes are teams of skilled artists who collectively act in an advisory capacity to the council.

They're the Maori and South Pacific Art Committees, who handle respective cases. Maori listen to Maori and South Pacific listen to islanders' art projects.

They're both under the instruction of the MASPAC council, but the powers are almost contradictory.

Contradictory in the sense that the art committee is almost as powerful as the council, notwithstanding that most of the members on the art committees are on the council.

With this power of getting things heard by the people who matter, the Maori art committee certainly does its homework.

Of the recommendations that face the council about 80 percent are heard by the Council, while the South Pacific team comes in a slow second.

### In the beginning

The sub committees were set up at the beginning of 1986, initially designed to foreshadow autonomy for Maori art administration.

As a result of the bumpy ride Maori artists are getting, the sub committees are suffering infrastructural problems, so since last year's conception of the committees nothing concrete's come out of their existence.

So far, the committee comprises members of the MASPAC council and government representatives.

What's worrying the council is that there is basically no public involvement with the sub committees themselves, therefore a lack of public

support for Maori and South Pacific art.

The ideal solution would be for the public to nominate who they consider to be the best bet in covering the wide field that Maori art encompasses.

At the sub committee meeting held every two months just before the Council meeting, the collection of these hand picked tohunga in different fields discuss anything from design of the carpet, to where an art exhibition should be held and how much money performing artists should have, to the more political sounds of the effects of the Antiquities Act on Maori and South Pacific people in New Zealand and supporting different exhibitions being held around the country by famous and not so famous artists.

In short, they allow people a start in the art world. If you've got it, and if they sense it, the sub committee will be right behind you.

### What they do

The art committee recommends different cases to the council, in terms of whether the project should be given financial assistance, or whether the project warrants any interest. So, you may well ask, who gives them the right to govern or act god over Maori artists?

Last year's lot was chaired by Cliff Whiting, whose reputation warrants no explanation to those both in and out of art circles.

And around his table were people of equal talents in different fields, Waana Davis, Kera Brown, Arnold Wilson, Kuini Wano, Tama Renata, Trevor Maxwell, Calvin Kereama, Kuru Waaka, Darcy Nicholas, plus reps from Maori Affairs, Internal Affairs and Education departments.

And from this lot, the factions of Maori art are given either the thumb up or thumb down, but whichever it is, MASPAC will listen to it.

## Motuti calendar

**A** collection of contemporary Maori carvings and their legends from the Motuti Marae, North Hokianga, has been produced into a calendar by the large New Zealand forestry company, N.Z. Forest Products Limited.

The 1987 calendar illustrates a cross-section of the many beautiful carvings incorporated in the newly built Motuti Whare hui. They are the work of the young people of the area.

The carvings graphically depict stories of old and modern times, and are testimony to the battle of the Maori people of Aotearoa for the defence of their cultural identity.

The marae itself is a microcosm of the Hokianga area and the people who inhabit it, the whanau of Te Rarawa.

The driving force behind the marae development is Father Tate, parish priest of Panguru, who interpreted the carvings in the calendar's accompanying text.

Copies of the calendar are being sold to raise money for the marae development.

Rosanne Meo, marketing manager, papers & chemicals, NZFP, said the people of North Hokianga showed a similar commitment to development in the North as NZFP, which has forest estates there, and for this reason the company decided to support the project.

"NZFP has a similar commitment to the land and to the future of Northland.