

## Illustrated talk

Title: *Whakawhiti/Exchange*

**Images:** please see:

<http://www.xaviermeade.net/purakau/>

and:

<http://www.xaviermeade.net/ko-taku-kupu-ko-tau-my-word-is-yours/>

## Biographies:

Michael Reed is a practicing artist and educator at the Art & Design School, Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology. His interests are social comment and the culture of the South Pacific. Since 1999 he has worked on a number of collaborative and cross cultural print projects with artists from New Zealand and overseas.

Mexican born Xavier Meade has been a Wintec (Waikato Institute of Technology) academic and researcher since 1982 in the fields of eco-design and visual arts. He has exhibited widely in Mexico, Cuba, Aotearoa (NZ), Holland and Spain since 1978 and completed collaborative projects bridging the politics and cultures of Latin America and Aotearoa.

## Abstract:

“Whakawhiti” or “exchange” is the basis of all communication. This is doubly important as New Zealand, a post-colonial and substantially immigrant nation, establishes and solidifies its identity as a South Pacific nation.

New Zealand, Aotearoa, is officially a bi-cultural and bi-lingual nation. The full recognition of Maori culture and how and what it contributes to the identity of our society and the nation, is a subject of ongoing debate and one that interests Meade and Reed. The projects, *Purakau/Myths and Legends* and *Ko Taku Kupu, Ko Tau/My Word is Yours*, demonstrate this ongoing exchange between artists, writers and cultures.

### *Purakau/Myths and Legends*

In 2009 Xavier Meade (NZ) and Prof Flor de Lis López Hernández (Cuba) invited twelve artists from Aotearoa, Cuba and Mexico to produce posters in response to the theme of ‘Purakau’ (a Maori term referring to myths, legends and “lessons for life”).

The artists activated a diverse range of indigenous myths and legends: “The Tangler”, “the Disappearance of Matias Perez”, “100% Pure New Zealand”, and others. The stories are deeply embedded in their cultures or origin, but the underlying themes resonate across cultures. The craftsmanship of the posters is exquisite. The Cuban contributors come from a long-standing tradition of handcrafted screen-printing, which has been maintained since the Cuban Revolution. All posters are made in their country of origin, through screen-print and lithographic processes.

This project follows in the footsteps of Xavier’s highly successful “Aotearoa Liberators” project, an exhibition of posters designed by NZ artists and screen-printed at the ICAIC in Havana, that found an audience in New Zealand, Mexico and Cuba.

*Ko Taku Kupu, Ko Tau/My Word is Yours* was the combined efforts of twelve Te Reo (Maori language) and thirty design students at the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology, producing a sequence of bi-lingual typographic posters, for a local literary festival, *The Press Christchurch Writers’ Festival 2012*.