

## Contemporary Maori and South Pacific art

The notion of contemporary art is often misunderstood, says fisherman artist and Council member Cliff Whiting.

He says contemporary art is simply traditional art which has been examined and modified to suit particular lifestyles of today.

"Contemporary is anything happening now", he says, adding that that includes artists working today in traditional areas. "In the kind of life we lead in New Zealand today, the exposure to other cultures, particularly that of the Pakeha, must affect our own culture."

He says other changes have come in the materials and tools artists use.

Drastically reduced supplies of traditional natural resources such as flax and timber, coupled with rapidly developing technology, have forced artists to experiment with new methods. "There's a whole new technological world".

He says it is important that new techniques are widely discussed and investigated. But he says closeness to the natural world, reflected in traditional materials, has always been a basic part of the Maori outlook.

In its 1983/84 budget the Council has allocated \$32,500 to contemporary Maori and Pacific Island arts programmes. Of this, \$12,500 is going to support the 10 year old independent Maori Artists and Writers Society, chaired by Hawkes Bay Community College tutor, Para Matchitt.

Council contributions will help pay for the Society's annual hui and for the newly established position of Executive Officer for the group.

Another \$10,000 has been allocated for two music hui — the first which has already been held in Auckland, for people involved in the Maori and Pacific Island recording industry, and looked at issues such as the need for a special

**Toi Maihi — Maspac council**



**Cliff Whiting — Maspac council**

radio station, quotas of Maori and Pacific Island music and the establishment of a New Zealand Recording Industry Commission.

The second, to be organised with the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council and the New Zealand Composers Federation, is a hui for Maori and Pacific Island composers.

Dates have not been set, but this meeting will look at a range of music industry skills, including copyright, use of original music, membership of APRA, as well as holding workshops in recording studios to increase composers technical knowledge and expertise.

## What is MASPAC?

The Council for Maori and South Pacific Arts — affectionately known as MASPAC — was set up in 1978 as part of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council.

Its overall function is to encourage, promote and develop the practice and appreciation of the arts and crafts of the Maori and South Pacific people in New Zealand.

Some of the service MASPAC provides include:

- acting as a contact on Maori and South Pacific cultural activities for government agencies, educational groups, Maori and marae committees, Pacific Island organisations and other groups;
- explaining Arts Council grants and making people aware of other funding organisations;
- acting as a liaison between people involved in cultural activities and the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council;
- arranging hui for the promotion and preservation of Maori and Pacific arts;
- identifying cultural needs of Maori and South Pacific people;
- administering funding schemes under which grants are made to groups and individuals;
- administering the Cultural Facilities Scheme run by the New Zealand Lottery Board.

MASPAC is made up of eight members plus a Chairman, all appointed by the Minister for the Arts in consultation with the Minister of Maori Affairs.