



beautiful music

Hiwirori Hatea's guitar designs strike a chord.

Resene Pompadour

Resene Pohutukawa

Resene Red Berry

Above: Hiwirori, who is headed to the Florence Biennale later this year, says he paints his designs straight onto the guitar without planning or sketching beforehand. While some of his guitars have been used by artists performing on stage, Hiwirori admits that they often end up hanging on the wall. "They are definitely playable, but many people are so stoked with their guitar that they're too scared to touch it."

Right: Hiwirori names all his guitars. This design on a Takamine acoustic-electric guitar called Pitau a Manaia is in Resene Half Spanish White, Resene Black and Resene Pohutukawa.

Far right: This design, named Te Haerenga-a-Rangi, is painted in Resene Black, Resene Red Berry, Resene Pohutukawa and Resene Waiouru.

Many musicians tell stories in the words and melodies of their songs and waiata. Artist Hiwirori Hatea's MOKO guitars go a step further, transforming the instrument into a story. Few people would be brave enough to take a paintbrush to a Gibson guitar, but for the Mt Maunganui-based artist of Rongowhakaata descent, the wooden surface of a guitar is a blank canvas. This contemporary Māori artist hand-paints his MOKO guitars using Resene paints to create a personalised instrument telling a unique story about its owner and their whakapapa.

"It's similar to how tā moko (tattoo) tells your story of whakapapa and connections. I tell a story the same way as the tattoo, but onto guitars, so each story is personalised."

Hiwirori has always been creative. As a child, he loved watching his father draw, and he often had a pencil in hand. The death of his elder sister, who had always encouraged his artistic pursuits, pushed Hiwirori to make art his career, and he enrolled in the esteemed Māori art school Toi Houkura in Gisborne at 17. Under the mentorship of Derek Lardelli, Sandy Adsett and Steve Gibbs, Hiwirori found his love for music and Māori art – and Resene, the go-to paint brand at Toi Houkura.

But it was years later, while working in Dubai as a musician, that he painted kōwhaiwhai (traditional patterns) onto a guitar, creating his first MOKO guitar (which stands for My Own Kind Of Guitar), combining Māori performing and visual arts. He still plays the first guitar he designed.

Hiwirori says he isn't just an artist but a storyteller and he loves painting someone's journey onto a piece of art. "I hear some amazing stories from the people I make guitars for, and that inspires me. It keeps my mahi interesting because every single guitar is different and has a different story to tell."

He takes a creativity-first approach to his art, a process he learned in art school. Following the initial

client consultation, Hiwirori begins painting straight onto the guitar while his ideas are fresh in his mind – without planning or sketching beforehand. Although that might sound nerve-wracking, after many years and more than 90 guitars, it comes naturally to him, and he now gets straight to painting with colours such as his favourite, Resene Pompadour. From day dot, he has used Resene testpots in his process – the fast-drying and durable formula is perfect for fast-paced work.

"I've also painted murals with Resene paints that have lasted for years – they still look like they were painted yesterday!"

See more of Hiwirori's work at www.facebook.com/HiwiroriART.

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Resene Waiouru

Resene Black

Resene Rice Cake

Resene Half Spanish White