New Zealand through the eyes of a Czech artist

Gottfried Lindauer lived in his second homeland from the age of thirty-five to his death in 1926, during which time he visited Europe three times. The artist kept in touch with his old friends back in Bohemia, writing regularly with descriptions of the beauty and sights of his new homeland. Nevertheless, it appears that in the early years he did have doubts about staying in New Zealand. After the death of Emelia, his first wife, in 1880 it seems that he sold all his property and was preparing to return to Europe when Walter Buller, one of his patrons, dissuaded him from leaving.[23] He obviously became attached to New Zealand: just before sailing back from Europe in 1902 — on this second visit the Lindauers took their two sons so Hector could study the violin in Leipzig — Lindauer wrote to Josefa Náprstková from the port

A landscape photograph taken following the instructions of Gottfried Lindauer, described by him as (translated from Czech): 'A forest fern tree by Māori called Ponga', National Museum — Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, inv. no. AO III 205. Photo: ©National Museum — Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures

Foy Brothers, *Maori Woman*, *c.* 1880s, photograph, National Museum — Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, inv. no. AO III 205. Photo: ©National Museum — Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures

of Bremen: 'My wife and I were planning on staying in Leipzig for three years; however, we were unable to get used to the place. Our hearts would ache greatly for New Zealand, our homeland, free and beautiful.'[24]

Lindauer was never a landscapist; only the backgrounds of some of his portraits contain views into schematised, non-descript romantic landscapes. However, certain aspects of the New Zealand landscape caught his attention and he managed to photograph them. When he sent his brother Hynek a photograph of a nīkau palm and tree ferns, he delivered a rather pithy description:

> A nikau palm tree, growing to be up to 40 feet tall. It is a magnificent tree; you can see tree ferns in the background. This is the scene that I found in the forest myself and had it photographed from a number of angles; it cost me a couple of pounds. Hynek, if you could see this Landschaft [a landscape, also in a painting] in nature, you would shit your pants because of the beauty of it. — I spent several days with the photographer in the forest myself and I did my bit by carrying the camera etc., but it wasn't that romantic.[25]

He had a photograph of himself taken in a friend's garden in front of a giant prickly pear tree that had grown to an enormous height in a mere eight years. The painter was also fascinated by the New Zealand fauna: the kiwi (supposedly, he looked after one himself), the extinct giant moa (which he commemorated in photographs taken in the Canterbury Museum), and the

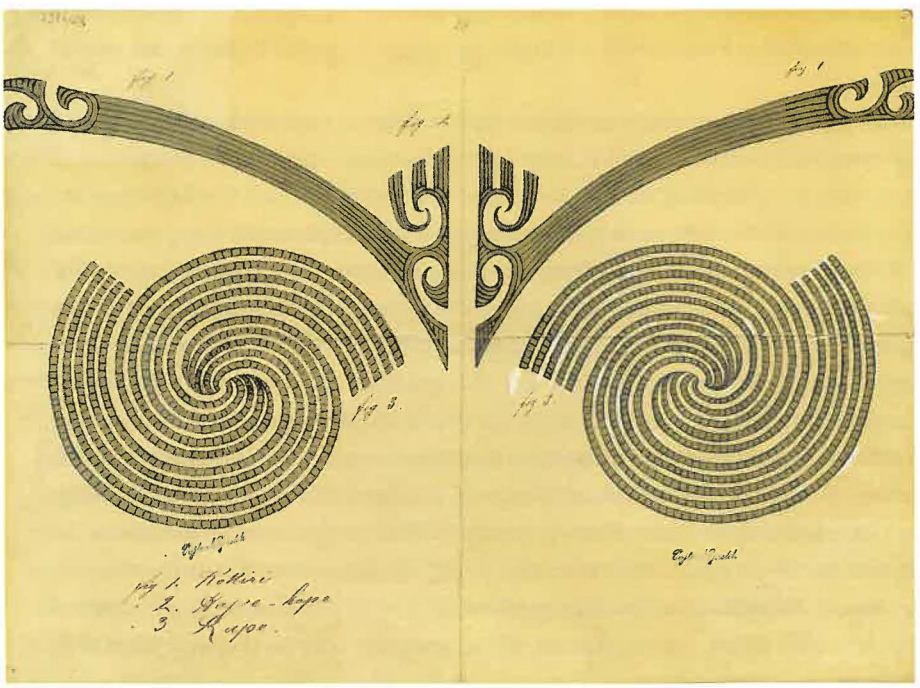
Gottfried Lindauer sitting under a prickly pear tree, about 1880. Photograph, National Museum — Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American cultures, Prague, inv. no. 7104. Photo © National Museum — Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American cultures

tuatara, a rare reptile with a third 'eye' on the top of its head, originating from the Mesozoic era. He took two tuatara to Prague in his visit in 1901–02; they were put on display at the house of Václav Frič.[26]

However, Lindauer's predominant concern in New Zealand is quite apparent from a set of annotated photographs that he sent to his brother Hynek around 1890; it is now part of the collection of the Náprstek Museum in Prague.[27] The vast majority are of New Zealand's indigenous people with captions such as: 'Young Maori ladies', 'Maori girl with a harp', 'Maori Mrs. Pare Whakaaro Rangi, meaning "heavenly thought" ', 'Maori soldier holding a wahaika, meaning a curved, wooden spade', 'Maori man wearing the national costume to puni from dog skin', 'Hongi — the Maori greeting of rubbing each other's noses'. The series also includes photographs of Māori carvings, buildings and other artefacts. The captions show a great emphasis on the garments, weapons, amulets, jewellery and other items that play important roles in Lindauer's portraits of Māori people. Citing one example: 'Maori woman wearing feathers of the huia bird of New Zealand; the pendant on her neck is a hei-tiki [representing] gods, it is made from greenstone (Nephrite Australis). The hei-tiki are passed down from the father to the first-born child and are deemed to be of great, miraculous value to the Maori.'[28]

An element of Māori culture that Europeans might have viewed as sensational, or barbaric, was the Māori face tattoo. Tattoos, tā moko, might cover other body parts as well: 'Chief Mohi te Rongomau wears a tattoo called "rape" on his buttocks. Only the chieftain and his wife can wear the rape tattoo,' he wrote. Lindauer sent two drawings of face, buttock and thigh tattoos with his comments to Bohemia.[29] The design of the tā moko worn by Chief Tāraia Ngākuti Te Tumuhuia is annotated with the Māori names of every detail (each having a symbolic meaning), and

Gottfried Lindauer, *Facial Tattoo of Chief Taraia Ngakuti*, n.d., ink drawing, National Museum — Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, inv. no. VN_144_58_3_11r. Photo: ©National Museum — Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures



Gottfried Lindauer, *Puhoro, Tattoo on a Thigh*, n.d., ink drawing, National Museum — Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, inv. no. VN_144_58_3_10r. Photo: ©National Museum — Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures

includes a detailed report on tattoos on the reverse: 'The most painful, the Maori told me, is the moko over the eyes, on the tip of the nose, and lips. I do believe that.' The painter highlights that each line has its place and name: 'The Maori are extremely sensitive on the regularity of moko: they are quick to point errors when I am painting them. That is why I studied moko in depth. Yes, I do not make mistakes any more and they are always wondering that the Pakeha (meaning "a European") can paint moko correctly.' Lindauer knew that the tattoo process commences at ages eighteen to twenty and takes several years to complete, writing: 'History knows of only one Maori man who had a full-face tattoo done in a single session; yet by the time the last lines were finished, he had died under the brush, or the bone chisel held by the tohunga's hand.' The result is unique: 'There are no two Maori who have exactly the same tattoo.' The decoration is rendered by a Māori priest, a tohunga, such as Lindauer depicted in his painting *The Tohunga-ta-moko at Work*.

> While the Tohunga is cutting the poor man's skin with a rather dull bone blade, all his friends are sitting around and singing songs as to encourage him and praise how beautiful it will look. The face swells and hurts, getting an appalling look; however, the cuts heal in 7–10 days and the wearer is parading it around as proud as a peacock. Young girls admire the attractive look: the more mutilated the face, the prouder the wearer.

The tā moko gains its blue–black colouring once massaged with ink from hīnau bark and 'the Maori often have the tattoo done again so the moko gets a darker hue'. Young Māori ladies supposedly do not favour tā moko for themselves; 'only girls have the decoration made on their lips'. The artist's comments on tā moko would have surprised and shocked a European reader, but also indicate his knowledge of the symbolic significance of the tattoo practice.

Lindauer showed great interest in Māori culture: he was interested in life and customs, learned several words of the Māori language and included a small basic dictionary in his letters to Bohemia.[30] In New Zealand he had found a new purpose in life: to capture, in as much detail as he could, the world of the Māori and to act as an intermediary in informing his native country about their culture. He felt he was an artist–ethnographer who, instead of searching for new ways in art, preferred to learn and capture the essence of a people from a different land and culture. Interestingly, there were no artists, except for Hynek, in the group of people in Europe who Lindauer kept in touch with through letters and personal contact. Most were people interested in the exploration of lands they considered exotic, such as Vojtěch and Josefa Náprstek, the founders of a worldwide ethnographic museum, Václav Frič, a trader in natural resources and promoter of photography, and Josef Kořenský.

The explorer Kořenský met Lindauer in Auckland in 1900, and he took a considerable liking to the painter, who he called 'Our countryman Down Under'. Kořenský admired Lindauer for creating his portraits of Māori, and he dedicated a number of texts in magazines and books to the artist:

> Say Lindauer's name and every Maori chieftain nods their head to indicate they know the artist who painted their portrait. Visit the house of any important public figure at their funeral, and what do you see above the body on display? You see a canvas painting with a spitting image of the chieftain, decorated with ribbons and reminding the guests of the good face of the deceased. And who did the painting, you might ask? Looking at the corner of the painting, you will see the artist's signature: Bohuslav [*sic*] Lindauer.[31]

Vojtěch Náprstek and Josefa Náprstková photographed in 1875 by Jindřich Eckert (left) and Josef Kořenský, *c.* 1902 (right). National Museum — Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, inv. nos N 1466 and Koř. 10/1. Photos: ©National Museum — Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures

Lindauer spread knowledge of Māori culture through Vojtěch and Josefa Náprstek, donating items representing Māori culture and two paintings — the portraits *Mrs. Haromi* (1906–07) and *Harawira Mahikai* (1906–07) — to their museum.[32] The institution holds a number of Māori items, especially garments made from flax fibre (capes, gowns, cloths and a bag), as well as two wooden items (a club and a fish hook decorated with mother of pearl). In his letters, Lindauer stated how he wished to acquire a Māori relief sculpture for the Náprstek collection; however, the rarity of such items meant that only wealthy collectors could afford them.

The letters and postcards Lindauer sent to his Czech friends make clear that he lived only for his family and for work. The letters do not mention living in Woodville or the politics of New Zealand. Lindauer certainly was interested in politics when he was young and spoke critically of the situation in the Austro-Hungarian empire. Although this topic resonates in his autobiography, in his later life he was concerned, nearly exclusively, with his family, nature and the life of Māori. The lack of interest in politics may have been because of his happiness at being in a 'free and beautiful' country, as he wrote in the 1902 letter to Josefa Náprstková.[33]

Comparison of Lindauer's European and New Zealand work

Gottfried Lindauer's work prior to his departure for New Zealand falls into two different categories in terms of theme and form: religious painting in the tradition of the Hemerlein school and portrait painting. Lindauer did little religious painting in his new environment, only completing several minor works: with very few exceptions, he focused on portrait painting and large-size figurative scenes depicting the life of Māori. However, surprisingly, parallels with his early religious painting can be observed in his portrait painting in his use of the hieratic principle of representation.

The influence of Lindauer's teachers in Vienna is evident in his techniques and his painting style. Josef Führich was a special influence on Lindauer's harmonic compositions and the narrative style of painting. Nevertheless, Carl Hemerlein was more influential on his style. Hemerlein

had managed to move beyond the Nazarenistic tradition of linearism that had dominated religious painting, probably through his time in Paris studying with Paul Delaroche, the master of illusionist historical painting. Lindauer had absorbed the illusionism, sophisticated lighting effects and plastic modelling for which Hemerlein's painting was known.

However, neither of these two painters had an immediate influence on Lindauer's principal genre, the portrait; indeed, neither of them focused on portraits. Young Lindauer had found his role models in the portrait painters of the preceding era of Biedermeier, notably in the works of Friedrich Amerling from Vienna and, more prominently, in the work of Antonín Machek, a Prague painter who also trained in Vienna. Features of the Biedermeier portrait style that can be identified in Lindauer's work are the smooth, detailed rendering of the sitter and the nuanced representation of material and garments. Biedermeier artists strove to achieve a balance between realism and idealisation: the goal was not to deliver a psychological study or exploit emotion, but to prepare a presentable portrait that if possible conferred authority or prestige on the sitter. A recurring trait is the use of a standard focal distance from the sitter, whose image is usually rendered in three-quarter profile or full face, a bust or a half-length figure. There are two types of background used: a full-area background with a halo-like illumination of the sitter's head and a Renaissance model with a vista of the landscape.

There is an important difference between the Biedermeier-style portraits and Lindauer's European ones: Lindauer did not include items that signified status in his European painting. By contrast, in his Māori portraits, the social position of the subject is symbolised by amulets, jewellery, weapons and similar items. Lindauer collected his own set of studio props, which appear repeatedly in his paintings. He received many of them from Māori as a reward for his portraits. Apart from these details, there is little difference between his portraits from Europe and New Zealand, especially in regard to those of people of European descent. For example, a comparison of the portraits of Markéta Lexová from Pilsen with Rosalie Schischka from Pūhoi does not suggest any major differences in concept and style, apart from the greater mastery achieved by the older painter.

For many of the portraits he painted in his second home country, Lindauer projected photographic images of his subjects onto the canvas.[34] The method was in use in Europe at the time, as supported by evidence from Munich, Vienna and Prague. Lindauer presumably learned photography while he was living in Pilsen, where one of his peers and near neighbours was Josef Böttinger, the city's most important photographer of the second half of the nineteenth century.[35] It is quite certain that the two artists knew each other and that it was Böttinger who introduced Lindauer to rudimentary photography. Accounts from Josef Kořenský offer indirect evidence of Lindauer being a photographer when he arrived in New Zealand: Kořenský writes that the artist made his living in the early New Zealand years by portrait photography and that he later returned to painting.[36] He certainly included photography in his studio practice in New Zealand, although there is no evidence that he used it in the preparation of his European portraits. Lindauer's younger brother was also using photography in his painting, maybe consulting with him. A newspaper report from 1882 states that Hynek Lindauer had developed a specific portrait technique: he was praised 'especially for portraits rendered fittingly in chalk by a special method after photographs were taken'.[37]

In conclusion, we can trace the development of Lindauer's painting style through to the changed context later in his life. In the mid-1860s Lindauer learned and developed an individual style for portrait painting, which served his purpose during the later decades. His European

training gave him the experience and techniques necessary to achieve a mastery in portrait painting in New Zealand, especially in the domain of illusionary effects and technical finesse. Rather than developing his style further in New Zealand, Lindauer focused on visualising and spreading knowledge of the people and customs of his new land. His artistic skills were fully adequate for this purpose and received many accolades from his patrons and customers.

Unlike the portraits, Lindauer's large scene paintings do not show any noticeable continuity with his early European work, except perhaps for the works in the pilgrimage chapel of Sts Cyril and Methodius in Valašské Klobouky, where the decoration included large figural compositions. However, Lindauer's genre paintings of the life of Māori have a different purpose, displaying an interest in ethnographic documentary, albeit taking artistic licence and revealing a tendency to romanticise. These scenes of Māori life were a long distance and time away from Lindauer's early work on the opposite side of the globe. He had developed his own style of genre composition.

In Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, there was an increasing tendency for the fine arts to play an important role in developing the cultural identities of nations; this held especially true in countries going through the complicated process of emancipation from national oppression. Lindauer was no stranger to that attitude, as is seen in his early self-portrait and in the portrait of Jan Svidenský; both paintings have been mentioned in this context above. Often the initial stimuli for the establishment of an independent cultural identity were based around literature and historiography — for example, considerable recognition was given to the Walhalla, a pantheon of greats of the German nation, installed in the vicinity of Regensburg in Bavaria in 1842.[38] In collaboration with the Munich sculptor Ludwig Schwanthaler, the Bohemian art patron Antonín Veith followed the Walhalla model when he established a sculpture gallery of the leading people in Czech history in Tupadly near his house in Liběchov. A similar conjunction of ideas inspired the preparation of a pantheon of paintings of Māori people, a result of collaboration between Gottfried Lindauer and the patron Henry Partridge. They certainly could not have predicted the importance their activities would hold for Māori in New Zealand and around the globe to this day.

23 Roger Blackley, 'Gottfried Lindauer: A Career in New Zealand', in Udo Kittelmann and Britta Schmitz (eds), *Gottfried Lindauer: Die Māori-Portraits*, Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2014, pp. 213–17, esp. p. 214.
24 Gottfried Lindauer to Josefa Náprstková, letter dated Bremen, 14 October 1902, National Museum — Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, archive inv. no. 41/362.
25 Náprstek Museum, archive inv. no. VN_144_58–3_8v.
26 Josef Kořenský, *K protinožcům. Cesta do Australie, Tasmanie, na Nový Zéland*, Prague, 1903, p. 126.
27 Náprstek Museum, AO III 204–221.
28 *Ibid.*, archive inv. no. VN_144_58–3_8r.
29 *Ibid.*, archiveinv. no. VN_144_58–3_11v/r; all quotations in this paragraph come from this source.
30 *Ibid.*, archive inv. no. VN_144_58–3 5v, 6r, 10v.
31 Josef Kořenský, 'U pohlavárů maorských. Krajan Podobiznář', *Národni listy* 41, no. 33, 1901, p. 1.
32 Lindauer corresponded with the Náprsteks between 1901 and 1908 and donated the paintings and items over the period: correspondence in the Náprstek Museum, collection VN.
33 See Note 24.
34 Ngahiraka Mason, 'Gottfried Lindauer: Painting and Photography' in Filip and Musil (eds), *Gottfried Lindauer 1839–1926*, pp. 80–93.
35 Scheufler, 'Počátky fotografie a první významní fotografové', p. 669.
36 Kořenský, 'U pohlavárů maorských', p. 1.
37 Anonymous, 'Čechové v cizině', *Národní listy*, vol. 22, no. 31, 1 February 1882, p. 2.
38 Ossian, Kalevala, Nibelungenlied, etc. Czech equivalents were the Manuscript of Dvůr Králové and Manuscript of Zelená Hora.