

# ISLANDS

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*A Safe Little World Monograph*  
by Andrew Killick

shadow *press*

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the far shore  
drifting out of the mist  
to meet us

- Elizabeth Searle Lamb

## Prologue

The ferry to Kawau departed from Sandspit, near Warkworth, north of Auckland, and I was on it since before I was born, first carried to the island floating in the amniotic fluid of my mother's womb. Departing from the mainland, down the channel – a passageway – beyond the headlands – into the green body of water that was the division between everyday life and retreat. It was traversed regardless of the weather. Later, as a child, sometimes nestled in the crook of my mother's arm while the boat pitched and rolled and waves sluiced from scupper to scupper across the wooden decks of the semi-enclosed cabin. Sometimes seated on the outer benches, my chin and arms rested on the salt and paint layered gunnel, the vibration of the boat's diesel engine vibrating through my body, watching the wake of the ferry foaming outwards, tumbling like an endless out-rush of white cavalry, charging into the sea waves, throwing up arms and dissipating into the green.

Our landing was by way of Clarke's shuddering wooden jetty, which laboured under the impact of the boat against its wooden piles, wood against wood, seasons and tides, and my mother's tale of being thrown into the sea by a wharf collapse in childhood. Once, during a storm, when the ferry was unable to tie up, I saw a baby tossed from a jetty like that one, across the raging gap into the catching hands of a man in wet-weather gear standing on the foredeck. Everyone gasped, but the child was safe.

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I was born with an island consciousness – an archetype that was both symbolic and real – inherited from my forebears and woven into me from childhood. From far back in my ancestral memory,

we have stood on shorelines and clifftops looking out to sea, surrounded as we are – hemmed in, protected – and watched the action of the waves. My Anglo-Saxon forebears arrived in Britain from the mists of somewhere. My Norman forebears coveted the island from the edge of a continent. My great great grandfather, born in the seaside town of Brighton, set out from one island to another – a promised land, thousands of miles away under sail. His arrival had been pre-dated by many hundreds of years by Māori seafarers. For centuries, all inhabitants of Aotearoa New Zealand arrived by water. In this place, even the mainland is an island.

The sea, that apophysis of the island, is woven into my name. St Andrew, my namesake, the fisherman. *Killick*, an old English word for an anchor.

—

In certain weather, the sound of rain on the metal roof. Our shelter. In the morning low mist hangs over the hills on the other side of the harbour, the water glossy, silver. The smell of wet pine needles, mānuka and moss. The beautiful lonely stillness.

On a sunny day, at a particular time of the year, still calm and the tide in. Red pōhutukawa leaves float (a feeling of coolness that communicates warmth) on the surface of the water. Sun passing through to cast leaf and ripple shadows, in movement, with glowing edges. All performing against a background, a sea bed, of small reddish stones below the tideline.

In the bush, when the wind picks up, the mānuka awaken, creaking spindly limbs – squeaks and cracks – evoking presence.

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I remember my father leaning over a formica dining table under the amber glow of an orange plastic pendant light, retracing the outline of an island in black pen. The map of Kawau that had been pinned with thumbtacks so long on the wall at the foot of the squab couch (yellow, with planetary moons?) had begun to fade. That summer, my father made it his evening pastime, with utmost care and attention to detail, to salvage the map's lines and lettering.

North Cove, South Cove, Vivian Bay - I'd seen all these from the ferry as it took its long and circuitous mail-run route, before at last making its way up Bon Accord Harbour to our own particular bolthole, a dark brown, corrugated-roofed, two-storey bach in Harris Bay.

Walking the island's tracks had taken me to the colonial seat of Mansion House, where monkeys and zebra had once roamed, and only the peacocks and wallabies remained from Governor Grey's attempts at establishing his southern Arcadia. We had been to the coppermine ruins at Dispute Cove. Our walks had taken us as far as Bosanquet Bay, the place of legend, which island locals called 'Bos-tacky', where I was certain I felt some lingering presence, the kaitangata consumed beside a fresh water stream in the wake of an ancient battle, and now crying out from the ground.

On a handful of occasions, sailing in my father's tan-sailed gaff-rigged dory *Faith*, we had made the voyage to Beehive Island, which looked like a storybook atoll, off Kawau's south-west coast.

Other places on the map remained unreachable, mythical - the wilds of the eastern coast - Sandy Bay, Slip Island, Slater Point, Point Fowler, Nelson Rock, Burgess Bay, Little Markham Island, Challenger Island.

In the agonising, fertile boredom of childhood, I accumulated hours, lying on my back, looking up at that thumbtacked map from the planetary squab couch... remembering, imagining, wondering, exploring its discoveries and mysteries; knowing and unknowing; and beginning to imagine all the islands that came next.

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## About the work

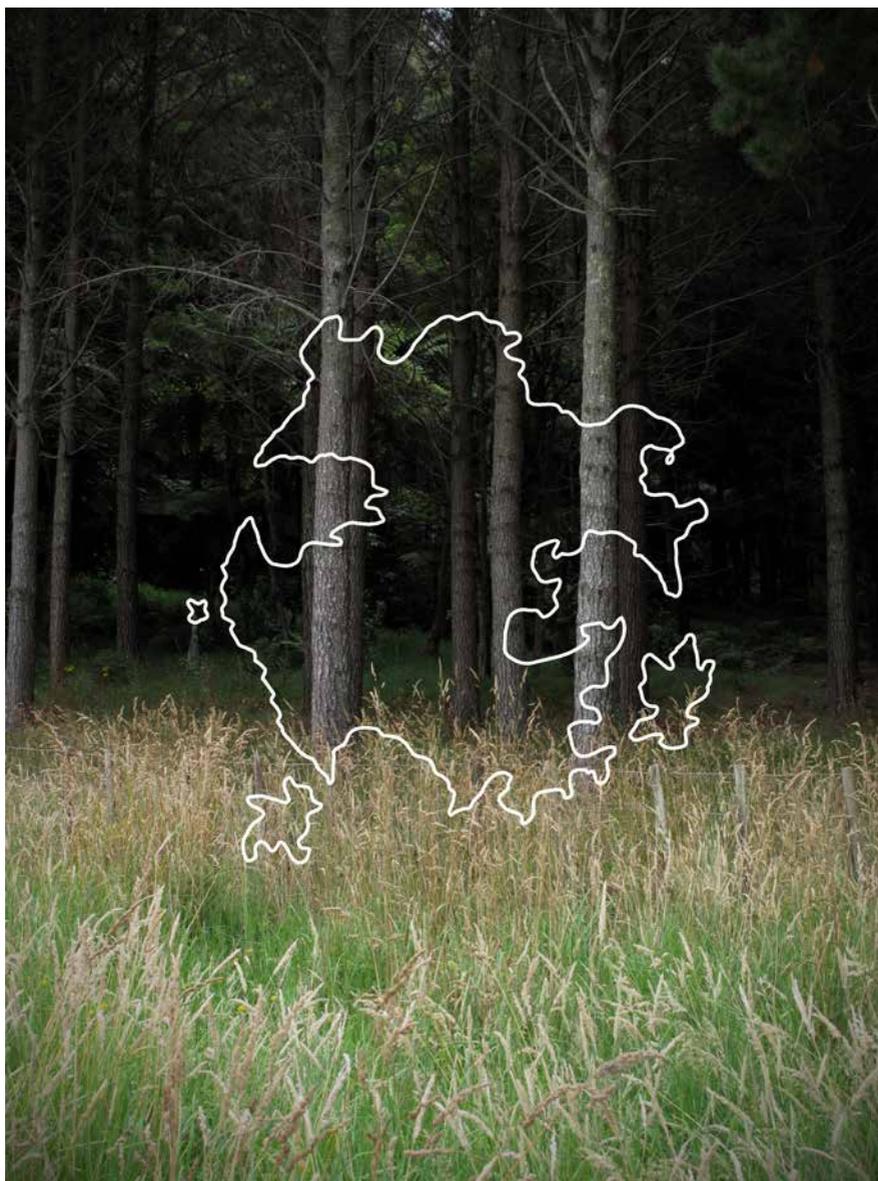
In the Islands series, worlds are created, or described, through hand-drawn, spontaneous, organic island shapes. These shapes are combined with original photographs of existing non-specific natural locations. The resulting combinations contextualise the island shapes and re-contextualise the photographs, imagining new places, new geographic locations.

The project can provide a context for thinking about the archetype of the island (the historical, emotional and psychological connotations it might invoke), and also the mapping of liminal edges and interior spaces as described and contained by the island's outline - 'liminal' in that the white line maps the meeting of sea and land, and 'interior' in that islands have been and are places of both sanctuary and exile, places that are both a shelter from the elements and subject to them.

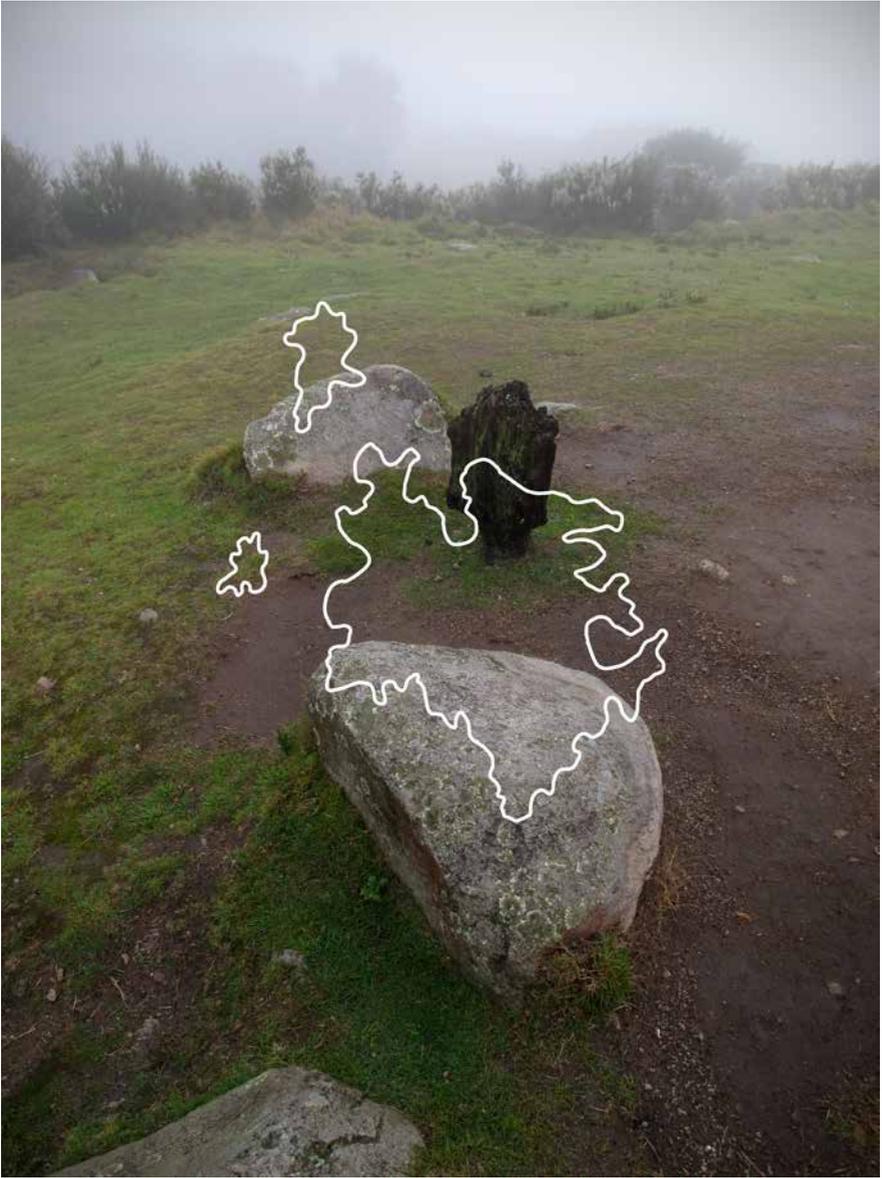
These images form Part One of the book. Part Two is a collection of fragments - collected quotes and original writing - that explore what islands might mean.

Welcome to the places where water encompasses and meets land. You remember the sight, sound, smell, taste and feel of it. Linger. Venture inland.

# Part One: Images



*fig. 1*



*fig. 3*



fig. 4



*fig. 8*

Part Two:  
Text & Documentary

## Fragments

*shimajima ya / chiji ni kudakete / natsu no umi*

Islands: shattered into thousands of pieces in the summer sea

- Bashō (translated by Hiroaki Sato)

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There is, God help us, more... I moved to face west, relinquishing all hope of sanity, for what is more. And what is more is islands: sea, and unimaginably solid islands, and sea, and a hundred rolling skies... Here is the fringey edge where elements meet and realms mingle, where time and eternity spatter each other with foam. The salt sea and the islands, molding and molding, row upon rolling row, don't quit, nor do winds end nor skies cease from spreading in curves.

And now outside the window, deep on the horizon, a new thing appears, as if we needed a new thing. It is a new land blue beyond islands, hitherto hidden by haze and now revealed, and as dumb as the rest. I check my chart, my amateur penciled sketch of the skyline. Yes, this land is new, this spread blue spark beyond yesterday's new wrinkled line, beyond the blue veil a sailor said was Salt Spring Island. How long can this go on? But let us by all means extend the scope of our charts. I draw it as I seem to see it, a blue chunk fitted just so beyond islands, a wag of graphite rising just here above another anonymous line, and here meeting the slope of Salt Spring: though whether this be headland I see or heartland, or the distance-blurred bluffs of a hundred bays, I have no way of knowing, or if it be island or main. I call it Thule, O Julialand,

Time's Bad News; I name it Terror, the Farthest Limb of the Day,  
God's Tooth.

- Annie Dillard, *Holy the Firm*

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Funny, just this minute he didn't want much to get away from the island... To go back to the mainland, back to his little house, back to all the troubles and worries. Through the open window he could hear the waves breaking on the rocks - a little louder now than earlier in the evening. Wind was getting up, too. He thought: Peaceful sound. Peaceful place... He thought: Best of an island is once you get there - you can't go any farther ... you've come to the end of things...

- Agatha Christie, *And Then There Were None*

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One day, [Brendan] begged the Lord to give him some place; secret, retired, secure, delightful, away from other people... He went on his own to Brandon Hill and looked out over the vast and gloomy ocean which lay around him on every side. In that place, he had a vision of a beautiful noble island, where angels would help him... Then the angel of the Lord came to talk to him, and said, 'From now on I will stay with you for ever and ever, and I will teach you how to find the beautiful island that you saw in your vision.'

...'This is the land you have been looking for all these years. You couldn't find it before now because Christ our Lord wanted to show you the many mysteries of the ocean. You should now return to the