

# *Cultivate*

An exegesis by Chris Lee

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01

*Introduction*



bang·er  
bang·er  
ban·ger  
bang·arrr  
bang ah  
sausage.

No problem.

piece a piss mate.

Figure 1.

Editorial wordplay.



# Introduction

---

**'If we want to speak  
to people, we need to  
know their language'  
Erik Spiekermann**

---

Language is a social fact and has become a key manifestation of a culture's spirit. This quote from Erik Spierkermann captures the essence of the power of language and it's inherent ability to construct, develop and transform identities.

This project had explored New Zealand's spoken identity, the power of experiential learning and the construction of our national identity. Food is used as a locus for this investigation as 'Food and eating afford us a remarkable arena in which to watch how the human species invests a basic activity with social meaning' (Parasecoli, 2008).

The representation of food carries a large scope of practices, cultural interpretations and ideological values.

The research question for my final year major project is: How can I represent our culture, by way of language, through an authentic experience of food and social interactions?

This exegesis takes you, the reader through my theorhetical, foundations, methods, processes in development in how I developed this question and how I intend to answer it. I will address the importance of language in our identity and use experience design to facilitate the education of conscious and connected audiences. It connects language as culture and addresses thorough the vehicle of food. Food is discussed in regards to Tikanga, the making of a meal and conversation surrounding the dinner table. The aim of this project is to educate New Zealanders, enabling a greater sense of respect and awareness; celebrating and enhancing a deeper, profound appreciation of our spoken identity.

2022

*Journey*



# Journey

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**Languages are inseparably linked to the social and cultural contexts in which they are used. Languages and cultures play a key role in developing our personal, group, national, and human identities. Every language has its own ways of expressing meanings; each has intrinsic value and special significance for its users.**

---

Language can be a barrier or connection between two strangers. This project began looking at how we as Kiwi's interact with each other in various social situations. In order to retrieve a more intimate insight, I interviewed the man behind 'Humans of Cuba Street' (HoCS). The series of 'Humans of...' is a social and cultural phenomenon which started with the celebration of the hidden stories of the colourful characters of New York. The creator of HoCS wanted to take time in his life to appreciate conversation. As he found himself continuously engaging mundane interactions, HoCS was an avenue to form interactions with residual impact. "The more I talk to people the more I understand different perceptions of different age groups, social barriers." (Chick, J. Personal Communication. 2014). This inspired me to explore another output of language; body language. I was immediately interested in the systems of social etiquette. In this process, I rediscovered the power of language, and the perception of how we speak against how we should speak. This is indicative of our culture. This brings me to the seeds of my major project.

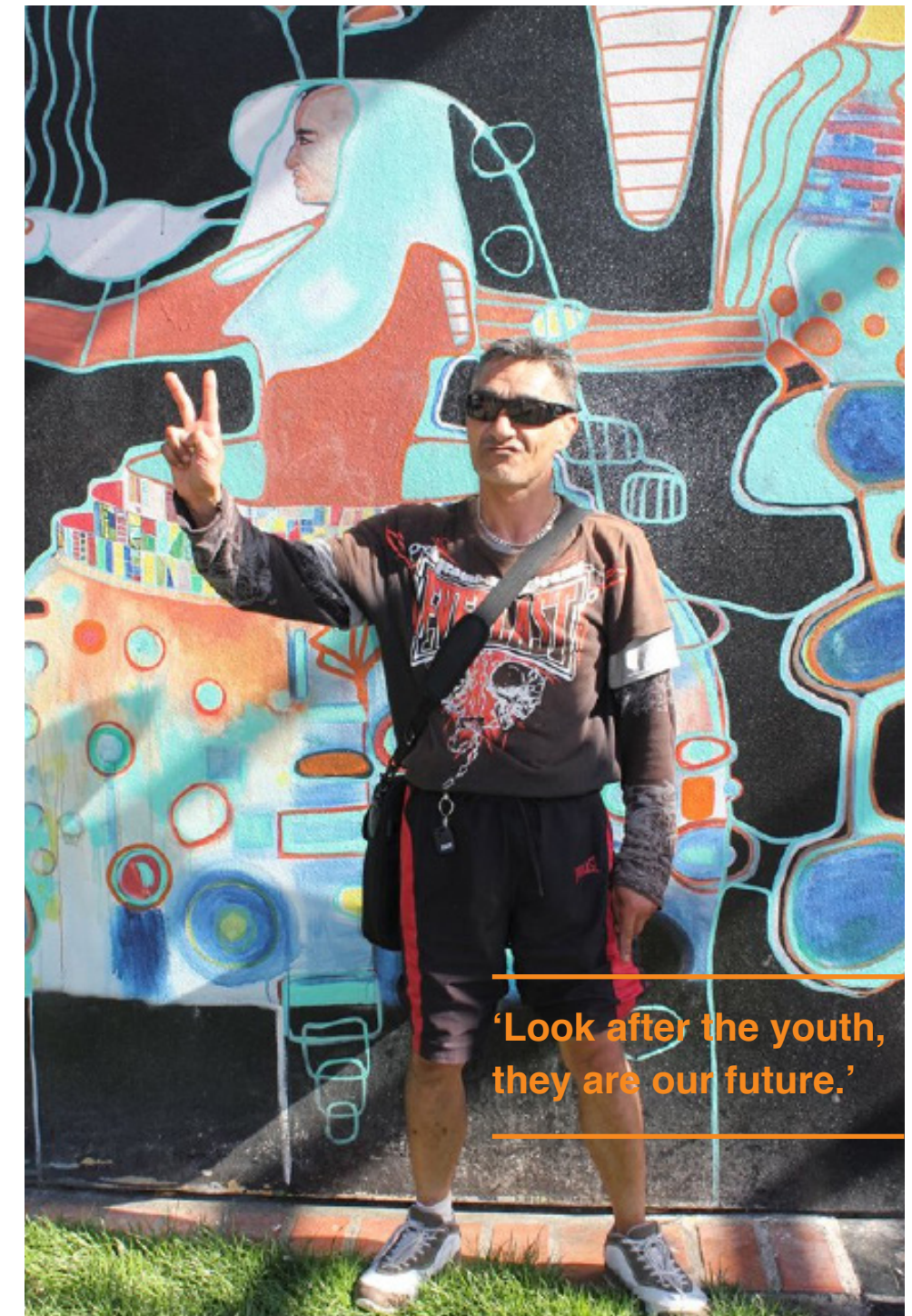


Figure 2.

Humans of Cuba Street subject.

03

*Language, Culture & Seeds  
of a Major Project*



**'Languages are inseparably linked to the social and cultural contexts in which they are used. Languages and cultures play a key role in developing our personal, group, national, and human identities. Every language has its own ways of expressing meanings; each has intrinsic value and special significance for its users.'**

Te reo Māori and tikanga Māori.  
(2014, p.24).

Figure 3.

Tangata Whenua, 'People of the Land'.





## *Language, Culture & Seeds of a Major Project*

Language is a gateway into understanding culture. New Zealand is no exception when it comes to colloquialism, slang and other unique verbal quirks as a manifestation of our national identity. Post-colonial New Zealand was overwhelmed with glossaries and dictionaries of the idiosyncrasies in our English as a result of common parlance (Bardsley, 2013). Our vocabulary together with phonology are elements that have made us unique from our Mother Britain and other colonial Englishes. Our inclusiveness of Te Reo Māori is a particularly distinctive feature within the world of English. This demonstrates how the areas of experience that are important to culture tend to get encoded in a cultures language (Holmes, 2011).

The 'Dave' drink driving advertisements are another example. 'Mate' is an ambivalent expression of 'mateship' amongst young New Zealand males (Bardsley, 2013). When Dave's friend chooses to call him by his first name opposed to 'mate', he makes a decision to distance himself from Dave, establishing him as an outsider.



Figure 4. Stills from advertisement using 'Mate' to identify individual.

'Mate' originates as a specifically British term, commonly used among blue-collar workers. Ironically, it is a sign of equality on our side of the world. This demonstrates how we have adapted the phrase to reflect our casual and friendly nature, also the power of language in our culture as it determines our behavior and as a result, relationships. Our reinvention of English is exclusive to those who have experienced it and invisible to those who haven't. By looking at the importance of language specifically in our culture, this influenced me to look at how strangers can build connections through the understanding of our unique language.



04

*Design Process:  
the search for community*

# Design Process: the search for community

Language is a means of constructing our social identity. We signal our gender, ethnic, and professional identity through our linguistic choices. This project will create an experience surrounding the spoken identity of New Zealand culture to inform audiences of dominant and emerging dialects and language quirks (Williams, 1977). As well as a celebration of our culture, audiences will be educated on New Zealand’s language history as they celebrate how it came to be, how it reflects our values and what it holds for the future. Using Pine and Gilmore’s (1998) theory of Experience Design (see Key Terms) I will approach my project to educate and provoke conversation on New Zealand’s spoken identity. The user experiences aims to create emotional connections to add value and engages audiences. Transformational Design Theory is the next step as it guides the user through a journey from the present to conscious fulfillment. I will apply these conjoining theories in order to produce design led solution with meaning.

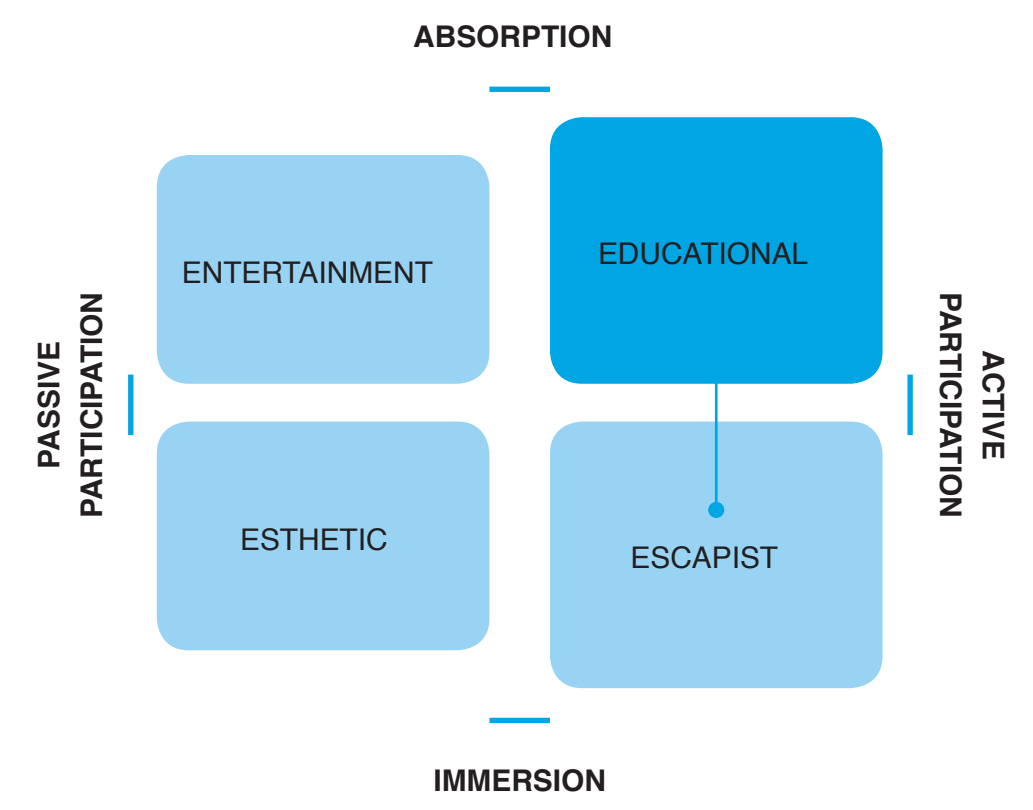


Figure 5. The Realms of Experience Design theorised by Pine and Gilmore.

My project is currently situated in the Educational realm (see figure 4). I aim to expand this project into an experience through active participation and Immersion also achieving positioning in the Escapist realm therefore a transformation experience.



## *Design Process: the search for community*

The initial outcome for this project looked at utilising Te Papa and its successful brand, as the placement of my project. The core of this project resonates with its quoted ethos, that Te Papa is our 'national museum, renowned for being bicultural, scholarly, innovative, and fun. Our success is built on our relationships with and ability to represent our community' (Te Papa, 2014). However, from my observations, I discovered there is currently no medium that celebrates our quirky reinvention of the English language. I intended to fill a gap in the 'Slice of Heaven' exhibition, which I identified as the most appropriate avenue of Te Papa's offerings.

The placement of my project in Te Papa would maximize the reach to overseas visitors, who I had initially identified as my target audience. Globalisation in recent years has seen New Zealand experience an explosion of immigrants and tourists (International Visitor Arrivals, 2014). This is evidence of our growing multi-cultural sphere of communication and a signifier of global desire to experience our culture. Here, I decided to recreate the concept of an exhibition to create a more engaging experience of our language, opposed to a one-way line of communication of information, which is the current situation.



Figure 6.

One among many unexperiential pieces, The Murder House in The Slice of Heaven Exhibition.



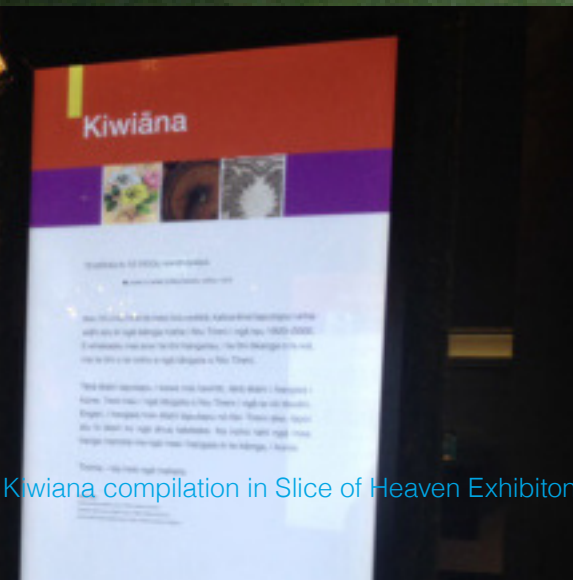
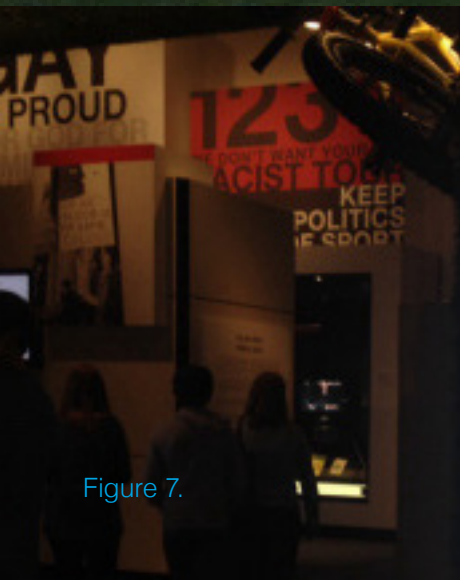


Figure 7.

Kiwiana compilation in Slice of Heaven Exhibiton.

## *Design Process: the search for community*

As precedence I enquired into Pradasphere, a celebratory exhibition created in collaboration with Harrods by London agency 2 x 4.

They created an immersive experience with multiple touch points. It reconceptualises the idea of a natural history museum with the brand that is Prada. I found this useful in my regards to my project due to the immersive nature. Pradasphere goes beyond the bounds of what is regarded, as a typical exhibition and makes the unfamiliar familiar in the setting of Harrods. The succession of touch points (see figure 7) positively shapes the user experience into a journey. Inspired by Pradasphere, I believed that by repurposing a section of Te Papa's Espresso café, audiences could be educated visually and experientially in an immersive exhibition. I chose the café as it is significant of our coffee nation.

The attendance of the 'Best of the Best' talks, provided me with some great insight to maximising educational spaces from a group who were responsible for AUT's new Sir Paul Reeves building. The ethos of the building is to collaborate, connect and engage and is dedicated to social learning. Therefore I explored the realm of Social Learning Theory (see Key Terms) and made numerous connections to the state of my project.

The use of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) could be applied to my project as the interaction with the space relied on following the interaction of one person, resulting in conversation. The about quirky nature of NZ language could provoke international audiences reflect on their language therefore result in conversation about language.

The space would be reflective of a lounge with accompanying publications and visuals to provoke conversation and actively educate audiences. The reconceptualization of this space had to be homely and inviting to create a more social experience, a place where audiences feel comfortable interacting with each other and sharing stories of their travels. To gather further insights from an outsider perspective in order to validate my project I visited Taylors College, an international language school in Auckland. I had the opportunity to interview Bahkrom, originally from Uzbekistan,. Bahkrom arrived with with impeccable grammar, structure, and pronunciation but was lacking in Kiwi vocabulary. As you can imagine, his English teachers back home, didn't teach how to say 'up to', 'chur bro' or 'loo'. Bahkrom expected to be interacting with a British English accent from his knowledge of the history of our colonization.





Figure 8.

Selection of immersive touch points in Pradasphere.

## Design Process: the search for community



Figure 9. Disconnected from the Te Papa' brand, the Espresso Cafe.

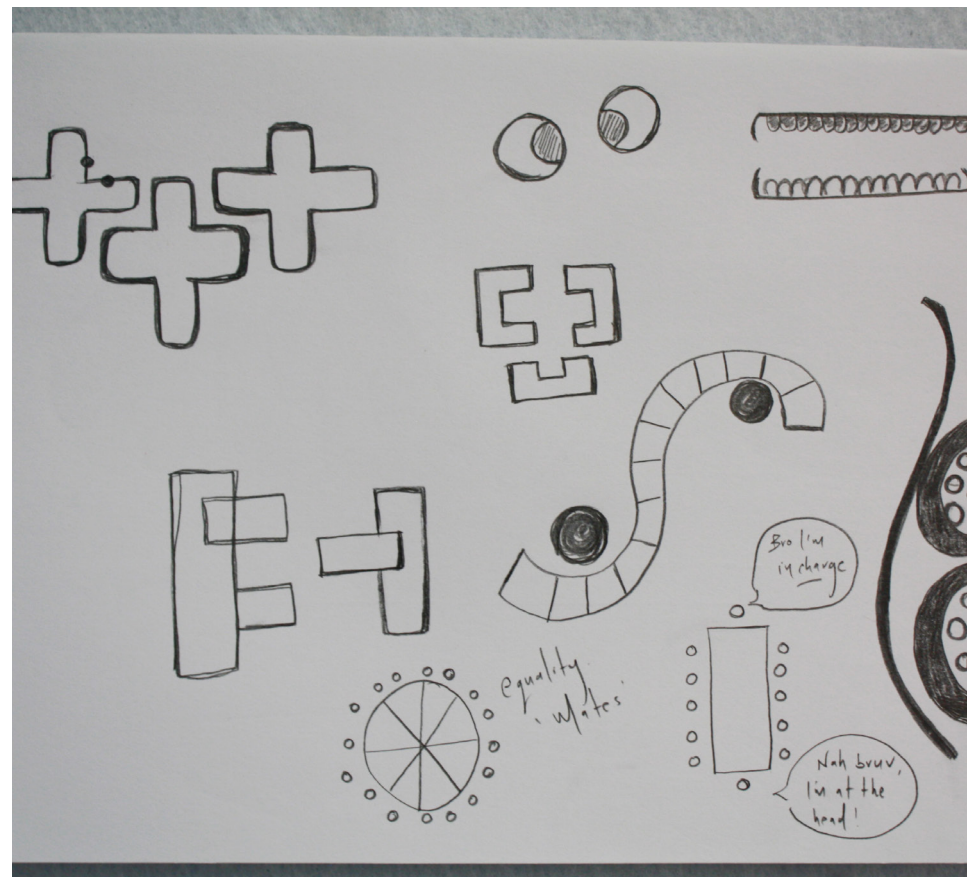


Figure 10. Exploration of seating to encourage social learning.

He discovered early on in this journey how our culture is manifested into our language. Personally for him, it reflected our informal, relaxed nature. This shows how over time language adapts from local culture and constructs aspects of one's identity.

Bakrom's insight was just one of many who validated the importance of our idiosyncrasies as an expression of our culture. Throughout our conversation, I learnt many of our quirks, such as our tendency to walk around barefoot, something not common back home for Bahkrom but an accepted social practice for us. This opened up another avenue for this project's target audience. Kiwis. Bahkrom validated my project towards the direction I was going in at this point but if we don't know enough about our own culture, could I aim my project towards educating Kiwi's through a celebration of our language? When I say "Tea's ready" instead of dinnertime or "Mate, I'm knackered" instead of I'm tired, do you think? "Man that's so Kiwi".



## Design Process: the search for community

**‘There’s no need to lay an egg over it, we’ll have it fixed in the morning’  
(McGill, 1998, p. 73)**

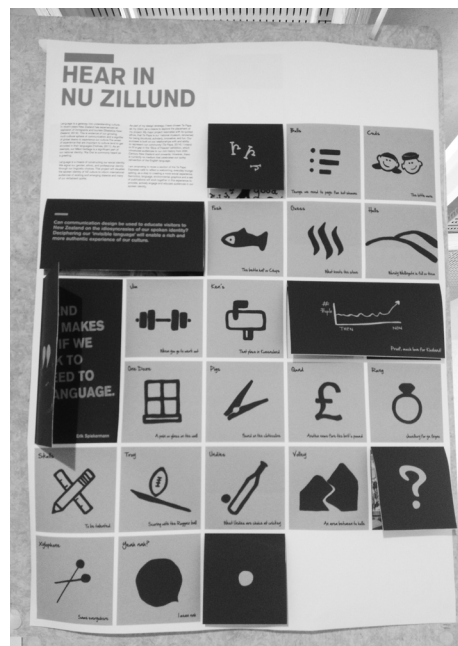


Figure 11.

Examination  
Research Poster

My research poster was the first piece of visual design I had put forward towards the core of my project. The format of my poster communicates the idea of learning a language through mimicking the format of an alphabet chart. It supported the idea of taking a second look, as the familiar, representative icons, is presented with unfamiliar words, yet familiar sounds. Subconsciously the reader must learn about my project through sensory exploration, primarily tactile. After reflecting on the overall design of my poster in comparison to the content, I disagreed with the predominately hand-drawn aesthetic that appeared geared towards children. However, my project does resonate with an extremely playful nature. It inherently imitates a playful experience that speaks of the cheeky Kiwi culture expanding off the many publications of New Zealand dictionaries. The spirited tone is reminiscent of learning a language as I was providing the opportunity to relearn it. The tone of voice it encompassed I felt was appropriate to the nature of my project.

I came to a crossroads in my project at this point. My recently discussed output had very little provocation for the audience to react. I was relying heavily on the project’s placement in Te Papa draw the audience into my space and expectation of my publication within the space. There is no real tactile learning experience opposed to sitting in space. This output hadn’t made it to the stage of being transformational. In addition to this, I had aimed to educate international audiences on our language; this became less interesting as I enjoyed the number of laughs and ‘Oh yeah, we do say that’ from my peers while going through the alphabet of my poster. Personally, even I enjoyed some of the things we say and how ridiculous they from an outsider point of view. This was the realization that due to large number of ‘in-jokes’ and little acknowledgement from us Kiwi’s an educated celebration of our language was in order. I will represent our culture, through language and social interactions as a celebration.



Typographic experiment. I conducted this experiment in order to design with the principle of repurposing. The recycling of the coffee invoices seemed appropriate to draw connections with repurposing a cafe space into an exhibiton space and geared my project away from the childish aesthetic.

Figure 12.

**CULT**  
**VATE**

**CULT**  
**VATE**

**CULT**  
**VATE**

**CULT**  
**VATE**



05

*Design Process:  
the search for provocation*

## *Design Process: the search for provocation*

Cultivate needed to be pushed beyond visual cues into a guided experience in order to be a successful transformational, social experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). My project was previously lacking provoking social interaction and tactile educational experience. I discovered food as a comfortable avenue for discussion and education. The process from beginning to end, preparation to cleanup demands a tactile approach.

Food culture influenced my project to result in a workshop. I had intended to create a workshop that educates participants on Kiwi language through the act of cooking. The familiar act will be tweaked so that participants will immerse themselves in the cooking process and learn about language by engaging in discussion while sharing their meal. Our relationship with food is 'one of the most common and pervasive sources of value in human experience'. Curtin and Heldke (1992) regard food to be an aspect of our history that is undermined in terms of cultural significance. I have chosen food as the vehicle for this project as food and community are inseparable. It acts as a springboard for mutual understanding and closeness, on a cultural and social platform.

For reasons stated, it is likened with language due to its history, influence and cultural interpretations. After discussing my workshop experiences with Kieran Stowers, he proposed a few key points on this output, proving it to have many holes. These keys points generally addressed the selling of point of the workshop and it's prolonged transformation. If it's a workshop, do I have to sign up or am I invited? Where will it be set? When I leave is the experience over? After much brainstorming and reflection on these points, I evolved this project into a dinner party. This decision was the most appropriate in order to facilitate the conversational aspect of my project as I was also influenced by the success of Kieran's master project Utopia Ingredients (2014).

The decision to call my project *Cultivate* arose at this point in my project. Once I had constructed an ethos in the form of a few key words, food, culture, experience, educate, empower, and play. The relationships between these words bring together and communicate the idea of one 'cultivating own knowledge'.



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How does the presentation of unprepared ingredients on chopping boards, which are tools in the kitchen aid the tone of the dining experience?

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06

*Design Process:  
the search for meaning*





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As New Zealand continuously establishes itself as an independent and diverse nation, Cultivate will act as a tool to facilitate an informal educational experience.

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## *Design Process: the search for meaning*

At this moment *Cultivate* is a dinner party, designed as a social experience. It is a holistic social experience where participants leave educated on Kiwi language through the act of cooking, dining and the conversations, which take place. The source of linguistic stimuli is embedded into a learners' environment, meaning the environment provides an opportunity to form associations between the words they hear and the objects they represent. Alike with Social Learning Theory, Spada and Lightbown (2002) claim the importance of environment to stimulate actions. For my project, the design experience must be supported with prompts of typography as it is the vehicle for language that will be utilized at touch points throughout the experience. Within the large scope of food culture, my design led solution focuses on Tikanga (see Key Terms) and the dining table as a vessel to an authentic experience of our culture.

I needed to broaden my scope therefore I researched into precedents that drew parallels with the intention to explore common social activities revolving around eating. Such as, farmers markets to observe the dealings of food as part of the cooking process and Yum Cha in regards to a food sharing experience.

There are a growing number of movements directly dedicated towards this community-orientated idea such as 'Eat With', 'Table Share' and 'World café', 'Eat With' I found resonated particularly with *Cultivate*. Through the macro trend of globalization, it is a delicious new way to 'travel'. 'Eat With' (2014) has established a global community connecting strangers to share their personalities, ethnicity, essentially their identity by way of a dinner party experience. They open themselves up to connecting with other like-minded people passionate about food. This encourages bringing back the family dining table experience, a time I remember as a time for discussion and reflection.



Figure 14.

A glimpse into the 'Eat With' experience.

## *Design Process: the search for meaning*

I will use the practice of Tikanga to aid the creation and strategy of my experience. Following Kieran's suggestions, already I have established that invitations will be significant creating a sense of belonging to build interpersonal relationships. It will signify the acceptance of a mutual relationship, as me as the host, and participants to accept the interaction required to be part of this social experience.

This will make the process of participating in cultural practices easier as it takes time and patience, and this is something *Cultivate* will strive to reflect. The principals of Tikanga will support the making of emotional connections, which as mentioned before, creates value and engages audiences, therefore making the experience transformational (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).



Figure 15.

A Hongi is a practice of Tikanga.



07

*The Proposal*

# The Proposal

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**Visual Communication design can be used as an educational tool to celebrate our spoken identity. A design led project using transformation design to engage audiences in conversation about and the idiosyncrasies of our accents, jargon and expressions of our unique Kiwi form of English will enable a rich and authentic experience of New Zealand’s culture through language.**

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*Cultivate* is a language tool or system embedded in what I will design to be a transformational, social experience. The success of this experience will have the potential to be applied in different languages to represent different cultures. It is a social experience of our nation’s spoken identity by way of a dinner party, where participants are able to navigate deftly with respect and awareness; enhancing a deeper, more profound appreciation of our sovereign nation.

I will further observe into the invisible space created by sitting around a table full of food. My design led solution will use an ethnographic approach as a form of enquiry in order to formulate questions, and aid the search for answers. The dining table is a valuable resource to be utilized in order to provoke discussion revolving around our spoken identity and what it holds for the future. A circular dining table will assist an egalitarian environment (see Figure 14) for participants to feel comfortable with each other to voice their thoughts.

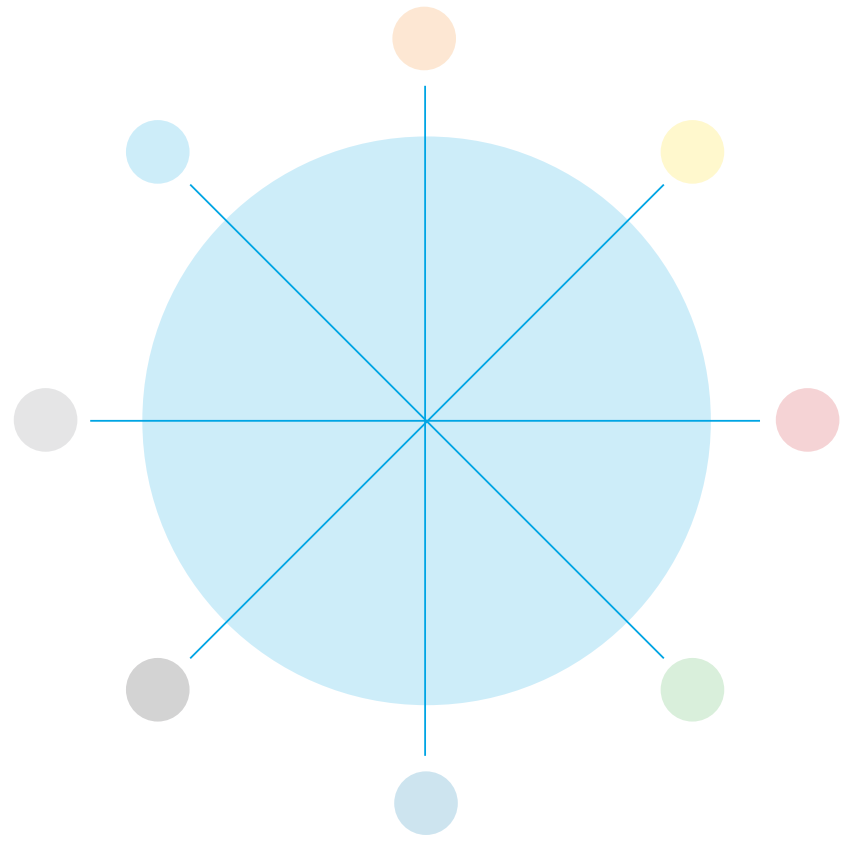


Figure 16. Creating an egalitarian dining experience.

# The Proposal

These are all touch points and questions to create basic understanding of how I can utilize existing elements of the dining experience to further facilitate the exploration of my project. I have not yet established a target audience. Moving through this timeline by due course I can find out who exactly I want to educate and what 'needs' I require to meet.

## Timeline

- **Observe customs and practices**
- **Take part in social eating experiences**
- **Identify visual cues**
- **How conversations take place, where, when, what?**
- **How conversations take place, where, when, what?**
- **Are these conversations apparent after the experience?**

The methodology I will use is Ethnography (see Key Terms). When it comes to building my experience, I intend to be a participant in *Cultivate* as an independent variable in what will be an iterative design process. As an active participant I will not only observe but also draw off my own experiences in order to systematically improve *Cultivate* with every dinner. Succeeding the meal, participants will leave with a toolkit, where they are able to continue their experience and share it with others. The toolkit will include the classically 'Kiwi' Edmonds cookbook that will be a revised version in our quirky language. It will also include the ingredients for a meal cooked at the dinner party, which will be reflective of our culture. By giving the opportunity for my audience to share their knowledge with others. Participants will establish a sense of pride and that will formulate a language tool that is systematic and can be applied to a variety of cultural experiences.





**EDMONDS**  
SURE TO RISE  
**COOKERY**  
**BOOK**

FIFTH  
EDITION

**EDMONDS**  
**SURE TO RISE**

**EDMONDS**

**SURE TO RISE**

**EDMONDS**  
**COOKERY**  
**BOOK**

Figure 17.

A collection of Kiwi Food Culture over time.



# Cultivate

OUR LANGUAGE.

GOOD TIME EH

Dress Code  
WHATEVER YOU LIKE

Even if it's

STUBBIES AND JANDALS

Tea  
MEAT AND THREE VEGE

Supper

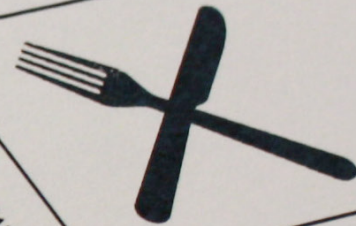
BISCUITS AND MILO

CHOW DOWN

&

SPIN A YARN

BRING A MATE



NOM.  
NOM.  
NOM.

... come cook oi

This is an experiment to visually show our British heritage, but semiotically represents our reinvention of the language. It is a strong contrast and something I will keep playing with.

Figure 18.



## *Key terms*

### **Ethnography**

Ethnography is a research-based approach from the perspective of subject at hand. It signifies cultural phenomena or the culture of an identified group visually or through the use of language (Fetterman, 2010).

### **Experience design**

Experience design is a way of thinking with its core principle focusing contextually on culturally relevant offerings and the level of engagement, therefore impact of the user experience. It's success of Experience Design goes on a basis of individualization, worth and sustenance (Pine, B. J. II & Gilmore, J. H., 1999).

### **Social Learning Theory**

Albert Bandura (1997) shaped the theory behind the Social Learning system. It can create behavioral learning patterns as a result of engagement from a direct experience or pure observation of others.

### **Tikanga**

Tikanga is physical or spiritual customs or habits practiced from a Māori worldview, which has been handed down through generations. It incorporates responsibilities of manaakitanga (hospitality) to host, care and taking ownership of visitors are fulfilled (Te reo Māori and tikanga Māori. 2014).



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# 10

## Illustration list

Figure 1.  
Personal work: Editorial wordplay.  
Completed March 2014.

Figure 2.  
Humans of Cuba Street subject.  
(2014, May 25).  
Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/humansofcuba/photos/a.721338237900972.1073741828.721330481235081/770074856360643/?type=1&heater>.

Figure 3.  
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Figure 4.  
Stills from advertisement using 'Mate' to identify individual. New Zealand Transport Agency (2007, August 24). [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hp2Zk-PODuf0>.

Figure 5.  
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Figure 6.  
The Murder House in The Slice of Heaven Exhibiton. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. (2014). The Murder House in Slice of Heaven Exhibiton. Retrieved from Chris Lee, Personal collection.

Figure 7.  
Kiwiana compilation in Slice of Heaven Exhibiton. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. (2014). Retrieved from Chris Lee, Personal collection.

Figure 8.  
Selection of immersive touch points in Pradasphere. Harrods London. (2014). Retrieved from <http://2x4.org/work/127/pradasphere/>.

Figure 9.  
Disconnected from the Te Papa' brand, the Espresso Cafe. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. (2014). Retrieved from <http://acorn-tooakee.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/dsc01589.jpg>.

Figure 10.  
Personal work: Exploration of seating to encourage social learning. Completed May 2014.

Figure 11.  
Personal work: Examination Research Poster. Completed May 2014.

Figure 12.  
Personal work: Typographic experiment on repurposing. Completed May 2014.

Figure 13.  
Let's share a meal. Eat Read Love. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.eatreadlove.com/2014/02/the-shared-table-for-white-magazine.html>.

Figure 14.  
A glimpse into the 'Eat With' experience. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.eatwith.com>.

Figure 15.  
A Hongi is a practice of Tikanga. (2014). Retrieved from [http://gg.govt.nz/sites/all/files/images/Ambassador%20of%20Mexico,%20HE%20Rosaura%20Leonora%20Rueda-Gutierrez%20Credentials150911%20\(1\).jpg](http://gg.govt.nz/sites/all/files/images/Ambassador%20of%20Mexico,%20HE%20Rosaura%20Leonora%20Rueda-Gutierrez%20Credentials150911%20(1).jpg).

Figure 16.  
Creating an egalitarian dining experience.

Figure 17.  
Personal work: A collection of Kiwi Food Culture over time. Retrieved from Chris Lee, Personal collection.

Figure 18.  
Personal work: A linguistic reinvention of our British heritage. Completed May 2014.

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