

So I'm at the gallery, right? Well, course I am, I live here. It's early morning, yeah, and I'm minding my own business, the sun's coming up and the light is just starting to wash the sky's face clean, and I'm stretching out my limbs and shit coz I want some of that action, I'm not feeling my best right now, it's cold as shit here and it's only April, and so I'm getting that photosynthesis tingle in my nether regions and I'm like ahhhh that's it and then suddenly this chick, this chick, comes walking over to me and gets like right up in my face, like looking at me real close, eyeing me up and I'm like...?? You right mate? Are we good? And honestly I'm feeling a little vulnerable you know, like I just woke up and I'm not looking my best, I haven't even fully unfurled yet, my buds are closed, I don't even smell good at the moment, and she's all googly-eyed at me and I'm thinking what is her problem and then, you'll never believe this, she pulls out a pencil, a *pencil*, and I'm shocked, like that could be my cousin, you know? So I'm like, is she trying to scare me with this, like, is she – is she gonna stab me? With my own cousin? And then to top it off, she pulls out some *paper* and I'm thinking this chick is sick, like what is she playing at, and then she gets right up close to me with her moony eyes and she starts *drawing* me, like full-on botanical drawing me, and she's examining me like I'm some sort of *specimen*, she's trying to get like the texture of my skin and the veins in my leaves and to be honest she's not even that good at it and I'm thinking really? That's all you've got? Are you even paying attention? And so I'm like, nah that ain't it, so I start sort of preening you know, I'm like get my good angles at least, so I start swaying in the breeze and shit, you know, doing that thing that humans like, being all romantic and mysterious, and then I start playing up a bit eh, I start shimmying my shoulders so my leaves catch the light better and I get that green glowy dappled thing going on and she's loving that, she's getting even closer and I start paying attention to *her*, I'm like two can play that game and I can see the crinkles in her fingers and the tiny feathered venules in her eyelids and as I reach out toward her a drop hits the paper and we look up and she runs toward the gallery doors and and I raise my face to the cracked-open sky and finally, I am washed clean.

Tessa Boraston / Madison Kelly, 'Field Drawing' workshop, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, various sites around Ōtākaro Avon River, April 2026.

A leaf is not green; green is green

like how under the microscope things get very complex.
Think acid wash – think bleach – think it has to work
hard to be what it is. I want to say pine needles. More like being born.
Surprised to say I don't think about that so often.

Someone calls you blue but you're green.
Someone calls you pine needles but you're green.
I like an environment I can control.
What and what did this take on. I don't know what gender

green is but it's definitely sex. Life was growing like a vine.
His life grew on him like moss, like cloak, like clock.
Think about burying. Think about drilling. Think about going
deep. You could call this something and leave it at that.

But something always wins. Something always grows.
Eventually you'll have something to say about it.

Josiah Morgan / Reflections on *Green Silence: Creative New Zealand development* (choreography by Sarah Elsworth, sound design by Anita Clark/MOTTE), Te Wā The Space, Ōtautahi Christchurch, 14–17 April 2026.

Poplar trees are fast-growing. It takes only ten years for a tree to reach maturity. Used for pallets, matchsticks, paper pulp, biofuel and leather tanning, their rapid maturity generates endless applications. ALPI, a wood processing company, shaves, cuts, dyes and laminates the poplar tree into artificial logs that are then – again – cut to create simulacra of trees from slow-growth forests in Asia, Africa, America and Europe. The trompe l’oeil is undeniable. Here, growing a tree happens twice. Once in an FSC certified forest. Then again in an Italian factory. The industries of forestry are put to different use, now focused on the manipulation and augmentation of other species; the ones on the verge of extinction can now be protected. Such faithful reproduction allows us to continue to covet the tone, grain and lustre of rare/functionally extinct species, but why the need to replicate them at all? Sitting at one of Martino Gamper’s tables it is hard to say that the butterfly joint holding together two sections of ‘American Oak’ and ‘European Ash’ isn’t a precious piece of ‘Brazilian Rosewood’. The furniture *is* exquisite.

In 1918, the exportation of our native forests was restricted. The following year, the New Zealand Forest Service was established, three years prior to ALPI beginning their unique processing of timber to address the shortage of exotic species for European markets. Here, ‘marginal land’ used for sheep and beef was converted to *pinus radiata*, a fast-growing local alternative to our decimated native species. Pine was crop-planted across Aotearoa. Hills were supposedly shored up by tree roots, and heavy rains were slowed down by vegetative litter. And, in the shadow of the pine tree, a transformation of economy, industry and landscape. Towns were built, families started and whole livelihoods created. When my uncles moved here from the Philippines, it was one of the first jobs they were given, working for hours in the sun to pierce the clay with pine saplings. Now, as a lecturer in architecture, I recommend our students use the fruits of this labour for mass timber buildings as a sustainable, even regenerative, solution to carbon-intensive building products like concrete and steel. But the industry of forestry has not meaningfully changed. It takes time and labour to plant trees. It requires large trucks, heavy machinery and diesel to cut them down. Unlike the poplar tree, *pinus radiata* depletes the soil, turns it acidic and degrades microbiomes. And so sitting at this table, in this chair, looking at a room filled with beautiful furniture, it is hard to separate design from extraction. Design does not change an underlying unease.

*

When I was initially writing this I had not seen the public programmes that would unfurl over the course of the exhibition. Often, I feel the challenge of design in the context of a gallery is to reveal what it can *do* so that conversations about what it *looks like* can be avoided. This is less about the function of the object (read utility) and more about its role in achieving something good, beneficial and socially responsible. It has been difficult to talk about the object directly. To discuss the furniture that makes up the exhibition. When I see posts of community groups, architecture practices and artists using the space, the furniture becomes background. It becomes a support for events, gatherings and parties. What the furniture *does* is to invite people into the gallery. It allows them to move around tables, chairs and to chuck a tote bag on one of the many hooks that cover the wall. To power up an amp. To lay out a dinner. To provide advice to architecture students. This gallery could be just a presentation of beautiful things made of materials from halfway around the world placed next to a body of research about our local forestry industry. But there are two shows here: the one where we talk about the furniture and the one where we talk about what the furniture does.

Micheal McCabe / Martino Gamper, *Endgrained*, Objectspace, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, 27 March–31 May 2026.

Reuben Paterson has designed a studio workshop for primary and secondary school students as part of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki education programme. Walls of the basement studio space are plastered with one-to-one scale photographs of Reuben’s New York studio, and he test-ran the workshop on a group of teachers during the April school holidays.

The workshop is prefaced by way of a video in which Reuben introduces himself and his work. He talks about ephemerality, un-capturable moments of wonder; the glitter of grimy New York snowbanks. On an overhead projector (the analogue type with an under-lit platen and directional mirror) is placed a glass dish of water. Participants are invited to watch slowly, to just notice. Drops of coloured food dye are eye-dropped into the water and diffuse across the surface. The grand finale is the introduction of an effervescent denture cleaning tablet.

In tubs of water at our tables, we drop marbling ink on a small round of float paper that magically keeps ink on the water's surface, and use a bent-open safety pin to swish movement into the suspended colours. I don't generally need any kind of reminder as to why I work as a secondary-school art teacher, but this gave me one anyway. Reuben is warm and open. Marbling in a little tub while talking about the passing of time made me want to hug everyone.

Last time I saw Reuben was in Melbourne more than a decade ago. Dean Roberts and I took him out to the museum at Heide, where time dilates: the little old farm cottage; the mid-century conversation pit with its raw brown wool couch cushions and rug; Yingabeal, the ancient scarred Wurundjeri tree; and Sunday Reed's kitchen garden. Dean died a couple of years ago now.

Teaching is a confrontation with time in the same way that being a parent is. *Slow down*, I'm always saying to my two hundred teenagers who want everything faster and faster. I'll be taking them to do Reuben's workshop too.

Sophie Bannan / Reuben Paterson, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki education programme workshop, April 2026.

Session with G today. Taking the space that my son was supposed to occupy but he didn't want to go to counselling. Ironically, the feelings of guilt-shame that G and I discuss are met with guilt-shame that I am talking about myself, when I came to find out how to heal him. Open wound pressed to open wound.

...

Lynley's book reveals the liminal space where the maternal subject lives. It invites me/you into her hiding places, one self nested in another self. The first page recounts the first time she felt the baby move, at a Mitre 10.

Her maternal ambivalence. *You read three articles... so you don't have to think about how there are only ten weeks left* makes my breathing shallow. So, I make a list of gardening tools that a real adult should own, and Google the closest Mitre 10.

...

G tells me that's the point. That metaphor with oxygen masks and planes. But, his lungs developed in me.

...

I think about the first time I felt him move. One self nested in another self.

...

I met Lynley at a conference in Wellington before I read her book. I remember the feeling of guilt–shame when she approached me outside and asked to sit with me on the seat with the view of the city. I was vaping, and I assumed her to be a real adult unlike me. To my relief, we found communion when she reached into her own pocket and sat down. We let out long exhales while she told me about her son.

....

I felt guilt–shame at not making Lynley's book launch at Scorpio Books. But I was burnt out and couldn't breathe.

...

It's not what she says but how she says it that reveals what hides beneath.

...

I watch him on the rugby field. My daughter is close by complaining about the cold and teaching me that, in fact, his decision to grow a 'horsey' is a good one, cool. If she were a boy she, too, would grow one. His father has also come to watch the game, which puts a little more air in his chest. I notice. I take note.

...

Lynley writes about maternal guilt–shame, feeling that her decision to go back to work could be an act of harm *I shouldn't be here... My being here means that something terrible is going to happen to my son.* Every time I dropped them crying at daycare, clinging / hear that crying all the way to university and all the way back to pick them up / every tight hug at night and prying little fingers from my clothes to write. Essays about Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Alice Munro.

...

It will be a book about mothers and becoming a mother and how we all fail.

...



I watch him run, fast. No one can take him down and he makes it all the way to the try line, right under the posts. A man to my left lets out a short laugh, breath visible against the cold.

Look at that kid. He's got somewhere to be.

Sian Alexia / Lynley Edmeades, *Hiding Places*, Otago University Press Te Whare Tā o Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka, 2025.

Sincerity and authenticity are words that have been trafficked through the realm of art and aesthetics for many, many excruciating decades of performativity. A less exchanged term is 'honesty', and, in its most brutal sense, it applies to the New Zealand film *Christmas*. New Zealand cinema, with few exceptions (the early films of Lee Tamahori [*Once Were Warriors*], Jane Campion [*An Angel at My Table*], Sam Kelly [*Savage*] and Peter Jackson [*Meet the Feebles*] are contenders, along with *One Thousand Ropes* by Tusi Tamasese) isn't particularly known for its truth telling prowess (witness *A Mistake*, the opprobriously embarrassing recent entry from Christine Jeffs, and perhaps the most appropriately titled film of recent years). We do have a healthy infatuation with the crime film genre, though the Aussies have unquestionably defeated us with their numerous bleak as fuck disasterpieces like *The Snowtown Murders*, *Animal Kingdom*, *Wake in Fright*, *Hounds of Love*, *The Boys*, *The Rover*, *The Stranger* and even the cartoonish *Wolf Creek* series, among a towering litany of other classicks. But Oz have a far more financially healthy film industry due to their size (and opportunely leaning on their criminal heritage) and thus are able to produce many more miserably personal gems than we flightless birds. *Christmas* is the ultimate no-budget Yuletide movie, and one whose 17-day shoot exposes the ugly truth behind the 25th of December, imaging a psychically war-torn family traipsing through the dual end-of-year nightmare of capitalist consumer strong-arming and the mass mental illness we call religion.

Mike Leigh's family centred films *Life is Sweet*, the recent *Hard Truths* and especially *All or Nothing*, with its council flat setting and inexhaustible proletariat altercations, make for potential analogues, though their theatricality (Marianne Jean-Baptiste's performance in *Hard Truths* rivals David Thewlis in *Naked*, and is beyond Oscar worthy) makes *Christmas* feel like a documentary. A sense of trapped-in-the-headlights desperation and melancholia pervades the mise-en-scène. This fragile family all seemingly desire connection but, like me, are masters at the art of self-sabotage and prefer to retreat to the uncomplicated solitude of alcohol, drug, sex and food addiction (à la Jane Horrocks' unforgettable character in *Life is Sweet*). Michael Haneke's family films (*The Seventh Continent*, *Benny's Video*, *Caché*, etc) also come to mind through the austerity and honesty of their presentation and thematic anxieties. Time passes like actual time, not like the intentionally manipulating edits of Hollywood cinema. A changing the toilet paper sequence is one I've never witnessed in a film before, but it feels entirely natural here, like a fresh slap in the face of cowardly American cinema. Also, invigoratingly, things aren't spelled out or simplified – to concretise the notion of the 'dense viewer' that producers seem to live and die by – which echoes the very

best storytelling in numerous mediums, including film, literature, song lyrics, theatre, photography, painting, poetry, etc. Haneke considers himself a 'realist' and the familiar rituals featured in *Christmas* certainly remind me of the many not-so-flattering (or at least not-so-cinematic) spectres of my own Christmases past. And like Leigh's films, *Christmas* is really about relationships in all their awkwardness and relatability. What could be more Kiwi than an aerial shot of a morning toilet spew accompanied by The Warehouse's lamentably imperishable jingle?

While the Two Mikes loom large, the director says that French filmmakers (I'm thinking Bruno Dumont, Maurice Pialat and the Dardenne brothers [the last of whom are actually Belgian, but their work is more French than France Gall]) were his primary influence and that "a revelation of character" is the most important thing to him. Gregory King also says that he aimed to present people who "aren't normal, aren't clichés" that one sees in mainstream films, though I believe one can find something wholly recognisable in all of these characters if you've grown up in working class New Zealand suburbia. Being caged, or more charitably, 'coming together' with people you only see once a year can indeed be challenging and it's rare to witness a screen rendition of this often agonising ceremony fidelitous to all the abyssal nuances of the disparate personality clashes involved with such a meeting. There's a tendency to romanticise these traits and Aussie director, Rob Stitch, is guilty of this with his film *The Castle*, however entertaining it may be. Don't get me wrong, there are some joyous moments in *Christmas*, though they're always subjugated by a sense of hopelessness which is obviously a very real thing for a lot of the people portrayed in the film. These characters don't give a fuck what you think; I'm not even sure if they care what *they* think. The main takeaway here is that *Christmas* (the holiday) sux and I couldn't agree more.

Nick Harte / Gregory King, *Christmas*, 2003.

I'm slowly earning the right to all my mama's stories. The dates and the late nights and the tangled web of who liked who and who got married and who was, who *is* recklessly unstable.

And the bands. The Indigo Bar/Bats/Meow bands, the bands she earned her title as a 'courageous dancer' alongside, the bands with the boys and the friends and the boyfriends. I used to think I would have to live in Te Whanganui-a-Tara to collect stories like that for myself. But they've written themselves into existence, whether I was living there or in Hokitika or Ōtepoti or in Twizel or now, in Ōtautahi.

I always find myself at Wunderbar on Saturdays because of the Friends With Bands effect. I should broaden that definition out to include Friends with Talent, I guess, given the long evenings spent at poetry readings or DJ gigs, but I digress. It isn't important. What's important is that it's a Saturday night and I've dragged my flatmates to Wunderbar (again) to remind my Friends With Bands (talent) I love them.

I met Emily Esplin in September last year. They're one of those people that with enough mutual friends and interests you can just *get along*. This is their first time playing in Ōtautahi (exciting) and they've just released their first single (more exciting) and they have an incredibly captivating, charismatic-yet-slightly-awkward stage presence. Their voice fills the whole room, rich and layered, breaking at just the right time, right pitch to give you the sense your heart has skipped several beats. It's a magnetic performance, though fleeting. Their performance of Eat Me Alive, their new single, is immediately ear-catching. I'm bubbly and excited in the moment and, writing this days later, remain bubbly and excited to hear what comes next. Esplin closes with a cover of Julia Jacklin's Pressure to Party, and we all sing and dance to our hearts' content.

Locals Minerva are up next, a band I remember Heidi Slade, lead vocalist, excitedly telling me about the beginnings of as we trekked around campus dropping off magazines last year. I saw them at Wunderbar in October, too, but they're on a new level tonight – maybe the mixing is better or they're more confident or they've nailed down their set – whatever it is, it's working wonders. The band shed their first name, Juno's Crush, earlier this year, and Minerva feels more true to them – more than a love interest, a side character – they're strategic, graceful, and absolutely ripping. Heidi's voice honeys the air, slows down time, does whatever the gins haven't yet; it sits soft yet defined atop the harsher, shoegaze-y, *shredding* instrumentals. A welcome contrast; a pure, velvety set...

These are the two acts I'm really here for, but there's still a gentle anticipation for headliners Pearly* and IVY, Ōtepoti-based art rock darlings. Phaedra, Pearly*'s lead singer, supported Emily Esplin and is a friend of a friend, but we're mostly out of the Friends with Bands realm here; I give myself over to the music. The lead guitarist does a great job of letting loose, making even the most rehearsed numbers feel vibrant and new. There's real presence here, spellcasting maybe, hidden within the gritty layers Pearly* builds.

IVY are awesome as ever, commanding our attention with floaty dreamscapes and the most *heavenly* vocals courtesy of singer Jesse. Their violinist Louis adds a divine touch, almost synth-like in his creative fills and support for the other musicians. Drummer Ocean and bassist Connor almost meet the Friends with Bands criteria, being a childhood friend of a childhood friend and a primary school classmate, respectively, but I'm purely absorbing their artistry. Incredibly tight-knit, well-seasoned performers, IVY know exactly what they're doing. Some accuse them of being derivative of bands like Radiohead, but there's something definitely fresh about the Ōtepoti bunch. In the five months since I saw them last, they've learned to make that fact unmissable.

I'm slowly creating my own stories here. The late nights and the tangled web of who likes who and who might get married and who *is* recklessly unstable.

And the bands. The Wunderbar/Darkroom/Space Academy bands, the bands you can't miss now because next time you get the chance the ticket cost might've tripled.

Ella Sage, Friends With Bands.

running in my jeans, in the woods, in circles.

running through my body

twisting intestines, double-knotting my stomach.

running over lapping memories

pretending breadcrumbs are enough.

i remember every lie.

running away from home: barefoot, tears, gliding.

running with my eyes closed

down the path i hope will take me to the beach ten
years ago.

running with my sister, booting rocks;

my father fishing the bar.

instead, i'm running around you

who religiously kicks up dirt and clogs my pores.

i'm run ragged by your version of events.

i wonder if you'd run me over given the chance.

it's easier running into people who don't know this
track;

didn't see me dry heaving on the hill.

i go right back to running.

running away from people

who bid me good morning,

love me and wish me well on my run.

It is rare to encounter a stranger who can hold a mirror to you and keep their hands steady. Even so, speaking with writer and musician Logan Edwards strikes a balance between solace and introspection. Logan wears his heart on his sleeve and candidly explores the consequences (positive and gut-wrenching) of leading with love. Logan channelled a season of dejection and heartbreak into his five-track EP, *Belong to Someone Else*. His work is representative of the gems that come from an artist who puts their all into their craft. To that end, listeners are gifted an opportunity to sing through their own heartache.

It was nerve-racking to learn there is little difference between Logan's journal and *Belong to Someone Else*. Coupled with an opportunity to listen to the EP before release, I grasp the exposure. I recognise myself in retellings of hopelessness, confusion, and 'what-if' traps. Logan's vulnerability sends a clear message – you cannot lose when you write honestly and love without expectation of reciprocity. The poem, *The More Loving One*, by W. H. Auden comes to mind when exploring love and expectation. Fear and vulnerability accompany actions and feelings of love. We hope that when we love, we will be loved in return. However, if we lead with the expectation of a return or a neat exchange, we risk our capacity to love. It is easy to get caught in the belief that love is pointless if someone else can't give it to you. There is freedom in believing no love is ever lost. As much as *Belong to Someone Else* is about heartache, I believe it is also a confirmation that love did not go to waste.

What's more, the lyricism prioritised in *Belong to Someone Else* ripples into my creative practice. An examination of my writing exposes a pedantic approach to creativity, ultimately hindering my work. There is a track on Logan's EP (*I will let you*



guess which one) with a set of lyrics written in under an hour. Unsurprisingly, this is the song I cannot stop listening to. A little insight into Logan's unfiltered writing practice confirms the realism is the best part. Resolutely, I arrive at an ongoing challenge for myself. I endeavour to write more and write honestly — knowing nobody can relate to perfection.

Belong to Someone Else will be released in its entirety on June 19th — a befitting time to find relief and reflection.

Paige Walker / Logan Edwards, *Belong to Someone Else*, 2026.

Nose to the chalkboard

*I will not tell a lie.
I should not tell a lie.
 But I do and you do too.
I will not fib.
I will not tell a big fib.
I will not tell a fib intentionally.
 Unless it will not hurt anyone.
I will only tell white lies.
I will not tell a porky.
 But what if telling a porky gets me and you a
 pork pie?
I will not run a scam.
I will not cheat.
I will not steal.
 But what about Robin Hood?
I will not get caught telling an untruth.
I ought not to deceive you.
 But I may inadvertently.
I will not eat that apple.
 Maybe just a small nibble.
I will always play fair.
 Until I find a loophole.
 Unless I learned to hide in small print.
I will not curse.
 Oh, but swear words sound so very very good
 when they hit the air.
I will not indulge in fiction to alter the course of
history.
 Smitten as I am with alternative times and
 worlds.*

*I will not dupe anyone for money.
Just a few light-hearted pranks.
I will not, cannot, have green eggs & ham.
Except with hollandaise sauce.
I will not look away.
I will not pretend it does not exist.
I will not put my hands in my pockets and walk
faster past you.
Without acknowledging my privilege.
I will not start a fire.
Without a bucket of water close by.
I will not disclose my homosexuality.
Unless I get caught in the act.
I will not run away.
But where to put that shame?
I should not pretend to still love you.
Though I do for the sake of the children.
Make another cup of tea.
I will not judge.
What to do about all that injustice?
I will not, should not, grieve, worry, cry without good
reason.
So many grey hairs.
I will not falsify documents.
Not even to buy alcohol or get into R-rated
movies?
I will not fake an orgasm.
Though it's hard to fake what you don't know.
I will not be negligent.
Even if I am too busy.
I will not abandon responsibility.
Especially when it is painful.
I will not tell a lie.
I should not tell a lie.
Fingers crossed behind my back.*

Julieanna Preston / Emma Neale, *Liar, Liar, Lick, Spit*, Otago University Press Te Whare Tā o Ōtākou Whakaihū Waka, 2024.

It was only after I finished *The Original* and it lingered for weeks in my psyche that I appreciated its value. Nell Stevens' writing builds a high garden wall, just imposing enough to make you curious about what's on the other side, wide enough to walk along the top of, but difficult to climb and easy to fall from. At each turn in the story I wondered, is this worth it? And then, what does that mean? At no point did I feel comfortable reading this book.

The Original follows a young protagonist heading through the turn of the twentieth century in rural (landed) England. Grace has lived with her aunt and uncle since she was a young girl after her parents were committed to an asylum. At the faded and grim, once-great house of Inderwick Hall, Grace takes solace in the friendship shared with her older and rebellious cousin Charles. Through her move to Inderwick and her relationship with Charles, Grace begins painting. In this triangle of circumstance, Grace's suchness in the world meets a burgeoning anxiety as she begins to register her differences to those around her.

She has a wild talent at copying paintings that is counterbalanced by her face-blindness – something her parents covered for her and that Charles later recognised and helped her with. When he leaves for a long journey at sea, she navigates the fraught socio-political field of her extended family left to her own devices: devices that Grace and her sickly aunt and accompanying band of lawyers must rely on when, after a thirteen-year absence, Charles suddenly returns to Inderwick. Unaware of her niece's face-blindness, Grace must testify to her aunt, the lawyers and staff (and the reader) if this is indeed the real Charles or not.

Even as I hoped for Grace's success and freedom, I found my head tilted sceptically to the side, my spine primed for flight. Like Inderwick Hall, the story was not inviting. The prose was lovely but dragging at times. I could stop, I told myself often, I do not have to finish this book if I am not enjoying it. But something was happening. As Grace tries to convince herself, among others, that it is or is not the real Charles, she uncovers masks and their attending truths. Through art and people she meets, the question 'are you like me?' repeats over and over. She paints empathetically, but for one reason or other struggles to read the same dynamic in people: a deeply recognisable human experience. Grace's unease is mirrored by the reader – I found myself simultaneously inferring and forming my own thoughts but filtered through Grace's perspective as she formed hers.

Stevens' control of tone was the most consistent I had read in fiction for a long time. The story grew like oppressive weather. The atmosphere of the book shifts and rolls with an extended but unstoppable drop in air pressure. Deft and unpleasant, and successful in its insistence.

Meg Doughty / Nell Stevens, *The Original*, Simon & Schuster, 2025.

Pause

When I read her words

she is right here speaking to me

refusing to shrug off the shackles of her discipline

I feel her inhale every sybaritic sound

each letter, each gap

savouring porous half-words

like a lover she has been waiting for

the whole of her life

to meet at sunup

Cindy Zeiher / Joanna Margaret Paul, *Imagined in the Context of a Room*, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, 2021.

On Friday the 10th of April three art exhibitions within two city blocks of each other opened at 5:30pm. There was a tide of gallery-goers greeting each other as they moved in opposite or concurrent directions towards one block or the other. “Are you doing all three?” “Which direction are you going in?” “How are the vibes there?” “I don’t know if I’ll make it to all of them.”

The National, a dealer gallery specialising in contemporary jewellery, celebrated Corduroy Cowboy’s opening with a live band in Stetsons playing country bops that bubbas danced along to and the rest of us joyfully yelled at each other over. Jacquelyn Fang Greenbank’s chip-shaped bolo ties with metal peanut-shell tips alongside giant crinkle-cut potato chips on the floor were markedly jaunty. Standing near the canvas works produced conversational gems like “What’s this then?” (confused). “A cheese grater” (smugly). “Oh” (pleased).

At CoCA Toi Moroki, a public contemporary gallery, Jess Nicholson’s Ka Maumahara te Uku (The Clay Remembers) began with friendly cheers, rattling ceramics and an organic marble run sending handmade orbs flying across the floor and their deployers after them. Pinned to the wall, Nicholson’s rectangular plates of uku bear sparkly found materials, the memory of their wholeness through the preservation of their separation, and the mark of the artist’s hands. Everywhere the give and grit of humans in relation refracts.

The Green Room at Toi Auaha, an artist-run initiative in a small outbuilding of the once-hostel, welcomed folks down the alley where the exhibition space door was noticeably shut. Further investigation was rewarded as you rounded the building to a side window. There, through holes cut into opaque black rubbish bags visitors smiled while trying to peep through the frosted glass to the video work, Emma Wallbanks’ Skin Flick, playing within.

Drinks and nibbles sustained the blood-sugar-depleting activity of improvisatory polyphonic socialising. Artists, other arts professionals, families and friends, the curious: all seemed buoyed by playfulness. People ate, drank, laughed and the wave of relief that comes with the end of a work week for some, the end of a day, an install week, the private gestational period of a new body of work for others, washed over us. How necessary it all felt – the Stetsons, chips, music, curiosity and play.

Meg Doughty, Three Openings.

*Category: Inner-space fiction
For there is never anywhere to go but in**

I’m at a point where I am ready to take action and commit to the ideas that I’ve been drifting around and circumnavigating for a while... *if I stay on this thick heavy slimy barnacled raft which is shrieking and straining as the great seas crash then I’ll puke my heart out and fall fainting away into the deep sea swells.** I want to follow the Ohinemuri as far as it is willing to carry me. Up through the historic river trade routes that lead from the Ohinemuri (Waihi) > Waihou > Firth of Thames > Hauraki Gulf > Waitematā Gulf (Tāmaki) in order to connect with myself as well as connect my communities (Waihi and Tāmaki) with each other. Imagine a leaf floating on a flooded park dwelling, it appears serene, it appears to be exactly where it should be, don’t forget the tree.



I was describing to a friend that there doesn't feel like there is right and wrong any more. The trending nonchalance looks like apathy in art-making. Of course subjectivity exists but with the oversaturation of ideas and opinions, and people feeling strongly about everything and nothing at all, it's hard to have a wayfinder. Like the tuna, I need a Tonga. I think people care so much they don't want to care at all because everything feels so out of control. It can feel like a trap: being too earnest or not being earnest enough. Or to feel like the things you care about may appear shallow or overindulgent. An ant steps under the magnifying glass expecting obliteration, the viewer finds it boring and moves on.

My friend was caught off guard when she couldn't articulate herself to her lecturer regarding her Master's project. He was caught off guard by her perceived lack of theoretical backing and was desperate to pin down her process. *Is this a sweet drowned woman floating in her hair?** She felt ashamed that she didn't have the confidence in that moment to explain what she was interested in, for fear of coming across as a conspiracy theorist. To me, she said that her work "relates to EVERYTHING in the world". Imagine a red line drawn across everything that ever was. The world is essentially a ball of red yarn.

I watched Selina Ershadi's new film *The Blue Dome*, at Artspace Aotearoa. Her own insecurity struck me ("my film is ruined"). Selina's family remind her that her arrival has created opportunities for connection they otherwise wouldn't have or couldn't have sparked due to topics being too taboo and shameful to discuss openly. They expose her pretense of "wanting to shoot a film" as being a cover for a desire to discover herself. They acknowledge that their everyday life holds a lot of mystery for her – and that it should – and that it's a good thing that she wants to seek after it. They say this whole experience (her arrival, the film, their conversations) are a good omen. They ask her not to worry about them.

*Who has not lain hollow in hot rock,
Leaned to the loose and lazy sound of water,
Sunk into sound as one hears the boom
Of tides pouring in a shell, or blood
Along the inner caverns of flesh,
Yet clinging like sinking man to sight of sun,
Clinging to distant sun or voices calling?**

There is intense emotional generosity in Selina's work. Her family reminds us that art should be working for us not against us. The qualities I'm drawn to in Selina's film are what I hope to generate in my own practice: an opportunity for connection, awareness of site and moment, appreciation of time and connection. I don't want to sit across the room from a cold image and have it be nothing but the silence between us. I refuse to be intimidated by the thing I've dedicated myself to.

Millie Dunstall, Inner-space fiction.

thinking about Maree and Alex's collaboration

in relation to their depictions of the mangrove's roots

holding land, water, and air

Like a claw, like hands

hands as roots

shifting liquid horizon

uneven horizon that becomes about above and below

breathe in breathe out

as homes

Sorawit Songsataya / Alex Monteith and Marie Sheehan, *Cherishing the sea forests*, Thailand Biennale, 2026.

"I don't come from a family of weavers", but my Dad was a carpet weaver and my Mum designed them. It is still surprising that knowledge and materials resonate with experiences passed down by parents, grandparents and greats.

Rangi Te Kanawa, part of Taumata Māreikura collective, and Oriental Museum curator, Rachel Barclay, presented the return of an 18th century pauku, a cloak woven for battle, at Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum from the Oriental Museum. I came as I was, with no questions needing answers, feeling content with not knowing everything before I got there. This is not my topic of expertise but I can connect to it.



Can you unlearn something that you haven't learnt through experience?

As orators, their dialogue spoke directly to the context of weaving but for me sat in the wider framework that holds the woven systems that make up our universe. Like the most broadly specific language that could fuel a lived experience. I walked away feeling energised and full when I have never woven with intention before.

The passing down of knowledge comes in different contexts that are drawn from connection. I hope my nieces want to weave in the future.

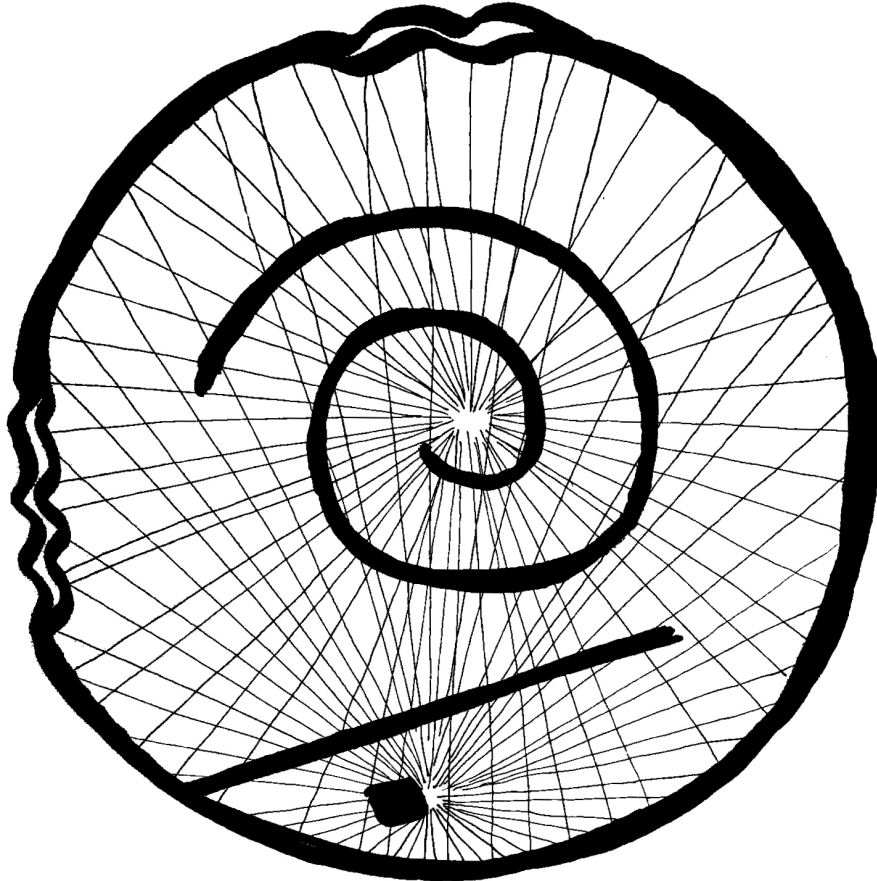
Java Bentley, Returning an 18th-century pauku, 'Te Reo o Te Ao Tawhito', Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum, 28 April 2026.

A Box for All the Things I'll Never Learn by Paige Jansen was first shown in RM gallery in September of 2025. This installation had its second showing as part of Kindred, curated by Yuka O'Shannessey of Public Record, in one of the six concrete silos that make up the multi-purpose exhibition space known as Silo 6 at Wynyard Quarter. In the past these silos held cement for transport via the old railway system. Now they are empty, and the railway no longer in use, but the tracks remain visible, snaking along the ground like a design element in the former industrial area that has been transformed into a public space with water fountains and playgrounds. The reclaimed land of Wynyard Quarter was once the tidal shoreline of the Waitematā Harbour, a mahinga kai for the many pā that were built along it. Before there were yachts, cruise ships and The America's Cup – there were waka. Beneath the heavy feet of the silos, water laps quietly in the dark.

The sun is bright in the sea-breeze air outside but it is still and cool like a cave inside the concrete chambers. Silo 6 lends itself to interpretation as a sacred space. It seems we humans cannot help but be moved to whispering reverence in echoing spaces with soaring ceilings. Spaces where we feel small, where any noise we make is met with an infinite chorus of disembodied replies. Heavy black curtains block ambient light from entering the silo that holds Paige's work. Two bare bulbs obscured behind layers of diaphanous gauze are the only sources of light in this inner sanctum. Two bodies of hand-woven gossamer textile fill the space: one in the centre, which winds into a pale, introspective spiral, and another straight partition in alternating panels of ecru and charcoal. There is a spell of deep presence cast by the sheer number of hours it has taken one pair of hands to render this subtle, delicate cloth. We are invited to carefully walk the spiral, arriving at its centre to one of the two bulbs. From here, the other bulb, living behind the striped partition, is clearly visible but softly diffused through the layers of silk. This other bulb beckons but a direct path is not available. Exiting the spiral, we are not the same as when we entered. We skirt around the outside of the spiral to make our way behind the partition, and finally this other bulb is seen unclothed. It softly illuminates a large box made from a humus-textured earthenware on a steel plinth. It is in the rough shape of a cube but its surfaces and edges undulate with a cadence unique to the alchemy of the kiln. The lid of the box is closed. This must be the box for all the

things I'll never learn. The bulb at the centre of the spiral is now the one obscured. The journey from that winding start to this closed box is one that invites embodied presence and emotional contemplation. We can return to that spiral beginning then come back to the box again. We can repeat this journey over and over and over. I wonder if doing so will change what lives inside that box.

Steven Junil Park / Paige Jansen, *A box for all the things I'll never learn*, Silo 6, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, 30 April–10 May 2026



We were sitting on Jonathan Smart's hard-edge pew looking at Miranda Parkes' painting, *Rewilder* (2026). Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965) comprises a photograph of a chair, a replica copy of the chair, and a dictionary entry for a chair. You can tell Neil Dawson likes the painting by the way he looks at it. The three items are shown alongside each other. Not entirely inquisitive but with soft eyes. The photograph of the chair is always somehow the replica of the chair on display. He appreciates it. The chair on display in MoMA's collection differs to the one photographed for the Pompidou's, but the dictionary entry is mostly the same no matter

what collection. I said it was as if Claes Oldenburg made a John Chamberlain. The dictionary entry is always a brief description of a chair, a supportive surface, but then there are also amendments about chairs of boards and seats of authority. We talked about Rewilder's weightlessness. Already you can see how a chair spills out semiotically. Its ability to just hang there. The supportive surface is destined to be amended. To be like a puffy cloud and yet to hold such a material presence. There is no agreed definition. An emphatic billow. Of course, Kosuth would seize on this. There's something to that pew. He turns the performance into a platform. It holds you there. He repeats the same tri-representational gambit with stools, tables and shoes. Stiff. It becomes an indefinite act of indecisiveness. Alert. For someone like Graham Harman a chair exposes its objecthood in its functionality. It's from a church. The hammer discloses its functionality before it's lifted. You wouldn't expect less. The chair exists only when it is sat upon. But that's not the point. When it breaks, we lament the lack of support. Miranda's paintings highlight the experiential, the haptic. Suddenly we aren't arguing about the indecisiveness of the semiotic. They want to be caressed. But the lack of an actual physical object. They exude a kind of touch. And then of course, in the same materialist vein you can also have an historiography of chairs like the Objectspace exhibition of 110 chairs. Think how often they're dumbed down as sensorium candy, bright exuberances as so many therapeutic balms. Chairs in that case are a prototype or a standard upon which to ruffle the fluctuation of human interest. What do we lose when we say that? Whale-bone chairs. What do we gain? English-heritage chairs, mass-produced chairs. If the paintings are haptic, how? Chairs in these instances are treated like test cases, performative tools with which to regulate evaluation. How can they be weightless and yet so dense? The chairs are too reflexive of human culture. How can they achieve the density of folds that Chamberlain achieves? We can't seem to allow them to simply be objects. How can they be so hostile to good sense and yet impose their own functioning aesthetic? It's clear that we either make our mind up about what constitutes a chair, or we let this pedantic exercise go. How do they become so insatiable, so porous, so enviable in their striations, or adjustments? Not that Gertrude Stein would. The way one colour might run into another, how seemingly arbitrary and non-sensical and yet totalised by their very materiality. A rose is a rose is a rose is as emphatic as it gets. Like a Chamberlain they're compacted rather than construed. Stein wrote a kind of materialistic prose which as Travis Jeppesen points out contained a "percussive strength". They're an act of collage, or collision, or better yet, collusion. It's the way she says it. They're compelled into being, squished, squashed, tethered. Her language recognises the "limits of grammar", "repeating those mistakes" for the sake of momentum. It no longer seems so wilful. At stake for Jeppesen is Stein's "generative flow of language". The aesthetic is everything. Here then a chair isn't simply a chair, but a repeated similitude, much as it is in Elaine Sturtevant's work when she takes Andy Warhol's stencil and replicates the flowers again and again and again. Just practice and repetition or simply blind chance. The replication is the point. A pulled thread, a skein pulled taut. We're no longer dealing with resemblance here but of a simulation with no end. Billows balancing, ballast tilting, overcorrecting, concocting, shrewdly manipulating. Or better yet, we are just dealing with chairs with no indecisiveness. These paintings are compelled by sheer verve. It's no longer that we can't see Kosuth's point, that a chair is a multiple, it's just we aren't interested in the declarative act that it doesn't cohere. Yes, there is an inordinate amount of confidence piled into these paintings. We don't need to arrive at a final chair. They stand up to their own ordinance. That rhetoric of context seems to miss the point. They don't mess about and yet they do. A chair is a chair is a chair isn't to say there's one of three chairs to choose from, but that every object is always already a multiple. Look at how they're crunched into being: seemingly, swimmingly arbitrary in their potlatch being. There's another way of getting at the same point: remember Michel Foucault's reading of René Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (1926). One line, two lines, crossed and gathered, stripes become variations on the same theme. Again, representation butting up against material facts. Same with the smudges and the billows and the buttons. For Foucault the simulation

is the thing. The colour spills out of them; they won't be contained. Representation loses itself in the allegorical modes of resemblance. Such verve, such audacity! Representation issues a second-order reflection, a narrative arc that encases everything. Because it all makes sense, they're not colour corrected, not like Chamberlain's scrunched car parts, not like Carol Bove's melting augmentation, her over-correction! It can't be only just a pipe. Yes, Bove with her softness, her billowing anti-tumescence. Again, it's the and, and the and, and the and. Is that what we mean when we invoke Oldenburg? Not the rose is a rose a rose. A softly drooping metal as bad-faith erotic fixation (is that what Hannah Wilke had in mind too?). We are always multifaceted. An optical opacity shooting straight at the obvious. Why can't representation just deal with that? A blind spot for the tender-hearted. That's what Foucault says. It all returns to that haptic touch. That Magritte turns from resemblance to simulation. That vivacity for life. Everything all at once. To be dropped into Euclidian space, a three-dimensional object, alert, tactile, ready. Everything always already. Supported. Simulation adjusts to the world as it is, not as we want it to be. Look at the tableaux's variegation. Perhaps if we just write about the chair in a functional way. Its undulation. Can't we just sit in it? Its surface is raised. What is it they say about dancing and architecture? Does it not pulse with a febrile tension? Is a functional object beyond discourse? Like a leaf. Does it exclude itself? The painting is skein-like, it's a veil pulled over the body. Is that what Donald Judd had in mind when he made furniture? It coerces the mass into sensation, the skein makes it susceptible to touch, to sapidity. Of course, they're famously uncomfortable to the point where that's what we know. The skein can shift, its fluidity manifests the painting's body. They're unfunctional. The skein carries the arterial system, makes it coherent. Perhaps the best way to appreciate a chair is just to purchase one, to sit in one? The skein pumps the painting's logic from one side to the other. To embrace its support. Like a pulse, the skein's billows are caught up in this alluvial channel. Must a chair always be passive, just waiting for an occupant? It's where the paintings' haptic impulse originates. Can't it have a vector of its own? The paintings want to be caressed. How might a chair dwell? Immersed within. Is it doomed to await its partner? The push and pull of aesthetics. Like a sleeping policeman. Think how they up-end the brusque masculinity epitomised by Chamberlain's crushed metal. Like Bruno Latour's doorstep? That eroticised fetish of phallogocentrism's death drive. Again, too many questions and too little focus on the chair without end. The compacted metal as so many overt corrections. Where might it begin, where might it end? Even in Bove's work the softened metal is still complicit. Why not just let it be? Still querying. Sit in the chair. In Rewilder these questions are set aside by the alluvial pulsing. Encumber yourself. This correction within the painting. Dissolve in the dissolution of meaning. The compacted adjudication has an entirely new direction. Forget the chair.

Hamish Win, Writing about Miranda Parkes' painting Rewilder; Writing about chairs.



I feel so chronically employed.
 Even though I told myself waitressing was my 'side
 hustle', I'm starting to think it might just be my job.
 My practice exists as scribbles, jotted-down notes
 and the occasional proposal.
 Today all my attention is going into feeling grumpy
 Tired
 Sore.
 I am giving too much of myself to my day job and do
 I have a choice?
 Repetitive action, motion, service.

Export gold
 Heineken
 Sirloin HP x2
 Roast pot/GS/Mush
 GS/Fries/pep

I've had people tell me that having a job is good, to
 make some kind of foundation before I really give
 the whole artist thing a go.
 I've also had people tell me the complete opposite,
 that feeling comfortable is a myth, that being
 uncomfortable is where it's at.
 And then people tell me there's no rush towards an
 answer, that I've got time for both.
 Unsure of what to do, I just keep walking in a
 direction.

Thai beef salad
 Brisket toasty
 Lemonade L
 Rasp coke L

My studio is my garage.
 It's a tip.
 When the only person holding you accountable is
 you, a messy bitch,
 everything seems to get away from you.

GF Beef Bur
No onion ring
Side GS
Coke Zero L
DFC Bur x2
Summit
Cassels Hazy

Finding time is a myth, making time is where it's at.
But coming home from a 11AM to 8PM shift and
trying to resist the siren call of sitting on my ass?
That's the myth.

Pornstar
Ginger beer
Water x3
Tiramisu
Choc kids
Sticky date

Some days it's so slow at work my manager gets
me to do some of the cleaning we don't normally
get done
Like the salt and pepper shakers

Long black reg
Flatwhite reg
Grapefruit
Blueberry Lem
Cap decaf reg

Dump out the salt
Dump out the pepper
Load empty shakers into the tray
Wash
Wait to dry

Bangers mash
Fishchip
~~Sav~~ x3 Sav bottle x3
Kids Raspcoke

Get salt and pepper bottle refill bottles
Refill salt shakers
Refill pepper shakers
Sneeze.

Eye Fillet HP x2
Mush/Fries/Mac x2
Caesar salad
Pink lady
Milk Stout

Put salt and pepper shakers back on table
Look at the time
Realise you still have six hours left
Hear Come on Eileen come on for the one billionth
time
Wish you still smoked.



Blt
Gf Blt
Meatlovers GF
Side fries
Margarita x3

I try to tell myself that my job is a practice and my
practice is a job
repetitive action, motion, service.

Cherry Mitchell, Salt and Pepper Shakers.

Jade Townsend's *From The Lion's Mouth* moves me into some other celestial realm. I am down in Whanganui in April following the death of my grandfather, and I visit Te Whare o Rehua Sargeant Gallery the day after his funeral, drifting around the gallery rooms in a bleary, fugue-like state. In a small room in the new wing of the gallery, I find myself stepping into an intricate story world, like a sacred chapel of memory, and of whanaungatanga. The gallery walls are a soft pink, clouds painted in the hue of sunset, the candyfloss wisps I would pull off the stick as a child. I am instantly soothed.

Created during a five-month residency at Tylee Cottage in 2024, the body of work emerges from the wellspring of Townsend's tūrangawaewae, pulling on familial memory to trace whānau-oriented narratives born of the land and its histories. Key markers of the Whanganui landscape form motifs throughout the body of work, whose title takes inspiration from Jane Maxey's children's book, *Charlotte and the Lion* (1985), in which a young girl sprinkles water on the Queen's Park Lion Monument to bring him to life.

Magic is shrouded by only the thinnest of veils in these paintings, which shimmer and quiver with the fine brush strokes characteristic of Townsend's exquisite detailing. I wonder if something in returning to the city of her birth, now as a māmā with her own children, summoned a renewed curiosity and wonderment in the artist. The mauri of these sites of personal, familial and cultural memory call for an active responsiveness as we change, and what lingers in nostalgia is refreshed by and responsive to a deepening relationship to cycles.

With my own childhood memories of these Whanganui markers, Townsend's paintings spirit me away to holidays with my grandparents, where our days consisted of a recurring pattern of activities: an afternoon at Kōwhai Park; a trip to visit my great-grandparents' graves at Aramaho Cemetery; a walk along the river; the yearly showcase we grandchildren would perform, charging my grandparents and their neighbours a gold coin to attend; visits to Rotokawau Virginia Lake to feed the ducks old crusts of bread. This was always my favourite day. We would walk around

the lake and I'd hold the coins collected from the showcase, turning them in my sweaty palms, warming them for their descent into the glistening waters of the wishing well in the Winter Gardens at Rotokawau.

I wonder what age I stopped believing in the magical potential that could come from throwing a coin into the fountain. There was definitely a period in my early teenage years where the activities of these holidays played out as nostalgic rituals, but the whimsy of my younger years had worn off. Adulthood encroaches to strip away magical thinking, and returning to this city in the wake of my grandfather's death has shaken me with a sense that I've lost something that belonged to the sacred enchantment of childhood. In a poem I read at his funeral, I reflect on how it is strange to try to orient oneself once a grandparent dies, like the corner of a home has fallen in and the structural foundations have been weakened.

The glint of my coin has been lost to the depths of the well, obscured by the waters. But in throwing it, I am closer to the obscurity. I still want to believe in the magical portal.

Townsend's own depiction of the fountain in Rotokawau is illuminated by the qualities of thresholds and veils that translate so impeccably through her embellishments. The canvas, divided by a horizon line where the glistening sky meets a dark gleaming surface, evokes depthlessness and calls into balance opposing forces – the illuminated day against the veiled waters; the light of the spirit in union with the shadow whispers of the soul; life and death. This striking composition is repeated across many of her paintings – *Beneath the Bridge to Nowhere* the Taniwha Frolic, Pukenuamu, and Ūkaipō are all similarly backdropped by a contrasting horizon line, creting and honouring a unity and balance between light and dark. Perhaps then, the inky waters of Rotokawau lead to the place where all wishes, prayers, karakia go, the same place where we are born from and return to when we die.

Recurring symbols across the paintings keep these time portals alive and free-flowing: manu feature throughout the works, as do circular coin and moon shapes. Flowing forms and Townsend's intricate webs, wisps and mists recalling kōwhaiwhai patterns infuse the works with the intuitive, ephemeral qualities of water. Birds, coins, water – these appear as conduits for exchange; message carriers between past and present, spiritual and physical.

In a post on Instagram, Townsend writes that her son Hayes appears throughout each painting, not always in human form, but taking shape through the ripples, vibrations and rhythms emitted by these symbols. He, and her other son Avery, also messengers. Another familial ripple outwards, a new generation of receiving and creating within the landscape. A new page in the mythology.

Millie Godfery / Jade Townsend, *From the Lion's Mouth*, Te Whare o Rehua Sargeant Gallery, Whanganui, February–June 2026.





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