

Portal

Friday 13 February – Saturday 21 February, 2026

The Kit, 8 East Street

Artspace Aotearoa

Frankie Ayers, Kyung Baro, Stella Barry, Kerin Casey, Millie Dunstall Sinag Fernandez, Inga Fillary, Neve Gresswell, Ziggy Humberstone, Zach Muir, Paige Nebbeling, Emma Savage, Rebekah Sohn, Jude Stevens, Emma Stretch, Laura Watson, Ivy Weir

Curated by Millie Dunstall

Portal brings together 17 artists who have volunteered at Artspace Aotearoa over the past two years. Through collective reflection, each artist has redeveloped an existing work in response to their shared experience, forming an interconnected circuit of renewed practices.

Frequently as artists, we leave ideas behind. While this is crucial to a practice, sometimes the abandonment is premature. The internalised demand to make good work every time, without fail, can leave you less inspired than the bad work itself. Iteration and reiteration and reiteration can help to discover kernels of brilliance, or leave husks of discarded drafts, making for an excellent bonfire to torch –literally and metaphorically. *'It stops because you stop. Think of that. You stop because you have made other arrangements. Changes.'* I recently read *How to Write* by Gertrude Stein, because Jess Clifford referenced it in her commissioned Artspace essay *'A rose is a rose is a rose'*. Although Stein was talking about duplicates in terms of grammar, I think it encapsulates the repetitive cycles of an artist well. An idea only stops because we stop, work only stops because we stop.

The oversaturation of any idea is inevitable, the unsolicited advice of a tarot card reader *will* reach you—and you'll most likely be willing to hear them out. Yes, I am a snake shedding its skin, yes there is someone out there who is thinking about me, yes I am facing a tough decision. It comes as no surprise that many artists are desperate to look back, as sometimes looking forward is too daunting, too precarious, too full of conflict. It isn't decipherable whether things were any

'better' or 'worse' than they were four decades ago, though nostalgia begs us to believe it is so.

With such a large group the questioned begged: How do our practices meet, then marry? Sitting down with the 2025 Artspace volunteer rōpū, we found multiple throughlines in our practices. Shared notions of memory, identity, heritage, transition and (re)development appeared in each individual's expression. It is no surprise that there are shared themes given the shared influences we experience daily with the steaming engine of social media, driving a firm stake into our subconscious. It feels corny, lazy even, to relate this to the internet, but making art in a technological time is fraught with feelings of confusion, imposter syndrome but also inspiration.

The Kit is doing well to hold all of these works together. It is a lot to hold together a year's worth of ideas from 17 people. For some it's a purge, others a birth, tapping in and tapping out of, placing a full-stop on a project, or perhaps writing the first sentence. For a viewer it may feel like stepping into a garage full of someone else's stuff; that is the nature of things.

Artist biographies

Inga Fillary's *Uncertain Objects* refers to an ongoing series of sculptural works in which domestic objects are cast in resin laced with waste material such as ash, compost and lint. As material is added, the resin becomes saturated and no longer able to retain the shape of the original referent, giving way to the materials. The resulting uneasy half-forms are both familiar and weird.

Inga Fillary holds a Master of Fine Arts with First Class Honours and is a Doctoral Candidate, Technician and Graduate Teaching Assistant at Te Waka Tūhura|Elam School of Fine Arts, Waipapa Taumata Rau|University of Auckland. She shows her work at Tür Gallery and mothermother Art Collective. She is also an art writer and film set dresser.

Kerin Casey is an artist based in Tāmaki Makaurau with an MFA with First Class Honours from Whitecliffe College. Her practice considers attachment and adaptability. Made using temporary connections of notches and tabs, rather than glue and nails, she makes hybrid structures, which are both painting and sculpture, and have the potential to be undone and re-assembled. Without permanent attachment each object holds in a momentary state of transition,

reliant on provisional interconnectedness and tension to maintain form. They do not come to a permanent conclusion for display, rather they continue to evolve over time. Through ongoing processes of removal and regeneration they begin to show evidence of a life lived, a paused current moment, and potential for further possibilities. Each work then exists as a perpetual sketch. Collapsing the binary between rough and final versions, they challenge the idea of being finished, instead being finished for now.

Sinag Fernandez's painting practice investigates questions of connection and belonging, particularly as they relate to interpersonal intimacy and diasporic homing. Drawing from found imagery, lived experience, and folklore, her work considers how identity is shaped through displacement, longing, and acts of remembering. Her practice invites intimacy and holds space for tenderness, offering painting as a site where diasporic memory, myth, and contemporary experience converge. She is based in Tāmaki Makaurau and completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2025 at AUT.

Frankie Ayers is a multidisciplinary artist based in Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa, whose practice centres on photography while extending into mixed media and installation. A recent Master of Creative Practice graduate from Unitec Te Pūkenga, Ayers investigates intersections of feminism, memory, and identity, exploring how personal and cultural histories inform the way we see ourselves and each other.

Her Masters work 'The Matriarchy That Made Me' blended her photography with archival images from her Grandmothers, Mothers and Aunts childhoods as well as subjective text to weave together a familial narrative about the importance of family bonds and intergenerational memory. Her work is rooted in the textures of place and the politics of representation, blending intimate reflection with broader social inquiry.

Kyung Baro (2001) is an interdisciplinary artist and educator based in Tamaki Makaurau, with a BFA from the Elam School of Fine Arts (2024). She is currently interested in the mediums of text and textiles, exploring the potential that emerges from combining different modes of expression in the slow, meditative process of suturing by hand.

Her most recent bodies of work have been driven by the desire to make sense of her diasporic identity as a mixed-race woman living between multiple cultures, through participating in the textile traditions of her matrilineal heritage, fostering a

sense of connection to place by working with repurposed fabrics and their layers of accumulated memory, and reclaiming the language that was once used to restrict her through the alteration of religious text.

Millie Dunstall (b. 2000) is an artist from Waihi, currently based in Tāmaki Makaurau. Informed by Albert Camus' philosophy of the absurd, her practice investigates emotional and affective responses to transient spaces through documentation and retrospection, attending to how meaning is constructed within conditions of impermanence and familiarity.

Working across photography, sculpture, and mark-making, Dunstall engages interpersonal relationships, acts of tourism, rural communities, and domestic environments. These sites operate as both lived and representational spaces, where personal memory intersects with broader social structures. Her work probes tensions between intimacy and estrangement, presence and absence, and experience and its subsequent representation.

Dunstall completed a BFA (First Class Hons) in 2021, graduating from Massey University Toi Rauwharangi, Pōneke Wellington.

Recent exhibitions include *MY FRIENDS ARE HOME, 2025*, Cheska Brown and Millie Dunstall, residential address, Waihi, and *MY FRIENDS ARE HOME II, 2025*, Cheska Brown and Millie Dunstall, Window Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau.

Zach Muir is an artist from Tāmaki Makaurau, currently studying at Elam School of Fine Arts. His current practice consists mostly of writing, creating publications, and drawing. His work focuses on the queer experience in contemporary society, merging both personal experience with a research/archive-based practice to present both the realities of queer life as well as the potential for queer utopias within and beyond it.

Ivy Weir (b. 2001) is a Tāmaki Makaurau based multi-disciplinary artist working primarily in textile, painting and photographic imagery. Her practice explores psychological narratives, whether they be personal or collective, through storytelling and myth-making. Weir examines how these narratives and ways of understanding interlace with ecological place and history. Exploring the in-between, Weir is interested in hidden forces - creating Gothic parallel worlds and portals into subconscious stories and intimate memories.

Weir graduated from Te Waka Tūhura Elam School of Fine Arts with a BFA in 2023, from Waipapa Taumata Rau University of Auckland. Her recent exhibitions

include 'Inside the Other', 2023, Theend Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau, and 'Close to Home', 2025, Papakura Art Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau.

Ziggy Humberstone, b. 2005, is an artist from Waiuku, currently based in Tāmaki Makaurau. Their practice investigates memory, absence, and the fragility of interpersonal and spatial relationships, exploring how recollection shapes experience and perception. Working across painting and installation, Ziggy uses colour, material, and spatial intervention to create works that invite projection, reflection, and temporal engagement. Their installations often incorporate suspended or partially obscured elements, encouraging viewers to navigate, anticipate, and participate in the making of meaning. Ziggy is currently completing the final year of a BFA at Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design.

Emma Savage (b.1997) is an artist based in Tāmaki Makaurau. Her conceptually driven practice explores shame and its intersections with our relationship to technology. Working primarily with portraiture through video and performance, she uses these mediums to investigate the power dynamics of the local art world, universities, multinational corporations and governments. Central to her art practice is exploring embarrassment and shame—deeply personal yet universally felt emotions. These feelings surface when she exhibits art, making them both the subject and the consequence of her practice.

Emma graduated from Te Waka Tūhura Elam School of Fine Arts with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2025.

Laura Watson is a Tāmaki Makaurau based moving image artist. Her work seeks to explore the way we construct identity. Often pulling on film archetypes and absurdism.

Emma Stretch (b. 2001) is a Pākehā artist, recently graduated from Elam School of Fine Arts. Her practice to date explores the Anthropocene, illness, systems, and perceptions of time through analog technologies, installation and printery outcomes.

Jude Hanson Stevens works between sculpture and photography, recreating structures and documenting sites connected to colonial history in Aotearoa. He graduated from Dunedin School of Art in 2024 and now lives in Tāmaki Makaurau.

Rebekah Sohn is a Tāmaki Makaurau-based artist attuned to light, time, and the quiet rhythms of the natural world. Her practice engages with form, repetition, and material to trace the subtle boundaries between presence and absence, stillness and change. Through a contemplative approach, she creates work that holds space for remembering and belonging. Guided by detail and gesture, her work carries a sense of intimacy, continuity and connection to the everyday.

Neve Gresswell (b. 2004) is a Tāmaki Makaurau-based painter. She holds a Bachelor of Visual Arts from AUT and is currently undertaking a Master of Visual Arts at AUT. Gresswell's practice is grounded in the study of memory, investigating the subtle emotional currents that tether us to childhood. Through an oil painting practice, she creates works that evoke spaces where time, memory, and feelings converge and fold into one another, reflecting the ways these recollections inhabit and shape the mind.

Stella Barry (b. 2005) is an artist and third year student at The University of Auckland studying a BFA. Interested in how unique our own visual perspectives of the world are, especially in memory, she uses a distorted form of photography with vaseline as a conduit to create a one way channel between the artist's mind and the viewer's. This translates the abstraction of her own thought and past into more coherent imagery that creates a shared nostalgic empathy. Stella explores the themes of accepting differences of people and even finding similarities in your own perceptions with each photo presenting a specific emotional reflection of the moment. With the help of color grading, Stella represents the heightened significance of specific colour palettes in those memories.

Paige Nebbeling (b. 1998) is an artist based in Tāmaki Makaurau with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Auckland. She specialises in illustration and oil painting, drawing inspiration from confessional and contemporary Māori artwork. Paige engages her audience through vulnerability; delving into themes of loss, self-identity, wairua, and personal narratives. As Māori wahine, connection to her whakapapa and tūpuna is a foundational tool for forming guidance, fostering a therapeutic connection with her medium.

Recent exhibitions include *'Take The First Left'*, Kim Meredith Gallery 2025, and *'Moemoeā'*, Studio One Toi Tū 2025.