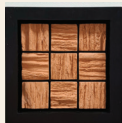


National Youth Art Awards
2025

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Judges

2025



Dr. Jeremy Mayall is the CEO of Creative Waikato - a regional arts organisation. He is also a composer, performer, artist, and researcher from Kirikiriroa-Hamilton, NZ.

His creative work is primarily in music, sound art, installation and multimedia formats, with a focus on exploring the interrelationships between sound, time, space, the senses, and the human experience. Collaboration is at the core of much of his multi-sensory work, and recent projects have included work with musicians, dancers, poets, aerial silks performers, theatre practitioners, scientists, perfumers, bakers, authors, sculptors, filmmakers, pyrotechnicians, lighting designers and visual artists.

As the CEO of Creative Waikato, he works to advocate for the value and importance of arts, culture and creativity to collective wellbeing. This organisation is a strategic capability builder who work throughout the Waikato region. They celebrate the importance of creativity, wellbeing and people in working towards a Waikato Region that thrives with diverse and transformative creative activity.

JUDGES



Laree Payne (Ngāi Tahu) is the director of Laree Payne Gallery, the only dealer Gallery located in the Waikato Region.

Operating for more than seven years, Laree Payne Gallery presents the work of leading contemporary artists from around Aotearoa and Australia. Alongside this, Laree Payne is the Curator for MESH Sculpture Trust, a trust of more than ten years who bring works of scale and significance to public spaces within Kirikiriroa central and surrounding areas.

Laree Payne is passionate about visual arts in the region, and keen to see the sector nurtured and strengthened. She is delighted to be invited, alongside Jeremy Mayall, to judge the 2025 National Youth Art Awards, acknowledging the critical role awards such as these occupy in providing space, opportunity and recognition for young artists.

Finalists



13—14



Aaron Liu —
We Built Our Cage

Acrylic Painting
600mm x 800mm x 20mm
\$550

2025



Around 5 trillion plastic bags are used worldwide every year. So my painting is what the future might look like if we keep using plastic bags.

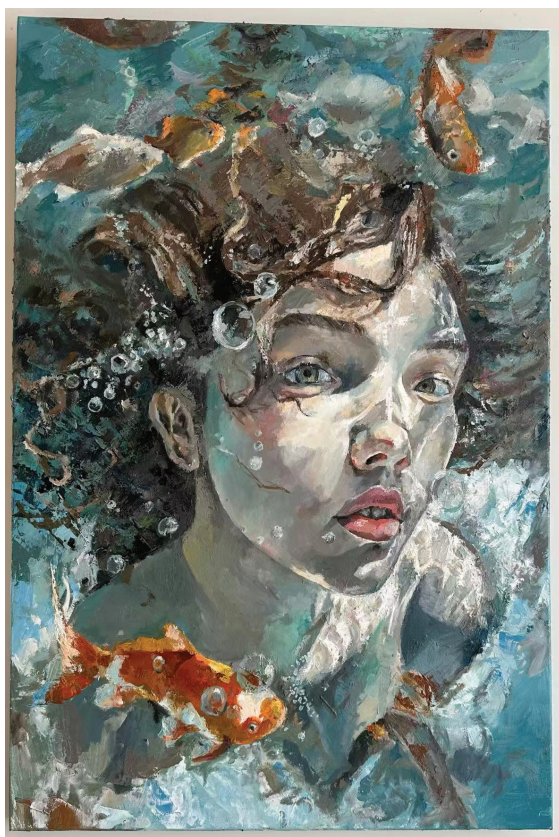
FINALISTS 13—14

Angela Yafei Yang — Veil of Water

Painting
600mm x 900mm x 40mm
\$2888

2025

The stillness and clearness of the water creates some beautiful watermarks on her face. I made this painting because I loved the beauty of the ocean and how it reflects these gorgeous colours. This piece was challenging in drawing water and a realistic face.



FINALISTS 13—14

Carol Zhao — Paws and Petals

Painting
500mm x 400mm x 15mm
\$125

2025

Capturing a peaceful moment, the warm sunbeams drift through the window leaving a trail of shadows on the table. A ginger cat lays resting peacefully next to it, a vase of soft pink petals brings vibrant colours. Though the soft colours, revealing the small moments of beauty in a cat napping.



FINALISTS 13—14

Casey Jia Man Sun —
The Echoes of Winter

Painting
50mm x 60mm
\$125

2025



In this painting, a dark stream winds through a snowy landscape, the land blanketed in memory-laden white. Painted in somber crimson, coal, and bone-white, the scene captures winter's cold and emotional solitude. Bare skeletal trees, their tangled limbs, echo the unresolved thoughts of a restless mind against the stark hills.

FINALISTS 13—14

Katrina Meng —
Chinese Intangible
Cultural Heritage

Mixed Media
297mm x 420mm
\$125

2025



Respect and honour towards my chinese intangible heritage, a civilisation with over 5000 years of history. Showcasing ancient bronze Tang dynasty instruments. The teal coat is the sediment of historical precipitation of vital traditions. The coppersmiths sincerity in art and chinese culture. I hope that artists maintain their sincerity towards art and ethnicities, showing pride in their culture.

FINALISTS 13—14

Ethan Chen — Lisa in Lines

Technical Pen
590mm x 750mm x 55mm
\$1200

2025

I drew the Mona Lisa, not the one in the museum but one imagining her life beyond the canvas. Surrounded by birds, castles, and flying machines, I wonder: Who is she really? What has she seen? Maybe she's been on adventures, or maybe she's just watching it all. Her smile hides secrets—maybe she's seen it all.



FINALISTS 13—14

Fangfei Zhao —
Life Blooms

Acrylic
500mm x 500mm x 15mm
\$3000

2025



A world of wonder, where life blooms eternal, The
Tree of Life whispers, wings dance on the breeze—
Tell me, do the gods watch over them all?

Hana Silsbee — The King's Mount

Drawing
820mm x 660mm
\$1200

2025

I stepped out of my comfort zone - terrified of back-grounds for as long as I've been doing art. Reading the stories about King Arthur gave the drawing an unexpected twist, and there began the horse perilous, who carries the king's crown in his satchel to protect it from dragons.



FINALISTS 13—14

Isabella Xu — Cattle and Craft

Sketching
\$180

2025

A plush cow toy, paintbrush, paint tube, and everyday objects arranged on a draped cloth. My choice of items reflects a mix of personal meaning and artistic tools, combining childhood comfort with creativity. The scene has been chosen to practice realism while expressing a balance between playfulness and artistic growth.



FINALISTS 13—14

Jessica Sun —
No Nest but the Wreckage

Painting
422mm x 298mm x 1mm
\$300

2025



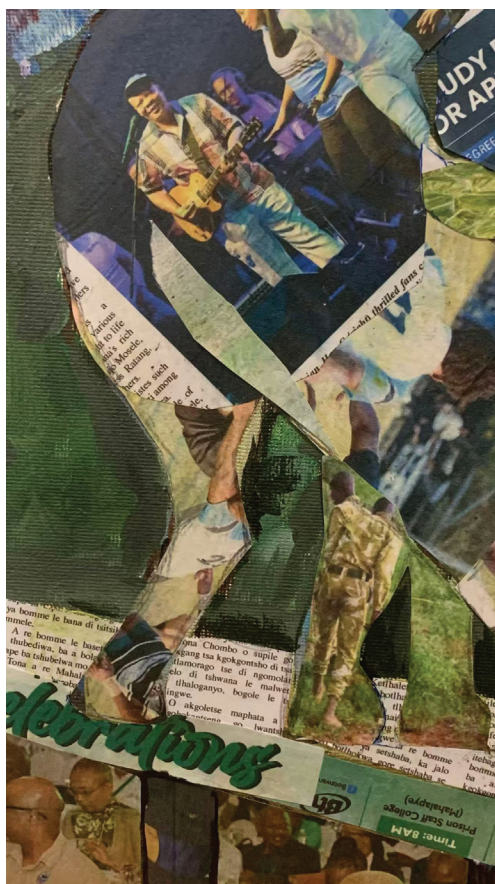
This artwork features a tui, a native Aotearoa bird, crafted from discarded objects. It symbolises nature's struggle against pollution, flying over a damaged ocean. While not real, it embodies our waste, asking a question: what will be left to fly if we don't change?

FINALISTS 13—14

Jessica Zheng — Living in the Same Space

Paper Collage on
Acrylic Painting
195mm x 300mm x 10mm
\$180

2025



First, I used acrylics to paint a cat walking along a balcony railing by the garden. Then, I cut out newspaper sheets I found online, matching the cat's shape and color. I wanted to create a collage style that explores humans and animals sharing the same living space.

FINALISTS 13—14

Liv Pardoe — Childish Fox

Painting
195mm x 295mm
\$130

2025

I would like the viewer to think about how we don't see foxes in New Zealand, and it symbolises the light we could bring in. The fox represents inner childish feelings that adults still have inside them. The fox is playful and bright.



FINALISTS 13—14

Max Kind — Somewhere Else

Watercolour
650mm x 500mm
\$125

2025



This work explores the idea of a fantasy world - the idea of there being somewhere else while we exist here in this world. The cities are depicted with varying densities to draw the viewer close to the artwork.

Olly MacPherson —
Carousel Dreams

Photograph
297mm x 420mm x 1mm
\$175

2025

Whirling colours, childhood joy frozen in motion nostalgia spins beneath a circus canopy of dreams.



FINALISTS 13—14

Poppy Beasant — Freedom

Painting
200mm x 255mm
\$125

2025

This work considers the feeling that you experience when riding. Everything fades away until its just you and the horse without boundaries.



FINALISTS 13—14

Daniel Wu —
Modern Apex Predator

Sculpture
620mm x 230mm x 70mm
\$150

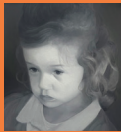
2025



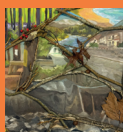
FINALISTS 13—14

Depiction of the Modern Day Apex Predator.

Finalists



15—19



Angela Seo —
Do You Love Me Now?

Painting
594mm x 320mm x 1mm
\$2000

2025



This painting visualizes the emotional struggle of people-pleasing through metaphor; costuming myself to appease others (the animals). It simplifies feelings of insecurity and loss of identity, helping viewers understand and empathize with the discomfort that comes with constantly trying to be liked.

FINALISTS 15—19

Annabelle Waters —
Keep Your Head
Out of the Clouds

Mixed Media
360mm x 480mm
\$400

2025

A self portrait reflecting on the feeling of growing older
yet still having your younger self within you.



FINALISTS 15—19

Aroha Graham —
Manawa

Print
210mm x 148mm
\$125

2025



My artwork explores the deep connection of my whakapapa where we combine together and share breath. For me, it is a powerful reminder of where I come from.

Ava Costello — Sisters

Painting
750mm x 600mm x 35mm
\$775

2025

An exploration of high contrast painting within a low contrast monochromatic colour palette, through film references and cinematic conventions.



FINALISTS 15—19

Ava Costello — The Yellow Wallpaper

Multi Media/
Moving Image (PICT)
\$2000

2025

An experimental adaptation of "The Yellow Wallpaper" shot on Super8. I wanted to evoke the gothic atmosphere of the original text, using a combination of stop motion and live action, informed by Eastern European animation of the 1960s-70s. I have a passion for analog mediums and processes.

https://youtu.be/WufdZySxU-4?si=giTsyRZTMx7Ys9H_

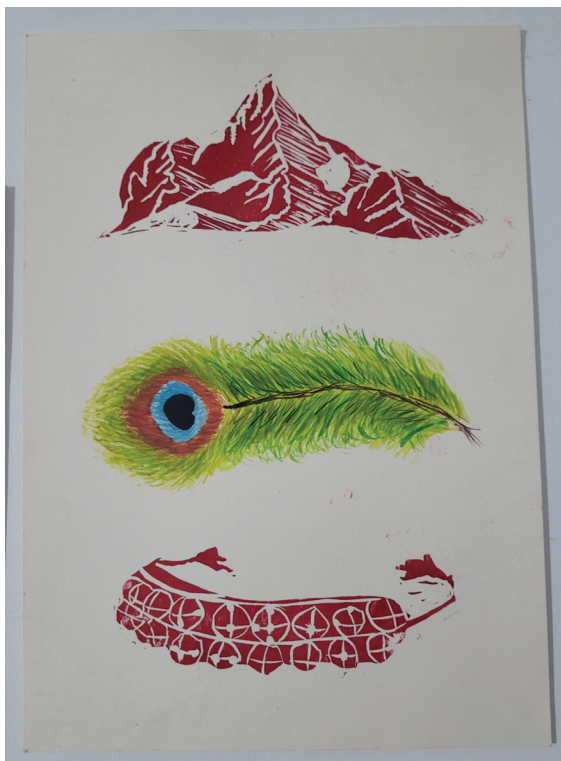


FINALISTS 15—19

Aymen Ali —
Ink of Ancestors

Indian Ink and Print Work
210mm x 297mm x 2mm
\$350

2025



This artwork honors Pakistani cultural identity, connecting past and present. Focusing on belonging and pride, a story rooted in ancestral tradition.

FINALISTS 15—19

Boya Jing — Wavy City Shape

Acrylic on
Recycled Cardboard
600mm x 450mm x 40mm
\$230

2025



The work is the representation of the city building, in circular geometric shapes, and the street, in bold black lines. Each circular form represents a spatial region—a building—that forms and reforms like a living organ. The street functions as both a physical and metaphorical substructure, shaping and connecting urban existence.

FINALISTS 15—19

Brianna Diao — Metamorphosis

Digital Illustration
210mm x 297mm
\$350

2025

The change in oneself and personal growth. A cocoon transforming from caterpillar to butterfly, we reshape ourselves and discard the past completely to become our best version. Colours represent a human womb, which symbolises second birth, and abstract alien-like features are placed to show the mental state within the person.



FINALISTS 15—19

Clare Yu —
Smoked Fish

Oil on Canvas
610mm x 305mm x 10mm
\$1000

2025



I was playing to combine subjects from different contexts to conjure up a surreal environment. The cigarette and tuna blocks on the right came out when I thought about “smoked fish” and twisted the meaning of it into another context. It is quite a fun and liberating process.

Pearl Scholfield — Waiting for Birthday Cake

Acrylic Paint on Canvas
713mm x 557mm x 36mm
\$400

2025

This painting is based on the memory of my 2nd birthday party as a little girl. It's reminiscent of the simplicity and wonder of my childhood, where my biggest dream was to get my face painted alongside my big sister.



FINALISTS 15—19

Emma Marshall — Fractured Connection

Sculpture
750mm x 1000mm x 750mm
\$850

2025

This sculpture explores the human condition by abstracting the torso and hands in a stark white, stripping the body to its essential form. Red threads extend like veins, symbolising memory, identity, and connection: core lifelines that define our shared humanity.

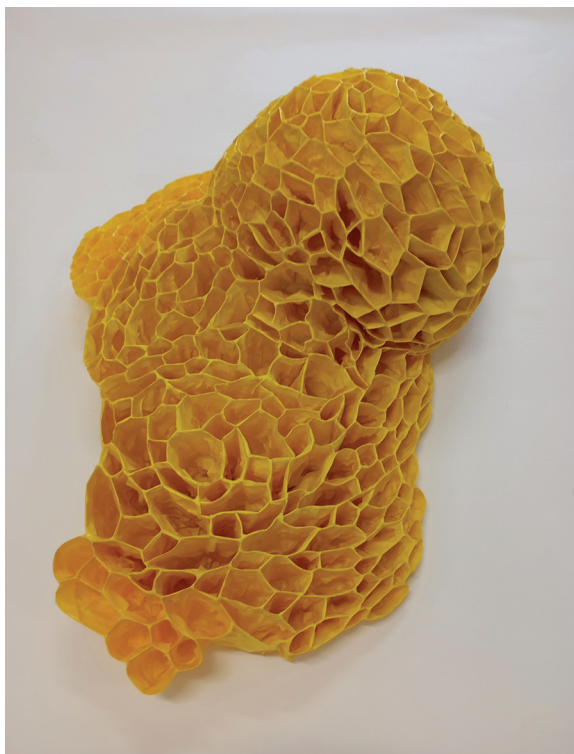


FINALISTS 15—19

Laura Anderson —
Fragile Reef

Sculpture
50mm x 35mm x 35mm
\$850

2025



Fragile Reef explores the delicate beauty of coral and the threat human impact poses to ocean life. Made from masking tape—a simple, everyday material—it symbolizes both the fragility of marine ecosystems and the potential for transformation when we respect and protect our oceans.

FINALISTS 15—19

Georgia Alexandria Jeffcote —
Sleeping George

Needlepoint on Canvas
195mm x 193mm x 15mm
\$500

2025



I have found my talent in these cat needlepoints. They aren't subject to a certain stitch but is more free motion. My hope is that Sleeping George if purchased is looked after and cherished with love.

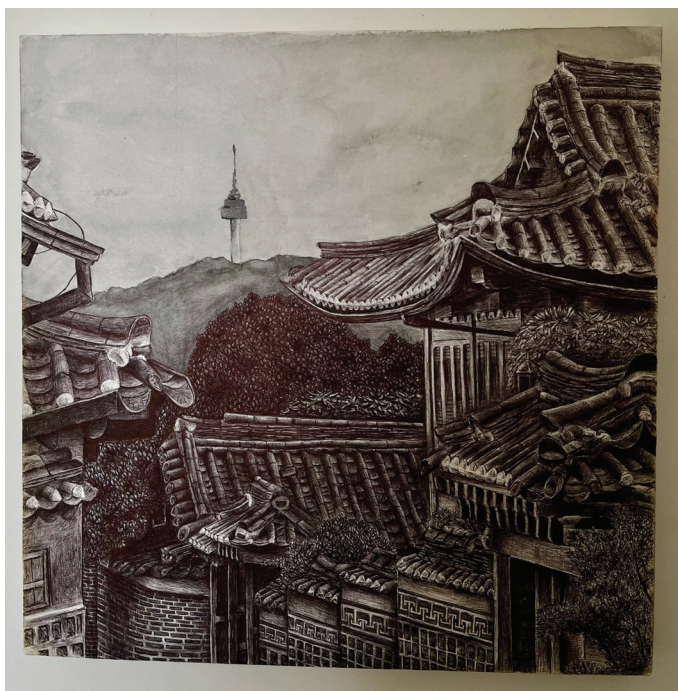
FINALISTS 15—19

Heejae Choi — Hanok Village

Pen Drawing, Watercolor
300mm x 300mm x 20mm
\$130

2025

This artwork is a pen drawing on a Hanok Village located in Seoul, South Korea, whilst capturing the beauty of Namsan and Namsan Tower in the background done in watercolor. As a Korean myself, drawing this allowed me to appreciate my culture even more.



FINALISTS 15—19

Jason Siyang Huang —
Whakakotahitanga (fusion)

Painting (Oil)
300mm x 400mm
\$10000

2025



This self-portrait shows me wearing a pikorua necklace, a Māori symbol of eternal connection and the cycle of life. It's a personal link to my cultural heritage and identity. Using soft colours, I aimed to express calm reflection and how our past continues to shape our journey forward.

Jessica Xu — Money Grows on Trees

Painting
750mm x 600mm x 35mm
\$500

2025

Earth's support systems will collapse in 2050 from the rate we consume resources. Every scanned barcode falls forests, destroying habitats. The barcode (46,171,400) is the kilometers of green land left, shrinking daily, and can be scanned using a mobile app I made. Live data about how consumerism fuels deforestation, engage through this link:



FINALISTS 15—19

Cathy Li — Distortion

Oil Painting
910mm x 220mm x 80mm
\$3000

2025

Self-portrait of exploring the unsettling intimacy of becoming my own villain. Reflecting my internal conflict with myself and how I am my worst enemy.

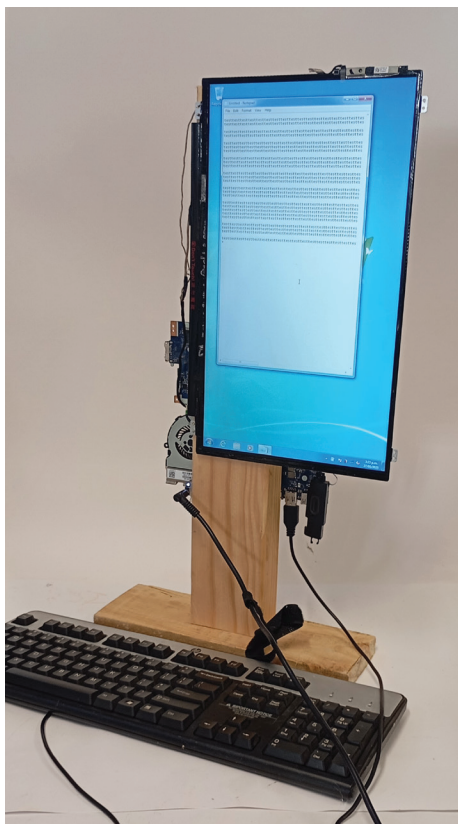


FINALISTS 15—19

Kaiden Walters — Type Me A Secret

Sculpture
\$650

2025



This interactive work invites viewers to contribute to a collective digital graffiti wall, reflecting how personal expressions merge into the endless stream of online content. It questions autonomy in a tech-saturated world, where human voices are digitized, archived, and potentially lost in the noise.

FINALISTS 15—19

Kyra Alkamil —
Ugly Truths

Oil on Canvas
375mm x 475mm x 10mm
\$400

2025



Ugly Truths is about being honest with ourselves and others. Being the person you truly are not someone you wish you were, and how that is often uncomfortable. The truth merges the everyday with the surreal.

FINALISTS 15—19

Linda Qian — Ghost Tide

Drawing
420mm x 297mm
\$1888

2025

This work imagines 2125: a world where oceans lie barren beneath our waste. Carelessly discarded aluminium cans and plastic bags have corroded their beauty. Papatūānuku carries the scars of human neglect. Extinct whales drift above—a haunting memory. Can we still make things right?

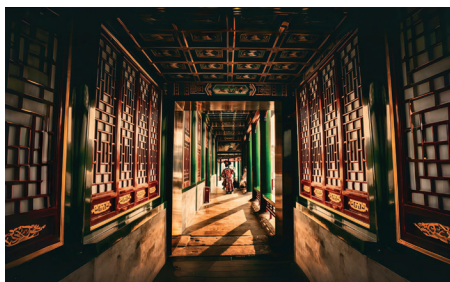


FINALISTS 15—19

Lingxin (Erica) Zhang — Tranquil Order

Photograph
\$210

2025



This series explores how architecture across cultures captures a deep sense of order and contemplation. From the symmetry of the Eastern corridor to the towering Gothic stonework and the grounded authority of the historic courthouse in Hamilton, each conveys discipline shaped by light and shadow, reflecting the harmony between human intention and designed space.

FINALISTS 15—19

Penamino Tuia — O A'U LENEI

Print
420mm x 594mm
\$125

2025

This work is a visual representation of all the things that I love about myself and contributed to who I am today.



FINALISTS 15—19

Poppy Buller — Born This Way

Acrylic and Oil Pastel/ Mixed
Media on Canvas Paper
190mm x 260mm x 1mm
\$450

2025

This piece shows the innocent happiness of childhood and the fun of creating art.



FINALISTS 15—19

Raquel Sheldon —
Synesthesia

Sculpture
450mm x 450mm x 300mm
\$350

2025



I named this artwork Synesthesia. The movement of the piece symbolizes the shapes and the rhythm of waves. I used clove and burnt some of the piece for scent. When you look at it from different angles it reflects the light. The texture of the work pierces you like music.

FINALISTS 15—19

Ronald Wang —
The World is a
Makeshift Circus

Oil Painting
600mm x 900mm x 20mm
\$300

2025



My experience in Model United Nations, shaping my understanding of global politics and the world. Its a circus, performers on the global stage, audience watching below. Behind the curtains lies a mess no one wants to talk about. Using recognisable individuals creates the same unease when realising how much it feels like an act.

FINALISTS 15—19

Ruby-May Maddock — Hollow Ruin

Sculpture
125mm x 143mm x 118mm
\$475

2025

Representing the money we spend has affects on the environment, causing fragile habitats to relocate. Environmental change causes growing resources to be more expensive. Raising the issue of overconsumption, we tend to patch up the outsides of issues without taking note of what is left on the inside.



FINALISTS 15—19

Samuel Chung Ng —
Remnants of Yesterday

Print
\$125

2025



This is a tetra pak print of my grandmother's house, because for my portfolio I chose the topic of dementia and aging. Because my grandmother has been going through dementia, the house represents that attachment to her, always wanting to return.

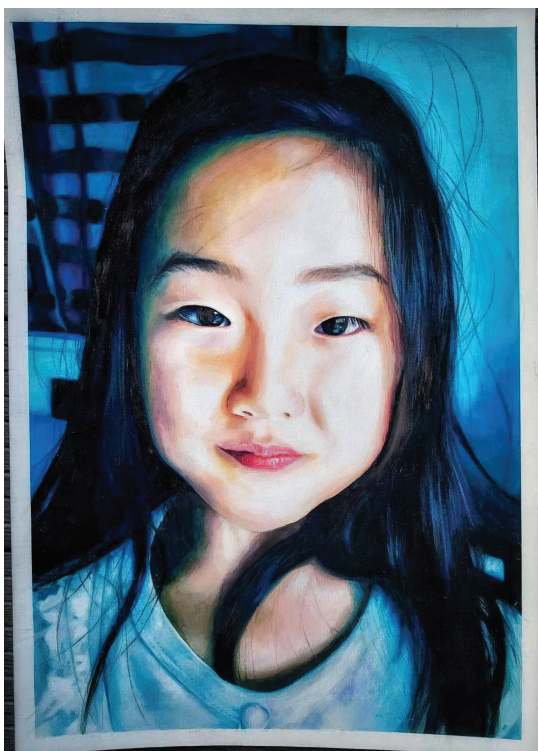
FINALISTS 15—19

Shannon Yu — Childhood

Acrylic Painting
297mm x 420mm x 1mm
\$1500

2025

This painting is me at five years old, the day before my first day of school. Against the cool-toned blue background, my face shines with warmth and excitement, blending the purity of childhood with a quiet sense of maturity. It's a moment of transition—on the edge of growing up—capturing both who I was and who I was becoming.



FINALISTS 15—19

Sienna Brits — Sienna in Grey

Painting
280mm x 285mm
\$5000

2025

My artwork is painted after a photo of myself when I was three, in which I had a decidedly gloomy, thoughtful expression. I wanted to paint a self-portrait, as I hadn't before. Though I originally intended colour, I picked grey-scale to focus on value and contrast as a beginner.

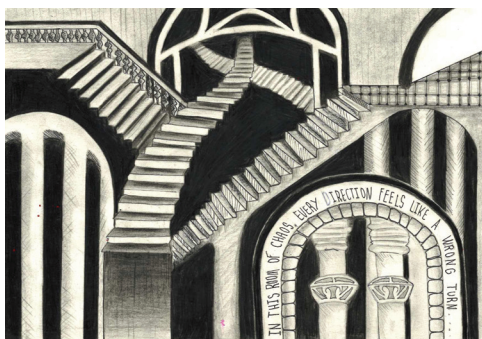


FINALISTS 15—19

Kate Richards —
TO HOPE

Drawing
630mm x 290mm
\$720

2025



My triptych is supposed to capture the essence of teenage depression. The elements throughout the three pieces send a message of feeling lost, hopeless, and despairing.

FINALISTS 15—19

Veer Parshotam — Juvenile

Print
210mm x 150mm
\$225

2025



There is a connection I have always had with bird life explored through this piece. Through the tui I explore my own characteristics. In a way this makes this artwork a self-portrait. My journey is just beginning much like that of the juvenile tui.

FINALISTS 15—19

Weizhi Zhou — Taonga

Oil Paint
210mm x 297mm
\$10000

2025

As a Chinese student living in Aotearoa, I hope to express my honour to the richness of Māori culture. Māori taonga (Treasures), both physical and spiritual, inspires me deeply. Through artificial and natural symbols in the painting, I explore my own identity and my journey of belonging in this land.



FINALISTS 15—19

Xiyan (Lily) Hu — The Twigs' Story

Oil on Wooden Panel
with Branches
430mm x 600mm x 50mm
\$210

2025



Every fallen leaf and twig has its story, witnesses and victims to the impacts made on this planet—from the pure, vibrant, flourishing scene of where it started, to the lifeless, murky, suffocating remains of where we're headed. Indicating the passage of time—serving as a reminder for the future we are shaping.

FINALISTS 15—19

Peter Zhiyuan Liu —
“Reflections over Hamilton”

Coloured Pencil on Paper
(Drawing)
420mm x 297mm
\$190

2025

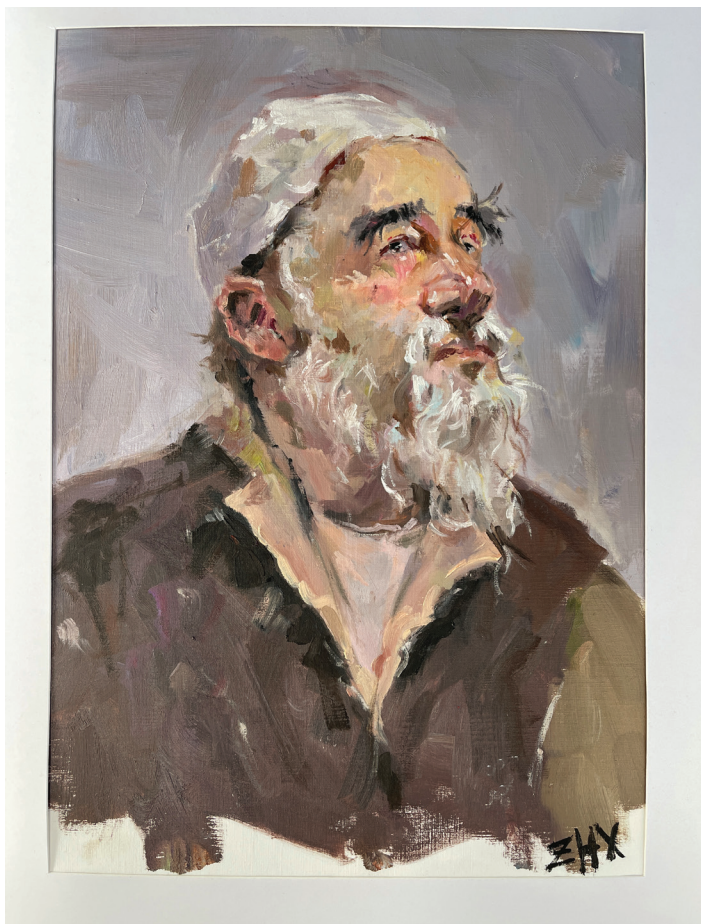
The 2025 Hamilton Balloon Fest — the sky is soft, water's still, and New Zealand holds its breath. Each balloon in the sky has its own character, floating above the lake, with their reflections trailing like silent echoes, full of life, but also calm — like a memory you didn't know you had until you saw it again.



FINALISTS 15—19

Zihan Xia —
Old Man

2025



FINALISTS 15—19

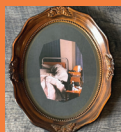
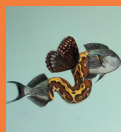
Oil Painting

445mm x 619mm x 35mm

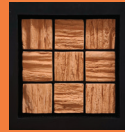
\$280

I painted this portrait because his long eyebrows reminded me of my father's and grandfather's. They bring up memories of us heroising our parents and grandparents, highlighting the unconditional love that shaped our upbringing.

Finalists



20—25



Alisa Robinson —
Uranga Huru

Digital Photography
420mm x 594mm x 40mm
\$450

2025



Uranga Huru - The Rising Glow of the Sun
Taken in Ngāruawāhia alongside the Waipā Awa.

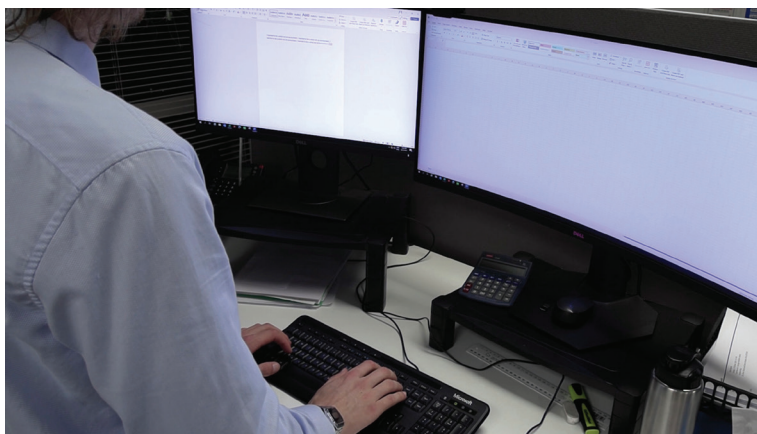
FINALISTS 20—25

Max Nasmith — I Wanted To Be An Artist, Not An Accountant

Digital Video
\$1000

2025

Questioning why society pressures people into jobs and work situations, we are never entirely happy with. Most people get trapped and work a job that they hate, wishing they had done something different.



FINALISTS 20—25

Molly Ratana — Kōuma

Mixed Media: Aute,
Muka, Harakeke, Toitoi
and Kokowai
270mm x 1000mm x 20mm
\$1300

2025



Kōuma is about spiritual protection through deep connection with te taio. The Maramataka phases represent new beginnings, the entrance into new light and the realm of Hina. Kōuma is sourced from Papatūānuku and incorporates traditional practices. It is also about the imperfections of life. Kōuma can be worn on the body.

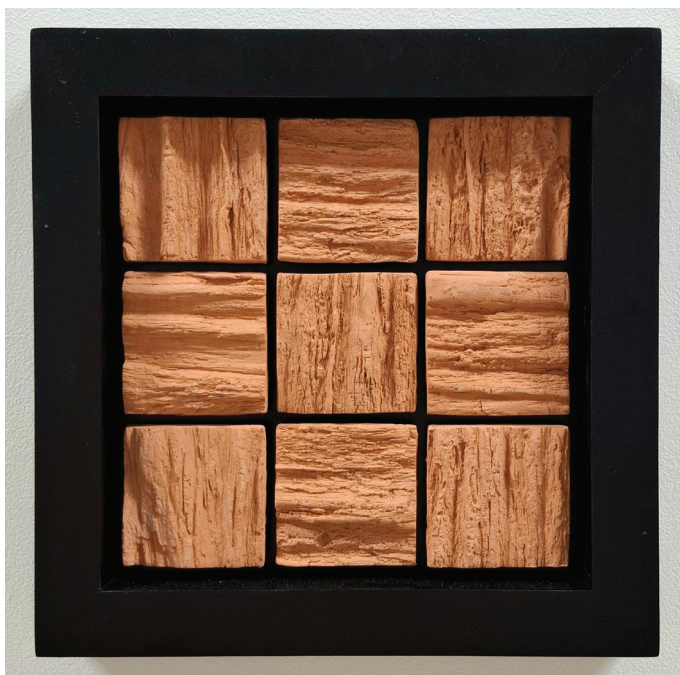
FINALISTS 20—25

Olivia Connolly — Preservation

Ceramic and Wood
280mm x 280mm x 40mm
\$300

2025

This work frames the beauty of the natural that is captured through impressions. Using clay to showcase the uniqueness of wood, each tile is an artwork of its own—forever preserving a state that the wood once was.



FINALISTS 20—25

Portia Roper — Spencer

Collage and Embroidery
300mm x 300mm x 50mm
\$395

2025

Animals morphing gradually through merging segments, they become one. The stitching gives the feeling they were stitched by Dr. Frankenstein. I sometimes dream about seeing my creatures in the environment. I wonder what these creatures sound like, how they walk, swim, fly, what they eat? How will they survive?



FINALISTS 20—25

Shalom Rickard —
'Keepers of the Promise'

Acrylic, Natural Earth
Pigments and Mixed Media
on Stretched Canvas
700mm x 900mm x 40mm
\$1350

2025



Witness time unfolding and the unknown future ahead. A promised visual belief, that as Tāngata Whenua, we carry a sacred duty ensuring the survival of our culture, tradition and identity. Guardians entrusted of ancestral knowledge, turning memory into form, bringing strength and hope to our collective future together as one. Proud of our homeland and ready for the future.

FINALISTS 20—25

Sophia Kilgour —
Discombobulated Spock

Oil Painting
76mm x 51mm x 4mm
\$500

2025



This work is an experiment in capturing the nostalgic effect of the fluorescent, otherworldly lighting that I loved from a TV show in my childhood, exploring the differences between and limits of film and paint.

FINALISTS 20—25

Stevie Fiske —
Family Portrait

Framed Photograph
250mm x 300mm x 30mm
\$125

2025

Photograph of my Father's living situation.



FINALISTS 20—25

Tangaru Clarke Hari Hari — Whanau Homestead

2025



FINALISTS 20—25

1000mm x 700mm x 40mm
\$750

This is a painting of my great grandparents' old home-
stead. I first illustrated the house, and the surrounding
land then went over it with oil paints. I wanted to invoke
feelings of playfulness and imagination to remember
times I spent with my whanau.

Thank you

On behalf of the Waikato Society of Arts, we extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who made the 2025 National Youth Art Awards a success, now in it's fifteenth year.

To the young artists who shared their vision, talent, and courage—thank you. Your work reflects the vibrant creativity and thoughtful perspectives that continue to inspire us all. The range and depth of entries this year was truly exceptional and we continue to be in awe of how outstanding their level of work is.

To our judges, Laree Payne and Dr. Jeremy Mayall, who undertook the challenging task of reviewing over 360 entries with care and insight—thank you for your time, integrity, precision and deep respect for emerging talent.

To our sponsors—your generosity makes this event possible. Your investment in young artists is an investment in the future of New Zealand's cultural landscape and an encouraging endorsement to how important art is for all ages.

To the families, teachers, and mentors who encourage creativity in the next generation—thank you for nurturing and supporting the arts in your communities.

And finally, to our dedicated WSA team, volunteers, and partners—thank you for your energy, passion, and commitment to making this exhibition happen.

Together, you help grow a thriving platform for youth expression and artistic excellence. We are honoured to celebrate the next generation of Aotearoa's artists.

Ngā mihi nui,
Waikato Society of Arts



