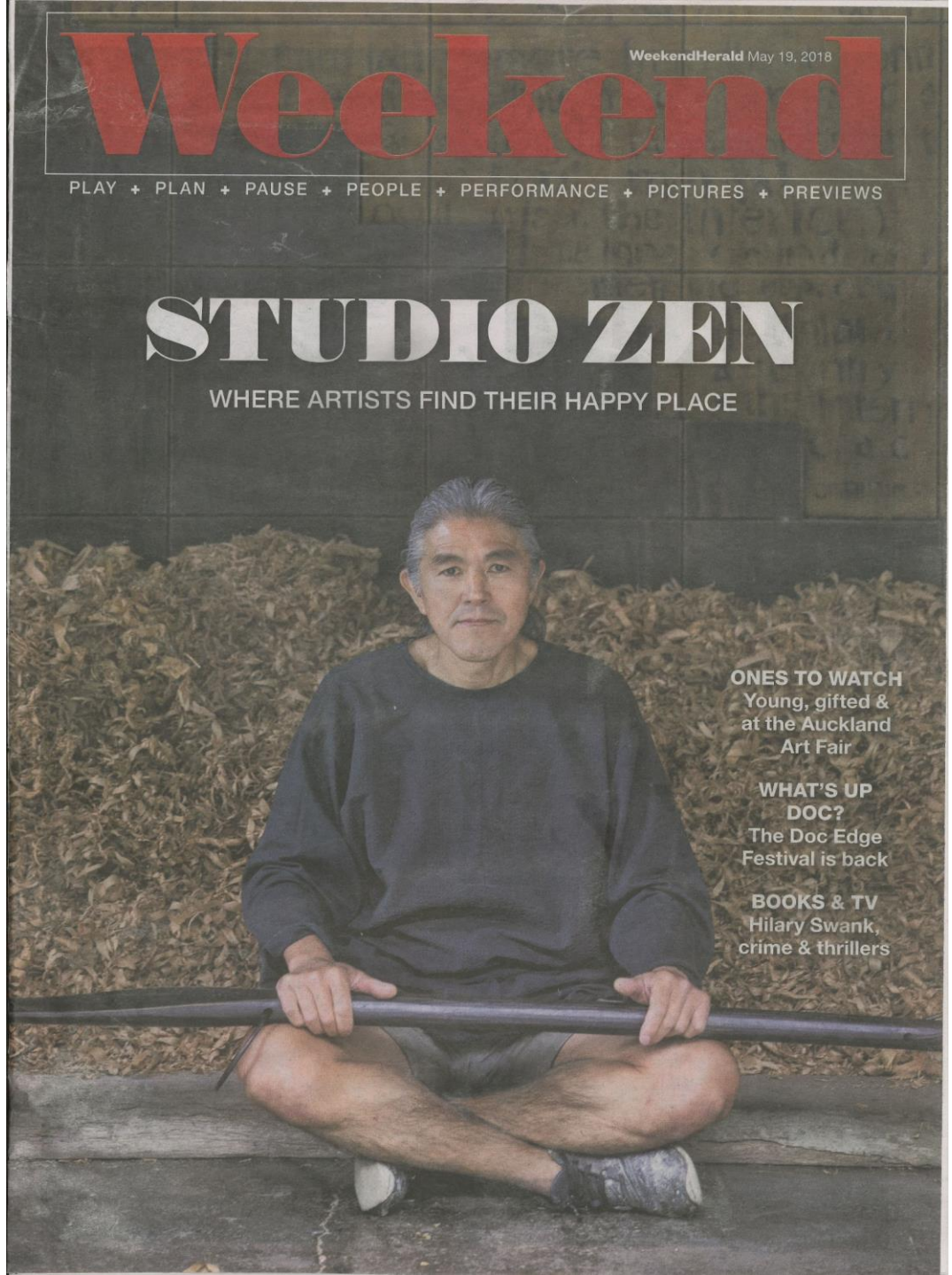


**art
fair**

Weekend – NZME
Saturday 19th May



Weekend

WeekendHerald May 19, 2018

PLAY + PLAN + PAUSE + PEOPLE + PERFORMANCE + PICTURES + PREVIEWS

STUDIO ZEN

WHERE ARTISTS FIND THEIR HAPPY PLACE

ONES TO WATCH
Young, gifted &
at the Auckland
Art Fair

**WHAT'S UP
DOC?**
The Doc Edge
Festival is back

BOOKS & TV
Hilary Swank,
crime & thrillers



Artists in residence

Auckland Art Fair puts the spotlight on this city as a place to see the best in contemporary art from the Pacific Rim. **Dionne Christian** asks some of the artists what 'place' means to them — in particular the space they work in.

SHANE COTTON

Painter, based in Palmerston North, exhibiting with Michael Lett Gallery

How long have you been in this studio? I think we took it over in 2006, so 12 years. At the time, I was working at home in the lounge and it wasn't a bad space but I just wanted to upscale everything. I wanted to have things started, like you see here, and not necessarily have to worry about taking them down and just live with them for a wee while and, to do that, you need to have lots of space.

I've got it set up the way I have because it gives me the best viewing position. It used to be a plumbing warehouse and was a bit of a shell. We did quite a bit of work on it, we put in a mezzanine floor, a bookshelf, a kitchen and made it habitable. I think you want to make a studio special and you do spend a lot of time there, sometimes I'll just come here and read a book.

You want to make it your own environment. I've got some personal things in here but I think the two most important things I need are books — things that I can read and things that I can look at — and music. I couldn't have a studio if I didn't have music.

Does your work have a specific Aotearoa New Zealand focus or is it more global in its scope?

I think the things I am doing at the moment, you could take them anywhere in the world and show them and they would stand on their own merits.

There is a back story to a lot of the work but, in one sense, one doesn't necessarily have to know the back story to appreciate the work.

On the other hand, having some idea of the back story allows you to see it with perspective and gives focus to the work. It tends to walk, I suppose, being located in a place but wanting to step out and venture outside of the location.



Above, artist Shane Cotton says a studio has to be a place you want to spend time in. Above right, potter Virginia Leonard in her Matakana studio. Photos: Jason Christian, Alexander Robertson

Zealand also engendered a huge curiosity for worlds beyond my own relatively small one. I found windows to other worlds through books and movies, and gravitated towards highly fantastic imaginary worlds that were far removed from my reality as possible — worlds so detailed that I could lose myself in them. It follows that my art practice and collaborative work is essentially an exercise in world building. The idea of pulling a new world into existence through sheer will and an abundance of detail is still really potent to me.

“ I think you want to make a studio special and you do spend a lot of time there. ”

Shane Cotton

You've done something a bit different for the Auckland Art Fair — tell me about that?

I am presenting my drawings in an entirely new medium for the first time. The focus is several unique quilts made in collaboration with my mother. Growing up, I was influenced by my mother's textile arrangements, by observing the processes of dying, cutting, arranging and piecing together material. I think this influence can be seen in my contemporary drawing practice today, which features repetitive geometries, elaborate borders, use of templates, and an affinity with traditional crafts and draughtsmanship. For the quilts, hand-drawn compositions were digitally printed on to bolts of cloth, then turned into quilts with embellished pieced borders by Mum.

“ I need the people that I have around me. They're a really important part of my process. ”

Jonny Niesche

VIRGINIA LEONARD

Sculptor and ceramic artist based in Matakana; exhibiting with Paulnache Gallery, Gisborne

Tell me about your studio and why you have it the way you do.

It's a big tin shed with a concrete floor, it is freezing in the winter and boiling hot in the summer. It's huge and I share it with Oly [partner Oliver King]. My half is a ceramic studio so it houses two electric kilns, one medium and one very large. Then there is the outside space, which is a large covered area; this is where I do all my glazing and poisonous stuff — there is a lot of that. It is organised chaos. I work in a very immediate and hurried reckless manner so I don't mind that I spill and drip and drop everything everywhere. I have work piled up on every surface; it seems to suit my practice so when I am building a work I have bits of works available and I can add them to a particular piece that I am working on at the time. There is no quiet space in my studio. I have tried to keep one corner ordered and quiet but it fills up within a couple of weeks. If I want a quiet clean space to put a work so I can spend time with it, I use Oly's space when he is not there, his space is immaculate.



Lowdown
The Auckland Art Fair brings together 45 of the most respected galleries, showing more than 180 artists from the Pacific region. The fair is an opportunity for curators, collectors and newcomers to the art world to experience them all under one roof. Auckland Art Fair, May 23-27, The Cloud on Auckland's Queens Wharf. Tickets on sale now. artfair.co.nz

Does being in a city like Sydney influence your work? I'm not sure that it does from the point of view of Sydney giving me a sense of identity. Maybe I have a displaced sense of making work that is in a more international language rather than specific to a place. I am interested, however, in sensory phenomena, transparency, interactivity and where the viewer is involved in the act of looking. In relation to Sydney and its effects on me, I have always been deeply affected by the soft gentle hues of colour in the east while the sun is setting. I remember as a very small boy eating fish and chips with my family on the grass at Bondi Beach, watching the colours shift and change into dark. It was a magical moment for me that I still remember. I did also make a body of work which was influenced by a place that has been a major influence in my life.

Top, New York-based artist Jess Johnson is back home at Whangarei Heads, collaborating with her mother, Cynthia Johnson. Above, Sydney-based artist Jonny Niesche in his studio. Photo Top: Northern Advocate; Photo Above: Photo: [unreadable]

Artists in residence

Growing up in the 1970s, I have strong memories of being dragged around the cosmetic departments of major stores with my mum.

To me, it looked like a magic spaceship with all the lights and the mirrors, the reflections and the colour palette. I'm not necessarily interested in the idea of "adorning the skin" but rather the sensorial, aesthetic, and to some extent nostalgic experiences elicited by cosmetic products."

KAZU NAKAGAWA

Sculptor, painter, photographer based on Waiheke Island; exhibiting with Trish Clark Gallery

What brought you to this place?

In 2003 I came across this property and it was obvious to me that I could work well here. It has a certain energy flow—throughout the land and the building; it was a good environment for my work and everyday living and bringing up children, who left home a couple of years ago. I am still here although I don't think that I'm settling down.

I've lived on this island more than half of my life, so it must mean nearly everything in terms of what I have done in my work and life. Even when I work

only on ideas and concepts, I need to connect with this place physically.

Every day around sunset, I go for a run about 6km around where I live, making sure that I do exist (not an idea), breathing air, seeing ocean and trees and people.

I think being in New Zealand gave me a freedom to explore different mediums, try new things.

Are there other locations that influence your work?

Tokyo, the city where I grew up, must be one of the most influential places to me, as much as Waiheke has been. My Buddhist and Shinto family lived there for a number of generations and it was my playground and learning field through my childhood and youth. Anything there must have forged my blank mind but I can't identify what that was or what it did to me and my works.

Where is the strangest place you've ever worked from?

I worked at the Waiheke library on a public art project from 2009 to 2014. Generally I work alone, but not this time. I worked with a large project team: council people, architects, contractors, builders, earth-movers.

At the final stage of the project, when I was carving the timber facade alone on the scaffolding, through a whole winter, many local passers by cheered me from the street as I was constantly there, even when it rained.



Artist Kazu Nakagawa works out of his Waiheke Island studio. Photos: Dean Purcell

See also
See video interviews with Shana Cotton, Jess Johnson and Kazu Nakagawa at nzherald.co.nz



JOHN PULE

Painter and writer based in Niue, exhibiting with Gow Langsford Gallery



Artist John Pule and his studios in Niue and Auckland. Photos: Pule / Tobias Kuku

Tell me about your studio in Niue.

I came to Niue in 2013 and decided I wanted to move here permanently; my family left in the 1960s when I was 2 years old but I always wanted to come back. I got help to obtain some of my family's land near the village of Liku, on the east coast of the island, where about 80 people live. I came here three years ago and no one had farmed this land since my family left, so it was bush. I cleared about half an acre—from about 10—to build a writer's hut and a studio house. I lived in the hut while the studio house was built. It is surrounded by bush and, of course, the island is surrounded by ocean. The road hugs the coast so wherever I go I can see or hear the ocean.

I'm planning to build another studio a little further away from these buildings and I'm deciding whether I want it to have electricity and running water. Since I have moved here, I



wanted to find ways to paint and approach painting in a new different way being more open to the environment and what it can do to me, rather than what I can do to it.

What do you have in your studio that you can't work without?

Music! I like to listen to music—all genres—and if I decide not to have electricity in the new studio, I'll find a way to have music.

What does it mean to you to work here?

What's really special is that I am on family land my parents worked. They grew watermelons, taro and bananas and sold the fruit and vegetables to pay for our passage on the ship to New Zealand. Most of my paintings, since I arrived, have been about family and the environment. The focus is on family history, personal history and the history that has come

from outside into the village. I like depicting people doing "their thing" in the natural environment around them.

Are there any other places that influence your work?

New Zealand is an influence because I grew up there and learned how to do my thing there. That has a huge impact on me, so do New Zealand writers and poets. I haven't completely abandoned New Zealand; I still get back about twice a year.

Pule's work will be on display as a solo presentation on Saturday and Sunday of the fair. Gow Langsford also shows artists Dale Frank (Wednesday and Thursday) and Hugo Kaha Lindsay (Friday).

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