



Congratulations to Kit Ong

Winner of the Winsor & Newton Summer Competition



Leuven Glow by Kit Ong

Newsletter 203 March - May 2026

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Summer Roses by Deb Clarke (detail)

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Autumn glow by Maurice Middleditch

From President Alyson Howell

By the time you receive this newsletter we will have completed the 2026 Annual General Meeting. Sadly, but unsurprisingly, after the major anniversary year of 2025 we have a number of resignations from the committee. The year saw the fruition of big projects and, understandably, project completion is a time for many to reassess and make new plans.

Sue Wild has served on the committee for 19 years and will retire during the year. She has organised paintaways, workshops, edited the newsletter for ten years and inaugurated the competitions and challenges. The incoming committee may appoint an administrator to fulfill the basic office tasks with Sue remaining on the committee to help with handover.

Jan Pryor is stepping down from the committee and will continue writing for the newsletter. Together Jan and Sue wrote the text for our superb book "Awash with Colour." (Have you purchased your copy yet? At the end of January we had sold 403 copies. We had hoped that every member would purchase and as membership is now at 580 we have yet to meet that aspiration.)

Alison Hehir, and Alan Reid are stepping aside. Ali organised our fabulous book launch in Wellington, and Alan ably helped with the Stratford paintaway. Both will be available to assist with specific events.

After one happy year as President I am retiring. I am pleased that Watercolour New Zealand is in good heart and has a bright future. The operation of the society is dependent on volunteer power and enthusiasm. The committee is acknowledging that with the increasing size of the society, the fact that it is a nation-wide group, and the consequent greater workload we may need to change the way we run the administration. Our treasurer and newsletter designer already receive honoraria. One option is to treat the secretary / administrator role in this way.

Our South Island Paintaway will be held in Clyde from 1 to 4 May. Organiser Pete James is very positive about the beautiful painting locations in the area. I am grateful to Pete and his team and I know it will be another great event. All you need to do after you have registered, and sorted your travel and accommodation is read and keep your Paintaway emails so that you are fully informed.

The summer competition has closed, with 73 entries and winners announced in this newsletter. And we are looking forward to Jane Blundell's workshops in late March.

The new committee, along with several experienced and wise current members, will have fresh members, ideas and exciting events. We look forward to a stimulating year ahead. Thank you for all your support during 2025.



**WATERCOLOUR
NEW ZEALAND** Inc.

National society for watercolour artists

President - Alyson Howell: president@watercolournewzealand.nz

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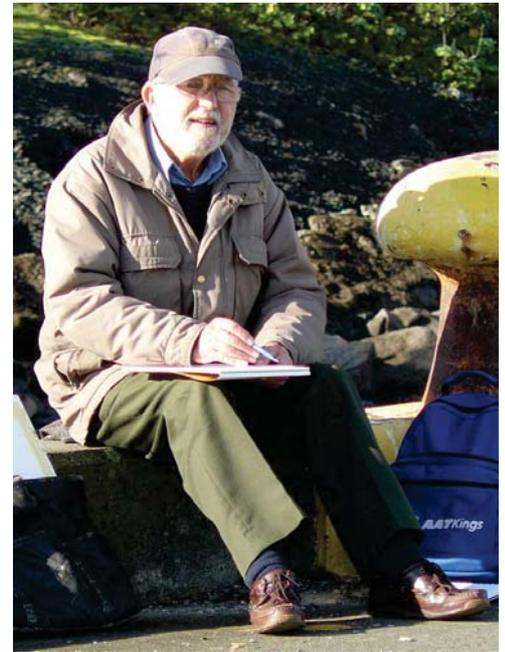
Newsletter - Alison Hehir, Jan Pryor, Sue Wild

Newsletter design and production - Charlotte Hird

Your newsletter contribution is welcome. This newsletter aims to inform and encourage members by including articles on all facets of the art of watercolour. Your contributions and suggestions are needed. Email info@watercolournewzealand.nz with ideas for articles.

Richard Acey – dedicated watercolourist

Richard Acey was born and bred in Hull, Yorkshire and came to live in New Zealand in 1971. He has been a member of Watercolour New Zealand for over 20 years, has exhibited at every exhibition and also enters the competitions. He attends AGMs, exhibition openings and Christmas gatherings. What a supportive member!



Richard sketching on the Wellington waterfront.

He has also been a member of Wellington Art Club for many years. On Tuesday and Wednesday mornings he arrives at the club rooms, paints something amazing, eats his lunch, then heads off to play table tennis or go to tai chi.



At Rest by Richard Acey

**We welcome new members - Annual subscription:
Member; \$45, Couple; \$55, Student (enrolled); \$20.**

Membership includes quarterly newsletter, workshops, social activities, exhibition and discounts at art stores.

To join please complete the online form at

www.watercolournewzealand.nz/membership

Alternatively print out the form, complete and post to:

Membership, Watercolour New Zealand, PO Box 33088, Petone, Lower Hutt 5046.

Watercolour New Zealand account: 01-0607-0026637-00

If you wish to be listed in the Artist Directory on our website: go to www.watercolournewzealand.nz/directory and select a profile type. Set-up cost is \$10, \$25 or \$50, then contact the Treasurer with your details.

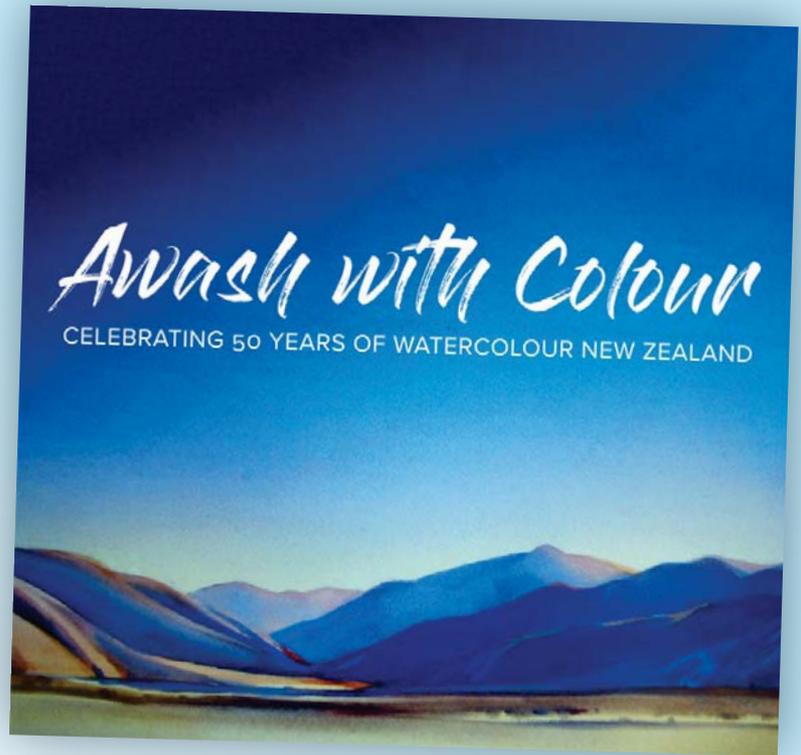
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www.watercolournewzealand.nz



Awash with Colour cover image by Adrienne Pavelka, Patron of Watercolour New Zealand.

Watercolour New Zealand in numbers

Our membership has increased every year from the founding 38 members in 1975 to the current 580. Members are spread from Kaeo in Northland to Invercargill.

Education: We have run 6-9 classes every year – that's around 375 classes with about 5600 learning experiences. We've brought an overseas tutor each year since 2011.

Exhibiting our paintings: We have run 80 exhibitions over the 50 years, and hung 2814 paintings in the last decade.

Camaraderie in the outdoors: We have held 30 Paintaways (they were called Safaris in earlier days) and their popularity has grown from about 25 in 2008 to 75 artists at recent gatherings.

We've run 21 Summer/Winter Competitions and received 1150 entries.

We've run 6 Winter Challenges, keeping the paint flowing in the cool months.

And five Winter Watercolour Fun days.



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The Story of Watercolour Paper

by Jan Pryor

Paper, brushes, pigment - the three legged stool of watercolour painting. It is believed, however, that one leg - the paper - carries more weight than the others.

We can paint reasonably good art with scrubby brushes - hogs hair, even acrylic. We can get by with student quality paints. We cannot so easily hide the limitations of inferior paper. It is literally and figuratively the basis for successful watercolour painting. I will describe its history and its characteristics in this article.

We are familiar with some of its features. For example:-

Texture: Watercolour paper comes in Hot Press, Cold Press (Not) and Rough textures. Each has its advantages, depending on what kind of art is being done.

Weight: This is usually described as grams per square metre. 300 gsm is considered optimal by most artists; 640 gsm is used by professionals, and lighter weights are best for sketches.

Some History

The history of watercolour paper is almost as old as the history of paper itself. Papermaking started in China around 105 A.D., though papyrus predated that by around 3000 years. By 1200 A.D. papermaking reached Europe and in particular Italy, where a paper mill was established in Fabriano. It made Linen and Hemp papers.

Arches paper dates back to 1492 when the mill was established in the town of that name in France. It is one of the few producers that still uses cylinder moulds.

The implementation of sizing in the 13th century, using animal gelatin, marked the ability for paper to become less absorbent.

This was followed in the 1750s by the introduction of 'wove' paper, produced on a wire mesh rather than being in layers. The development of wove paper is attributed to James Whatman, an Englishman in Kent. J.W.M. Turner used Whatman paper in his watercolour work.

Wood pulp papers were introduced in the 20th century.

Properties of modern water colour papers.

There are two main methods of producing water colour paper. The first, and usually considered the best, is using moulds. The fibres are formed into sheets on cylinder-mould machines; these give the paper a more uniform structure than handmade paper. However, in practice, it can feel much more like handmade paper; it's also durable and stable. The **mould-made process** is valued because it mimics handmade paper by allowing fibres to settle randomly, creating a sheet that is more stable and less prone to warping than standard machine-made paper.

Machine-made paper is more reasonably priced and is extremely regular; it is usually made of more paper fibres and less cotton. It is sometimes referred to as the Fourdrinier method, developed in England in 1806. It uses a moving woven mesh to create a continuous paper web by filtering out the fibres held in a paper stock and producing a continuously moving wet mat of fibre. This is dried in the machine to produce a strong paper web.

The *colour* of watercolour paper is important; different shades of white for example will affect what is painted on them. Cotton papers are a slightly off-white colour, but in some cases optical brightening agents are added to make them bright white. The agents, however, can deteriorate over time so are avoided by makers of archival paper.

There are also black and tinted watercolour papers. These are made by adding light fast pigments and work best with opaque colours.

Cotton based paper

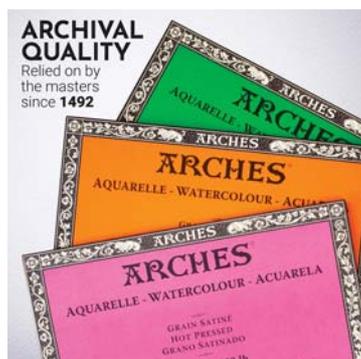
The gold standard for watercolour artists is generally accepted as 100% cotton. It is made from long cotton fibres and is durable and strong. Paper made with less than 100% is correspondingly less durable and usually harder to work with. However, the production of cotton can be problematic with the possible use of



Pietro Miliani's paper mill in Fabriano in Italy in the mid-15th century.



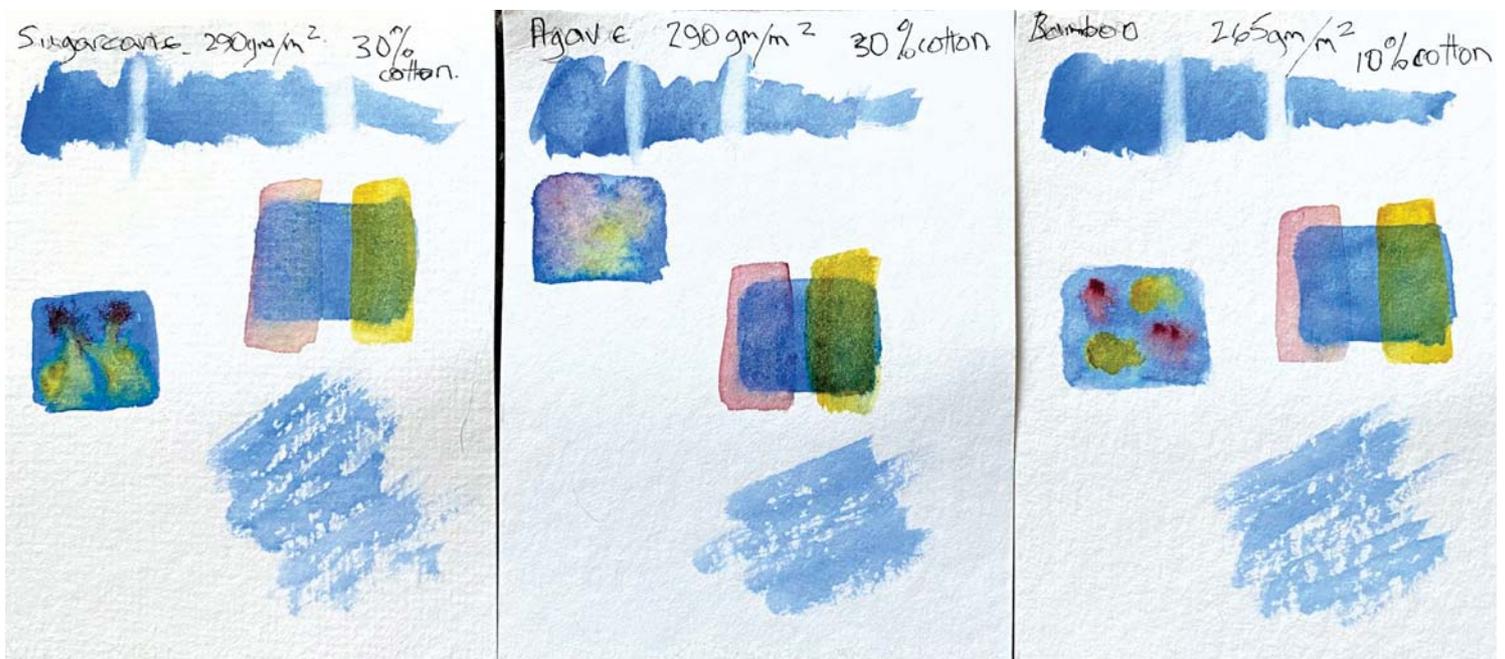
Hahnemühle



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slave labour, high use of water, and the use of pesticides to control weevils.

Many quality brands of 100% cotton paper are available including Arches, Bockingford, Canson, Clairefontaine, Fabriano, Hahnemühle, Saunders Waterford, Strathmore, and The Langton. Chinese companies producing 100% cotton papers include Baohong and Meeden, which are generally less expensive than European brands, however of good quality.

Wood pulp (cellulose) paper

This is made from wood as the name indicates. It is sometimes referred to as 'wood free' because the lignin which causes acidity is removed. Lignin comprises 20-35% of the composition of wood and is important in nature to hold plant cells together. Because of the acidity, which causes paper to turn yellow, the wood is broken down chemically. The pH (acidity-alkalinity of paper) needs to be 7 (neutral) or higher i.e. more alkaline. Cellulose-based papers are now almost always acid free.

Hahnemühle (and other manufacturers) make a number of cellulose-based papers, including their Britannia and Harmony ranges. Generally these papers are less absorbent than those that are cotton-based but are well liked by many artists.

Cellulose based paper is a little more challenging to use than cotton paper, but is affordable to buy. There are also several combinations of wood pulp and cotton paper available.

Other paper compositions

There are now sustainable alternatives to cotton and wood pulp papers, many available in New Zealand and most made by Hahnemühle.

Bamboo is 90% bamboo and 10% cotton, and is 265 gsm.

Hemp paper has high durability. It has a rough surface, which works for many artists. Hahnemühle makes a 60% Hemp – 40% cotton paper though it doesn't seem to be available in New Zealand. East Coast Hemp Supply (in the US) sells Hemp Heritage watercolour paper, 300 gm/sqm, for US\$12.95.

<https://shop.eastcoasthempsupply.com/products/hemp-heritage%20AE-watercolor-paper-art-pack>

Sugarcane paper paper is 70% bagasse (waste from sugarcane), 30% cotton. It is cold press, and 290 gsm.

Agave paper is made from the succulent, Agave, which is prevalent in South American countries. It is 70% agave and 30% cotton, and has a weight of 290 gsm. It is markedly whiter than sugarcane and bamboo.

I tested the three paper samples that Andrew Glennie at Gordon Harris generously donated: Agave, Sugarcane, and Bamboo which came in pads of 8 x 10.5 cm. Hemp was not available.

The pigments I used are Cobalt Blue, Alizarin Crimson - Daniel Smith and Transparent Yellow - MaimeriBlu. Here are the results.

- **Lifting:** all three handled lifting satisfactorily. Other reviewers have suggested that Agave has a delicate surface and pills with lifting. There is a slight roughness around the lifting sites on Agave but it's not too bad.
- **Wet on wet:** Bamboo handled this best, and Agave worst. Sugarcane was middling.
- **Glazing:** Bamboo paper seems to have taken this the best, with sugarcane a close second. The texture of sugar cane paper is apparent in the glazing. Agave with its fragile surface muddled the colours somewhat.
- **Dry brushing:** Sugarcane and Bamboo coped well with dry brushing. The texture of sugar cane is again apparent. It was more difficult to get the dry brush effect on Agave's smooth surface.

Comments

Although Bamboo paper is a lighter weight than the others, it handled lifting, glazing, and dry brush work well.

Sugarcane paper also performed well. Its texture shows through, which is potentially a problem for some.

Agave is smooth and white, and probably best suited to detailed work.

I did three quick landscape sketches 'blind' using the papers. Bamboo and Sugarcane were a pleasure to use; Sugarcane tended to have more intense colour. Agave is less easy because of its smooth and fragile surface. If I had to choose one, it would probably be Sugarcane. All are available in New Zealand. I recommend trying them as eco-friendly alternatives to cotton.



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Pictured: da Vinci Colineo Watercolour Brushes

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Making Colour Sing - Practical Lessons in Colour and Design by Jean Dobie

There are books in my collection that I re read about once a year and *Making Colour Sing* is one of those. It was first published in 1986 and is now recognised as a 'classic'.

The book is divided into thirty-one short, well written chapters. Twenty are devoted to colour and eleven to composition. As the title indicates the focus is on how to use colour (to make it sing) and to design an image (to paint a picture rather than an object) rather than on the complexities of colour and design theory. It is therefore easily accessible and practical. The book is generously illustrated with paintings that illustrate the points made.

To give you an idea of the content here are some of the key points of the colour chapters:

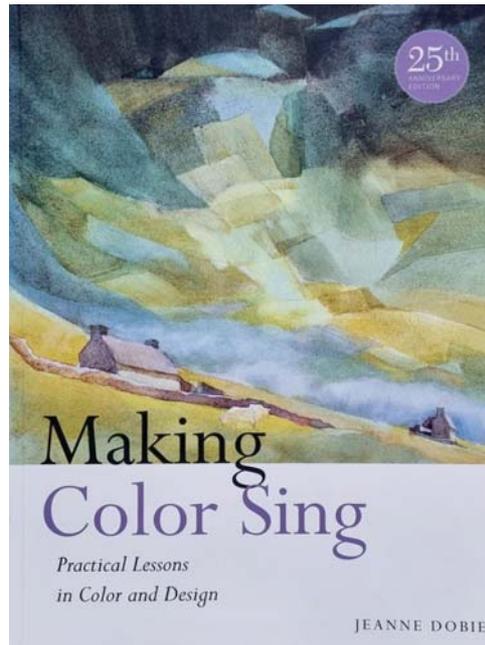
Choose a limited palette of single pigment transparent colours for maximum glow and carrying power - 'oceanic colours' which have strength and vibrancy from across the room. Avoid oceanic mixtures that contain the complement of the colour you are trying to mix as this will grey the result. For example, to mix violet using blue and red avoid using yellow leaning hues – use a red leaning blue and a blue leaning red.

Colours pulsate when surrounded with complementary colours or colours containing their complements. Staining pigments have twice the power of others and are useful for mixing rich transparent darks. Luminous complementary darks make adjacent lights glow. A colour can be accentuated by surrounding it with complementary colour or disguised by surrounding it with colour of a similar hue or value, or by dulling it by adding some complementary.

Visual tension can be the subject of a painting, created by the use of complementary colours of equal value and intensity (even when muted) and opposite temperatures. For example, the focus could be a yellow field vibrating against a purple (rather than a green) hedge. Copying landscape colours is rarely satisfying.

Mouse colours such as greys, mixed from complementary colours, and browns, mixed from three primaries, support rich jewel colours allowing them to shine. Accentuate jewel like colours by using with restraint and balancing them with mouse colours. Tame wild colours using complements, glazes and disguises. Too much variety of colour results in visual confusion.

Colour temperature is relative and should be judged in relation to the temperature of the neighbouring colour. Warm colours advance and cool colours recede. This can be used to create form and space in a painting.



White and light colours attract attention more than dark colours and appear to expand when surrounded by darks. Tinting white areas with a blush of colour makes them glow. Pure white areas will appear to take on a faint tint of the complement of the surrounding colour.

Glazing is the optical mixing of thin layers of transparent colours painted wet on completely dry. This way of mixing colour gives a completely different result from mixing on the palette. There are five chapters on the various ways of using glazes, as underpaintings, in correcting strident areas, in unifying disjointed areas, and in shadows.

Colour can be used to bridge unrelated areas, softening unwanted contrasts. Colour from one area can be added to the adjacent area to smooth the transition.

With regard to composition some key points are:

See the image, including the background shapes, as a variety of solid shapes (not outlines) of different values and colours which interact in a pleasing pattern. If you focus on seeing the overall pattern of shapes and how they interact there is less tendency to paint one thing at a time, and to see and paint all the distracting detail. Place the lightest and darkest shapes together at the centre of interest, the rest of the painting should be supporting midtones.

What is important is not how well you paint but how well you see and work out how to arrange the shapes, values and colours from your subject. Unpainted white shapes need to be designed, not be left over bits of white paper. The eye seeks an interesting pattern of light shapes, the role of the dark shapes is to provide a setting for the lights. Midtones should carry your eye through the picture without interruption so should be of a similar value so as not to stop the eye.

Compose with about 12 shapes which need to be varied in size and value. Exaggerate and or combine shapes and their position to improve the design if necessary. Remember you are making a painting, not a copy of what is in front of you.

This is not a basic 'how to paint book'. Knowledge and experience of colour and design theory is helpful to hang the information on to. There are suggested exercises which help imbed the information. The knowledge contained makes it an essential book for more experienced painters who wish to grow in their expertise.

This is a book written out of love for colour and a profound understanding of how colour behaves and how it can be used in composition. It has helped move me from painting subjects (things) to composing images. Each time I read it something new registers with me, so I will keep reading it annually.

2026 Summer Competition

The Winsor & Newton Summer Competition attracted 73 entries from North and South Islands. The prizes are vouchers for Winsor & Newton art supplies, valued at \$300 for First prize, \$150 for Second place and \$75 for Third place.



Watercolour New Zealand thank Winsor & Newton for their generous sponsorship.

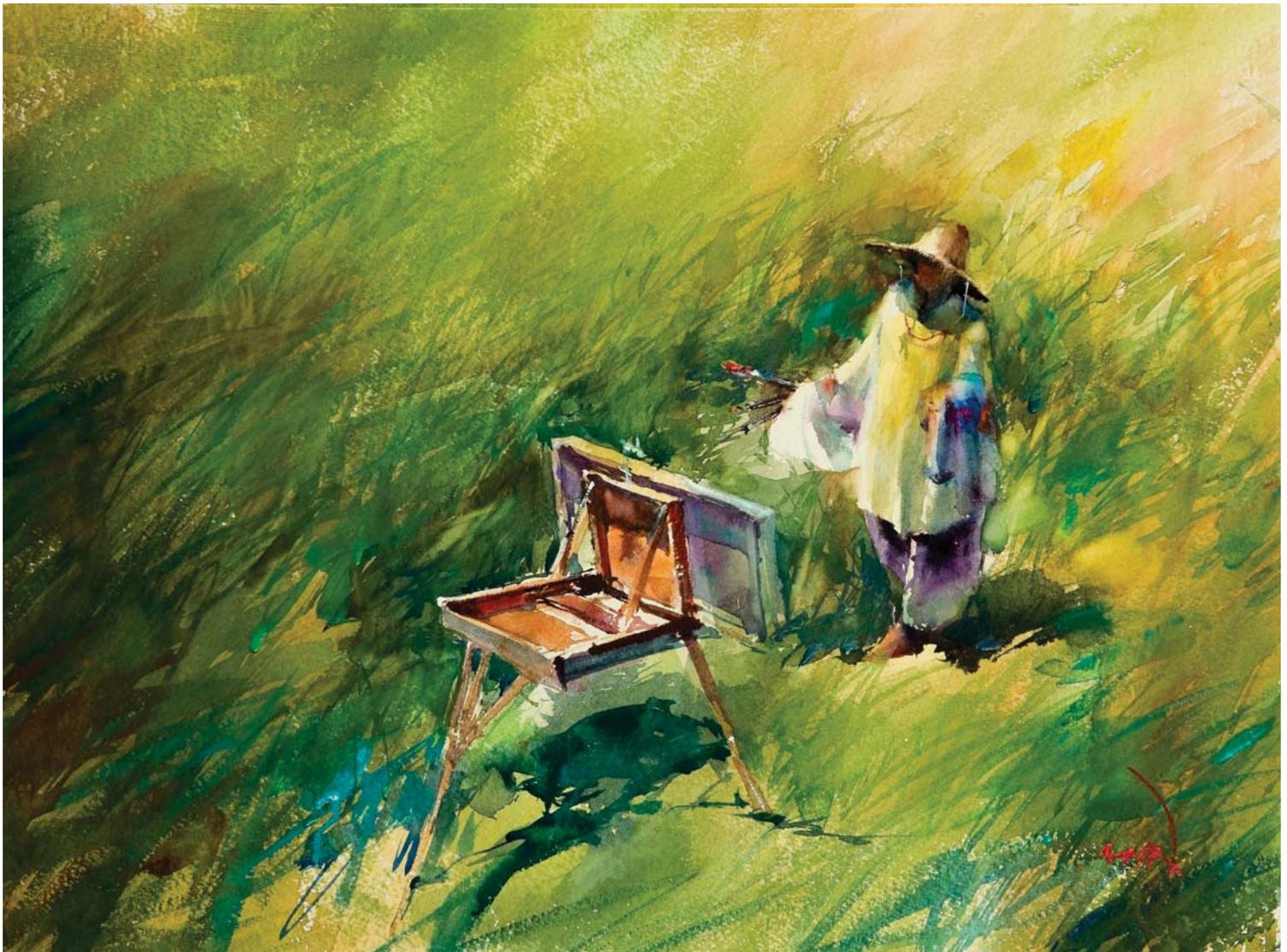
First place - *Leuven Glow* by Kit Ong



Judges' comment: This painting features an iconic Wellington bar captured in a flowing, loose watercolour style. A great subject with the light inviting the viewer in.

Artist's comment: "This vibrant watercolour captures the lively atmosphere of Leuven Bar in Wellington. With expressive brushwork and a warm palette of golds, ambers and soft blues, it evokes the energy of a bustling evening scene. Figures gather under white umbrellas illuminated by glow of city lights, creating a sense of warmth, movement, and community that reflects the spirit of Wellington's social heart."

Second place - *Plein Air Artist* by Min Kim

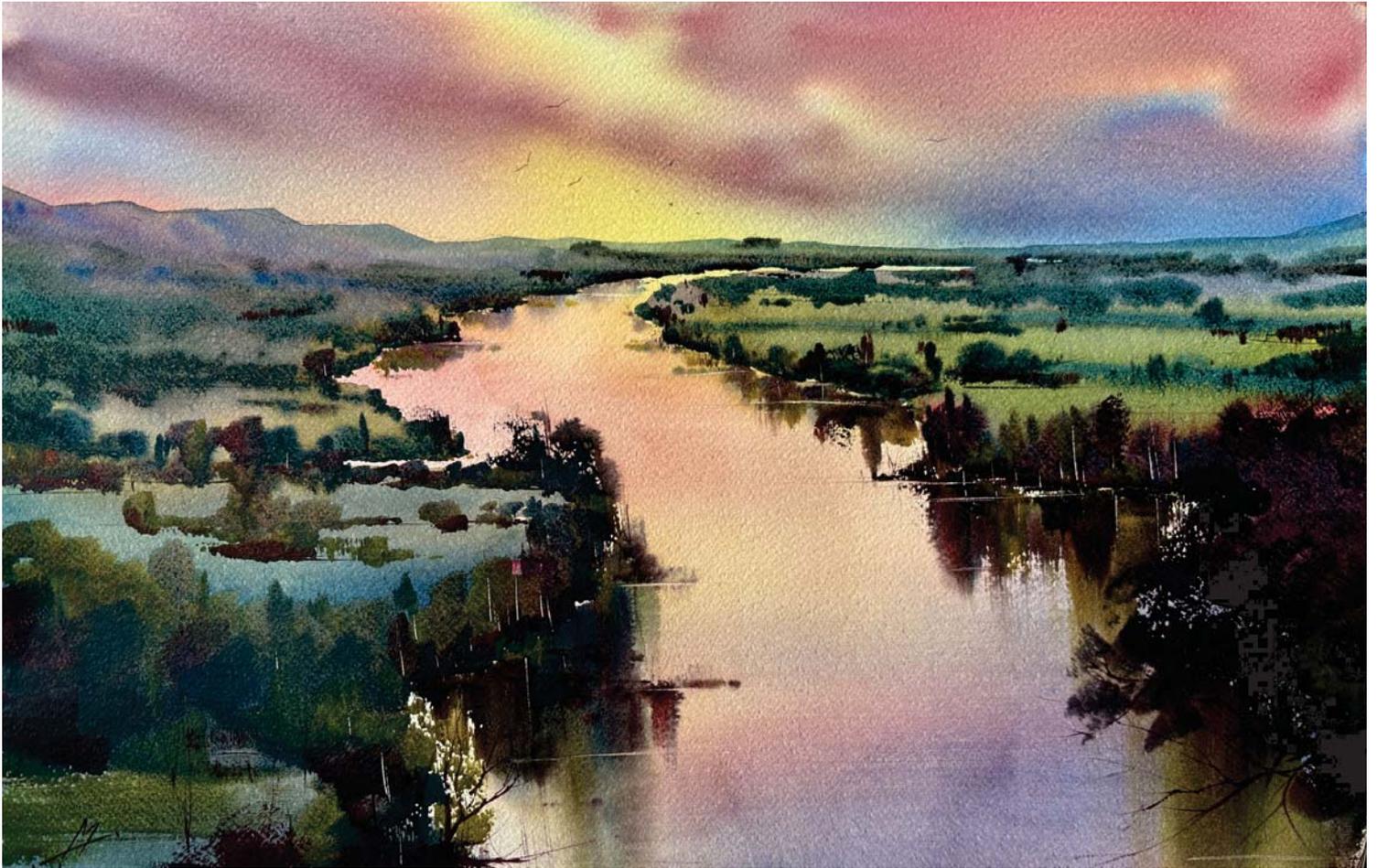


Judges' comment: Intense colour and light against dark draw you into this painting. The focus on the artist and the easel is captured with just enough detail. The work is beautifully painted with soft and hard edges.

Artist's comment: "Throughout 2025 I challenged myself to paint plein air for the entire year. Spending real, face-to-face time with nature gave me new wings as an artist and a deep

sense of freedom to explore New Zealand's extraordinary landscapes. This painting comes from a summer at Lake Pukaki, where I was repeatedly humbled by the majestic beauty of Aoraki / Mt Cook. I painted every day, trying to capture fleeting light and atmosphere. Whenever I set up my easel in the open air, I feel a quiet warmth — a blessing from nature that continues to guide my work."

Third Place: *Still Waters* by Martin Necas

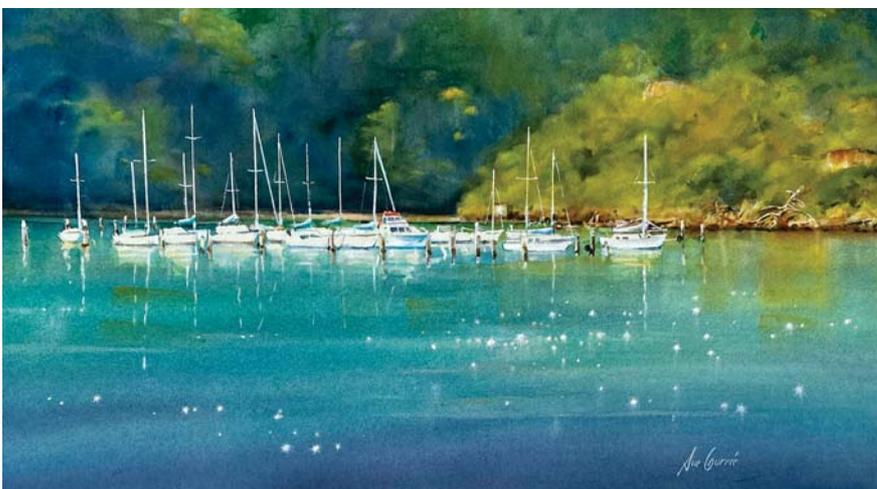


Judges' comment: The moody sunset is captured in the river reflections. This is a simple composition with strong use of colours. The artist makes excellent use of light against dark. Beautifully done.

Artist's comment: "I am a Hamilton-based watercolour artist. I gravitate towards bold, expressive, impressionist landscapes that capture the raw natural beauty of New Zealand. My aim is to portray a sense of grandeur, wonder, mystery and beauty. Most

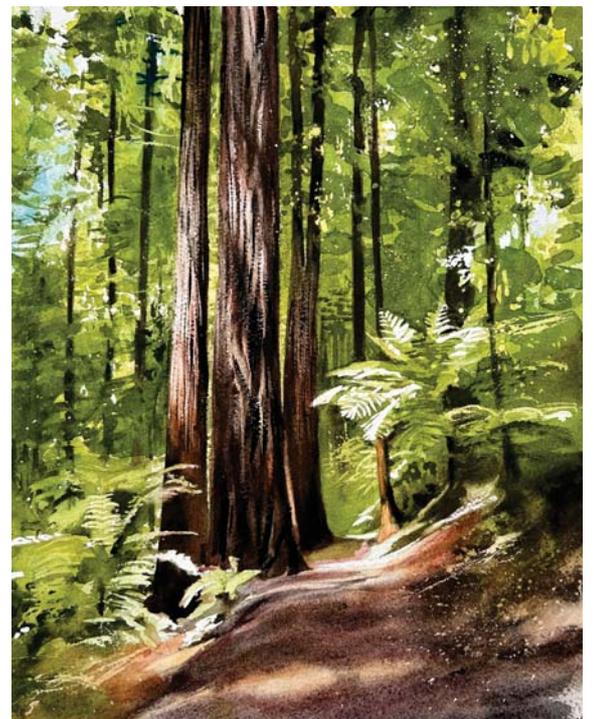
of my inspiration comes from the beautiful landscapes of the Waikato region. This painting depicts an aerial view of the Waikato River where its waters are temporarily arrested by the Karapiro dam, hence the title *Still waters*. Looking north, the foothills of Mt Maungatautari are shown on the left horizon. To the right, an expanse of lush green fields, so characteristic of the Waikato, reflect the last rays of receding daylight."

Other entries in the Summer Competition



The Diamonds of Diamond Harbour by Sue Currie

The paintings are posted daily on our social media and in the gallery on our website. https://www.watercolournewzealand.nz/public/pages/events/summer-competitions/online_summer_competition_info/#all-entries
Both Ruth Keil and Sue Currie have attracted a lot of likes and comments.



Redwood Forest by Ruth Kiel

Celebrating our most precious possession: a brief history of watercolour painting in Aotearoa New Zealand

Dr Rebecca Rice, Senior Curator Art, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

One of the highlights of our 50th year celebrations was undoubtedly Dr Rebecca Rice, Senior Curator of Art, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Dr. Rice's presentation at the launch of Awash with Colour last November was as educational as it was enthralling. It was a speech that condensed a 250-year history of watercolour in New Zealand into 1700 words which is no mean feat in itself. Through her vision, we come to understand the significant role those early watercolour artists played and, for the future, her words are an encouraging call to us all.

It is a privilege to publish the speech for the first time in our newsletter. We hope that you enjoy Dr Rice's expertise, wisdom and wit, as she shines a fresh light on the way we view our watercolour world.



2 November 2025, The Dowse Art Museum, on the occasion of the celebration of 50 years of Watercolour New Zealand

Watercolour painting has a long and prestigious place in Aotearoa New Zealand's art History. The very first artists to set foot in this land recorded their impressions of people and place, flora and fauna in watercolour, from Sydney Parkinson, the artist on board Cook's first voyage to the Pacific, through to the earliest surveyors, soldiers and settlers who arrived on these shores with the hope of making a home in this place: George French Angas's watercolour portraits of Māori have carried stories of tipuna, their dress, and their environments across time and place ([Nga Toenga \(daughter of Barrier Island Chief\) | Collections Online - Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa](#)); New Zealand Company surveyors and artists, William Fox and Charles Heaphy's watercolours portrayed a productive, fertile land encouraging immigrants to this country (1), while the flamboyant soldier-artist Gustavus von Tempsky produced watercolours that captured the pain and conflict of the New Zealand Wars ([The return of the war party | Collections Online - Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa](#)). Martha King, described as New Zealand's first resident botanical artist, painted our native flora with a pleasingly spare, economical yet graceful hand (2) and for generations John Buchanan's pared-back watercolour panorama of Milford Sound, Mitre Peak at the centre with hills cascading to left and right, literally adorned the cover of our National Art History.

The first generation of 'artists' firmly believed that the scenery of New Zealand should give rise to a great school of landscape painting. William Hodgkins, speaking at the Otago Institute in 1880 reminded listeners that:

...we have here, almost at our very doors, the special features of every country which is remarkable for its scenery, the English lake, the Scottish mountain and glen, the snow-seamed peaks of Switzerland, the fiords of Norway, the tinted geysers of the Yellowstone...



Wellington Harbour, N.Z., 1841, New Zealand, by Major Charles Heaphy VC. Purchased 1968 from Wellington City Council Picture Purchase Fund. Te Papa (1968-0024-1)



The Phormium Tenax, or New Zealand Flax. Plate 15. From the book: *Illustrations to Adventure in New Zealand*, 1842, by Martha King, Day & Haghe, Smith, Elder, and Co. Te Papa (RB001053/015a)



A wet day on a wild coast, 1894, Dunedin, by William Hodgkins. Purchased 1994 with New Zealand Lottery Grants Board funds. Te Papa (1994-0004-1)

Watercolour, with its portability and affordability, was the preferred medium for Hodgkins and his peers as they travelled in search of new subjects for their brush (3). John Gully, who pictured the mountains and lakes of Te Wai Pounamu, the South Island, with such eloquence and elegance, earned the title the 'Turner of the South'. (4)

James Crowe Richmond, whose still, sensitive landscape watercolours were made in stolen moments as he travelled Aotearoa as Acting Native Minister, awkwardly juggled his political responsibilities with his artistic passion (5). He lamented when based near Queenstown in Skippers Canyon:

"All was frost and the sun so little on the valley that if time had allowed I could hardly have made a sketch for the cold. But of course, my business, which was to see and be seen, would not let me amuse myself..."

Many of these artists passed on their talents to the next generation – Dorothy Kate Richmond (6), Isabel Field (7) and Frances Hodgkins – and also, through the establishment of art clubs, academies, and art schools, to aspiring artists throughout the country. Up to the 1880s, in the embryonic art societies that emerged in metropolitan centres, watercolour held sway. But very soon, there were other trends afoot, and in the same decade, Alfred Sharpe, responding to the prominence given to oil paintings in exhibitions, penned a 'plea for watercolours', writing that those who are:

...deterred by the far greater technical difficulties which beset the manipulation of water colour, as well as the much greater care required both in regard to workmanship and materials, have gone over holus bolus to oil: and water colour seems to be relegated to the realms of sketchdom. I have been a watercolourist for thirty years, and still stick to my first love.

For Sharpe and many of his generation, the sketch made outdoors was something to be worked up in the studio (8). In a series of articles titled 'Hints for landscape students in watercolour', he described how one should sketch from nature before proceeding to studio work. In the studio, one could make decisions about the composition, carefully selecting the right clouds, even cutting and pasting from previous studies to achieve the desired effect – a process that sounds very much like a 19th century version of photoshop!

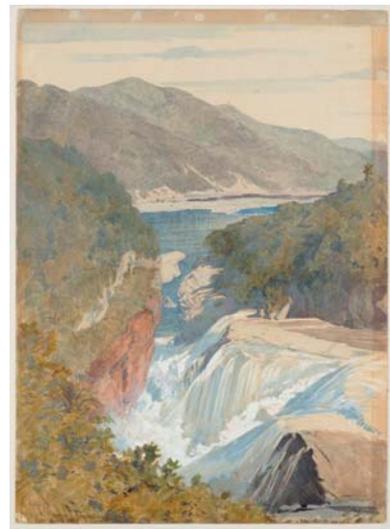
Fast forward 20 years, and Frances Hodgkins was making waves with her watercolours, proving their ongoing relevance and leaving behind a portfolio that continues to stagger us with its effortless beauty (9). Hodgkins painted en plein air and in the spirit of impressionism, as she worked to capture the fleeting effects of colour and light with a freedom of expression. For her, watercolour was a medium that allowed her to work up images quickly with strokes of pure, unblended colour, painting wet on wet, and moving away from an interest in naturalism to considering the overall effect of a work of art. Hodgkins was wary of imitation, writing to her mother in 1903:

...it is so easy to paint like your master and to think other people's thoughts, the difficulty is to be yourself, assimilate all that is helpful but keep your own individuality, as your most precious possession – it is one's only chance.

Hodgkins transitioned to other media after World War two but periodically returned to paper-based works throughout her career. This is a pattern that can be observed observe in many



Paekakariki, 1883, New Zealand, by John Gully. Gift of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, 1936. Te Papa (1936-0012-241)



Te Reinga, Falls of the Wairoa. Hawke's Bay, April 1867, Hawke's Bay, by James Crowe Richmond. Gift of EA Atkinson, 1935, on behalf of the artist's daughter, DK Richmond. Te Papa (1935-0005-12)



Roses and berries, 1933, Wellington, by Dorothy Richmond. Gift of Mr and Mrs G. G. Gibbes Watson, 1974. Te Papa (1974-0003-18)



A New Zealand lake scene, 1900, New Zealand, by Mrs Isabel Field. Gift of W.G. Turnbull, 1950. Te Papa (1950-0005-2)

artists' practices. Watercolour is such a foundational medium, a core part of a traditional art training, and of course it's cheaper, more portable and more accessible than many other media. At times of change or experimentation, working in watercolour can enable artists a degree of freedom, the ability to try out new things, to experiment. Along with Hodgkins, we see this play out in the oeuvres of Toss Woollaston, Rita Angus, Gretchen Albrecht, John Drawbridge, to name but a few artists. Today, we see artists like Seraphine Pick, recently named an Arts Foundation Laureate, work in watercolour alongside oils and gouache to give expression to her artistic vision.

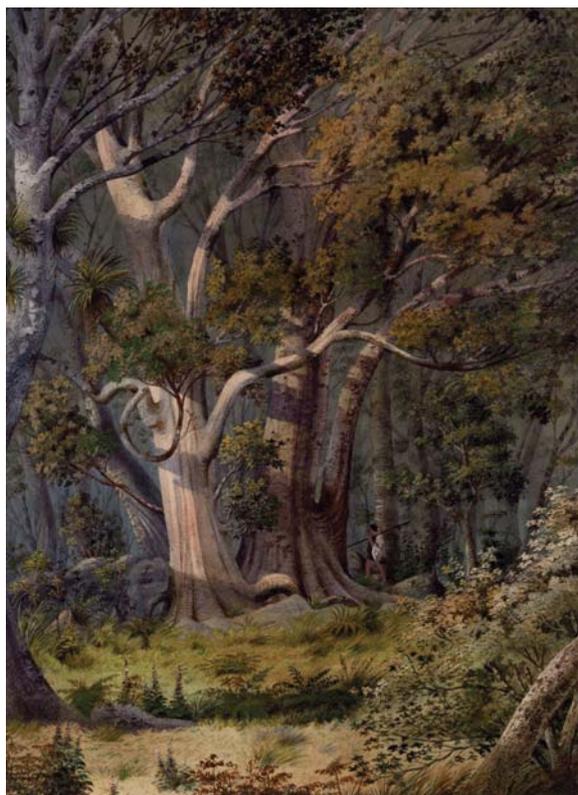
In spite of all these examples, as is noted in the introduction to *Awash with Colour*, the publication celebrating 50 years of Watercolour New Zealand, the medium has often been treated as a 'poor cousin'. Fifty years ago, the founders of the society, Eleanor File and Kathleen McLay, recognised the need to advocate for and preserve the unique tradition of pure watercolour, and set about establishing the watercolour society.

Reading the beautiful publication that is being launched today, I'm struck by the work you all have done over this time. Not only have you, through the society, created a space for watercolour, but you've also made a space for art. You've made your medium accessible, engaging with a broad range of artists, from amateurs to experts, young and old. You've offered feedback, held workshops and 'safaris' throughout the North and South Islands, and have connected your members through newsletters and increasingly through online platforms. I also love the connections that have been drawn across disciplines, from ceramics, to dance and music. This is arguably where the magic happens, when we rub up what we know against the possibilities of cross-fertilisation. This is what keeps us all going. As one of your members, Tui McLauchlan apparently stated after a particularly successful exhibition: "Goodness me, we might all settle down with egotistic smugness into that malignant rut where we don't strive anymore!"

I was born in 1974, celebrated my 50th birthday last year – one year ahead of you. I understand how those 50 years pass – the challenges and opportunities that present themselves to us, the periods of growth and excitement countered by others of self-doubt and paranoia. But what a joy to reach this age! I



Burial place of Hone Heke, Bay of Islands, 1883, Auckland, by Alfred Sharpe. Purchased 1977 with Ellen Eames Collection funds. Te Papa (1977-0027-1)



The hilltop, circa 1908, by Frances Hodgkins. Purchased 1913 by public subscription. Te Papa (1913-0003-1)

remember thinking as I turned 50 that it gave me permission to throw my weight around a bit, to celebrate my own individuality – for as Hodgkins said, that is our most precious possession.

The watercolours showcased in this book and through the work of Watercolour New Zealand members throughout Aotearoa demonstrate extraordinary individuality. They range in subject from the comedic to the botanical, from abstracts to still lifes, from figure studies to cityscapes, and in style from detailed and descriptive to loose, expressive works, from bright, unblended to muted and bleeding colours.

I'd like to finish by quoting a beautiful phrase made by one of your previous presidents, Vivian Manthel French, for reading this made my heart sing, and it should yours too: "Watercolour is unpredictable, but beautifully lyrical. It is like a human being – responding to a light but firm touch, not liking to be overlooked, and occasionally liking to run free".

As you enter your 50th year, might I, as a 51-year-old, encourage you to embrace the freedom your medium allows – the way it dances between the lines of predictability and spontaneous surprise. I encourage you to continue celebrating the potential of watercolour, and to continue to grow and innovate together so your society might thrive, as I wish to, for another 50 years.

Articles on New Zealand's historic artists included in our newsletters

Newsletter 163 (2016) Charles Heaphy
 Newsletter 170 (2018) Francis Hodgkins
 Newsletter 169 (2017) John Gully
 Newsletter 191 (2023) Albert Walsh
 Newsletter 189 (2022) James Nairn
 Newsletter 179 (2020) T.A. McCormack
 Newsletter 164 (2016) Olivia Spencer-Bower

- i See Gil Docking, *Two Hundred Years of New Zealand Painting*, A. H. and A. W. Reed, 1971
- ii Cited in Peter Entwistle, *William Mathew Hodgkins and his circle*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 1984, pp. 160-161.
- iii JC Richmond, letter to CW Richmond, Dunedin, 13 June 1867, cited in Guy H Scholefield (ed.), *The Richmond-Atkinson Papers*, vol. 2, Government Printer, Wellington, p. 250.
- iv See Roger Blackley, *The Art of Alfred Sharpe*, Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery, 1992, p. 126
- v Cited in Mary Kislner, *Frances Hodgkins: European Journeys*, Auckland: Auckland University Press and Auckland Art Gallery Toi i Tamaki, 2019, p. 53.
- vi *Awash with Colour: Celebrating 50 years of Watercolour New Zealand*, 2025, p. 37
- vii Ibid, p. 6

NEW

Aqua Elite Prism

Introducing Aqua Elite Prism, our new watercolour brush with a distinctive triangular head and ferrule. Prism is designed to give artists a new level of control, versatility, and creative freedom.

Aqua Elite has three loading surfaces, each side can hold a different colour, allowing you to blend, transition and create multi-dimensional effects directly on the paper.

From crisp edges and fine details to soft gradients and fluid washes, this brush provides precision and creative expression.

Aqua Elite brushes are made from innovative synthetic hair, indistinguishable from natural Kolinsky, Perfect for discerning watercolour artists.



[SCAN HERE TO DISCOVER MORE](#)



Prism Design



Upcoming Workshops with Jane, Deb and Charlotte

Two 2- Day workshops with Jane Blundell on Colour Harmony

Workshop 2026/1 - this workshop is fully booked.

Workshop 2026/2 - one place available in the 25/26 March
9am - 4pm at Nga Manu Reserve, Waikanae, Kapiti Coast

Fee \$300 for two days. To book this workshop email

bookings@watercolournewzealand.nz

Subject: Workshop 2026/2

Class 2026/3 or Class 2026/4

Two 1-Day workshops with Deb Clarke

Deb was guest artist for our Splash Stratford exhibition and presented a glorious array of large paintings. She is a popular and very professional tutor who will give you valuable learning in an engrossing, enjoyable session. Each one-day workshop you will learn the techniques of using lots of water and granulating pigments to create the texture of fur or feathers in any watercolour. The paper and granulating pigments will be supplied.

ONE DAY Workshop with Deb Clarke Wild Watercolour 2026/3

The subject will be a hare.

Date: Saturday 13 June 2026 9.00am – 4pm

Venue: Wellington Art Club, 27 Chelsea Street, Miramar, Wellington

Fee: \$125 Suitable for any level of experience

ONE DAY Workshop with Deb Clarke Winged Watercolour 2026/4

The subject will be birds.

Date: Sunday 14 June 2026 9.00am – 4pm

Venue: Wellington Art Club, 27 Chelsea Street, Miramar, Wellington

Fee: \$125 Suitable for any level of experience

Please note: You can request to attend both one-day workshops. Please give a preferred option.

If places are available you will be able to attend both. To book these workshops email

bookings@watercolournewzealand.nz Subject Clarke Workshop 2026/3, Workshop 2026/4



Class 2026/5

Beginners Washes & Edges workshops with Charlotte Hird

Tutor: Charlotte Hird

Date: **10am - 5pm 25/26 July Workshop**

Venue: Wellington Art Club 27 Chelsea Street, Miramar

Fee: \$200 for two days **2026/5**

Learn the core techniques of watercolour and create landscapes, a still life and learn to place people in the landscape.

Watercolour is all about control of the water on the brush, the pigment in your palette and the dampness of the paper. Only practice will guarantee good control of these elements. To make that practice fun we will use vibrant colours and make beautiful washes and soft edges. You will explore wet into wet technique, blend colours, and leave with a handful of paintings, some core knowledge and confidence for your watercolour journey.

All materials provided including the paper.

To book this workshops email:

bookings@watercolournewzealand.nz Subject: Class 2026/5



Monthly Outdoor Painting Groups

WHANGAREI Sketch Group meets on the **2nd Saturday** of each month to sketch at different locations in and around Whangarei. The upcoming dates: **14 February, 14 March, 11 April, 9 May**. Locations will be published a week before. **Sketching Whangarei** www.facebook.com/groups/5783292938441592 or contact **Tina Seifarth** - tina4kiwi@gmail.com

Waihi Plein Air Group meet on the **2nd Friday of the month at 10am**. Everyone welcome, contact **Pam** on **0221075712**.

NEW PLYMOUTH Outdoor Painting group

Email **Yvonne Geeraedts** to find out more about this monthly plein air group: l.y.houwers@actrix.co.nz

WELLINGTON Group Sunday 10 am – 12 noon

19 April - Queen's Wharf Outer-T, Wellington Waterfront

17 May - Karaka Bay, Opposite 315 Karaka Bay Road, Miramar Peninsula

21 June - Otari Plant Museum Wilton Bush, 150 Wilton Road

We welcome newcomers to come and paint with experienced painters, followed by coffee and lunch in a nearby cafe. Join the **mailing list** email info@watercolournewzealand.nz
Subject: **WGTN MPG mailing list**

Plein Air Painting Nelson Tasman meets weekly on a Wednesday at 10am in the Nelson Tasman area and includes watercolour and other media. You can find the group on FB @ Plein Air Painting Nelson Tasman or contact **Nicole Russell** nicole@nicolerussellart.com, 0223786099

CANTERBURY Watercolour Plein Air Group meet monthly at locations around Christchurch and Banks Peninsula as the weather allows. Notification of events will be sent around a week in advance. Updates on **FaceBook** and by email to those who have registered with **Canterbury Watercolour Plein Air Group** www.facebook.com/groups/258405936508559

Important dates for your diary

- 1 March **Watercolour New Zealand NZ Annual General Meeting:** Wellington Art Club, 3.30 -5.30 pm
- 21/22 March **Workshop with Jane Blundell** Wellington Art Club
- 24/25 March **Workshop with Jane Blundell** at Nga Manu Reserve, Waikanae
- 30 March - 3 April Outdoor Painting week**
- 1/2/3/4 May **Paintaway Clyde, Central Otago**
- 13/14 June **Deb Clarke - Watercolour Texture Workshops**
- 25/26 July **Charlotte Hird - Beginners Workshop**

Experience Japan by Painting
7 nights/6 days in Hokkaido
with artist *Charlotte Hird*

Come paint, advance your skills and learn about this unique culture, based in a modest suburban house in Otaru during spring or autumn, 6-days painting temples, shrines, torii, blossoms, rice paddies, lakes, mountains, beaches and the famous Otaru Canal. Receive expert tutoring, eat delicious Japanese food and experience a unique slice of Japanese life. Non-painters welcome. www.charlotteswebdesign.co.nz/tours
inquiries: charhird@gmail.com



2026 DATES and Availability:
Spring Tour 1: 1-7 May 1 place
Spring Tour 2: 10-17 May **SOLD OUT**
Spring Tour 3: 20-27 May **SOLD OUT**
Autumn Tour 1: 10-17 Oct **SOLD OUT**
Autumn Tour 2: 20-27 Oct 4 places
NZ \$2,000 per/person twin share
Includes: accommodation, breakfast, local transport, easels, tuition, WIFI

Welcome to our new members

Robin Falconer - Waikanae, **Sheila Cattle** - Blenheim, **Vic Crutchley** - Auckland, **Jackie Lindsay** - Palmerston North, **Allen Pendergrast** - Auckland, **Jane Grimmond** - Henderson, **Judith Glucina** - Whitianga, **Lynda Williams** - Feilding, **Nely Golovkova** - Auckland, **Silvia Guzman Rasillo** - Auckland, **Brent Forbes** - Timaru, **Paul Willis** - Nelson, **Debbie Stanger** - Blenheim, **Theresa Wallace** - Oamaru, **Aleesha Winter** - Morrinsville, **Valerie Dirou** - Nelson, **Anya Godwin** - Auckland, **Thabata Romanowski** - Stratford, **Helen Viggers** - Wellington



Paintaway Clyde
Central Otago
1/2/3/4 May 2026



Otago Autumn by Maurice Middleditch

Join fellow artists on a long weekend painting the stunning Central Otago landscape and historical artefacts of mining and pioneer life.

We are based at the Clyde Memorial Hall for our Paintaway in Autumn for 4 days in May (1/2/3/4). Over the 4 days we will paint, socialise, and eat together, with our "Pop up Gallery" on the Hall walls for all to admire and learn from.

Register your interest and receive further information:
bookings@watercolournewzealand.nz
Subject line: **Paintaway CLYDE 2026**

WATERCOLOUR & YOGA EXCURSIONS

Hot Water Beach

Bushy Park



16 - 20 April

23 - 26 June

South Coast Studio also offers weekly classes
in watercolour, drawing and painting.

021510020

southcoaststudio.co.nz

