

# COROMIND

Issue 39

## The Difference Between Marlin and Seagulls

What We Choose to  
Call Acceptable

## HOLISTIC WELL BEING THROUGH WAKA AMA

The Goal, the Sport, the Outcome

## GUARDIAN BIRDS OF THE COROMANDEL

The Art of Symbiosis  
with Iona Matheson

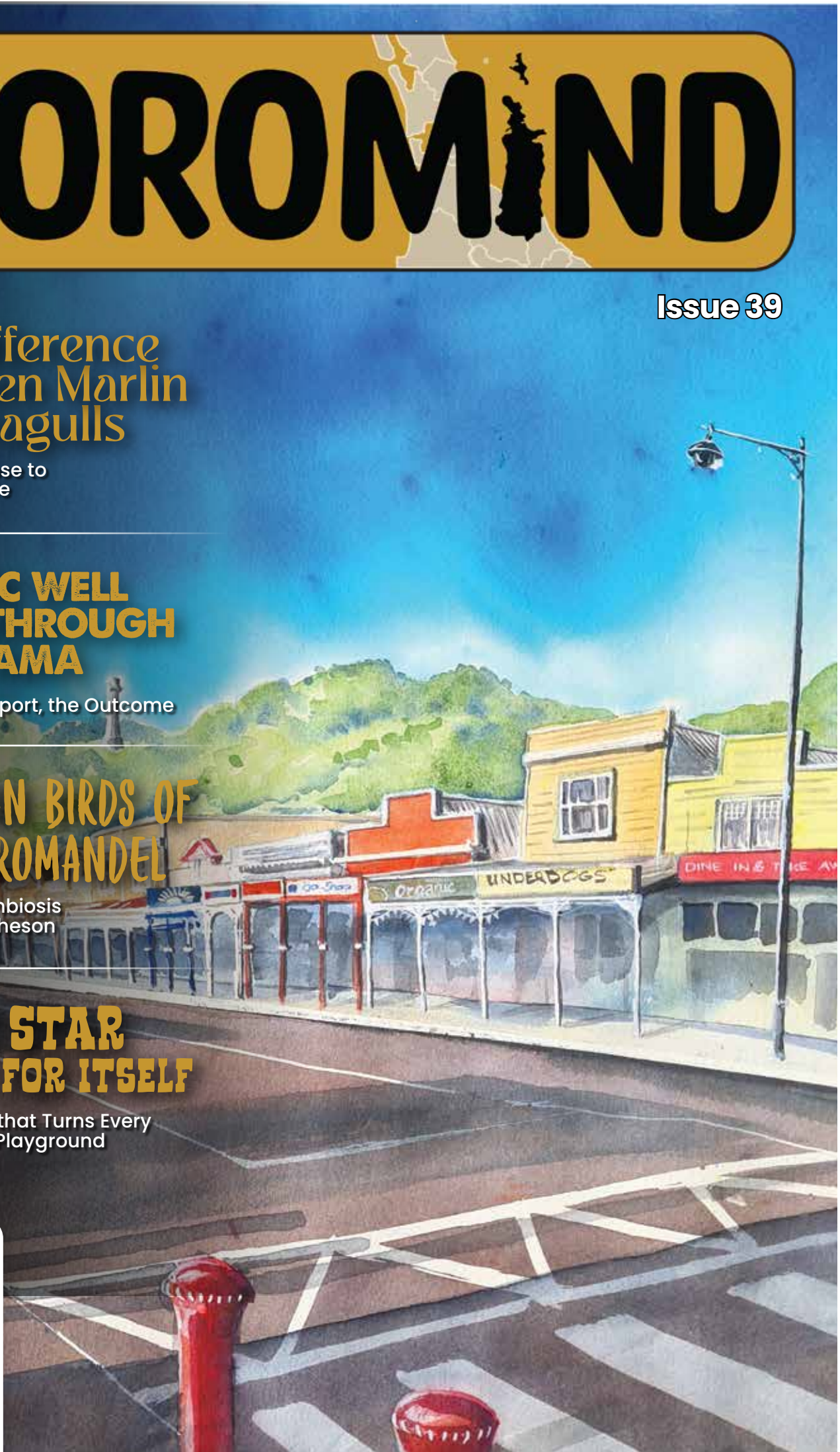
## LUCKY STAR SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

The Collective that Turns Every  
Festival Into a Playground

On Air



Watch & Listen



# Nature in Frame

There have been many well-deserved accolades for Coromind, now well into its fourth year of publication. Leo and Taylor have provided space for an amazing array of Coromandel artists of every hue – painters, sculptors, musicians, woodworkers, potters, writers, historians ... I stand in awe of what they have managed to achieve, presenting beautiful covers and fascinating stories while yet maintaining consistency along with variety.

My immediate focus, though, is on something else. I love how, from the outset, they have managed to also feature conservation issues and volunteers – an essential aspect of our Coromandel world. By raising awareness of the work being done both on land – along our shores and in the bush – and in the marine environment, Coromind increases the likelihood of residents and visitors changing damaging behaviours, engaging in positive efforts to support or restore restoration efforts, and in general living 'more gently' in te ao (nature).

What are some of the major issues facing us? For householders: legal waste disposal (including safe disposal of batteries, electronic waste etc.), controlling invasive pest weeds and animal pests, refraining from contaminating stormwater drains with old paint, chemicals and so on, aiming for self-sustainability, resisting the intrusion of invasive mining of our conservation estate ... the list goes on.

For the seashore, both coast care groups (removing invasive plant species and replanting with native ones), predator trappers and seashore bird protection volunteers (in particular, protecting dotterels during the nesting season) all perform vital services, usually with advice and support from DOC. Also, several local businesses and organisations support significant efforts for tree planting and marine protection.

Across the Peninsula, legions of volunteers are trapping possums, rats, hedgehogs, mice, weasels, stoats and (in certain areas) ferrets – all of which are responsible for deadly attacks on birds, nestlings and eggs, whether ground nesting or in trees, as well as other precious fauna such as geckos, skinks and wētā. With my own volunteer work over the past several years, both predator trapping and shorebird protection at one particular beach, I've seen the resulting increase in birdlife (e.g. bush birds such as tūi and kōtare) and successful dotterel and oystercatcher chick survival. It's the inspiration that keeps me going!

Looking back through the previous 38 issues of Coromind, this inclusion of conservation issues and awareness of our natural environment is a given – many of the early articles could easily be reprinted now to remind us of the importance of preserving Mother Earth while we can still make a difference. As stated in the initial Editorial, issue #1: 'We all play an important part in our community as individuals, but we believe that it's collective work that creates a better society.' Where conservation issues are concerned, this is an absolute truth! So, I offer a huge thank you to Leo and Taylor for their contribution to our community understanding of the importance of saving our environment from destructive practices and pests.

Words by **Helen Oliver**



WE NEED YOUR HELP!



## NEEDS A NEW HOME!

If you know of a property or opportunity, please get in touch:  
hello@coromind.nz | 021 036 88 66 | Thank you for supporting local.

The Coromind team is looking for a new place to call home. Leo and Taylor have been part of the Coromandel community for 13 years, living in Whitianga and running a growing media company that produces Coromind magazine, podcasts and video content.

We're searching for a 3 or 4 bedroom house, ideally with a large garage, unit or shed to house our mobile soundproofed studio. Whitianga is our preference, but we're open to suggestions.

As Coromind continues to grow, we're also open to sharing or renting a commercial space and creating a collaborative creative hub.

## COROMIND MAGAZINE IS INDEPENDENT, LOCAL, AND COMMUNITY-FUNDED.

Becoming a member helps us grow into a stable business that can continue telling Coromandel stories for years to come – delivered right to your door.

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# THE ULTIMATE COROMANDEL GIG GUIDE

Coromind now brings gigs and events from across the region into one place – powered by Eventfinda. From live music and exhibitions to festivals and community gatherings, our guide at [Coromind.nz](http://Coromind.nz) helps you stay in the loop.

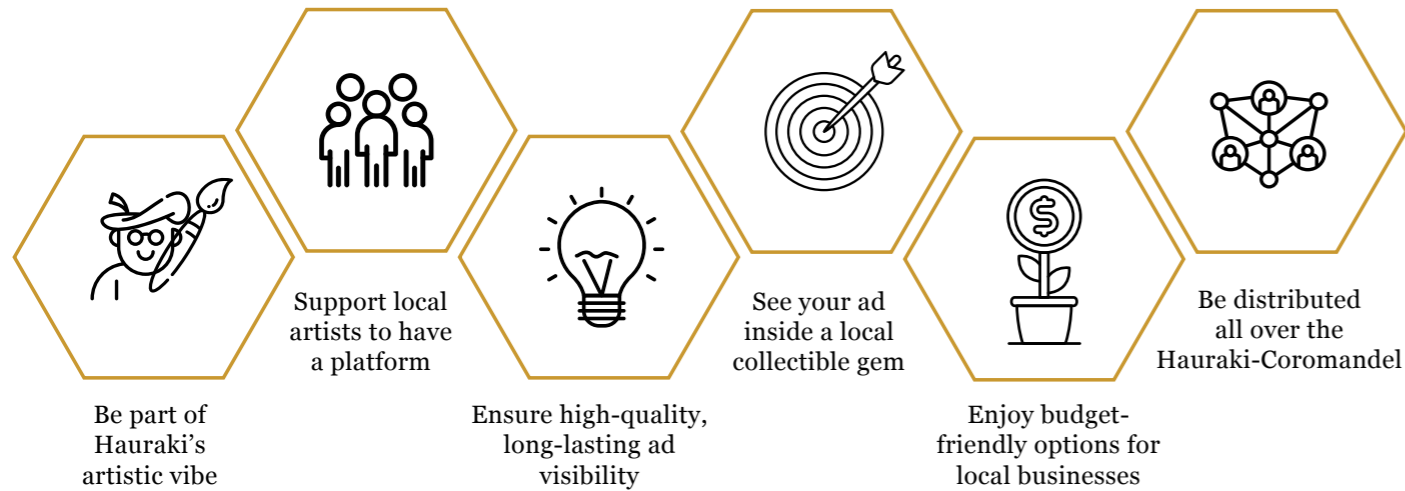
IF YOU'RE RUNNING AN EVENT AND WANT TO BE FEATURED, EMAIL US AT:

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## Reasons for your business to advertise on Coromind



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# Finding my *Medium*



When you walk into Vessel Gallery, you're likely to ask me two things: "What kind of art do you do?" and "Where on earth is that accent from?"

I usually answer that I am a watercolourist. Even though I dabble in almost everything, watercolour feels the most like me: fluid, transparent, unforgiving yet honest, occasionally unpredictable and stubborn, but generally well-behaved. However, as much as it defines me now, our relationship didn't exactly start with a 'coup de foudre'.

My name is Laurie Spera Mango. I grew up in Avignon, France, where I studied Applied Arts and Packaging Design. Back then, I was all about the bold world of acrylics, dry pastels, and alcohol markers. The professional watercolour set I treated myself to at fifteen sat quietly at the bottom of my toolbox, ignored and unloved. Its only job for years was to provide a light wash of colour to the caricatures I drew of my classmates (and teachers) whenever I got bored in English class.

At twenty-two, I traded my desk for a backpack to travel the world. Space was a luxury. My heavy paints stayed behind, and I packed a few trusted ink pens and, half-heartedly, that old tin of watercolours.

I documented my life on the road, sketching the faces I met and the places I visited. At first, it was all ink, with just a tiny hint of colour to bring things to life. But as the miles stretched on, the ink began to recede, making space for vibrant washes. I learned to dance with the "wet-on-wet" technique, to layer, to use light, to build volume, and to colour shadows to capture an ambience rather than just a scene.

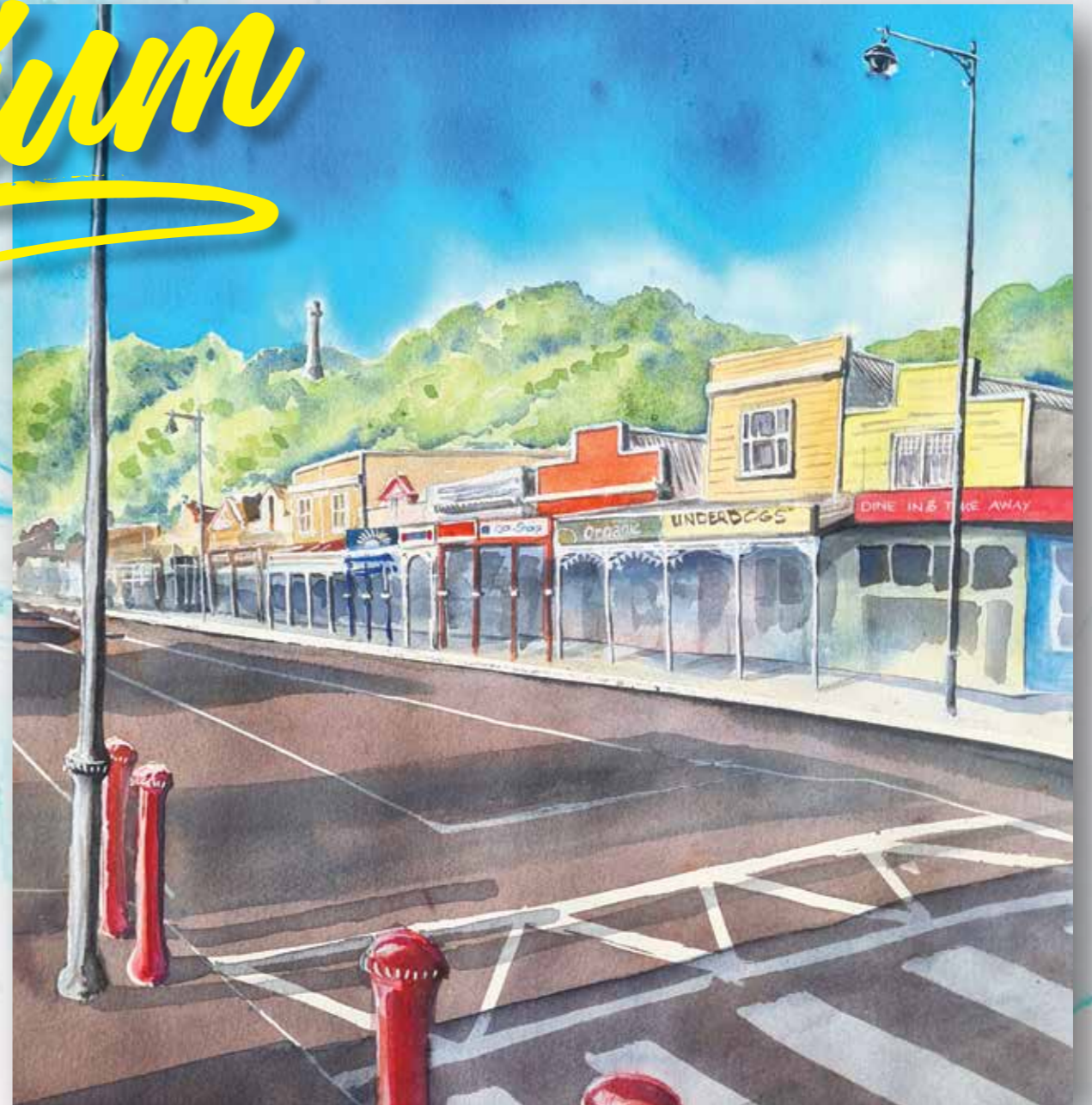
By the time I settled in New Zealand a few years later, going back to acrylics wasn't even an option. I had embraced watercolour out of necessity and ended up making it my own.

Four years ago, I found my 'place' in Thames. Meeting a community of beautiful people whose creative lives mirrored my own gave me the confidence to move my art out of the privacy of my sketchbooks and onto the walls of the Vessel Gallery for all to see.

Today, I am still documenting my journey, but I have grown. My work has evolved from capturing what I see to bringing life to the intangible, ideas like *Deep Breath* or *Healing Heart*. My love for other mediums has come crashing back. I now find myself surrounded by an extensive collection of tools, papers, and canvases, the kind of hoard every artist dreams of. I call this space The Creativity Room. It is where I host workshops and classes for artists of all ages and abilities, and where other creatives share their wisdom.

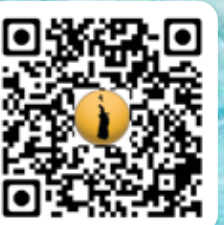
Watercolour may have been my 'necessity', but it became my second native tongue, much like the art community became my second family, and these are some of the best things that have ever happened to me.

Words by  
**Laurie Mango**



Check out more of  
*Laurie's Works*

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# WONDERING IN WAIKINO

## *The Artist's Dream & The Market's Reality*

What is Art worth? Some create it, some buy it, some invest in it, and some ... just enjoy it. It is so multi-dimensional and almost unexplainable by linear and limited language, so rather than try to actually define it, let's explore the roles it plays in our lives because without Art, life could amount to nothing more than a monotonous, dull, existence of repetitious survival.

Let's start with the creator, the Artist(e). Why would anyone choose to be one? It is not encouraged as a viable career or an option for survival; there are usually no excessive financial rewards for the time and effort spent, and it has been proven to be a challenging lifestyle, albeit quite a rewarding experience at times. Nevertheless, some still choose this path, with all the odds against them. Perhaps it is a masochistic, egotistical condition to choose to draw, dance, sing, play, write or paint without a priority for financial remuneration. Yet, there is no doubt that the world appreciates the endeavours of people who choose this journey. Our civilisation could not survive if everyone decided to be an Artist(e). That might explain why not everyone can survive as one.

And then, there is the consumer of Art. Some may feel they lack any artistic ability or the time to indulge in such activities. Hence, they pursue other paths that are more lucrative and appear uncreative, like starting a business or becoming a lawyer, doctor, engineer, chemist or politician. It seems to be the safer alternative as one is almost guaranteed to be remunerated if one excels. But they are willing to pay for Art and enjoy what Artist(e)s create. They listen to music, adorn their homes and workplaces with paintings, sculptures and even their gardens with landscaping, or anything that enlivens their home. They appreciate Art and are willing to pay varying amounts for a variety of reasons. This is what makes it so tantalising, as not everyone likes the same Art, and not everyone is willing to pay the same amount for it either.


Art has long been a valued expression of human culture, serving as a medium for emotions, stories and traditions. However, Art isn't just about beauty and creativity – it's

also something people invest in as a status symbol. People value certain pieces for their aesthetic and artistic qualities but also as an investment or a representation of a higher social standing. Art can be a viable investment for those with the money and a knowledge of Art. Investing in Art can be risky, as it is challenging to know how much it will appreciate and which will appreciate over time. Art could be considered a financial portfolio component or a diversification of investment. Many paintings in circulation or museums are worth obscene amounts. The Mona Lisa is said to be worth USD790 million and the most expensive painting ever sold to date is *Salvator Mundi*, which sold for USD450 million. These are extreme examples, though, as many less famous pieces are worth anything between \$3,000 to \$1 million.

Last but not least, there is the value of Intellectual Property. There are four basic types – Copyrights, Trademarks, Patents and Trade Secrets. Intellectual property "derives its value from a wide range of parameters such as usefulness, market share, barriers to entry, legal protection, profitability, industrial and economic factors, growth projections, remaining economic life, and new technologies, all of which will inhere in the valuation." (Wikipedia)

Some examples of brands with a very high intellectual property value are Coca-Cola, Ferrari, Rolex and McDonalds. In the music arena, large amounts have been paid for the rights to artists' catalogues. Queen's was recently sold for USD1.27 billion; catalogues by Bob Dylan, Sting and Bruce Springsteen are all worth around USD500 million.

Art plays a pivotal role in many areas of our lives. From the struggling, broke creator to the billion-dollar investor, Art is part of us. As long as we walk this earth and evolve, Art will always make the difference.

 Words by **Amir Yussof**





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# HOLISTIC WELLBEING THROUGH WAKA AMA

*The Goal, the Sport, the Outcome*

**THIS IS OUR WHY ... WHAT'S YOURS?** ➔



**Ko te waka ama he kaupapa whakahirahira kia whakapakari ai i ngā pou kātoa o Te Whare Tapa Whā.** Waka ama is a powerful kaupapa (purpose) that strengthens all the pillars of Te Whare Tapa Whā.

We have our gym bunnies, those seeking connection, and others wanting to explore Te Ao Māori – we all came to waka ama for different reasons. But through the sport, we've each strengthened the pillars of wellbeing outlined in Te Whare Tapa Whā, the Māori health model of holistic wellbeing by Sir Mason Durie (1984).

#### Te Whare Tapa Whā – the Māori Health Model

##### Taha Tinana – Physical Wellbeing

Paddling reflects physical strength and stamina. The low-impact nature of waka ama makes it accessible to people of all ages and fitness levels.

This inclusivity is why National Sprints, held every January over seven days, has become one of the country's largest sporting events – and one of the most exciting!

- **Competitors:** 3,875
- **Spectators and Whānau:** over 8,000
- **Location:** Lake Karāpiro, Cambridge

##### Taha Hinengaro – Mental Wellbeing

Mental intellect is built through learning paddle techniques, navigation, and strategy. Long-distance races especially require deep focus and mental resilience.

##### Mauri Tau (mental peace)

“When you're paddling for 2 hours, there is a silence in the waka ... you can't keep talking, so eventually you settle into rhythm – just feeling, one stroke after another. It's in those moments that I connect with my crew, and it's on those long paddles in the quiet that I find my favourite moments.” – Mike Bennett

##### Taha Whānau – Whānau & Community Connection

Waka ama builds strong community bonds and resilience. It's a very social sport. First, there's the inter-crew

connection – six paddlers working as one in the waka! Then, inter-club connections – our relationship with our sister club Hauraki has been vital to our journey. Without their tautoko in establishing our club, we wouldn't be here today. Finally, there's the race community – waka ama is competitive, with dozens of national races held each year. You'll hear te reo Māori spoken, and whānau are always welcome. High fives are everywhere – it's a humble, supportive and inclusive environment.

##### Taha Wairua – Spiritual Wellbeing

We express spiritual wellbeing through karakia – asking for safe passage on the wai (water) and acknowledging the sacred spaces we enter. Whakataka te Hau is one of our club karakia.

“My experience of Taha Wairua is best described by my race in the Rotohoe Series on Lake Rotorua – about half way through, I started to think and see clearly, I felt deeply connected to the wai – hearing it lapping and feeling it on my skin – my soul felt on fire. It's a feeling I'll never forget and it left me wanting more!” – Natalie

##### Whenua – Our Foundation and Identity

The fifth dimension, Whenua ( Mental Health Foundation, 2025) speaks to our identity and connection to place. Where are my roots? Where do I come from? How do we fit in this world? Waka ama is more than a sport – it's a doorway to reconnecting with tikanga, kaupapa, and whakapapa / identity.

##### Come and find out if waka ama is for you!

Nau mai – we welcome paddlers of all experience levels to connect with us on the wai.

**Mauri Tū Mauri Ora!** An active soul is a healthy soul!

Join **Whitianga Waka Ama** on Facebook or email wakawhiti@gmail.com.

Words by **Mike Bennett & Natalie Jones**



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WHITIANGA · 14 & 17 MARCH 2026

# ST PATRICK'S DAY AT BUFFALO BEACH CLUB

Whitianga's Biggest Irish Celebration Takes Over the Waterfront

We all love celebrating St Patrick's Day, and how lucky are we in Whitianga to have a party spot right on the water.

This year, Buffalo Beach Club is going all out - kicking things off on Saturday 14 March with **The Grail** playing Irish pub classics, then handing the stage to **Twisty Willow**, a Waipu Celtic duo bringing lively tunes and serious crowd energy, on Tuesday 17 March.

Both evenings you can expect famous Texas Pete's BBQ bringing the flavour, top-notch cocktails and that unbeatable Buffalo Beach setting.

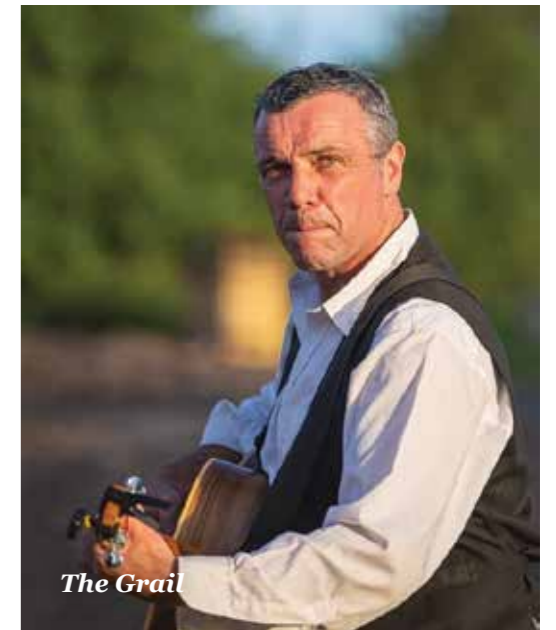
*"Come in green. Come with your crew. Come ready to celebrate."*

BUFFALO BEACH CLUB

So we thought we'd share a few cool facts. That way, when you rock up dressed in green, you'll also be dressed in knowledge.

- St Patrick wasn't actually Irish**  
Born in Roman Britain - likely Wales or western England - he was kidnapped by Irish raiders as a teenager, became a Christian missionary and returned to Ireland to spread the faith.
- The shamrock explained the Holy Trinity**  
Legend has it St Patrick used its three leaves to explain the Trinity. Three leaves, one plant.
- He died on 17 March, 461 AD**  
The date marks the death of the patron saint - celebrated ever since with music, community and a great deal of spirit.
- The first parade wasn't in Ireland**  
It was held in the United States, organised by Irish immigrants celebrating their heritage far from home.
- Blue came before green**  
Early depictions show St Patrick wearing blue. Green took hold thanks to Ireland's nickname - the Emerald Isle - and its links to Irish identity and rebellion.

Today, St Patrick's Day is less about sermons and more about community, music, laughter and a bit of Irish spirit - a chance to gather your mates, raise a glass and enjoy good vibes. And that's exactly what Buffalo Beach Club does best.



The Grail



Twisty Willow

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For more information, follow Buffalo Beach Club on Facebook and Instagram, or scan the QR code. Sláinte!



**BUFFALO BEACH Club**  
est. 2025

# zero waste is a team sport...

## WĀHI TUKURUA – YOUR LOCAL HUB FOR REUSE, RECOVERY, AND COMMUNITY ACTION

Zero waste can sound like a big, serious mission... but at heart, it's simply something we do better together. No one person can rescue every piece of timber off-cut, every jacket, every leftover tile. But a whole community? That's where the magic happens.

Every time someone donates good-quality clothing, drops off surplus building materials, or chooses to repair instead of replace, they're part of a much bigger story. The builders who set aside reusable timber, the families who shop second-hand first, the volunteers who sort and fix – they're all playing on the same team.

And like any good team, we win by passing things along. A drill you no longer need becomes someone else's weekend




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project. A stack of tiles becomes a neighbour's splashback. A jacket you've outgrown becomes someone's new favourite. Resources stay in play, not in the bin.

Zero waste isn't about being perfect. It's about being connected. It's about noticing what we have, sharing what we can, and keeping useful things circulating in our community for as long as possible.

When we treat waste as a shared responsibility – and a shared opportunity – everyone benefits. That's the real victory. Just like the sign in our shop (pictured) says – We can do it! Together we can help keep resources circulating in Mercury Bay.

 Words by  
**Tracey Bell**



**DMK MD.**

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# GUARDIAN BIRDS OF THE COROMANDEL

## The Art of Symbiosis

Coromandel Town is a very special place in our lovely region. Local artists and their incredible work keep the energy vibrant and refreshing. One of my favourite things is to wander through town and stumble across lovely encounters.

Last year, during the Coromandel Open Studios Arts Tour, our crew visited a number of studios and were lucky enough to spend time at The Gannet's Nest in Wyuna Bay, where Kay Ogilvie was sharing her beautiful space with Iona Matheson. On opening night, Iona won the People's Choice Award, and it was easy to see why. Both artists welcomed guests with warmth, speaking about their techniques with lightness and care. We are lucky to have creatives like this in our rohe (region).

Iona grew up in Raumati North, near Wellington. A school trip to Kapiti Island at just nine years old left a deep imprint. Surrounded by native birdlife in a protected sanctuary, her connection to te taiao (nature) began early. Creativity was also close to home. Her father built quirky concrete paths filled with patterns, and she would help him shape and decorate them. At 14, she and her mum attended ceramic decorating classes together. Fabric painting, driftwood jewellery, experimenting across media, it was all part of her early exploration.

That curiosity followed her into formal study. At Unitec, she trained in ceramics and fibre, immersed in the hands-on Craft Design programme. Later, she completed a postgraduate diploma in Art and Design at AUT. Unitec gave her the freedom to experiment and connect with a community of creatives in West Auckland. AUT sharpened her ability to articulate her ideas, strengthening her critical thinking and later supporting her role as an Education Manager in public galleries.

She speaks honestly about how that intense period of analysis took time to settle. After so much critique, it took a while to feel fully comfortable in the making again. But the thread that began at art school, combining ceramics with inlaid plant materials, still runs through her work today.

Iona's professional journey has included working at Lopdell House and later at Te Uru Contemporary Gallery in Titirangi. Being surrounded by challenging and inspiring exhibitions shaped her eye and her confidence. From helping install work by Colin McCahon to engaging closely with the Portage Ceramic Awards, she absorbed a wide spectrum of artistic voices.

Large-scale public projects also expanded her practice. Collaborative sculpture work and site-specific commissions allowed her to connect deeply with communities and their histories. She learned to think bigger, to embrace scale, and to appreciate the synergy that comes when many hands and minds contribute to a single outcome.

At the heart of Iona's recent work is the idea of symbiosis. She spends time fossicking, collecting shells, stones, leaves and seed pods, drawn to textures and patterns shaped by nature. Her love of art and science intertwines. While studying at AUT, she created melting clay 'specimens' in jars, like a playful pseudo-scientist observing transformation.

Her Guardian Birds now reflect the interconnected relationships between flora, fauna and geology. Ceramic, recycled paper pulp,

bronze, cast glass and embedded leaves come together in richly layered forms. There is something powerful about the way humble paper sits beside bronze, about how reclaimed materials gain new life. These Guardian Birds carry a quiet presence, reminding us of the cycles and connections that sustain te taiao, and inviting viewers to feel a similar respect and attentiveness to the natural world.

People often gift her kauri leaves and seed pods. Sustainability is not an afterthought but part of her values. Living close to places like Anawhata and Piha on Auckland's wild West Coast reinforced her respect for land and community. Weekly studio visits to isolated Anawhata nurtured her connection with other artists. Later, an artist residency at Driving Creek brought her to Coromandel, where 'living and breathing clay' felt like a natural landing.

When someone encounters one of Iona's sculptures up close, she hopes they feel a presence. Her work is textural, colourful, and layered with references to mythology and the whenua itself. It carries a quiet call for greater balance, reflecting the interconnected ways many indigenous cultures understand the world – a reminder that everything in nature moves through cycles and relationships. If humans could reconnect in similar ways, the world would look very different.

Now based in Coromandel after her Driving Creek residency, Iona continues to exhibit across Aotearoa. She has created major public works, including a 6-metre Moa Mountain at Massey Leisure Centre and leading the public art component for the New Lynn Library in Auckland.

For the 2025 Arts Tour, Iona presented a new collection of mixed media sculptures inspired by the lush Coromandel landscape and its endemic birdlife. Visitors were drawn to the layered textures, the fusion of materials and the quiet strength in each piece.

Spend a few minutes in front of one of her mythological birds and you begin to understand what fuels her practice: a deep respect for te taiao and the intricate relationships that hold it together.

**E-mail:** [kauritoad@gmail.com](mailto:kauritoad@gmail.com)

**Instagram:** [Iona Matheson Sculpting](https://www.instagram.com/IonaMathesonSculpting)



Words by  
**Leonardo Magri**

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**PROUD TO BE LOCAL**

*Sam Connors*



For Sam Connors, theatre is a passion that was woven through her upbringing in the Thames-Coromandel region. Her earliest memory of the stage is being tucked inside a sleeping bag at the back of Thames Little Theatre, peeking at rehearsals with wide-eyed wonder. That quiet moment sparked a journey that would lead her to become one of the area's most promising young directors.

Sam's path to directing was shaped not just by the stage, but by the vibrant community events she grew up helping to organise. Her mum's involvement in local celebrations – 'Steampunk the Thames', Christmas in the Park, and Santa Parade – gave Sam a behind-the-scenes look at how creative visions come to life. "Directing feels like event planning," she says. "It's about watching all the pieces come together." That early exposure to logistics and storytelling laid the foundation for her unique approach to theatre.

Though she's currently based outside the region, Sam is still working on her craft. She's directing *Up the Duff* with the Matamata Dramatic Society, a play she first performed in back in 2020. Written by a local Thames playwright, the show explores the lives of five women navigating pregnancy – some joyfully, others reluctantly. Her connection to the Thames-Coromandel community continues through her commitment to returning for shows and events. "This is home," she says simply.

Whether mentoring young performers, supporting local productions, or staying engaged online, Sam remains a vital part of the artistic fabric of the region.

"One of the most unique theatre experiences came just a week before opening night of *Up the Duff* in 2020, when a sudden COVID lockdown forced the team to halt Production – then having to recast and rework the entire show with social distancing and restrictions later that year," states Miss Connors.

Sam is proof that local roots can grow into something extraordinary!



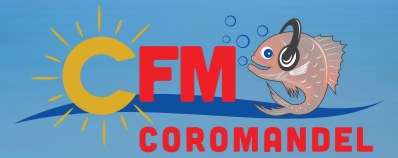
Words by **Fabian Roberts**

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# The Difference Between Marlin and Seagulls

## What We Choose to Call Acceptable

I was talking to an old friend the other day about this and that and we got onto the topic of fishing, one which is dear to my heart. I love fishing but when I think about it, it's not the catching that I love most. It's the fishing bit – sometimes sitting on the rocks watching the tip of a rod for a decent strike or other times standing in a river flicking a fly at a trout that is not hungry. It is all that I need to feel at peace with the world. The catching to eat is just a bonus.

After sharing a few tall fishing stories with my friend, I told him about the time when I was a 10-year-old kid walking along Takapuna Beach after fishing off the rocks with a mate. We hadn't caught anything, so for fun we put a bit of bait on our hooks and dragged the line along the beach to see if we could catch a seagull. Well, did we ever get a telling off. An old fella yelled at us and told us to stop immediately. He went on about cruelty to animals and the like. So, we stopped and went home empty-handed with neither a fish nor a seagull. At the time I didn't really think I was doing anything particularly cruel or egregious.

After recalling this incident, my friend and I started talking about fishing contests and I jokingly suggested that in conjunction with this year's Kubota Classic fishing competition, we could hold a seagull catching contest on Buffalo Beach. We could get 10 kids at a time to line up on the beach holding rods with a piece of bait on a barbless hook. You could even burley up the beach with stale bread to bring the birds around. The biggest seagulls could be measured to decide on who gets the prizes, maybe Kubota toy tractors or the like, but all birds would be released relatively unharmed apart from a hole in the beak. After all, it would only take a couple of minutes to reel the gull in. The kids would have a ball, no creatures would die, no pollution would be released into the ocean, and everyone would be happy.

My friend looked aghast even though what I had said was said in jest and he rightly pointed out that most people would be up in arms if such a comp were to take place on Buffalo Beach. DOC rangers would prosecute the organisers under the Cruelty to Animals Act, and the general public would chase us off the beach.

We continued our musings about competitions that involve harm to animals and of course came to the conclusion that surely big game fishing for prizes should come under similar constraints as a seagull-hooking activity. My friend once again rightly pointed out that most of the fish caught are filleted or smoked and eaten by the community, except for sharks which are probably dumped in the ocean after the obligatory photo on the wharf. That may be true, I argued, but what happens to the marlin that are released? After an hour or more fighting on the end of a large hook, how many of them die during the fight, soon after or are so depleted that they suffer a lingering death in the following days or weeks? "Which is more acceptable to people these days?" I asked him, "Ten or twenty dead marlin on the bottom of the ocean or a few seagulls with holes in their beaks? And of course there would be no possibility of eating the seagulls, because they would all be released relatively unharmed and none would be killed for prizes."

My friend and I pondered these thoughts for a while and wondered why different standards are applied to similar situations. We wondered who besides Kubota could be persuaded to sponsor the seagull venture but eventually came to the realisation that no company, not even Kubota, would be dumb enough to do it because of course they would face a huge backlash from their customers, many of whom may be farmers who participate in the Kubota Classic.

Let's hope that sanity will eventually prevail and a lack of big company sponsorship or support by respected fishing organisations like Legasea for large-scale commercially-driven fishing competitions will become a thing of the past, and fishing people will fish for the table and of course the pleasure of just being on or near the water. Hopefully our children will be taught to respect the life in our presently depleted oceans and shy away from the destruction that we humans have wantonly engaged in through greed, dangerous fishing methods, lack of respect and over-fishing.

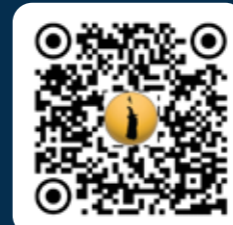
Words by **Ross Liggins**



“Hopefully our children will be taught to respect the life in our presently depleted oceans.”

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# Nature Bathing for Creative Souls

*The creative power of stillness in the wild*

While some find their best creative inspiration in books or galleries, in conversation or music, I have found it in the grip of the forest, in the embrace of a river's cold, in the gentle caress of sunlight.

Papatūānuku, Pachamama, Gaia, La Tierra. By whatever name you know her, Mother Earth has always been a clear guide in my creative work, and the only practice I have ever managed to keep consistency in is nature bathing. Walking in nature is meditation for my creative soul and the most inspiring space I can spend time in.

Developed as a meditative practice in Japan in the 1980s, and in response to the increasing urbanisation of Japanese culture, shinrin-yoku, or forest bathing, is the simple therapeutic act of spending time in nature, with the aim to improve well-being.

Certain trees and plants emit essential oils and compounds, easily absorbed by the body when we spend time in their proximity. After studies found beneficial health effects of this absorption in stress hormone levels, nervous systems and blood pressure, Japanese ministry of agriculture director Tomohide Akiyama officially advocated shinrin-yoku as a recognised practice, establishing guidelines and promoting its benefits to the Japanese public.

To practice shinrin-yoku, awareness of all senses is required, so put away the devices, walk slowly, intentionally. Breathe deeply of the sweet and pungent earth, kneel to test the 'squish factor' of a patch of vibrant moss or wrap your arms around a trunk, feel the porous textures, the insect life moving between skin and bark and listen to the chorus and rhythms.

'It is clear that our bodies still recognize nature as our home ...' – Yoshifumi Miyazaki, *Walking in the Woods*.

I've preferred the company of my hound companion to any others when hiking, so when I tramp, I purposefully choose a time and place where I'll have a better chance at solitude. Avoiding holiday periods and well known 'gram-worthy' destinations, I opt for make-your-own trails over popular traversed routes, though of course even in my day-pack, I carry safety essentials.

Aotearoa tramping is, to date, my favourite tramping ground, and I've certainly covered a lot of ground here, even after completing Te Araroa which saw me traverse Aotearoa New Zealand on foot from Cape Reinga (in the far north) to Motupohue (in the far south).

Before I moved to Waihi, I flew from my then-home in Naarm

(Melbourne) to spend a short time here on respite. The aim was to boost my mental and spiritual well-being, following a particularly debilitating depressive episode in 2018, and all I did while here was immerse myself in Mother Nature's spaces.

"Stand still. The forest knows where you are" – David Wagoner, "Lost".

Riding the Athenree estuary track on a borrowed bicycle, the tūi song was a joyous cacophony that inspired a playful whistling mimicry of melody, while digging toes into the cool weight of black glittering sand calmed me to stillness. I wild-hiked for hours, discovering a cascade where I stopped to bathe in the freezing shallow pool and lay on sun-warmed rocks to pen a humble poem that unbeknown to me at that time, would propel an entirely new creative direction and eventually, a life here in Waihi.

Lead me to the river,  
Swift and steady in her resolve to move  
Ever onwards, ever collecting  
discarding how the river flows.

Whenever I walk in a forest, garden or wild space, regardless how long I'm out, I carry a notebook and pencil. Leaving devices tucked in my pack, my scribbling hand records random or obtrusive thoughts, joyful musings, memories, simple observations or poetic reflections of this branch or that bird. I sketch, not because I'm any good at it, but to remember the feeling of a place. Nature's grace humbles me and inspires song like no other environment can.

Recording as I walk is a means to react and invite perspective. Paying curious attention to my surroundings, I notice what changes and what stays. Often, paradoxically, I feel an expansive diminutiveness, the layers of the fragile ecosystem becoming, in each walk, more obvious, more precious.

The implementation of shinrin-yoku was intended also to inspire a desire in the Japanese public to protect the forests and natural areas.

If we all spent more time in forests, in bush, on coastlines, and could experience the therapeutic quality of this connection with nature, find the resonating comfort of these places, perhaps we would want to do better in protecting them.

 Words by **Milly Moon**



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# LUCKY STAR SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

*The collective that turns every Festival Into a Playground*

I love music festivals. There's something electric about being surrounded by people all gathered to have fun, dance, and soak up good vibes. Splore is a perfect example: eight thousand people camping, dressing up, and immersing themselves in music, food, and creativity. Most of the artists had positive messages to share, making the festival as much about connection and inspiration as it was about beats and colour.

I've been friends with Matt Sephton for a few years now. The guy is a sound wizard, and I always trust him to set up a party or festival sound system, and to keep the energy flowing with his groovy DJ sets. Matt had been telling me and the Coromind crew about Lucky Star HQ for a while, and when the chance came to cover their presence at Splore, we knew it was one not to miss.

Lucky Star is an independent collective that can slot into almost any festival, but experiencing it in person is something else entirely. It's a buzzing hub that feels like a circus sideshow, a backstreet dive, and a community lounge all at once.

Originally, Lucky Star began as a humble coffee caravan and juice bar. Over time, it has grown into a beloved festival institution with its own personality and energy. What started as espresso on wheels became a playground for music, performance, and playful antics. The crew calls it "always going to misbehave."

Mels Berg and Jonas Karsten run the collective, bringing their free-roaming, festival-centric lifestyle into everything they do. When they're not at Splore, they travel Aotearoa with friends, house trucks, and The Extravaganza Fair, building kaleidoscopic worlds wherever they land. If you've been to The Extravaganza Fair, you'll know Jonas from his epic truck and funky clothing and sunglasses stand.

It's no surprise people choose to stay at Lucky Star almost the whole time during a festival. It's family-friendly, colourful, and the music line-up blends live acts with top national and international DJs. At Splore, highlights included Princess Room, Alleykat, The Mara, Queen B & The Nobles, DJ Matt Rapid & Elise Adlam, and

my favourite, the Lucky Star All Stars Band featuring incredible musicians like top NZ drummer Michael Barker and singer Nikita Tu-Bryant. There was even Mermaid Bait, a modern fanfare-style band, and a Mozzarella Cheese Making Rave. And of course, Con (Rad) Artists kept the costumes and performances impeccable.

DIY is the Lucky Star mantra. The collective works relentlessly before, during, and after events. Jonas summed it up simply: "Mate, Lucky Star speaks for itself." And he's right. The energy, the music, the performers, the community magic—it's all undeniable.

But here's the challenge. Their main stage, the iconic Lucky Star Fire Truck, blew a head gasket just days before Splore. Beyond repair, with specialist engineers confirming it was officially done. They still managed to get it to Splore by hiring a specialist truck, an emergency cost of \$5,000 just to transport it to the festival and back to their home base at The Extravaganza Fair. Now they need to buy a new truck and move the entire stage body onto it.

This isn't just a vehicle. It's their livelihood, their festival heart. Anyone who's danced, laughed, or felt alive at Lucky Star knows the magic it brings. And now they need a hand. Any contribution, big or small, will help cover the emergency costs and support the new stage truck, keeping Lucky Star alive and rolling across Aotearoa festivals. You can scan the QR code below to donate and help get their truck sorted.

The next stop for Lucky Star HQ is Resonance Festival, 20 to 22 March. It's your chance to experience the joy, the colour, the music, and the community that make Lucky Star the beating heart of every festival it touches.

If Lucky Star has ever made you dance, connect, or feel alive, now's the time to show some love. Let's rally together.

 Words by **Leonardo Magri**

**TO WATCH LUCKY STAR AT THE LAST SPLORE FESTIVAL OR TO HELP THEM BY DONATING**

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**MOKO ARTSPACE**

**INDULGING IN NZ'S FINEST CREATIVITY**

An art gallery situated in the heart of Hot Water Beach, surrounded by the sounds of crashing waves, local cafes and hot pools! The perfect way to spend a day on the Coromandel. Moko demonstrates a wide range of art including large-scale original pieces, sculpture, prints, glasswork and much more, showcasing and supporting artists from all around New Zealand.

Not only is this a stunning gallery worth a visit, it's for sale. Offered as land and buildings, with the option to include the established business, this landmark property delivers lifestyle, income and legacy in one of the Coromandel's most treasured beachfront locations - an opportunity not to be missed!

Privately nestled among lush tropical gardens, this architecturally designed sanctuary captures stunning, intimate coastal views over Hot Water Beach. Light-filled open plan living flows to expansive decks that frame the ocean panorama, while the master suite and flexible additional rooms offer effortless comfort and connection to the coastline. As well, there's a self contained studio providing premium guest accommodation or income potential.

Scan the QR code below or contact Lea Jurkovich at lea.jurkovich@bayleys.co.nz or 027 733 9955 for further information on the listing.



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# THE TIGER AWAKENS

## How Mekong Foo Brought the Electric Soul of Southeast Asia to Whangamatā!

There comes a moment in every coastal town's story when something electric arrives, something that does not just add to the landscape, but transforms it. For Whangamatā, that moment came when the doors of Mekong Foo swung open, unleashing a riot of colour, flavour and unbridled joy onto the Coromandel Peninsula.

This was not just another restaurant opening. This was a manifesto.

"We wanted to create something the community would feel happy to come to, not just for special occasions, but for a Tuesday lunch with your workmates, Sunday dinner with the whānau, or that spontaneous 'let's grab a bite' moment with friends," says the team behind Whangamatā's most vibrant culinary arrival.

The result is a space that pulses with the energy of a Saigon street market and the warmth of a Kiwi beach town, where the décor hits you like a tropical thunderstorm and the food transports you straight to the bustling hawker stalls of Hà Nội, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur.

### The Art of the Tiger

Every great venue needs a guardian spirit. For Mekong Foo, that spirit came alive through the visionary brush of Shane Walker, the local artist who took raw, ambitious dreams and rendered them into a prowling, electric Asian tiger that now watches over diners with fierce, welcoming eyes.

"Shane was incredible to work with," the team recalls. "He took our very raw ideas and made them reality." That collaboration birthed an interior that refuses to whisper. It shouts with joy. Vibrant hues clash and harmonise. Neon accents pulse against bold murals. It is a space designed to make you smile before you have even tasted the food, appealing to grandparents and grandchildren alike, to surfers fresh from the beach and professionals escaping the office. This is not minimalist fine dining. This is maximalist fun!

### From Nerve-Wrecking Dream to Community Heart

Let's be honest, opening a restaurant is terrifying. The early days of Mekong Foo were a cocktail of pure excitement and sleepless nights. Would Whangamatā embrace this bold new flavour? Would the community see themselves in this electric Southeast Asian vision? The answer came roaring back. Yes.

"The support from the community has been incredibly positive," the team reflects, still sounding genuinely humbled by the reception. That support is not taken for granted. Behind the scenes, the Mekong Foo crew are relentless perfectionists, constantly tweaking, improving and pushing to deliver experiences that keep locals coming back and visitors planning return trips.

Because this is not just about serving food. It is about creating moments, the kind where you laugh louder than you meant to, where you insist your friends "just try this", where you realise three hours have disappeared over shared plates and cold drinks.

### Mekong Foo proudly welcomes Beach Hop 2026

As the newest addition to this year's Beach Hop line-up, they are revving their engines alongside the chrome and leather. Whether you are cruising in a classic '57 Chevy or riding a thundering Harley, swing by for fuel of a different kind, vibrant Southeast Asian flavours that match the energy of New Zealand's most iconic automotive festival. Consider this your pit stop for paradise.

### Your Invitation to the Table

Mekong Foo throws open its doors six days a week—Tuesday through Sunday, from 12pm till 9pm—ready to feed your cravings whether they strike at midday or sunset.

07 214 9271 — Call for inquiries, or bring your spontaneous spirit and walk right in (parties under 10). Planning a celebration? Groups over 10 can book ahead to secure their spot in the jungle.

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**Music by** Alan Menken - **Lyrics by** Howard Ashman  
and Tim Rice **Book by** Linda Woolverton

**Producer and Musical Director** Fabian Roberts  
**Director and Choreographer** Emma Fletcher  
**Stage Managers** Kathy Moylow and Jenni Bell  
**Co-director** Amanda Roche  
**Sound & Lighting** Corbin Duerre and Niky Boerdyk  
**Vocal Director** Raewyn Watkins  
**Costume** Isobel Roche  
**Assistant choreographers** Olivia Graham & Tahlia Osborne



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