

COROMIND



Issue 45

COROMANDEL OPEN STUDIOS ARTS TOUR

Celebrating 20 Years

SMELLY NELLY STRIKES AGAIN

A Giant of the Southern Seas
with a Few Unexpected Tricks

SKATING FOR THE FUTURE

A Guided Journey on Four Wheels

A Long Conversation with Colour

Nigel Sparrow: Practice
That Keeps Unfolding

On Air



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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 helps you stay in the loop.

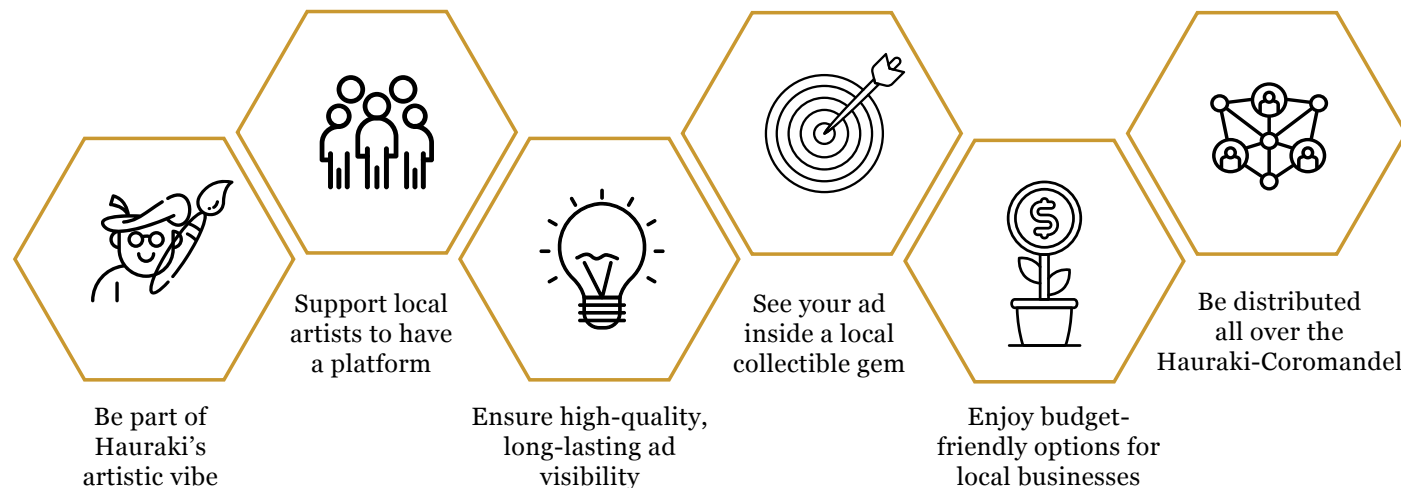
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LUCAS ROCHA

My connection with the Coromandel is deeply personal. It was one of the first places where I began building my life in Aotearoa. Born and raised in São Paulo, Brazil, I was always used to the chaos and intensity of a big city. Then, when I arrived in Whitianga, I found myself surrounded by a completely different pace of life. Among the tranquillity, the landscapes and the community, I found something I never expected: a true sense of belonging.

Thanks to the artistic atmosphere of the place, I had the opportunity to meet incredible people who went out of their way to support and encourage my work. Through these connections, I began to realise that my art also had a place there, and that I could become part of the community through it.

I had the opportunity to create some illustrations for the first edition of Coromind and, more recently, I had the pleasure of holding my first solo art exhibition at Hula Cafe in Whitianga. It was a very important experience for me. I felt incredibly happy seeing my work displayed for people to experience, and it was really special to watch the reactions of those who came into the café, stopped to look, and took the time to discover my work. It was there that I began to realise the value my art could have and started to see a possible path forward. Through the feedback and conversations I had with people, I also gained a clearer vision of the steps I would like to take next.

I have been drawing since I was a child, but it was during the pandemic that I had my first truly meaningful experience with painting. I remember watching art videos and step-by-step tutorials, much like the ones Bob Ross used to make. One day, I decided to give it a try and bought a canvas. I really liked the result and, from that moment on, I became increasingly interested in exploring different forms of art.

Perhaps that is why I find it difficult to define my work within a single style. I often describe myself as a kind of 'walking metamorphosis'. I am always

looking for new forms, materials, techniques, styles and different ways to express myself.

When I look at my drawings and paintings, I can see certain connections between them whether through the line work, recurring characters or particular characteristics that appear again and again. At the same time, there are works that are completely different from one another, where I experiment with different techniques, formats and forms of expression.

I don't like being restricted to a single style, subject or material. I enjoy having the freedom to change and experiment. I believe life is too short not to take risks and explore new paths. Tattooing, for example, is one of those paths I want to explore further, especially because of my connection with the culture and the opportunity it gives me to take my art into a new form of expression.

For me, art represents freedom. Through it, I can express myself in whatever way I choose, without having to limit myself to a single form, technique or language. Perhaps that freedom is exactly what makes me want to experiment so much and continue searching for new ways to create.

I am still discovering where all of this will take me. And for me, perhaps that is the most exciting part: not knowing exactly what the next path will be, but always having the desire to explore it.

Instagram:
[@lucasrocha_art](https://www.instagram.com/lucasrocha_art)

 Words by
**Lucas
Rocha**



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CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

We're delighted to be partners for the Coromandel Open Studios Arts Tour, celebrating its 20th anniversary this year and marking two decades of showcasing the vibrant artistic community in and around Coromandel Town.

On the first two weekends of October, Coromandel Town opens its studio doors to the public – an event no art lover should miss. Meet the artists who call the Coromandel home, and discover the stories, tools and processes behind their work. It's free and self-guided, so visitors can go at their own pace, watch artists at work, explore their studios, and buy pieces they love straight from the source.

Marking this milestone year, 41 local artists are taking part, working across painting, ceramics, glass, screen-printing, textiles, sculpture, jewellery, creative woodwork, and more. We're especially excited to welcome ten new artists to the tour this year. This includes a hub of four artists in Colville – a first for the tour.

This year the tour runs over the weekends 3rd - 4th and 10th - 11th of October, with an accompanying exhibition spanning the full nine days.

Start your tour at the exhibition at Hauraki House Gallery, Kapanga Road, where every artist has at least one piece on display – the perfect first stop to plan your route. The gallery is open daily 10am - 4pm, 3rd to 11th of October. Join the artists for the opening night on Friday 2nd of October from 5.30pm – all welcome. Don't forget to vote in our People's Choice Award, with a great prize pack up for grabs.

Between studios, soak up everything Coromandel Town has to offer: its heritage buildings, its harbour and bays, its cafés and shops. The tour is as much about experiencing the place as it is the art.

Collect your guide book from Coromandel Information Centre, Hauraki House Gallery or download one at: coromandelartstour.co.nz

Some artists are open for the full nine days (look for the flags), and others welcome visitors all year round – just look for their open signs.

For more information, visit:

Web: coromandelartstour.co.nz

Facebook: @CoromandelArtsTour

Instagram: @CoromandelArtsTour

Here's to 20 years of Coromandel art – we look forward to seeing you!



SHAPED FROM THE EARTH

WHY THE COROMANDEL'S CREATIVE PULSE STARTS IN THE CLAY

There is something deeply grounding about working with raw earth. Long before Driving Creek became home to New Zealand's most famous narrow-gauge railway, it was a sanctuary for clay. Barry Brickell was drawn to this rugged valley not just for its hills, but for the rich, dense terracotta sleeping beneath the topsoil. He understood that to create something beautiful, you have to get your hands dirty.

As spring arrives on the peninsula, the forest around us undergoes a quiet awakening. The native canopy grows vibrant, the birdsong sharpens, and the creative pulse of Driving Creek quickens. For decades, this valley has been a haven where artists, dreamers, and makers gather to shed the winter chill and create from scratch.

In a world that moves increasingly fast through digital screens, the act of sitting at a pottery wheel is a radical return to the physical. It forces you to slow down, breathe, and cooperate with the raw material in front of you. You cannot rush the clay, and you cannot force the fire.

This spring, we invite you to step away from the noise and step into the studio. Whether you have never touched a pottery wheel in your life or you simply want to reconnect with the artisan heritage of our region, there is a piece of clay waiting for you at Driving Creek.



DISCOVER YOUR INNER POTTER:

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Tēnei Te Pō, Nau Mai Te Ao

Te Korowai Hauora o Hauraki: Indigenising Our Approach to Alcohol and Drug Addiction



"Sometimes people feel like they are in a dark space. Sometimes what's needed is some light." – Darryl, Mataora (AOD Practitioner)

As a kaupapa Māori health and well-being provider working within Western models of care, we face the continual challenge of how to deliver our services in a way that is uniquely Māori and creates a safe space for whānau (people) that is supported by our language and principles. And, in turn, uplifting the well-being of Māori in a world where they are over-represented in poor-health statistics. How can we do things differently?

In the words of the late great Moana Jackson, "Change only comes with imagination." If we are to make meaningful change for our people, we need to think outside the square.

Te Hīnātore – the glimmer of light

Mataora (AOD Practitioner) Darryl and Whānau Support Worker Tash have indigenised the way they deliver their AOD (alcohol and other drugs) support group: moving away from clinical models and bringing a more holistic approach that incorporates te ao Māori (Māori worldview).

They draw on a Mahi a Atua framework of using pūrākau – the creation narratives of our atua (Māori gods) – as a way for

whānau to connect and resonate with the many atua and how each of them navigated distress and moments of darkness.

Darryl and Tash have taken inspiration for the name of their wānanga series from the story of the children of Ranginui and Papatūānuku (the sky father and earth mother). Trapped in the unending darkness of their parents' loving embrace, 'Te Hīnātore' was the first glimmer of light that offered hope of change and opened the floodgate to more light, more understanding, a way out of the restricted space.

Change talk

Darryl asserts that our people are the experts of their own journey, "We all have life experience and we all know how drugs and alcohol can impact on our lives ... As an individual, what is it we need to change?"

When ready, whānau are welcomed into this space of safety and no judgement because they want to make a change, to move out of that space of restriction.

The group wānanga setting offers a range of perspectives, experiences and ideas. The creation stories, and other pūrākau, spark conversation, offer solutions, open the door of opportunity, and encourage collective problem solving.

In te ao Māori, many of our beliefs and values come from pūrākau – the creation narratives of our atua. This wānanga reminds our people that their stories are important, that their emotions have whakapapa (ancestry), and that together they can support each other to make the deliberate and intentional change that is needed in their lives.

Tēnei te pō, nau mai te ao – this is the dark, welcome the light.



If you or a whānau member are in distress, tēnā whakapā mai. Give our mental health and addictions team a call on 0508 111 555. Our immediate response hotline is available Monday-Friday, 8.30am-4.30pm.

To find out more about our 'Te Hīnātore' small group wānanga:

Phone: 0508 835 676 - option 3
Email: darryl.maxwell@korowai.co.nz
Website: www.korowai.co.nz



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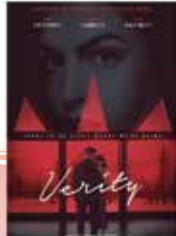
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PROUD TO BE LOCAL *Baxter Ward*



The Theatre Bug Bites Hard

There are many conditions that sweep through communities. The common cold. Hay fever. A mysterious urge to buy another keep cup despite already owning six. But perhaps none is quite as contagious, or as delightfully inconvenient, as the theatre bug.

It starts innocently enough. You volunteer for one little show. Perhaps you borrow a funny costume. Maybe you sing one song. Before long you're discussing harmonies over dinner, referring to complete strangers as 'cast family', and wondering if you could squeeze one more rehearsal into the week.

Just ask Baxter Ward.

Although now proudly waving the theatrical flag for Morrinsville Theatre, his story actually begins much closer to home. His Poppa spent his whole life in Whangamatā, while Baxter's own childhood was sprinkled with weekends and holidays across Onemana, Whiritoa and Hot Water Beach. Like many of us, the Coromandel has always felt less like a destination and more like an old friend.

His first production arrived in 2017 when he played Donkey in *Shrek Jr.* Some people leave their first show thinking, "Well, that was fun." Baxter left wondering when the next rehearsal started.

These days he finds himself behind the piano as Musical Director, helping young

performers discover talents they often didn't know they possessed. Some arrive already reading music with ease. Others simply arrive with enthusiasm. Somehow, by opening night, they all sound like they belong together. It is theatre magic, although Baxter would probably tell you it mostly involves patient rehearsals and saying, "Let's try that one more time."

The Morrinsville Theatre itself has an equally charming origin story. Once upon a time it was an indoor cricket centre. Somewhere along the way someone looked around and apparently decided, "You know what this place needs? Jazz hands."

It turns out they were absolutely right. What shines brightest is not the building but the people inside it. Volunteers welcome audiences, parents quietly solve impossible costume problems, committees keep the lights on, and creative teams somehow transform enthusiastic youngsters into confident performers.

Baxter's favourite moment comes each closing night, as the final song fills the theatre and every rehearsal, every missed note and every nervous smile suddenly makes perfect sense.

The theatre bug, it seems, is incurable. Fortunately, nobody is looking for a vaccine.

 Words by
Fabian Roberts



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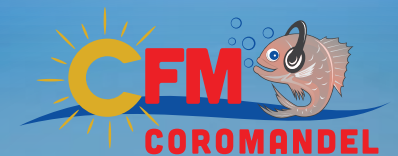
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After several years of planning and patience, Wāhi Tukurua (Mercury Bay Resource Recovery Centre) has reached an exciting milestone!

The Ministry for the Environment and Wāhi Tukurua have signed a refreshed Memorandum of Understanding, allowing work to move forward on a Building and Construction Resource Recovery Facility alongside the new Refuse Transfer Station in Whitianga. While it's a significant achievement for the project, it's also an important step for our wider community.

Building and demolition materials make up one of New Zealand's largest waste streams, yet many items such as timber, windows, doors, cabinetry and fixtures still have plenty of life left in them. Rather than heading to landfill, these materials can be recovered, reused and given a second chance.

Once operational, the facility will provide builders, renovators and residents with a practical way to divert reusable materials from landfill while making affordable building supplies available for community projects, repairs and future construction.

For Wāhi Tukurua, this has always been about more than waste. It's about keeping valuable resources in circulation, reducing environmental impact, and building a stronger circular economy for Mercury Bay and the wider Thames-Coromandel.

As the project progresses, there will be opportunities for local businesses, tradies, volunteers and community groups to become involved.

After years of waiting, it's exciting to see this vision becoming a reality.

Building a More Circular Future



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Words by
Tracey Bell



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A Long Conversation with Colour

Nigel Sparrow: Practice That Keeps Unfolding

My first creative memories go back to when I must have been around four years old. I was at my Nana's house in Dunedin and someone (probably her) had given me a colouring book and some crayons. My first 'drawing' was to the outline of a parrot. What I distinctly remember was my delighted shock at the brilliant crimson and vivid blue that came out when I used these new materials (crayons).

Over the years, I have played with many mediums. Being a teenager in the '60s and '70s as the cultural waves of hippiedom and rock 'n' roll rolled into New Zealand meant lots of experimentation with clothes, colour (tie-dye!) and style. We all wore thrift shop clothing and occasionally would save up for a really groovy piece of clothing from somewhere like Tigermoth or Browns Mill.

I moved to Europe in the mid-'70s. Among other things, I discovered my interest in graphics and, following on from that, screen printing. I had two great friends who did all the weekly posters for two of the big music/theatre venues in Amsterdam and I became fascinated with screen printing and eventually learned how to apply it to fabric in the early '80s in Sydney.

Cities often have a golden period in our minds and in the '80s and early '90s Sydney was that place for me. I turned my first screen printed designs on cotton into shirts and got a stall at Paddington markets, which was a home base for many creatives in that time.

Over those first few years I produced several individual fabric prints which helped extend my clothing range. In 1985, I went to Seattle for the first time and came across someone with lots of literature about watercolour marbling. I bought some of this information, having fallen in love with marbled papers in Florence some 10 years before. I had one of those intuitive flashes that I *should* be

able to make marbling work on fabrics.

In fact, it took nearly 18 months of experimenting to finally produce the first pieces of marbled fabric but I love making them to this day. Every single piece is a one-off so the variety is infinite. The process is very unusual as water based pigments are suspended on a tank of seaweed-based gel, roughly the consistency of cream.

The flow of the pigments changes as the marbling progresses so a range of techniques are used (combing, raking, spattering) to manipulate the pigments into their final shape on the surface. A piece of fabric with an alum solution added to it then picks up the pigments, which immediately sets the pigment pattern into the fibres of the fabric in a process called 'lakes of colour'.

Marbled fabrics are quite colour fast and resist UV fading. In all the years I've been making fabrics (my tank is now 3 metres long x 1.5 metres wide), I have rarely found anyone who works on that scale. As a result, I necessarily make a simple clothing line to offer a way of having your own piece of marbling. These are always available in The Source, the artist's collective in the centre of Coromandel town.

I have another practice, often done in front of the fire in winter, of creating unique digital prints based on my own photographs. The original shots can be taken anytime and anywhere (just like any photo), but the re-working usually takes a bit longer than the original shot and needs some quiet time just looking at things.

I currently produce a small range of things based on these images – some images on T-shirts, some images are digitally printed with archival inks on archival paper (and largely framed as prints) and I have a great selection of handmade cards available in The Source.

As an artist, it's good to have some new projects to stir the imagination and stimulate the flow of ideas. Last year in winter it was a combination of this digital printing and also marbling on 3D surfaces, creating some unique lights/lamps and other 3D objects.

I also continue with my exploration of sand carving rock, including our own pounamu, with the use of an industrial sand-blasting set-up I have at my workshop. Although this is not a large part of my output these days, I still enjoy the design process and the permanence of a permanently carved memento.

I occasionally make a unique memorial for a friend or the family/whānau of someone who has died, knowing they will be able to put it into a special memory place and/or take it to a new location if it's time to move.

I love living here in Coromandel town and continually find inspiration in our environment – the shapes and colours of our hills and waterways along with the constantly changing light.

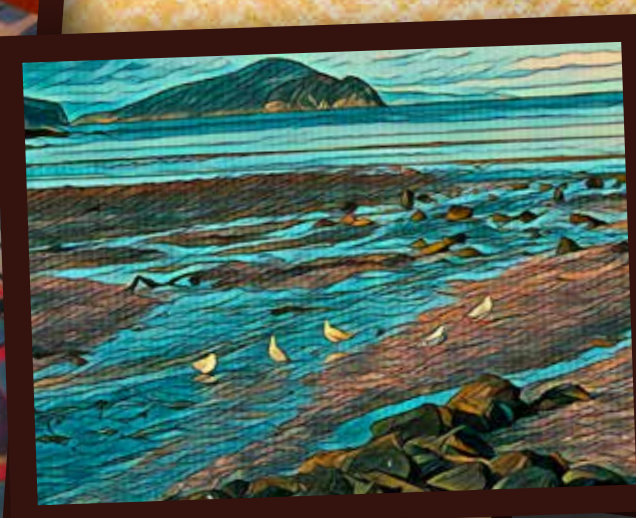
I also love the ongoing success of our collective, The Source. We celebrated our 22nd birthday in December 2025. I have often worked with collective projects of different types and find great value in collaborating with a range of people to bring our strengths together into whatever the project is.

My work is available at The Source (31 Kapanga Road, Coromandel) seven days a week.

Instagram: @nigel.sparrow1

Contact: 027 224 5990

 Words by
Nigel Sparrow



Watch our visit to Nigel's Studio

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Hitchhiker Tales - A Series

DON'T STOP

The Quiet Reality Behind the People we Drive Past

My history of hitchhiking through unstable Central American countries – and the generosity I received from strangers there – left me with a belief that when it became my turn, I should give back.

So now I pick up hitchhikers who look dangerous enough that one once said to me, “Thank you so much. I know how I look – and even I wouldn’t pick me up!”

For a long time, I didn’t talk about this habit – either hitchhiking myself or stopping for others. In New Zealand, I often pick up travellers heading off to hikes or small adventures. Those lifts are usually light and fun, like stepping briefly into someone else’s story. I mostly pick up hitchhikers to make the journey interesting. With others, I learn that some people need help more than others. I don’t want to stop helping those people. Who else will?

Recently, the last five hitchhikers I’ve picked up have all been New Zealanders: homeless, dealing with mental health issues, and at least two with prison histories.

Just before Christmas, in the Waikato countryside, I picked up a man carrying an improbable amount of gear – a tent, a sponge-rubber mattress, a guitar for busking. To get my attention, he pressed his hands together in a prayer gesture. I stopped. Others wouldn’t have.

He told me he was on his way to see his five children for Christmas. There were two mothers involved, and access was limited to birthdays and holidays. I imagined some of his earlier choices hadn’t sat well with the families of the mothers.

His car, he said, had been impounded the day before for not carrying a physical copy of his licence. I didn’t question that, though I’d once received only a warning for the same lapse. When I asked where he usually lived, his answer circled the truth. Was he homeless?

When I dropped him in town, he spotted a shopping trolley and asked me to stop. He transferred his belongings into it and walked away.

In the future, I’ll ask, “Where do you usually live?”

A few months earlier, at dusk, I picked up a hitchhiker on the outskirts of Whangamata. He apologised

for having just taken a ‘massive bong hit’ and warned me that, for this reason, he might not be great at conversation. I wryly thought how polite he was for worrying about me. I also thought: In his world – he thinks saying that to a complete stranger is perfectly normal.

As the evening light faded and we drove out of town, he told me he’d spent eight years in prison – a sentence that saved his life. When he got out, he saw what meth had done to his friends.

As a teenager, he’d stolen motorcycles for his father, who altered and sold them – ‘conversion’, he called it. At fifteen, expelled from school, he moved in with a twenty-year-old girlfriend who already had a baby. Later in life, his mother wrongly believed he was dealing cocaine and called the police on him.

I wanted to write extensively about his life – but decided not to let him into mine. I’d learned that lesson years earlier in Guatemala, practising Spanish with people involved in drugs: Protective, but dangerous to be around.

Last year, near Raetihi, I picked up a large man hitchhiking with a Rottweiler. They were homeless and had been hitchhiking all day in the heat. I couldn’t imagine who else would stop. I did.

I managed to learn a few things about him before the conversation stalled. We rode in awkward silence until Whanganui, where he asked me to pull over beside a shopping trolley. The next day, I saw him hitching in the same direction I was going and I didn’t stop. Limited conversation doesn’t bode well for a second chance.

None of these men spoke directly about mental health or addiction. But all were struggling to survive, and all had been quietly – or explicitly – rejected by their families and communities.

Picking up hitchhikers is often light and companionable. With others, it reminds me how much some people need help – and how few people are able to give it. So, I stop. I listen. I learn.

And for now, I don’t stop stopping.

Words by
Rachael Mayne



SURE SHOT

HAURAKI-COROMANDEL PHOTOGRAPHERS SERIES

Featuring Lorraine Beattie

My love for photographic art began as a young teenager. On a trip to Wellington Zoo as a volunteer Scout Leader, with Kodak box brownie camera in tow, I captured, from behind, the boy scouts sprawled over the railing at the lion cage. This was a lightbulb 'moment in time' and the start of a passion that has continued to evolve as I've progressed through my creative journey.

A few years later I headed off backpacking around the world. During that time of exploration I honed my skills in the art of composition, light and 'the moment'. I developed an addiction to anticipating the shot, capturing cultures, landscapes, seascapes and architecture in many corners of the globe. On return to NZ, life intervened with another profession and family but I carried on with photography as time allowed.

After a hiatus, I picked up my gear again and joined the Photographic Society in Auckland.

This triggered what has become an amazing continuum of invitations to exhibit my art both in group and solo exhibitions, in the USA, Europe and here in NZ. I have been featured in a number of International Juried Art publications, lectured in the UK, and presented at various Rotary events, Grey Power, schools, travel shows, the corporate world and partnerships with the Spinal Trust and currently featured at the Rodney Women's Refuge.

My offshore travels have continued, and being caught up in disasters in various hotspots (a cyclone in Burma and rioting in Chile are a couple) has provided me with exciting photojournalism opportunities simply by being in the right place at the right time.

In NZ, I focus on the golden and blue hours to get the best light and patterns of land and sea, particularly around the Firth, Coromandel and Hauraki Plains; my home turf is now Paeroa, after many years at Miranda.

Beyond the environment, my passion for capturing humanity continues with events, sports, families and weddings. Spontaneity and the emotion of a moment revealed without a pose is still the major influencing factor in my photographic journey from my beginning as that young teen at the zoo. I love to draw the viewer in to feel that emotion, regardless of the subject.

My equipment over the years has evolved with the change in technology. My current kit includes a Canon 6D full frame with a collection of different lenses, my favourite go-to being the 70-200mm F1:4L/USM, great bokeh (soft-focus quality of a blurred background) and excellent for shots without being in the subject's space.

Website: lorrainebeattie.com
Facebook: [Lorraine Beattie Photography](https://www.facebook.com/LorraineBeattiePhotography)
Email: lorrbeattie@hotmail.com
Phone: 0274 743597

 Words by
Lorraine Beattie



Zebra Crossing

Settings:

f/7.1, 1/500s, ISO 100, Focal length 200mm

On safari in the Masai Mara, Kenya, another moment-in-time chance encounter. The zebras appeared from the tussock onto the road. I could read the uncertainty within the herd as to which direction they should go, left, right, forward or back? I loved the symmetry of this image with their positioning and even though they all look the same the stripes are unique to each animal.

Love



Settings:

f/5.6, 1/250s, ISO100, Focal length 70mm

On a family outing to the beach near Kaiaua, I caught my son and grandson Finn in this special bonding moment. I love the emotions evident between father and son, love, care and trust. Finn was around two years old at the time. The little orange wheelbarrow was used by my three sons, and survived the rigours of their boyhoods to be enjoyed by the next generation. This is now my trademark logo depicted on an easel.



Beach III

Settings:

f/6.3, 1/400s, ISO100, Focal length 200mm

As I travelled south from Naples along the Amalfi Coast, the view from precarious cliff tops was awe-inspiring. I hung over the edge as far as I could to take this shot. The precise positioning of the beach umbrellas, the off-centred lookout stand and waves at shoreline colluded to present an almost painterly abstract picture. Printed on canvas, this image was included in a solo exhibition in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.



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My Coromandel

Over the winding hills, I easily slip back in time
To see children running barefoot, singing tell-tale nursery rhymes
A time when ice-creams were as big as your face
And jumping in the sea was a family race
I can distinctly remember my Uncle Jack's boat
In Te Kouma Harbour she was kept afloat
My Mum holding the back of my pants in a bunch
As I generously fed fish my breakfast, and lunch
Over the years friends would come and go
But I could always lure them back to our beautiful Coro
Missing the old-fashioned spirit of community
And 'bloody good' mussel fritters at Peppertree
When I must wave goodbye
In my rearview mirror I spy
The green rolling hills, translucent sea, and I smile
So long Coromandel Town, see you again in a little while!

by Michelle Johns

But they let me quietly become myself

There are sheep bleating next to the church
After a while, two ducks appeared in the church hall
A black-tailed bird stayed on my car window for a long time
In the mountains in the early morning, I heard the sound of people riding horses
Going down the mountain, the sound of Māori shells floated from afar
All this can't bring me good luck
But they let me quietly become myself
Spring is simple and unpretentious, neither accepting nor giving
Spring finally knows that she has an invincible summer
Spring, I am the one who picks up petals
My body is full of soil and fragrance
If you are tired, just wither for a few days, you don't have to bloom and sprout all the time
You are part of spring

by Yaning Ma Foreman

Why?

Why must children die
to feed the dreams of ageing men?
Men blinded by ego and power
indifferent to suffering and injustice
haggling over political gains
from the comfort of their hideaways
The world's outrage is sadly muted
no white knights to save the lost souls
of Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, Iran ...
The death lists go on ... on ... and on ...

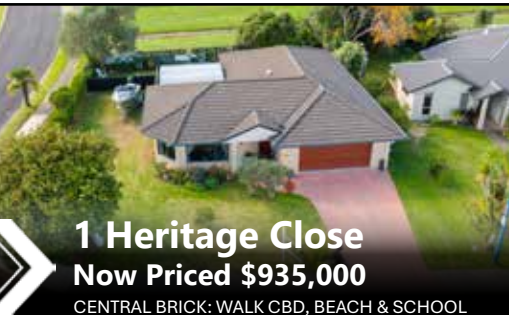
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SMELLY NELLY STRIKES AGAIN

A Giant of the Southern Seas with a Few Unexpected Tricks



If you picture a fearsome bird, your mind may jump to the New Zealand Falcon or the Australasian Harrier. But how about a seabird? The Giant Petrel is the largest of all petrel species. Both the Northern and Southern Giant Petrels breed in New Zealand, though they spend most of their lives roaming the waters around the Antarctic continent and the subantarctic islands. Similar in size to an albatross, they are distinguished by their heavier, more powerful bills. Those powerful tube-nosed bills have an excellent sense of smell to help them locate food across enormous distances

Their nicknames – Smelly Nelly or Stinker – are well earned. Chomping down on a dead whale, seal or penguin is enough to deserve that name, but when threatened these birds will regurgitate their stomach contents, repelling anything that approaches them. A very stinky strategy?

Over the years of running a rehabilitation centre, I have cared for many of these impressive birds. They are often found inland after being blown off course, and upon rescue, they receive a full physical examination and blood tests. These frequently reveal malnutrition and dehydration, which can place significant strain on the kidneys. Intensive care is then required, including fluid therapy and carefully managed tube feeding to avoid refeeding syndrome – a dangerous condition caused by introducing whole foods too quickly after a period of starvation.

Handling a bird with a wingspan of up to two metres and a weight between 3.8 and 5 kilograms is never a one-person job. Despite their size, Giant Petrels in care are usually calm, though undeniably cheeky. Feeding times required particular care, as toes and heels were always at risk of an opportunistic nip.

After several weeks of rehabilitation – and many kilos of raw meat and fish – we assess the bird's feather condition to ensure it is fully waterproof and confirm it has regained a healthy body weight. With support from the Department of Conservation, each bird is banded and registered with the Wellington Banding Office before being released near a cliff or open stretch of sea, ready to return to its vast ocean home.

If you have found a sick or injured bird, please call DOC's Emergency Hotline 0800 362 468 for further instructions.

Words by
Annemieke Kregting

RUGBY IN MY LIFE

The Good, the Bad and the Bruised

My first ever game of rugby was at Pigeon Mountain in Auckland. I was 6 years old. I remember running around not really knowing what I was doing or where I should have been running. I don't remember actually touching the ball, but I do remember that we lost the game 49-nil, a result that fortunately left our team with ample room for improvement.

During the following few years, I was quite small for my age, but I was agile and had good ball skills. A standout recollection of those early rugby days was when I was playing for my elementary school first fifteen at the age of about 11 or 12. It was during the annual match against the old boys who were in their first year of high school. Of course, they were a year older than us and naturally a lot bigger. I played fullback and was the last line of defence, entrusted with stopping any attack by the opposing team. Well, during this game, my defensive skills were tested to the limit. My most vivid memory was standing there watching the opposing loose head prop, ball in hand, come charging towards me. I remember his name. It was Goldwater. He wasn't that fast, so I could cover him, but unfortunately for me he was huge and I was tiny in comparison. My tackle training kicked in, and I reminded myself to grab him around the legs and place my head behind his buttocks not in front. I did that and felt him falter and slow down but sadly my arms weren't long enough to reach right around his legs and he managed to stagger over the line and score a try. I was battered and bruised but managed to keep playing. After the game, I was complimented on my bravery for attempting the tackle. Looking back, I am not sure whether I was brave or stupid, considering the possible serious injury that could have resulted. Today, I wonder at the survival skills of smaller players, like All Black Damien McKenzie who, despite his size, throws himself at men far bigger and stronger than himself. I hope he avoids serious injury.

At high school I finally started to grow and by the time I reached my final year, although quite skinny, I was big enough to be included in the first fifteen. High school rugby entailed playing against players who in a year of two would be playing for their province or even for the All Blacks. I remember when our school played against Mt Albert Grammar, seeing future All Black winger Bryan Williams run onto the paddock with tight shorts covering thighs almost as thick as my body. I hoped I would never have to tackle that. Fortunately, my hope was realised.

I've heard that these days high school rugby is becoming extremely competitive, even to the point where many private schools are now offering scholarships to talented rugby players from less affluent areas. This obviously benefits both the players who receive the scholarships and the schools which achieve better results in the rugby competitions. However, one could ask the question, "Is this fair on the less affluent schools without the funds to finance such scholarships?" Does money ultimately determine the winner?

After high school, club rugby beckoned and quickly became the foundation of our social life. After each practice, which happened twice a week, there was usually a beer or two downed and after each game on Saturdays it was beers and pies in the club house together with the opposing team. Sometimes, on-field disputes were settled there and then. The rugby culture mantra that alcohol was king resulted in some ugly violent scenes. After the

club house, the party often moved to a local pub. Drink driving laws were not strictly enforced in those days, which together with cheap fuel, faster vehicles, and a rising population of young drivers, resulted in horrific road death statistics. In 1973, the total was a shocking 843. Compare that to 2025 when it was 271. Stricter policing of alcohol is definitely working, although I am surprised at how much alcohol you can drink and still be under the limit.

Our club team was called The Pigs, named by our illustrious captain, Dave, who was also founder of the team's tea-chest band. Dave encouraged us to take the field wearing party hats and singing our team song which he wrote. Some referees demanded that we ditch the hats before play started and that we stop singing. Despite our antics, we had some exceptional players and won enough games to reach the Auckland fourth grade competition final which was to be played at Eden Park as one of two curtain-raisers before an All Blacks versus France test match. Of course, our families were excited that their sons would play at Eden Park. Unfortunately, our team decided to celebrate the night before the game, instead of the night after, just in case we lost. Dave hosted a party at which alcohol once again was king, together with a green herbal substance which was becoming more and more popular in the early seventies. The party went on till the early hours and come kick-off time we were a motley bunch of hungover players. Of course, we lost the game badly and were subjected to well-deserved derision by those who had fostered high hopes of a glorious victory. Luckily the party had been one to remember.

After a couple of more years of club rugby, my enthusiasm started to wane, especially after our team's fly half, Mike, was tackled heavily and suffered a badly broken leg. I can still remember the sound of a loud crack and the image of his broken leg bone forming a large bulge under his sock. Other injuries were also common, like deep sprig marks raked down an unfortunately placed back in a ruck. Rucking opposition bodies was allowed in those days and high tackles were treated much more leniently than they are today. There were no yellow cards. I realised that with my skinny body, I could get seriously hurt if I continued playing. My other hobby, surfing, seemed much safer, so I stopped rugby, much to the disappointment of my dear Dad who loved watching me play.

Today, I really enjoy watching my grandsons play the game, happier in the knowledge that they wear both mouth guards and head gear. I find professional rugby great to see on the tele. It is highly regulated and much more safety conscious than it was in my day. There are yellow and red cards for dangerous play and sensors inside mouth guards to detect high impact contact requiring an HIA (head injury assessment). These are all positive aspects, developed as the game has become more professional. However, now and then we hear reports of professional players being stood down after breaching team protocol. Some of these incidents probably involve alcohol. I am not sure if drinking is still king in club rugby. I would hope that things have improved since my playing days, although recent incidents in Whitianga, allegedly involving some local players, leave one wondering.

Words by
Ross Liggins



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It's All in the Details

Sugarfish & Lofte: Taking Celebration Seriously in the Coromandel



Kai is art. And when it is made with care, commitment and a genuine desire to make people happy, it becomes an experience, something people remember long after the plates have been cleared.

For Amy of Sugarfish, creating those experiences has been a way of life. It is perhaps fitting that someone who has spent so much of her life making other people's moments special finds talking about herself one of the harder things to do. But look a little closer at what she has built, and there is plenty worth celebrating.

Amy grew up on a farm in Whangapoua, where she took to the kitchen from a young age, cooking for the family while her parents worked long hours on the farm. After a year at Nelson Polytechnic and another at AUT, she headed to Australia looking for experience and found herself cooking every day for crews of 30 on pearling boats off the remote Montebello Islands, 120 nautical miles from Western Australia. With supplies arriving by seaplane once a week, feeding a crew meant serious planning, organisation and resourcefulness. It was an unlikely training ground for what would come next.

Back in the Coromandel, Amy started a family and spotted an opportunity at the Mercury Bay Aero Club. Rather than simply opening a café, she saw potential in the main hangar and created the Flight Club Ballroom. Weddings followed, then requests to cater weddings elsewhere around the peninsula. Sugarfish grew, 'Bertha' the mobile catering trailer joined the team, and eventually Amy made the decision to focus entirely on catering.

Today, Sugarfish caters for around 50 weddings every season, alongside conferences, birthdays, memorials, festivals and all sorts of other celebrations. But behind those numbers is something much more personal. "I love to bring a smile to someone's face," Amy says. "I always want to give people a little extra."

That commitment comes with a price. Wedding seasons can mean weekends and summers booked 12 - 24 months ahead, family events moved to weekdays and important occasions missed. Amy credits her partner, parents and children for helping her make it all work.

Her desire to create opportunities for others has also shaped the wider Sugarfish family. Ahi, the mobile pizza oven, and Awa, the coffee cart, began partly as a way to extend work for the talented locals who help during the busy season, but have grown into services in their own right.

Ahi is available for dry hire, with ingredients supplied or guests encouraged to bring their own toppings and create their own pizzas. Awa is available as a staffed coffee cart for events, including day-after wedding gatherings, with or without food. Both offer a fun, relaxed way to add something special to an event.

And now there is Lofte. Born from a gap Amy noticed at her own events, Lofte offers elevated glassware and tableware for celebrations beyond the traditional Sugarfish wedding, from business functions and smaller gatherings to parties at home.

It is another chapter in a story that has always been about more than catering. It is about bringing people together, creating something beautiful, and helping them celebrate life in this place Amy has called home for so long.

"I have been privileged to be welcomed onto people's land and into their homes to help them celebrate," she says.

And perhaps that is the real art behind Sugarfish, and now Lofte. Making people feel looked after.



Words by
Leonardo Magri

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SKATING FOR THE FUTURE



A Guided Journey on Four Wheels



We've all dreamt of being skaters: watching those cool guys and girls flying around the skatepark, landing incredible flips and jumps, and making it all look effortless.

It is easy to think they might be born with this talent. But behind the cool confidence and every successful trick are hours of practice, plenty of falls, and someone willing to teach. Inspiration and guidance can come from YouTube or other online resources, but face-to-face interactions always mean more and deliver better outcomes.

Sean Reilly has been a skateboarder since the age of six and doesn't intend to stop any time soon.

After working as a teacher, Sean combined his passion for education with his love of skateboarding to establish Whitianga Skate School as a business in 2023. Over the next two years, he introduced young people to the sport while creating a fun, welcoming environment for skaters of all abilities.

After taking a year away with his family to travel around New Zealand, Sean saw community-run skate schools thriving in small towns across the country. Inspired by what he experienced, he returned with a new vision. Together with his partner, Sharon, he established the Guided Journey Charitable Trust in 2025, creating opportunities for even more young people to access skateboarding and other programmes that build confidence, connection, and well-being.

"In a world where many young people are spending increasing amounts of time indoors and behind screens, we see real value in getting outside, being active, connecting with others, and experiencing the well-being that comes from movement, friendship and community," Sean says.

"It's not so much about being the best; it's more about getting out there and being brave while learning from mistakes."

The response from the community was huge, and by 2026 more than 94 children were taking part in weekly lessons outside of school. School-based programmes have introduced even more students to the sport.

The impact has reached far beyond skateboarding.

In Term 2 this year, Sean and Isaiah visited Whenuakite School to deliver a programme to more than 150 students from Years 1–8. It was a great opportunity for students to develop new skills or polish their existing ones in a fun, supportive, and inclusive environment.

Mr Veysi, the school principal, was very impressed with the programme. "The skate sessions have given our students much more than just skateboarding skills. We've seen increased confidence, resilience, perseverance and teamwork. Students have been willing to step outside their comfort zones, celebrate each other's successes, and keep trying even when a skill has been challenging."

And the impact of the visits didn't stop there. The programme stimulated learning after the sessions: ākonga explored measurement and data activities, created artwork and descriptive writing inspired by movement, balance and action, and discussed well-being, resilience and personal goal setting.

With more people joining regularly, shared responsibility is what makes this fresh new opportunity viable.

"Everyone working together means great things can be achieved. We have an amazing community, and we want to develop programmes that help young people grow and succeed," Sean explains.

Sean and Sharon established the Guided Journey Charitable Trust to expand opportunities across the Coromandel Peninsula. While skateboarding remains its flagship programme, the Trust also aims to provide a range of experiences that help young people grow, connect and thrive.

So next time you're about to sit down, take a moment. Perhaps there's something else you could be up to.

Facebook: Whitianga Skate School

Instagram: @whitianga.skate.school



Words by
Thea Dozell
Year 8, Whenuakite School

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