

SLOW BURN

AHI TĀMAU

Women and photography
Māreikura Whakaahua

Lissa Mitchell



\$35

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Slow Burn Ahi Tāmau

Women and Photography Māreikura Whakaahua

LISSA MITCHELL

THE COMPANION CATALOGUE TO THE MAJOR PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION AT TE PAPA

"Researching, collecting and writing about photography, I have often wondered where the women were."—Lissa Mitchell

Slow Burn Ahi Tāmau showcases the diverse range of photography by women and non-binary artists from Aotearoa New Zealand, spanning the 1960s to today. This major survey exhibition from Te Papa's collections sparks a conversation between past and present – exploring themes of identity, whānau, place, and time through a feminist lens. Highlighting over 150 works by 50 artists, this accompanying catalogue by curator Lissa Mitchell illustrates how ways of seeing can be passed down, reimagined, and slowly reignited.

Featured artists include Anne Noble, Fiona Pardington, Natalie Robertson and Lisa Reihana. The curator's essay provides further historical context to the exhibition, and biographies of the photographers make this a valuable research resource.

Slow Burn builds on ten years of deeply considered research, inclusive collection decisions, and the 2023 publication of Lissa's acclaimed book *Through Shaded Glass: Women and photography in Aotearoa New Zealand 1860–1960*. The exhibition and catalogue bring work by photographers from the last 65 years out of the storeroom and into conversation with each other – a celebration of photography's ever-evolving nature in Aotearoa.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lissa Mitchell is curator of historical photography at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. As well as their 2023 book *Through Shaded Glass: Women and Photography in Aotearoa New Zealand 1860–1960* (Te Papa Press), they have contributed to several other books: *An Alternative History of Photography* (Prestel, 2022), *New Zealand Art at Te Papa* (Te Papa Press, 2018), *Brian Brake: Lens on the World* (Te Papa Press, 2010), and *The Aotearoa Digital Arts Reader* (Clouds, 2008).

SALES POINTS

- Accompanies a major 2026 exhibition in Te Papa's Toi Art galleries from February
- Of interest to photography experts and those interested to know more about a largely unexplored part of our art history
- Thoughtfully designed in concert with the exhibition
- Affordable price

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CURATING *SLOW BURN*

Researching, collecting and writing about photography, I have often wondered where the women were. Work by women and non-binary photographers has long been underrepresented in collections, exhibitions and publications. This imbalance can give the impression they played only a minor role in Aotearoa New Zealand's photographic history – but that's simply not the case. Women have always been active across all areas of photography; their contributions simply weren't well supported or documented. *Slow Burn: Women and photography Ahi Tamau: Mareikura whakaahua* speaks to this gradual recognition – the slow yet accelerating ignition of work waiting to be seen.

Slow Burn showcases the contribution of women and non-binary photographers and artists whose work is held in the national collection at Te Papa. This catalogue, and the exhibition it accompanies, shines a spotlight on more recent collecting by Te Papa, and highlights threads connecting contemporary photographic practice with that of the past. Building on the 2023 book *Through Shaded Glass: Women and photography in Aotearoa New Zealand 1860–1960*, *Slow Burn* reveals connections between makers and processes of the past and present and also raises questions about the collection of women's photography since the 1960s in Aotearoa.

Contributions by women to photography in

Aotearoa have been consistently concerned with identity, whanau and family, place, and connections across time – themes that are intertwined with the ways women have been able, and unable, to conduct their lives and make photography. This selection of works is focused on the use of photography – for archival, documentary and creative purposes – to record and express experiences and to challenge both systems of governance and the perspectives of audiences.

Central too is the question of what legacies first- and second-wave feminisms have left within photography being made now, as well as the impact of an 'historical turn' in contemporary photographic practice to using obsolete analogue photographic processes. Gathered, all these approaches to making are realised as photography that operates across time and space and acknowledges the spirit of sharing and co-operation that enabled its creation – whether with other people, the land, or artists from the past. The gallery provides the opportunity to exhibit these works together as the objects they are – big, small, loud, angry, beautiful, contemplative, reflective, uncertain, bewildering – as memorials, as aspirations.

The exhibition follows more than ten years of research, collection acquisitions, and the 2023 publication of *Through Shaded Glass*, a book I wrote to reveal the often unseen contribution women made to

Self-portrait with a mirror by an unidentified woman photographer using a Kodak Brownie Six-16 camera with an art deco-style front, c.1940. Sheet film negative. Purchased 1999 with New Zealand Lottery Grants Board funds. Te Papa (B.080575).

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98

Hanging on a rock face, Victoria Ginn, 1976–77.
Gelatin silver print, 246 x 250 mm.
Purchased 2013. Te Papa (O.041022).



99

Still Life, Victoria Ginn, c.1986/1993.
Cibachrome print, 406 x 507 mm.
Purchased 1993 with New Zealand Lottery Grants Board funds. Te Papa (O.003947).

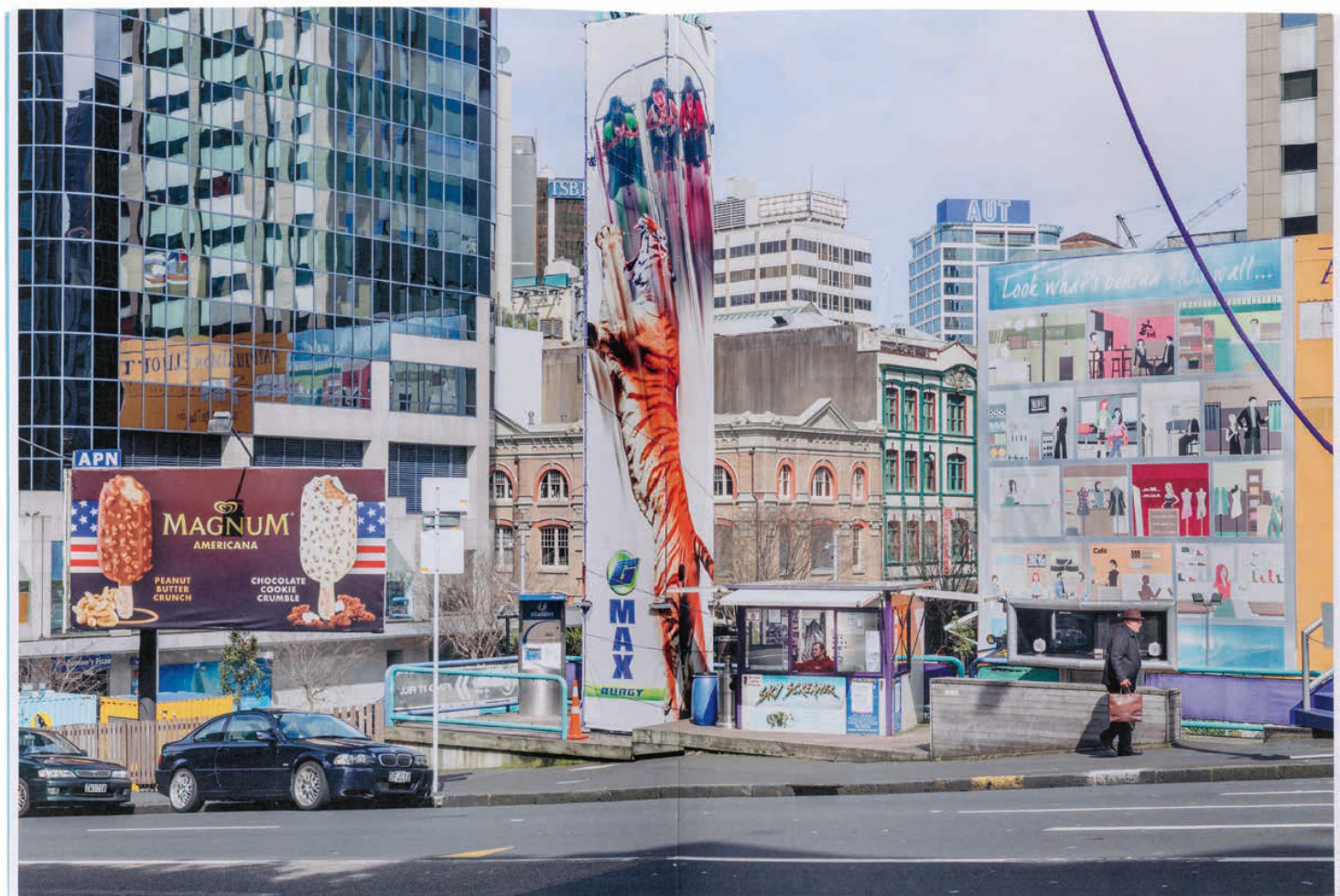
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ANCESTOR TECHNOLOGIES HANGARAU TŪPUNA

03.

Ancestor Technologies intentionally echoes the name of Stella Brennan's 2023 survey exhibition at City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi, in which she recontextualised a 120-year-old archive of glass-plate photographic negatives from her family archive. By reusing these images to reconnect with their stories in a digital era, Brennan highlights the materiality of historical objects and their role in storytelling. The artists in this section similarly engage with recovered or overlooked histories, unearthing stories as signposts toward possible futures grounded in materiality. Abhi Chinniah collaborates with her subjects to explore how cultural practices, traditions, and beliefs can be preserved and adapted outside of ancestral homelands. Ann Shelton revives plant-based knowledge, particularly its deep connections to women's health and healing. Other artists visualise change in communities: from the ruins of forgotten settlements in Caroline McQuarrie's photographs to the legacies left by ancestors in the work of Annemarie Hope-Cross and Samantha Matthews. Artists such as Conor Clarke (Ngāi Tahu, Scottish, Welsh) and the creators of the featured photobooks invite audiences to consider the materiality of photographic images by drawing attention to their layered, tactile dimensions.



The Long View, Mary Macpherson, PhotoForum, 2018.
Photobooth page spread, 244 x 194 x 7 mm.
Purchased 2023, Te Papa (R000487).



200

My grandfather, mother and father, Janet Bayly, 1980.
Polaroid SX-70 print, 108 x 88 x 2 mm.
Purchased 1982 with New Zealand Lottery Board funds. Te Papa (O.002908).



201

For Jim, Lynn Kelly, 2003.
Silver, shell, copper, gold, coconut shell, mother of pearl,
brass and copper, laser prints, 25 x 199 x 8 mm.
Purchased 2003. Te Papa (2003-0008-2).

For Evelyn, Lynn Kelly, 2003.
Silver, garnet, turquoise, star ruby, amethyst, citrine, garnet,
masé pearl, laser prints, 28 x 184 x 9 mm.
Purchased 2003. Te Papa (2003-0008-1).

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Porou Street, Sara McIntyre, 2015.
Colour pigment print, 254 x 339 mm.
Purchased 2024. Te Papa (O048946).



207

Totika Road, Sara McIntyre, 2019.
Colour pigment print, 369 x 285 mm.
Purchased 2020. Te Papa (O048949).