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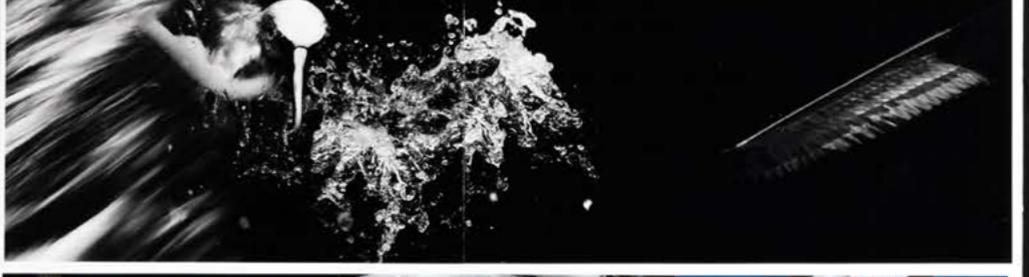
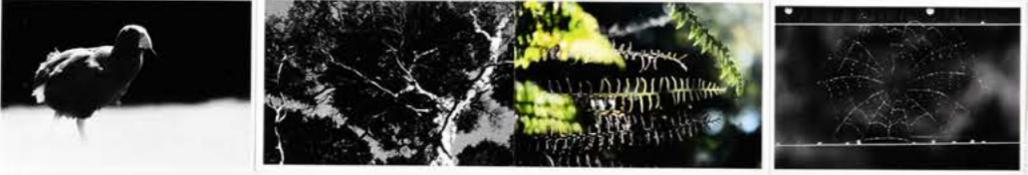


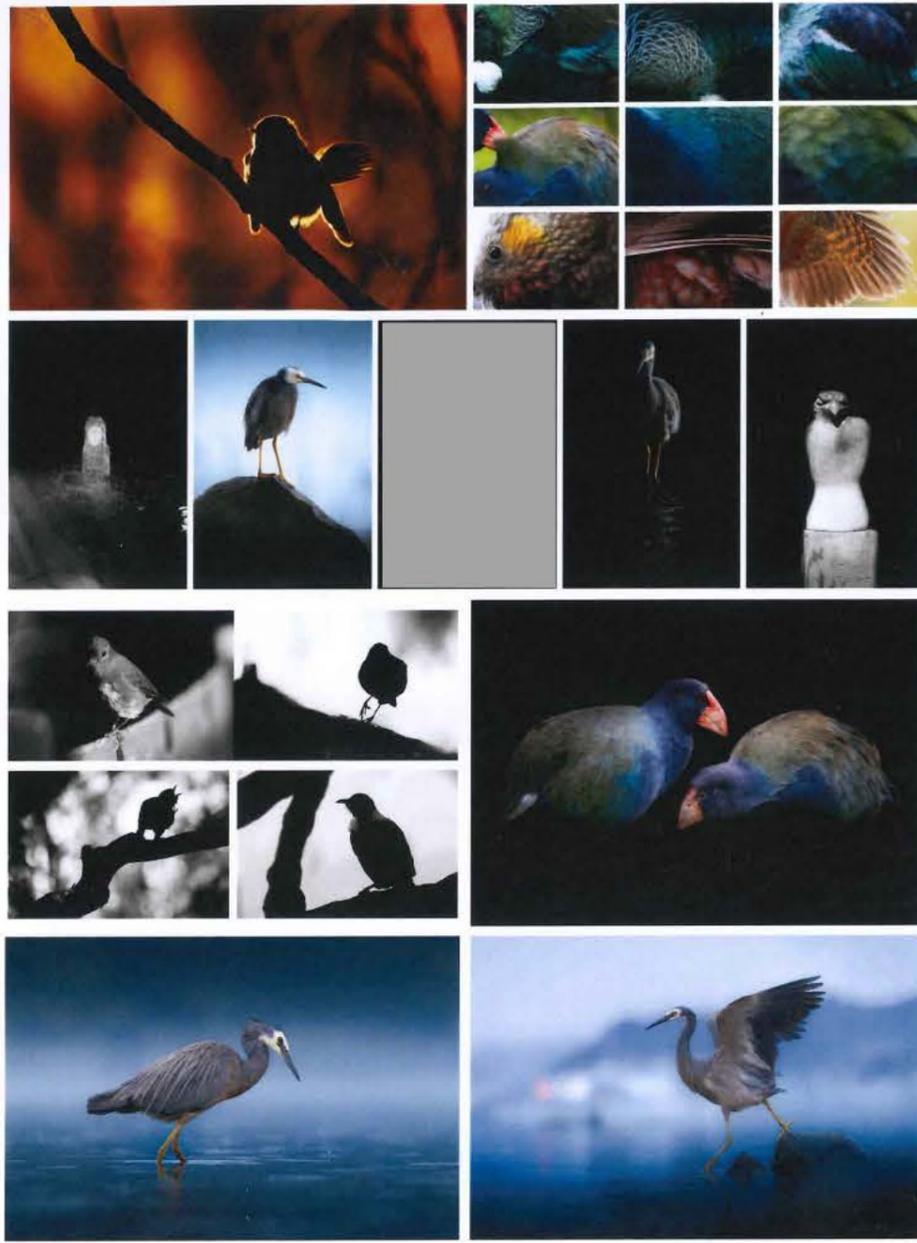
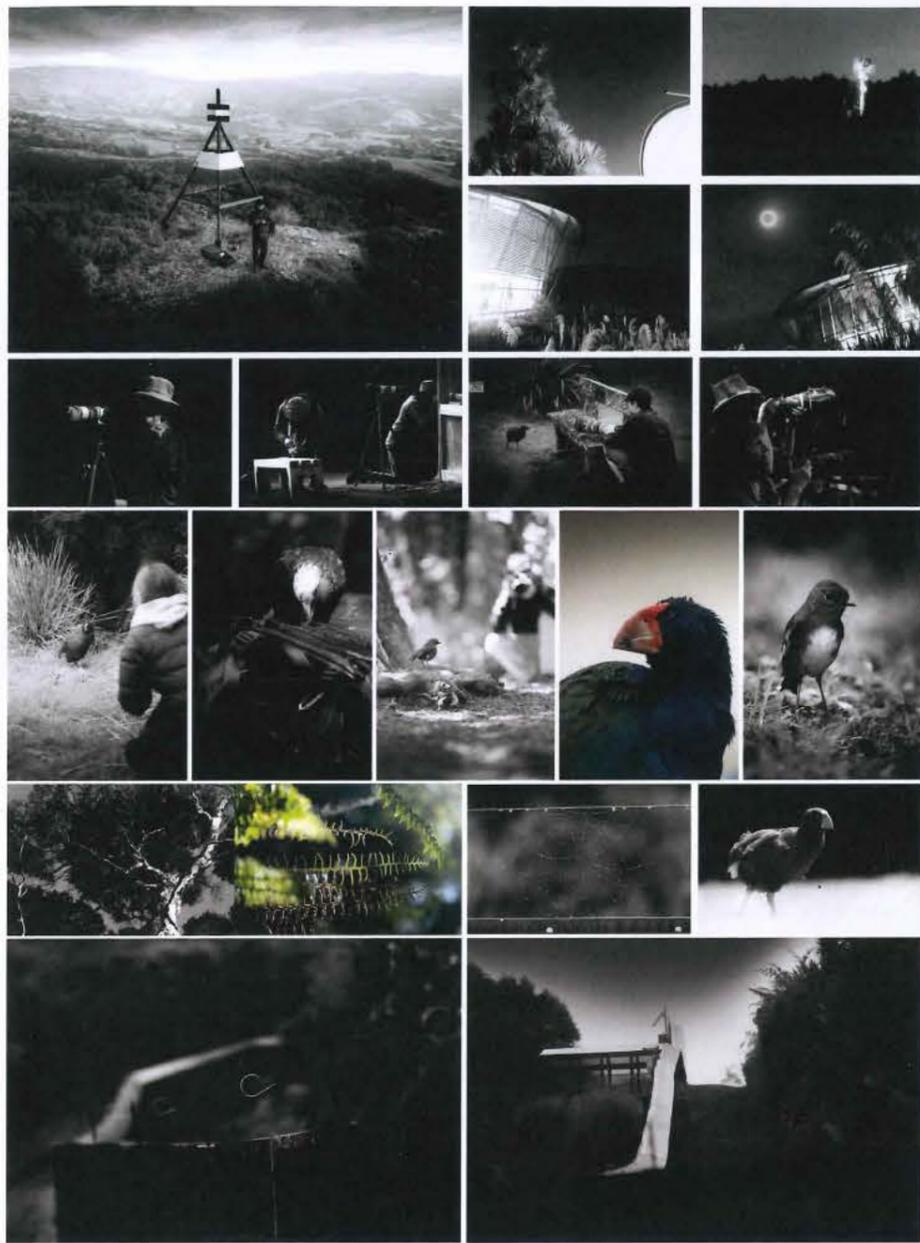
Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Scholarship Visual Arts 2025

93310 Photography

OUTSTANDING SCHOLARSHIP EXEMPLAR





Orokonui - a love story (original proposal)

orokonui : a love story

I have chosen "Orokonui: A Love Story" as my concept for my portfolio because I want to show the natural and manmade environment of the sanctuary, the many different people, the flora and fauna, and the many stories within the predator-proof fence.

I think that people naturally assume that Orokonui is just another piece of bush with a couple of interesting birds hidden around it. But really there are so many tales waiting to be told, and so much history behind it. I think that it also holds an important connection to Māori culture, the Kai Tahu of the area around and near Orokonui.

I have a connection to this concept because photographing birds is something that I have been doing for over 10 years, and Orokonui has always been a place for me to go where I can show my creativity through capturing the fauna and flora of the ecosanctuary. On my [redacted] birthday, I bought my first interchangeable lens camera, and it fully kicked off my photography journey, opening up a much larger range of photographic opportunities, like being able to zoom in without losing quality. The first three photos along the bottom of the page show the first image I ever took on that camera, the second shows an eager [redacted] year old [redacted] using his Dad's camera, falling in love with the full frame look, and the last photo is one of the first I entered into a wildlife photography competition. I have come to realise that the power of photography is showing the world through your lens. Everyone's lens is different, and so I want to show Orokonui through my lens, how I fell in love with it, and the relationships that other people are making with the ecosanctuary. The last two photos are ones that I have taken within the last year, with all my new knowledge and gear, as it really inspired the theme of my portfolio.

The aesthetic of the work on my portfolio will be very similar to my work in general, which is moody and expressive. I am not afraid to do something (that may be considered as) unconventional with my work, whether that's blurring the image to show motion, or dropping the shadows to further enhance contrast and isolate a subject. I want to use a lot of black-and-white imagery which can sometimes help take the viewer's focus away from the sometimes distracting colours of the forest and the birds and force them to look at the textures, the ideas, and the subtle lines in the image. Similarly to last year with my black and white football portfolio, I think it makes people more engaged with the image, because removing some of the visual context makes the image less recognizable, and you can make them view something a certain way.

I have arrived at this conclusion because this is my lens, this is how I view Orokonui, this is my love story to the ecosanctuary. I fell in love with the dramatic lighting, the movement, the stories, the people, the flora and fauna of Orokonui. My portfolio is viewed through my eyes whether it be the small hidden and dark moments, or the big obvious and bright moments. The way families, the elderly, the youth, view the ecosanctuary are a key part to my portfolio, but they are all viewed from my viewpoint. Showing their impact to the ecosanctuary, and the impact that they have to someone like me, and how that affects my love story. When they get in the way of an amazing shot or story, or when they give me a tip that makes me find something unique and beautiful hidden just out of public view. I want to document everything, in a very editorial way, a way that would be used in the inside of a Natural Geographic magazine, or printed large on the inside wall of an eco sanctuary.



Photography : my love story (updated proposal)

photography : my love story

I have chosen my concept this year to be "photography : my love story", because I want to show my world through my lens, and how it has changed.

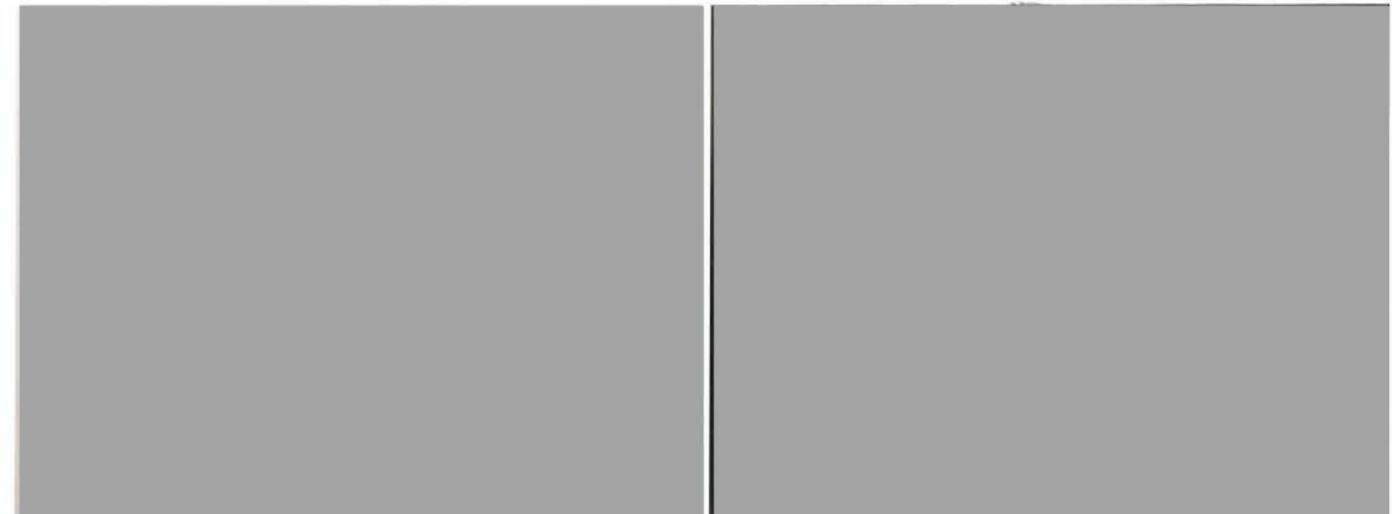
My photography journey started at Orokonui Ecosanctuary, a wonderfully vibrant and unique place that I could capture through my small little camera. Although potential setbacks in "lack of quality gear" may have stopped many other people, it was just what I needed for that age, and something that I can now see later in life. Having a small setup that I could take everywhere with me, meant that my knowledge and ability grew at an extremely fast rate. No one ever taught me anything about my photography. Except my Dad telling me not to break anything. I learnt everything in the field, and I can see that in the results of my photos getting better and better.

I can clearly remember trips to Tahuna / Queenstown and going on forest walks, frustrated at the terrible photos I was taking because of the difference in lighting. Not being able to capture details in the highlights and shadows at the same time was the main problem. But through trial and error, over many years, I have learnt ways around problems that little Sam would be scratching his head to.

Editing my photos was never something that I had really thought about doing, given that I thought it was cheating, it makes sense. My dad would use the apple photos "auto" edit feature, which would do basic adjustments to give an even exposure. I never thought that did a great job. The development of my editing is really interesting to look back on, from the apple filters, to my golden colours age, to now, where I think I have reached "my" style.

My portfolio is effectively a microcosm of my photography journey. The subjects of my photography clarified to a focus on the birds, rather than people or landscapes.

Photography has consumed my life. I think my portfolio and scholarship shows this for a few reasons. Such a depth in images, with so many that didn't end up on the panel. My ambition to create unique imagery that other people don't think / or are brave enough to make.



Communities of practice

Cultural – Te Ao Māori

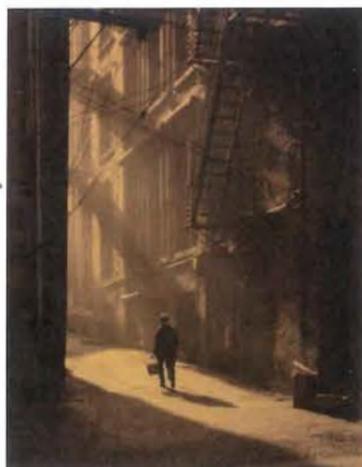
Using a cultural and Te Ao Māori lens to view my portfolio allows me to examine the local (and semi-local, e.g. New Zealand) influence on the environment of Orokonui. Photography isn't just capturing light, as that is a much more surface level approach to looking at it, but it is capturing emotion, atmosphere, and culture. The name of the ecosanctuary comes from the local Kāi Tahu iwi, referencing the name for a peaceful planting phase of the moon, Orongonui, showing the deep cultural roots that the environment holds with the people of the land. Their gifted name, Te Korowai o Mihiwaka, means The Sacred Cloak of Mihiwaka, which speaks to the sloping forest-covered mountain forming one side of the valley. Exploration of local Māori Kāi Tahu beliefs, like their holistic view of life, that emphasises the interconnectedness of people, the environment, and the spiritual realm, would be key in transforming my work and making it more multi-dimensional.

Scientific

Looking at my portfolio through a scientific lens would allow me to explore Orokonui as not just a place of beauty, but as a functioning ecosystem. Orokonui is a living case study of conservation success, showcasing biodiversity restoration through predator-proof fencing, species reintroduction, and habitat regeneration. My photography becomes not just a way of freezing light, but a tool to document and reflect the complexity of these ecological interactions - the relationships between species, the importance of native flora to bird populations, and the visible signs of a recovering ecosystem. Science gives context to what I photograph: knowing that the takahē was once thought to be extinct adds importance to capturing its image; understanding how miro and rimu trees support native bird diets informs how I frame the forest. My portfolio is not just about aesthetics, but visualising the results of almost two decades of research, effort, and community-led ecological care. By using a scientific lens, I can highlight Orokonui's unique role in reversing biodiversity loss, supporting endemic species, and acting as a model for other conservation efforts across Aotearoa. It's about making the invisible visible, and capturing not just what's there, but why it matters.

Art Historical

Viewing my portfolio through an art historical lens allows me to situate my work within traditional nature and documentary photography, while also exploring how my stylistic decisions are influenced by and challenge these conventions. Nature photographers like Ansel Adams used stark black-and-white imagery to evoke the magnificence and emotional power of the landscape – an approach that resonates in my own use of high contrast, texture, and light to dramatise the environment of Orokonui. After some research, I have found that my openness to experiment with motion blur and embrace unconventional framing aligns with photographic movements like Pictorialism, or even the more subjective documentary styles of the 20th century. The goal of these movements were different to more conventional styles because they moved on from simply recording reality to expressing the photographer's personal connection to the subject. This lens would allow me to echo the shift from photography as evidence to photography as interpretation. Like the New Topographics photographers, I am interested in human interaction with the land, not always grand or heroic, but intimate, layered, and sometimes messy. By presenting Orokonui through my own lens, I contribute to an evolving artistic dialogue about how we see and represent the natural world, blending documentary with emotion, and conservation with artistic expression.



Pictorialism was a late 19th century movement that treated photography as fine art, aiming to make photos look like paintings. This was an important technique that I used this year to make my art unique to every other bird photographer.

colour



Black and white photography is an interesting way to portray colour. The theme of my portfolio is Orokonui through my eyes, and to be honest, I'm not drawn to colour. When I look at something, the first things that I tend to notice are the lighting, the textures, and the shapes of a scene. Although colour can definitely add to an image, it can also be a huge distraction. Black and white photography forces the viewer to focus more deeply into the form of the image, and instead of being a watcher, they interact with the pieces. I want the viewers of my portfolio to work for the reward of my images, inquisitively gazing into my works, rather than grazing the surface of someone else's more simple and saturated images. Black and white allows me to express the unique eye that I have in photography, for lighting, composition and texture, in a way that colour doesn't. Black also has an important meaning in Māori culture too, representing the void that life came from.

Contrast is my best friend. Crushed blacks and blown out whites. Although definitely not conventional in any sense for the majority of photographers, because society has sculpted the way they see the world, shadows and highlights should retain detail. Let me ask you something. When you look at the sun, can you see any detail? Some things are meant to be out of our control as photographers, and that's the beauty of photography. You have to work with what you have. Showing the raw side of Orokonui, the side that hasn't been digitally enhanced and re-coloured by modern smartphones. That is something that is important to me.

My portfolio isn't solely black and white though. I want the colours that I do include to be controlled, with each one looking like it has been chosen for a reason, instead of just because it was there. The red of a takehe beak against a low key background. The soup of fern greens along a track.

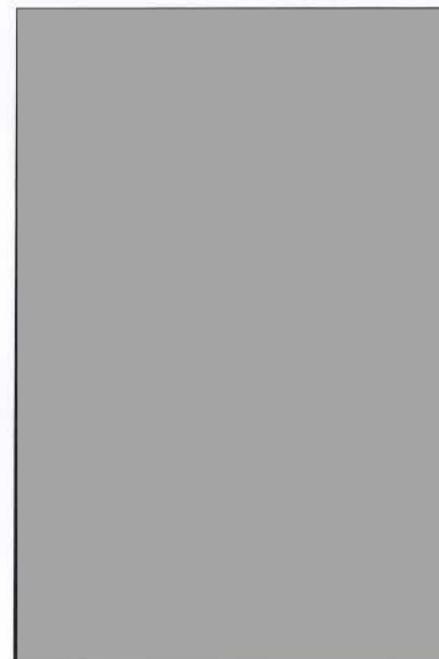
Colour can be explosive and distracting in an image. I want to use black and white to refocus the viewers eye, forcing them to engage with the message my portfolio tells.



obvious black and white ↵



my evolution of pardington

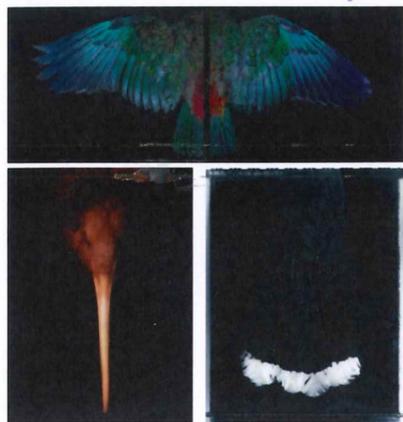


fiona pardington esque



example of a pop of colour

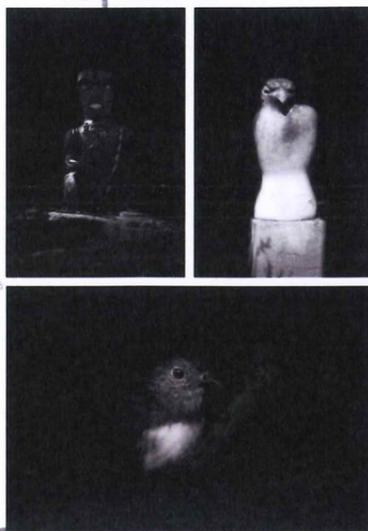
artist model example



Fiona Pardington

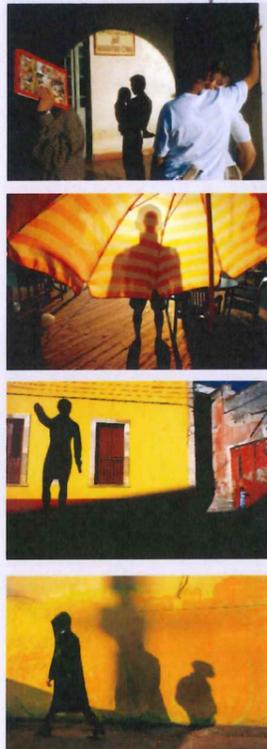
- used low-key backgrounds to make unrealistic and moody scenes.
- uses a cultural/te reo māori lens to frame her work
- using a black background removes distractions and taxidermy allows for surreal compositions

my work



te reo māori context
low key background
shadows "envelop" character

artist model example



Alex Webb

- uses extreme shadows to make bold and striking silhouettes
- what is merely suggested in the shadows and what is showcased in the highlights tells two different stories
- the message of each image is up to the viewer to decipher on their own

my work



stark contrast
depth of field
leading line
mix of lit subject

artist model example



Tim Flach

- flach uses a white/black background with his images, inside his studio, allowing him to have a much wider range of lighting, subject matter, and compositions
- lighting is always very direct and diffused without any shadows
- his subjects are all taxidermies, allowing for very easy detail shots

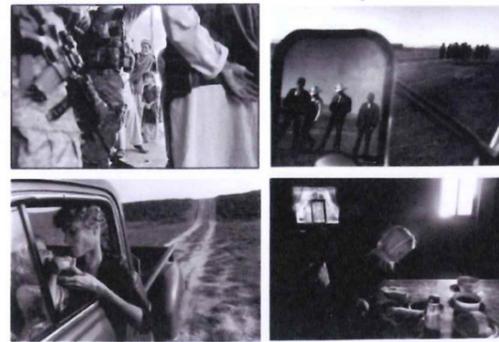
my work



(high key) white background
diffused lighting

Larry Towell

artist model example



- never too scared crush the shadows or highlights
- uses rule of thirds to split the frame for the viewer
- physical paths and tracks are also used to literally take the viewers eye on a journey through the image.

my work



rule of thirds
use of paths as leading line
vic of fingers

Thomas Vijayan

artist model example



- uses a wide variety of shot types, both super wide and zoom, and in between
- the environment always plays an important part in the photo, whether it is the weather conditions, a weird shaped branch, or a set of spooky trees
- the subject always, stays central

my work



zoom shot
depth of field
interesting branch
wide angle

Key Concepts

Manuhiri / The Visiting People – I love documenting the people of Orokonui, especially the photographers. I have always been interested in the other photographers, their process, their gear, their stories. Even as a kid, I remember going on photography expeditions hosted by the [redacted] and being the youngest person there by about 20 years. I was surrounded by creatives with many more decades of experience than I had, and I was fascinated with them. Young [redacted] tiny head was bursting with questions, and all of the others were so happy to share their knowledge with me. I am so lucky to be involved in such a supportive community of photographers that have always been willing to share their tips and tricks with me, even from a young age. Looking back on it now, I think that when these (mainly) odd old men and their expensive gear looked at me, they saw someone excited to capture the world, even through their very different gear, and unique perspective. Sure, I would love to go to Orokonui all by myself, with nobody else inside the ecosanctuary, but seeing other like-minded people, those who support taking care of the natural environment and are deeply connected to this place like I am, always makes me smile.

Whenua / The Place – Orokonui has always been such an important place to me. I have spent the equivalent of a couple weeks there over the years, many birthdays, and still, every visit is unique. Weather makes a huge difference to the type of images I take, and the experience that I have. Since the location doesn't change when I go there, I have to come up with new ways each time, to make my photos look unique. Whether it is going in the rain to freeze rain drops mid-air around the menu, or going earlier in the day to get more dramatic lighting, I enjoy that challenge. Orokonui is a [redacted] which makes each trip feel extravagant and important that I make the most of it. The ecosanctuary has so much variety, which further allows me to get unique photos every time, whether I want the silvereye in the Toetoe, the skinks in the boulders, the Tieke in the Whauwhaupaku (Five finger), or the sea birds in the lagoon right at the bottom of the hill. Orokonui has so much to offer in terms of place, I don't think I will ever run out of new experiences.

The flora and fauna – The large variety of plants and curious creatures that Orokonui has within the ecosanctuary is unlike anything else in the South Island, let alone Dunedin. Because of their predator-proof fence, it allows their wildlife to flourish without the impact of pests to cull populations. Birds that were thought to be extinct as little as 80 years ago, now freely wander the fields of Orokonui, like the Takehe. The conservation work done keeps on allowing these endangered birds to live in a way much closer to how they did in the wild, instead of in a bird hospital, or enclosure. I am lucky to have seen my first South Island Saddleback / Tieke over the last few weeks, which they introduced just under two months ago. These birds were also thought to be extinct on the mainland, and only found on offshore islands like Ulva and Solomon, but are now slowly growing.

And my photographic perspective –

My perspective is a very important part of my portfolio because it dictates what makes me unique. This year is very special to me, because it marks ten years since I was given my first camera. Seeing my progression over the years through photography, the one thing that has stuck with me. My gear, my knowledge, my eye for composition, everything that makes me unique to all other photographers, not just my age.



Genre - Endemic Wildlife

The genre that I have chosen for my photography portfolio is wildlife. More specifically, endemic New Zealand wildlife.

Many people are drawn to the toucans of Brazil, or the flamingos of India, but I have always been fascinated with our native manu. Our extraordinary birds that are overlooked globally. The fat sub-tropical chicken that came back from "extinction". The incredibly ADHD parrot that lives in urban environments that will eat anything. The highly skilled, pencil thin fisherman that lurks on our shores.

These stories are just so hidden behind mainstream birds, just waiting to be shown to a wider audience. I want my photographs to be the reason that future generations of photographers start. I want to be the inspiration that Bence Mate (a Hungarian wildlife photographer) was to me (see inspiration page).



Subgenre / Aesthetic - Minimal Photography of Birdlife

My subgenre summarises how I went about photographing when I visited Orokonui in recent times. Birds are really easy to take photos of. But making them the clear subject and telling a story? Much harder. Finding a background that doesn't take away from the subject and the moment, while adding to the image is a hard task. But it is something that I have become accustomed to finding.

Using unique lighting and unusual in-camera settings to make my images stand out, is one of my favourite challenges. Leaving a bird to be rim lit against a dark background, shows off the organic shape while leaving the rest for the viewer to make up. Using a slower shutter speed (e.g. 1/15th) to exaggerate the movement of a bird in flight. Using black and white photography to capture a generally colourful bird, and instead focus on the unnoticed textures in the feathers.

Bird photography is hard to perfect, and I want to show that in this subgenre.



duds

these are some key works that I didn't end up using in my portfolio, but they helped me to progress my ideas to a more intelligent and thoughtful place. Some are similar to other works on my portfolio, but weren't added because they lacked that one key detail that the other had. These works didn't add towards the minimal aesthetic I was going for, where I used the birds in abstraction, masking the bird-y aspects of them and highlighting shape.



This shot of a wing was one of my favourites from this shoot day in the open Pacific ocean, but it didn't fit the aesthetic of my moody, and baroque-esque pictures. It was too elegant, and stuck out like a sore thumb, but it helped me to clarify my intentions on what to include, and leave out others that were similar.



This takehe image was one that I always would imagine taking centre stage, as I loved how it removed the bird from the environment, which shows my path away from orokonui to a broader topic. But other similar works already did the job this image did, and the composition felt restricted to me, making the bird feel small and not important.



These two were part of a series I made at Orokonui, where I wanted to show the movement of the birds, and for the Takehe, the temporal nature of them. I wanted to show how they were "extinct" merely a couple hundred years ago, and how they are barely there now. To do that, I used a slower shutter speed and darkened the shadows to remove character from them. I chose not to include them because I felt that it was a substory to the message I was trying to convey with my work. This was a cultural message, not a series to do with my story as much.



These two images were meant to signify to the viewer that photography to me, is about shape, texture, and tone, and that sharp focus isn't always necessary to create a beautiful image. When I think of works like Eadweard Muybridge's zoopraxiscope horse works, they convey a similar message and serve as an inspiration to my work. A horse with a rider, taken on an old camera with many imperfections like specs on the glass - the takehe diving, along with more digital imperfections and artifacts like out of focus and a vignette.

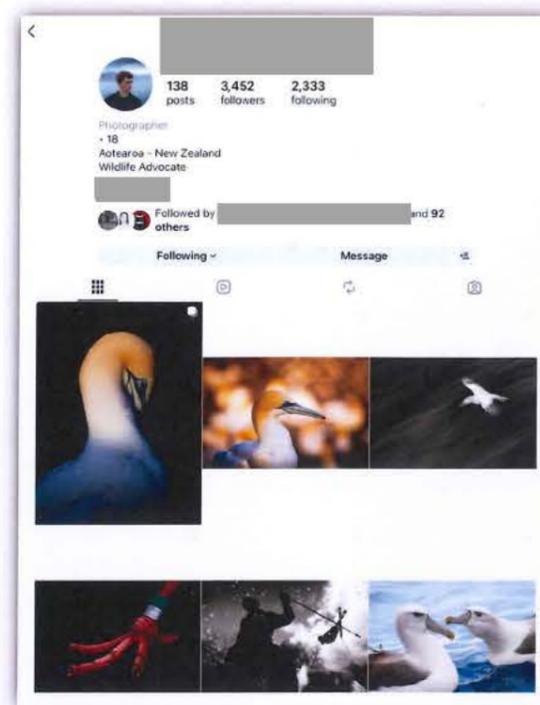
an online presence

Posting my work on social media was never something that I thought would help my work get noticed by people other than my friends. I originally downloaded Instagram to share photos I took on a school field trip, but now, it is the fastest way for me to get feedback on my work, from others with similar interests to me. When I first started, it was just my friends and family from Dunedin that were liking and commenting on my posts. Now, my audience has grown hugely to people from all across the globe. Photographers that I have looked up to for years now, some with hundreds of thousands of followers, follow me back and regularly comment on my posts. A significant notification that I recently got was when one of my photography idols (Jan Wegner) followed me back. I have been watching his Youtube videos for many years now, and I have learnt so much from him about camera gear, bird photography, editing, and so much more. This was such a point of realisation for me that social media can help me connect with not just people around the world, but like-minded photographers like me.

It was definitely a shock to me when I realised that the photography base around the world is so kind and willing to share knowledge with each other. Playing football for over a decade made me realise how harsh and negative that sport can be, but I have found that photographers aren't nearly as competitive. There are so many New Zealand wildlife photographers that I have found through Instagram, and they are always up for a chat, many of them offering to go take photos together next time I'm near them! In late 2023, I was invited to this world wide youth photography group chat by one of those New Zealand photographers I was talking about. We were all aged around 14-18ish years old, and we shared our work and talked about photography together. It was such an amazing way to grow connections all around the world, people I could go stay with when I travel the globe. This group chat has eventually evolved into a community channel that me and a few of my mates are collaborators in, where we host photography competitions and answer questions from the 3,000 members that we have.

Putting my work out there into the world has really given me a lot of feedback. As a self-taught photographer, I have always had to overcome challenges alone, but now I can look to those more experienced than me for anything. Whether it is getting another opinion on an edit from other editors, or looking for a new local spot to photograph a specific species, social media has been a total game changer for me and my journey. I looked back on my old posts recently and cringed at my persistent desire for "golden-hour" shots that I took in jpeg, and I realised that I wouldn't be where I am now without social media. I think social media truly changed my perception on what is right, for better and for worse. It took my work into a more natural space, showing the world for how it truly is, a personal motto that I now go by.

Perceived success is something that people fall for a lot online. An artist or photographer that may have many thousands of followers, and gets millions of likes on each post can still take bad photos. A lot of the time, the reason they are so popular is because of their content, their way of creating, the way they speak, etc. Especially in recent years, photographers are feeling more and more forced to become better at numerous things so that their work can be promoted online. They have to learn videography, graphic design, colour grading, storyboarding, and so many unrelated things to photography in order to succeed. Although social media has blurred the lines between photography and content creation, there is still a great place for it online, you just have to be brave enough to try different media as well.



This is a screenshot of my Instagram account, showing how my portfolio is just a snapshot of the life I am creating for myself, centered around birds.

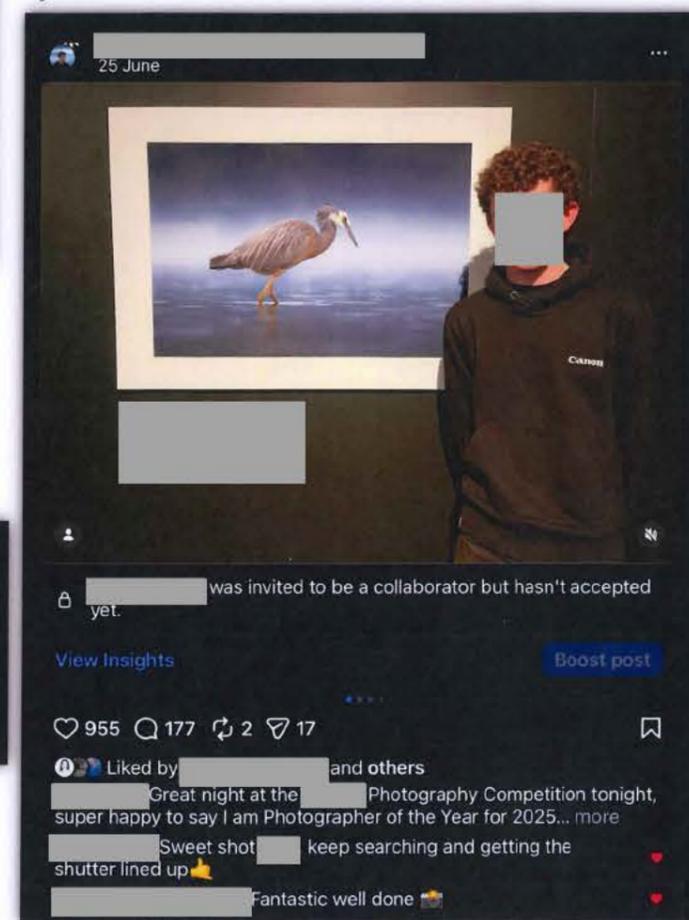


This is Jan Wegner, one of my biggest inspirations for wildlife photography. I have watched many hundreds of his youtube videos so when he followed me back, I screamed and ran around my house.



I am really into analysing the stats on Instagram. Here is one of my favourites. These are my views from the last three months. 1.9 million.

That's 35% of the population of AOTEAROA! I think that shows the potential that social media has for me.



Instagram is such a great place to build connections, I am so so lucky to live in a time where I have all of this in my pocket.

my past

Ever since I was a young kid, I have always been addicted to pictures. Images. They would be the first thing I would look at in magazines. They really drove my creative mind.

There was this Hungarian wildlife photographer that I came across as a child called Bence Mate, and his work blew my mind. When he was in his late teens and early twenties, he travelled around the world making these wildlife photography hides that had one way glass for the photographer to look out of. This gave me the motivation to create my own wildlife hide on my lawn at home, out of bits and pieces of wood from behind the house. I even emailed him with some of my own questions I had about his work, which he replied to and loved my photography hide so much he posted it on his facebook. I think that Bence was the first photographer that made me realise that photographers are indeed real people, and that even I can be a photographer too.

I got my first camera at age seven, a small point and shoot that wasn't great, but it took pictures and that was all that mattered to me. Three years later, I saved up for my first interchangeable lens camera, the Canon EOS M3, and that changed how my photos looked completely. I could finally zoom in without losing quality, which was the one thing setting me back, especially as a wildlife photographer. Four years later I decided to use my Dad's full frame Canon 6D camera as it was much better for what I needed at the time, which was shooting birds in dark bushes.

In 2024, I got my first job at the local camera store, and it taught me so much about photography and I made so many new connections. I bought my (realistic) dream camera and some lenses that I never dreamed of even touching. I remember telling my Dad what my dream setup would be early last year, and now I have a lot of it. I know that there is a general saying in photography which goes "better gear doesn't mean better photos", but I really believe that it does to a certain extent. The opportunities for new work that I have gained after investing in my gear, have only gone up. Getting close to shy birds was always an issue for young [redacted], as much as he tried to sneak up there is only so much you can do. I think instead it should go "all the gear and no idea". As much as having a \$30,000 lens and a \$10,000 camera would have appealed to little [redacted] I now know that he would have been so lost, and not even able to carry it.

Coming through the ranks (gear wise) has allowed me to improve my art holistically and allow me to become more grateful for what I have. In 2025, I was lucky enough to win the [redacted] Photographer of the Year award, in a competition I have been entering ever since I was that seven year old kid with a point and shoot. Looking back on that now, with all the knowledge, the experience, the gear, everything I have gained over the last 11 years, I feel very appreciative of young [redacted] for chasing his dreams.



This is my photography hide that I made when I was ten years old. I used it to photograph my local lawn-abiding birds that gathered to eat the frozen toast I left in front. Sometimes it didn't work. I wonder why.



[redacted] at the photo comp, with his image.



Bence Máté in his natural habitat. Half under water with his camera.



Young [redacted] taking photos at the beach with his dad's camera. Always makes me laugh looking at my dedication to getting the shot. Hands, knees, elbows, all covered in sand.

my future

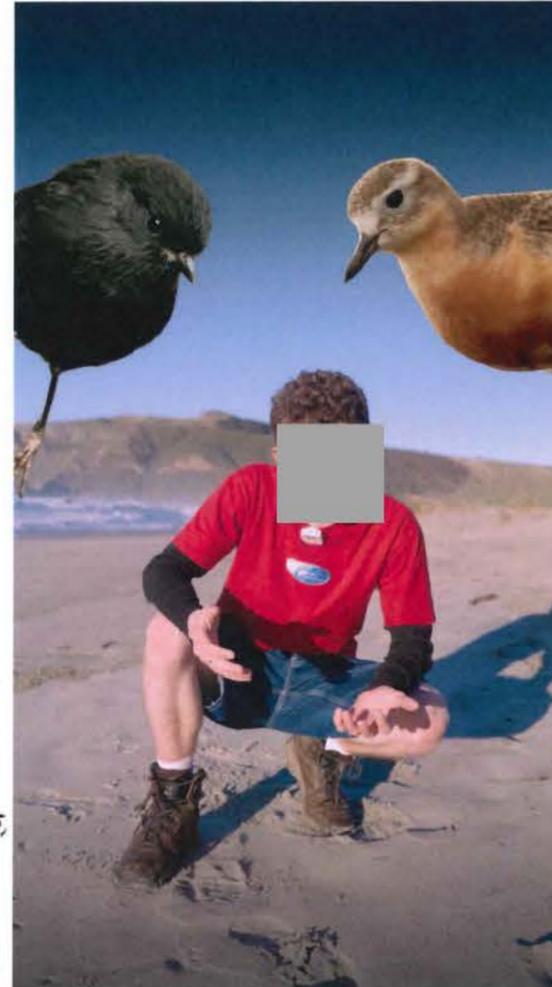
The 2025 [redacted] Photography Competition was really a turning point in for me in terms of getting my work seen. Since I won the youth category for wildlife, and was the overall winner, it meant that my image went everywhere. I was featured in the Otago Daily Times, on One News, and I got interviewed by Jessie Mulligan on RNZ with my younger brother. The museum asked if they could sell my works on canvas in the museum shop, which has given me another source of income.

Wildlife photography, but more specifically conservation photography is where I can see a career for myself. Working with big names like the Department of Conservation (DOC) or National Geographic to show New Zealand's beautiful wildlife on a global scale would be the dream for me. Recently I was asked if I wanted to be a part of DOC's new campaign "Always be Naturing" which I of course said yes to, and they got me to create a short video that they would use for promotion. This was a fun creative challenge for me, and easily something that I could see myself doing more of in the future.

In September I was a volunteer for the Yellow Eyed Penguin Trust, and helped them with their campaign for Bird of the Year 2025, which was an amazing way to make new connections and create fun wildlife content for a good cause. Over a few weeks between by school assessments, I would make memes, reels, anything that would promote our local icon the Hoiho to the rest of New Zealand. Even though I was only a volunteer, it gave me a great taste on what my future in conservation could look like, as well as being given the option to volunteer for them over the summer.

Looking forward, I dream of becoming a Canon ambassador, working for both national and international animal conservation organisations. When I move up to [redacted] next year, I am looking to make new connections with fellow photographers, wildlife advocates, and nature organisations so that I can make my dream possible.

a promotional video for Bird of the Year 2025 ↓



my printed work for sale at the [redacted] ↓



evaluation

My portfolio is larger than just this year, it is an in-depth look at my photographic journey taking shape over the last decade and a bit. Although showcasing Orokonui's fenced beauty was an idea left behind, it is still reflected in the images that remain. My focus shifted into a much wider range of sites, where I tried new and sometimes scary things. Being brave enough to try new things is how my portfolio managed to evolve. Escaping the constraint of Orokonui to find a much broader, but much more relevant theme that just felt right to me. If I had only taken photos at Orokonui (although full of diversity), showing progression in an idea would have been a much harder task. For me, although my portfolio concept came to me a bit later than others, it feels so natural and easy to work on. If I simplified it into one sentence, my portfolio would be – photography, my love story. It is finding my love, in a world full of love.

My portfolio is not just an artboard, but also a diary. It speaks to how my taste has changed over the course of this year, in textures, in colours, in tones, more than any words could. The impact other photographers and artists (more broadly) have had on my creative thinking like Fiona Pardington and Alex Webb. The impact that photographers through social media have had on my style, challenging my perception of colour and composition. The impact of new gear that I have obtained throughout the year, like the 200-800mm, allowed me to get much closer to my subjects, and opened up a whole new world of images. Many thousands of photos condensed down into a summary of a year. A year of change and adaptation.

The aim of my trips have also changed. I have learnt to slow down when necessary, each image means more to me now. Blurry or grainy photos aren't immediately looked at as to be deleted. I consider each piece as its own work, not as part of a series.

Baroque-inspired albatross chaos was not where I expected my work to head towards, but that in itself reflects my journey in photography. My previous experience with albatross (prior to this year) was biking down to the albatross colony when I was with my Dad's old camera. Even from the carpark I managed to take photos that featured in competitions. The next year (2024), I travelled on my first wildlife cruise, finally getting up close to the amazing Buller's albatross. This year, I was lucky enough to take photos on a nine hour pelagic cruise out to the Otago Canyons photographing seabirds. I took seven thousand photos, and the best ones of that day make up the end of the portfolio. Being out on the water with these amazing birds is one of the best experiences of my life, and I am so grateful that I put myself in such a position to make these opportunities possible.

I never imagined I would be able to continue wildlife photography when I was older, this thought has only become in the last year. My portfolio has grown as I have grown, layered with opportunity and experiences. But now it seems like my only option, and I can't see myself doing anything else. It's more than a dream, it's a reality, because it already is my job now. It only gets better from here.

key work

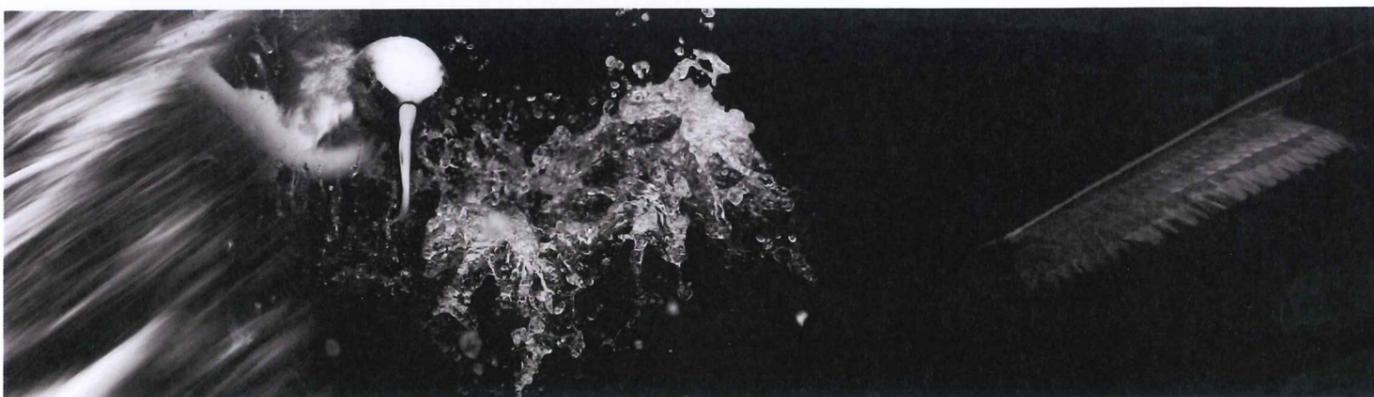


This photo really proved to me that cropping plays such a huge part in composition, and that I shouldn't be scared of losing detail, I should trust my camera. Modern cameras are so good in low light and 24 megapixels is plenty to crop in.



After I edited this photo, I really began to understand my concept, and use my artist models to elevate my work. It shows my unique editing style that I have developed over the years. It shows I'm not scared to go against 'classical editing' techniques to voice my story.

Fine art was not where I expected my work to head towards, but I am so glad it did because I think the unexpected is so beautiful in art. I love how this work takes the birds out of the set environment of Orokonui showing my growth and new style.



Outstanding Scholarship

Subject: Visual Arts – Photography

Standard: 93310

Total Score: 22

Marker commentary

This Outstanding Scholarship portfolio showcases the candidate's articulation of a compelling proposition that explores the interplay between the natural and constructed environments of the Orokonui sanctuary, presented through the conceptual lens "Orokonui: A Love Story." The investigation is grounded in authentic personal engagement, informed by interactions with people, flora and fauna, ecological dynamics, interspecies relationships, and the diverse narratives that exist within the predator-proof sanctuary. The portfolio functions as a refined microcosm of the candidate's photographic journey.

Research is extensive, insightful, and demonstrates intellectual rigour. Cultural understanding is intentionally sought through engagement with both people and whenua, resulting in contextual research that meaningfully supports the exploration of key conceptual ideas. The photographic practice is informed by a cultural and Te Ao Māori perspective, enabling a nuanced understanding of the local and semi-local influences shaping the Orokonui environment.

The candidate's documentation reveals innovative and lateral strategies for photographing wildlife and natural settings. Purposeful use of natural lighting is evident, employed to examine colour, texture, form, and, critically, contrast. Connections to established practice are comprehensive, and the candidate's readiness to engage in iterative experimentation illustrates a reflective and analytically driven approach to image-making.

Overall, the Outstanding Scholarship portfolio extends the scope of the portfolio by presenting a comprehensive and well-supported investigation. The portfolio and workbook evidence display a considered and fluent application of research, as well as a consistently high level of engagement with both the conceptual content and the photographic practice. Collectively, the depth of inquiry and sophistication of execution affirm the candidate's capacity to operate at an exemplary scholarly level.