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Featuring
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ANAHERA-JADE**



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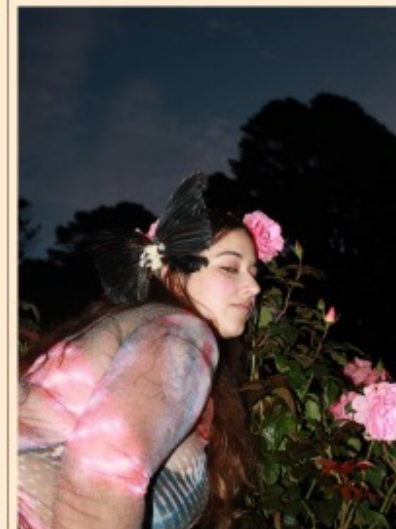
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"If it is a human thing to do to put something you want, because it's useful, edible, or beautiful, into a bag, or a basket, or a bit of rolled bark or leaf, or a net woven of your own hair, or what have you, and then take it home with you, home being another, larger kind of pouch or bag, a container for people, and then later on you take it out and eat it or share it or store it up for winter in a solider container or put it in the medicine bundle or the shrine or the museum, the holy place, the area that contains what is sacred, and then next day you probably do much the same again—if to do that is human, if that's what it takes, then I am a human being after all. Fully, freely, gladly, for the first time."¹⁰⁸

p. 92 mothermother, *Unifying Threads*. Installation view, Te Atamira, Tōhuna, May 2025

p. 93 Michelle Mayn, *Untitled*, 2024–2025, hand-stitched cotton gauze and cotton thread, 450 x 100 x 200 cm, installation dimensions variable

p. 94 Jasmine Clark, *Tide Catcher* [work in progress image]

p. 94 Nat Tozer, *Observations of the Ground Through Canvas (on-going)* (detail), buried and unearthed canvas, 187 x 181.5 cm

All images: Courtesy of the artist, mothermother and Te Atamira. Photography: Dave Oakley

— Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*

I'm following a line back to December 2024, when I first talked to Nat Tozer about *Unifying Threads*. We spoke about the work of making a group exhibition, the individual practices of each artist, the process of building connections in a new place, and the ways art can become a form of care. The project title thrums like the vibration of a spider web strummed by a droplet of water. The lines of connection between these artists and their works are drawn through past experiences, familiar landscapes, and shared materials and methods. The exhibition is an invitation to loop your own line through the warp and weft of their shared understandings.

mothermother is an artist-run initiative and social space, akin to a river, a net. It offers a way of iterating, hosting, connecting, centred around reciprocity and ways of working slowly and consistently. It's a description that reminds me of a spider weaving and reweaving a web—making and mending her home and her surroundings in relation to the scale and rhythms of her own body.

The beginnings of *Unifying Threads* were tethered by a group chat. The artists are located across Aotearoa in Kā-Muriwai Arrowtown, Kiri-kiri-roa Hamilton and Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Messages flowed back and forth as the works developed. A tide of conversation, rising and falling.

In an early progress photo, the circular centre of Jasmine Clark's *Tide Catcher* is photographed floating on the edge of Lake Wakatipu. Anchored on a piece of driftwood, the unwoven ends of the piece starfish out from the base and tickle the light that plays on the surface of the water. Although her work lies flat on the water's surface, the potential of the form is clear. The piece speaks of containment, even as the water rises and falls through the negative spaces of the weaving. In her iconic essay *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, Ursula K. Le Guin lists the ancestors of the plastic shopping bag: "A leaf a gourd a shell a net a bag a sling a sack a bottle a pot a box a container. A holder. A recipient."¹⁰⁰ Le Guin's essay equates these vessels with the form of the novel, writing that a book holds words that bear meanings. Equally, Clark's strands are inscribed with techniques, patterns and memories, passed down to her by her foremothers.



p. 95 Jasmine Clark, *Tide Catcher* (detail), 2025, woven rattan reed, charred driftwood, 200 x 170 cm

p. 96 Michelle Mayn, *Muka & Reel*, installed with Rachel Hope Peary, 2024-ongoing, cedar, muka (processed harakeke fibre; NZ Flax, Phormium tenax), wooden reel and wooden thread holder, muka dyed with guava berries and leaf, alder cone, wharariki pod and seed, harakeke pod and seed, tanekaha, 3.4 x 3.4 cm each, installation dimensions variable



Tori Beeche's paintings are also coded with inherited shapes and patterns, offering coy glimpses of imagined and remembered interiors that collage her own memories with her father's recollections of his Norwegian childhood and images drawn from archives. Each composition operates off a grid that is gently delineated by the architecture of the picture space: in one instance the edge of a blue-grey door; in another the batten of a wall or a skirting board; later, a picture frame. Titled according to an established rhythm, each work is first inscribed as 'Transitive Patterns' before the reference or homage receives a nod in parentheses. By orbiting her own biography, Beeche navigates ways to approach a homecoming or shared familial histories.

Michelle Mayn's work *Inaka & Wharariki* weaves together inaka leaves gifted by a friend in Ōtautahi Christchurch with wharariki pods that skeletonised during an extended dye process (the skeletonising described by Mayn as "an unexpected gift"). In *Guava Jelly and Jar*, she offers her own gifts to visitors by presenting homemade guava jelly, meticulously packaged in glass dishes and then wrapped using gauze from the jelly-making process. Guava twigs and harakeke fibres coloured by the seeds, leaves, pods and berries of each plant material extend throughout the exhibition, quietly offering forms of connection within the space. By maintaining a close relationship with each plant from

beginning to end, Mayn's process acknowledges the life-force of natural materials.

In late April, Rachel Hope Peary sent me a video of her work in progress. The weaving is suspended in the shelter of a porch, open to the fenced section of grass beyond the house. In the video, the expanse of reddened cotton stitching murmurs and breathes in the breeze. In total, the work is two metres in height and seven in length. The dimensions are a personal yardstick, a measure of time spent on arranging, processing, breathing. Writer Lucinda Bennett reflects beautifully on Peary's process by observing, "These are works that record the unevenness of time, how our hearts do not beat like a metronome, fear and excitement will hasten them and the rhythm will slow when we breathe deep, when we sleep, are unwell, as we age."⁹





p. 97 Michelle Mayn, *Guava Jelly and Jar*, 2005, home-made guava jelly (*Psidium cattleianum* Sabine), glass petri dish (borosilicate) cellophane seal, silk thread and cotton gauze, each dish 1.2 x 7.5 cm

p. 98 Tori Beeche, 'Transitive Patterns' series, oil on linen, 45 x 50 cm each

In Nat Tozer's *Observations of the Ground Through Canvas* (ongoing), once-buried canvases map their participation in this life cycle beyond white gallery walls. Arrested mid-decomposition, they attest to the continual existence of an underground conversation between soil, microbes, insects, warmth and root systems. This chattering continues below our feet. In one late-afternoon message, Tori Beeche compares the form of the work to an altarpiece and my memory invokes *Mary, Untier of Knots*, a once-obscure Baroque painting of the Virgin Mary unknotting a long white ribbon. In my mind, she ties, unties and reties the ribbon as it gradually frays and softens to the same tone as Tozer's unearthed artefacts.

Louise Bourgeois wrote, "What is a drawing? It is a secretion, like a thread in a spider's web ... It is a knitting, a spiral, a spider web and other significant organisations of space."⁸¹ An exhibition is a significant organisation of space but so is a studio, a garden, a kitchen table, a bedroom. In *Unifying Threads*, mothermother artists weave together the possibilities of social connection, repetition and storytelling to demonstrate resilience and an acknowledgement between materials, each other, and the environment. *Unifying Threads* is carried by a current intent on reaching out, inviting each of us around the next bend of the river.⁸²

(81) Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (Ignota, 2019), 32-33.

(82) Ibid.

(83) Lucinda Bennett, 'Freedom Within the Cage,' Laneo Payne Gallery, 7 August 2024, <https://laneopaynegallery.com/exhibitions/53-the-edges-in-the-middle-a-sole-exhibition-by-rachel-hope-peary/>

(84) Louise Bourgeois: *Along Came a Spider*, Art Gallery NSW, <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/learn/learning-resources/louise-bourgeois/>