

Uni NEWS

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MOPHEAD POWER

Selina Tusitala Marsh
on the success of
her graphic memoir



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Darl Kolb, Professor of Connectivity, talks about metaphors and disconnecting

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THIS YEAR'S MODEL

How Shaun Hendy's modelling of Covid-19 numbers put him in the thick of the country's response to the pandemic

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JOY AT BEING BACK ON CAMPUS

After a semester spent mostly huddled over computers in bedrooms, lounges and offices at home, thousands of students showed their enthusiasm for being back on campus on 27 July. The Clubs Expo held on 27-28 July at the City Campus and 30 July at Grafton were great opportunities to mix and meet new people. But the sheer joy of being back on campus 'in real life' is probably represented well in this photo of two students in Alfred Street on a sunny Auckland day, ready to take on the semester.



TIMELY NEW RESEARCH CENTRE

A new research centre at the University will focus on the issues faced by people forced out of their homes due to conflict or climate change in Asia and the Pacific. The Centre for Asia Pacific Refugee Studies (CAPRS) is led by refugee expert Associate Professor Jay Marlowe (left) at the Faculty of Education and Social Work, and Dr Gül Inanç from Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. The centre is the first of its kind in New Zealand. Read more about it at: auckland.ac.nz/CAPRS

MORE THAN A RED SHED

A building described as a Northland barn could be the fifth oldest European building in the country behind Kemp House, the Stone Store, Te Waimate Mission and the Treaty House. Investigations by David Cowley, as part of his research project for a Masters of Architecture and Heritage Conservation, discovered the 'Pouerua Store/Stable' can be traced back to missionary Henry Williams who bought property in Pākaraka as a sheep and cattle station in 1835. See: auckland.ac.nz/barn-history



The 2020 Kupe Leadership Scholars reflect the diversity of New Zealand society.

BREAKFAST OF FUTURE CHAMPIONS

The 2020 Kupe Leadership Scholars enjoyed a breakfast event on 28 July which was a chance to catch up with mentors, sponsors, alumni and supporters as well as the 2019 cohort. Journalist Rod Oram led a panel of speakers – Sir Peter Gluckman, Marama Davidson, Mai Chen and 2019 Kupe alumna KDee Ma'ia'i. The theme was 'Imagining New Futures' and covered values needed to face current challenges, 'super diversity', climate change and misinformation. Read about the scholars: auckland.ac.nz/2020-Kupe-Scholars

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SEPTEMBER SESSIONS

The University is offering a September to December semester for students in China wanting to do commerce or engineering degrees. Billed the China September Sessions, the Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) will be based at Nanjing University of Science and Technology (commerce) and Northeast Forestry University in Harbin (engineering). Students will be taught online by our staff plus receive face-to-face support from local learning tutors. See: auckland.ac.nz/China-September-sessions



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THIS YEAR'S MODEL

Professor Shaun Hendy's data-modelling skills helped shape the Covid-19 response.

The first Friday afternoon into the lockdown, Professor Shaun Hendy was cracking a beer for Zoom drinks with his Physics colleagues when he noticed an email land in his inbox.

"I was sitting at my garden table and an email arrived on my laptop. It was from the National Crisis Management Centre. I'd been corresponding with them all week about the Covid-19 modelling work we'd been doing, so I didn't think it would be that urgent and thought 'I'll read that later.'"

In fact, he left it until the next day. That was when he found out the police were after him.

Sort of.

"The police, who were staffing the Crisis Management Centre, were using their emergency powers to bring our modelling work for Covid-19 into the official response," says Shaun.

"The email came with a letter from the Prime Minister and was addressed to me and a manager at Statistics New Zealand, Vince Galvin. We were both surprised. We were now required to provide modelling updates to the National Crisis Management Centre every day by 9am."

But Shaun had anticipated daily modelling would be needed to track numbers and scenarios.

"I'd already arranged something with Orion Health, who the University has a partnership with, because I know that researchers aren't the best at getting up at the crack of dawn each and every day to deliver progress updates. So we provided the data and the code, and Orion did the hard work of translating that into a daily report."

Before long, Shaun, who is director of the multi-disciplinary Te Pūnaha Matatini, the Aotearoa New Zealand Centre of Research Excellence for Complex Systems, was thrust into the media spotlight. "I've done a bit of work in infectious disease as we have a number of people in Te Pūnaha Matatini, but at the outset we certainly didn't see ourselves as core to what was going on. Nonetheless, we were drawn in quite quickly.

"It became clear New Zealand didn't have pandemic models ready that were appropriate for the circumstances here. So that's what we set out to develop."

Shaun says he soon realised the significance of what he was doing. "The pressure came on with the very first paper. We were talking about tens of thousands of deaths potentially. I was asked to go on Breakfast TV to explain our findings to the general public. It left me shaking. I've done a lot of TV, but it was the first time I'd had to say something with such big consequences."

Shaun wasn't doing the modelling alone. There was a team of around 20 people working on it at Te Pūnaha Matatini, including students who'd had finished their degrees but couldn't start new roles because of the lockdown. Most of the work was done collaboratively from home, although "one parent was able to get support to come into the University to get some peace to do their work!"

"Everybody's felt privileged to have been part of the effort."

– Professor Shaun Hendy

"There's been a sense of responsibility but everybody's felt really privileged to have been part of the effort. It's been really hard work, but we've had a unique window into what was happening and the process that went toward the Prime Minister's 1pm media conference each day."

He says his group of scientists all took their access to data extremely seriously. "So what MP Hamish Walker and Michelle Boag did with patient data felt like a real slap in the face. We've been dealing with similar data, although many of the details they had were not available to us, so to see a politician casually access this and then use it to vilify people was shocking."

He says keeping busy during lockdown was a privilege. "Psychologically it always feels better

in a crisis to be doing something to help, despite being under considerable stress at times."

Shaun and Dr Siouxsie Wiles were key scientific voices from the University, and their expertise was complemented by Otago University's expert, Professor Michael Baker.

"Michael has deep expertise in the epidemiology, while my team has the modelling and quantitative skills. Expertise in science communication though is also very important. Michael's very good at that and Siouxsie is extremely accomplished – her partnership with *The Spinoff* was communication at its finest."

Shaun says it was a case of working towards the common good. "Siouxsie and I had discussions with Michael from time to time and would say, what do we think about this? What should we be emphasising right now? We'd exchange views so that we weren't cutting across each other and confusing the public."

He says unlike Siouxsie he didn't suffer personal attacks. "Siouxsie has an international profile which exposes her to a greater number of people and some people were commenting on her appearance. That just never comes up for me."

The author of *Silencing Science* and *#NoFly* can see the irony in both those titles today. But he notes that the government isn't silencing science right now – it has listened to the expert opinion of scientists to tackle the Covid-19 threat.

"Politicians don't need to be experts. They do have to be able to weigh evidence, and they do have to have access to expertise they trust. There was an extremely high level of trust between the Prime Minister and her science advisers."

He says that needs to be the case always, especially in matters as important as climate change. "Politicians need good relationships with experts, and those experts need to be able to tell those politicians things they don't want to hear and potentially to say those things in public."

Shaun and his team are committed to working on the Covid-19 response until next March, although with an election coming up other scientific subjects may come to the fore.

"The lead-up to an election requires good communication and informed discussion on scientific issues in a way that people understand and listen to," he says. "The easiest choice is to stay quiet or avoid contentious issues, but that's a bit of a cop-out. Traditionally we've tended to want to ignore the politics and work behind the scenes but the science community is getting better at navigating contentious issues in public."

"Even if you don't think your science is going to be on the front page during the election period, it's still really important you've thought through the ethical and political issues that might confront you if it were to be. It might be you who gets that email from the police one day."

■ Denise Montgomery

MOPHEAD MEMOIR MAKES AN IMPACT

Poet Selina Tusitala Marsh's first book for children, a graphic memoir, is a finalist in the NZ Book Awards for children and young adults.

A little Polynesian boy sits barefoot in his foster home, a lavalava draped over his head. He is reading a book by torchlight. The book is called *Mophead*, and has been given to him by his Pākehā foster carer.

His carer writes to the book's author, Associate Professor Selina Tusitala Marsh, about the nine-year-old's love of her story and illustrations.

"She wrote, 'First of all, we do have carpet at our house so I'm just letting you know he just prefers to sit on the wooden floor,'" says Selina, of the letter. "Second, he has read and reread *Mophead* so many times. I haven't seen him respond to a book like this. He loves it."

"That really touched me, because he is a little boy who's obviously going through a tough time, but also he has the most beautiful caregiver who is actively putting culturally relevant material in front of him. I was just so moved by that."

There have been funny responses to the book too. One woman made cookies in the shape of *Mophead*. "She Instagrammed her child's lunchbox and it got so many shares!"

Mophead: How Your Difference Makes a Difference (Auckland University Press, 2019) is a finalist in the New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults on 12 August. It's up for the Elsie Locke Award for Non-Fiction, alongside

Kuwi & Friends Māori Picture Dictionary, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, The Adventures of Tupaia by alumna Courtney Sina Meredith and *Three Kiwi Tales* by former staff member Janet Hunt.

"I'm stoked," says Selina. "I call it a graphic mini-memoir so yes it's true, but it's a true story well told. I'm just floored that it's up there with the big contenders in the field. I've never written a book for kids before."

She knows well the impact a book and its writer can have on a young mind. *Mophead*, which depicts Selina as a young child often cruelly teased for her unruly hair, shows her change of mindset after poet Sam Hunt visits her school. He has wild hair and wild words, and couldn't care less about the fact he looked and sounded 'different'. Selina stopped hiding her hair in a bun and started celebrating her difference.

The celebrations have continued throughout her life. As the first person of Pacific descent to graduate with a PhD in English from the University of Auckland, she later became New Zealand's Poet Laureate from 2017-2019, the first Pasifika person to fill the role. In 2019, she was made an Officer of the NZ Order of Merit for services to poetry, literature and the Pacific community and this year she was made a Fellow of the New Zealand Royal Society. As well as her published collections of poetry – *Fast Talking PI*, *Dark Sparring* and *Tightrope* – her work has been published in more than 70 national and international anthologies, books and literary journals and websites.

But *Mophead* came about almost by accident although Selina says the story was 'always in her', as you might expect from her name 'Tusitala' which means 'writer of stories' in Samoan.

"As a kid I used to draw my own pictures and write my own stories, but because I was such a perfectionist, I'd never finish anything. I was at the AUP office discussing a 60,000 word memoir about my tenure as New Zealand Poet Laureate. I'd been mucking around with the *Mophead* drawings on my iPad and actually had an entire book storyboarded. Just as I was about to leave,

"When you get into the schools and also appeal to caregivers, grandparents and people who, for whatever reason, feel shut out of academia or education, barriers are broken." – Associate

Professor Selina Tusitala Marsh

I paused at the doorway, swung around and said 'Oh, by the way, I've got this other thing'.

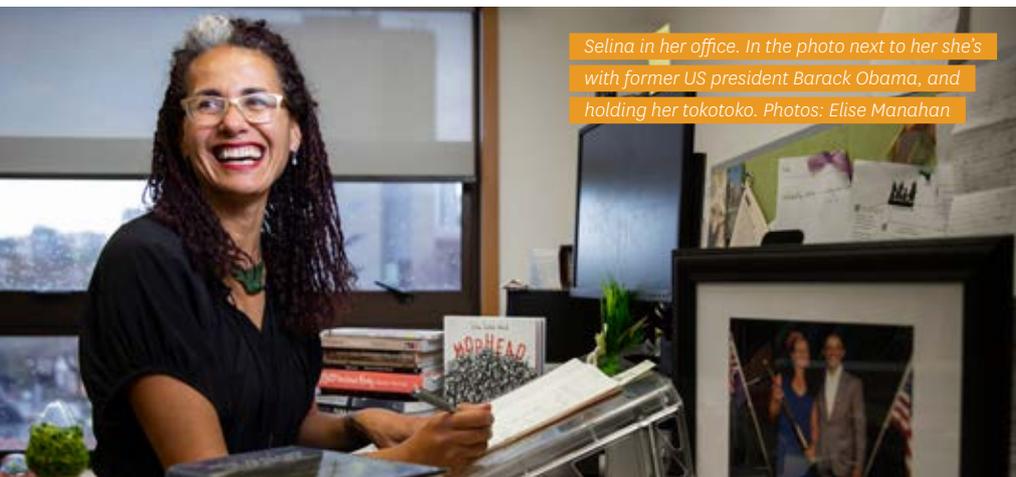
AUP's Sam Elworthy recognised a story that reflected the zeitgeist of the nation. Selina had gone from being called Mophead at school to being awarded New Zealand's highest poetry award. "As part of the laureateship, I was given a tokotoko, a traditional Māori carved ceremonial walking stick reflecting my poetic identity. The top part is a fu'e, a Samoan talking chief's ritual flywhisk with a head made of long coconut fibres. It looks a bit like a mop at the top ... and that's created this beautiful visual and narrative arc."

But not everyone understood the significance of what Selina represents. On her final night as Poet Laureate in 2019, she was returning to her hotel in Wellington after attending an emotional ceremony celebrating her achievements. She was clutching her tokotoko and heading to her room, reflecting on a wonderful evening, when a group of half-cut businessmen tried to tarnish the memory of that special night forever.

"I had just handed over the Laureate title at the National Library. I was wearing a formal fuchsia and orange Pasifika dress. I'd just been walking through parliament grounds thinking to myself 'what next?'. As I walked through the hotel doors, the men turned towards me. One of them calls out 'oh look it's the cleaner' implying my tokotoko was a mop. His mates were all laughing.

"It brought me emotionally full circle to the little girl in the *Mophead* story. But this time, I had a voice. I'd just been celebrated as this national figure. But these ignoramuses attempted to exert control over what they could not understand. In putting me down, they tried to define and control what was clearly outside their narrow gender and race boxes."

As an example of racism, it's typical of what lies not far beneath the surface in New Zealand society, she says. "Living in the diaspora as a Pacific Islander, or someone of Pacific Island descent, aside from the usual entrenched systemic racism prevalent in a post-colonial society, the racism I often encounter comes in the form of microaggressions. It's those 1,000 paper cuts. The daily acts of discrimination in throwaway remarks or 'jokes'.





Former NZ Poet Laureate, Associate Professor Selina Tusitala Marsh: "The racism I often encounter comes in the form of microaggressions. It's those 1,000 paper cuts."

"When you live in a brown, female body exuding its own mana, it can be confronting to a conservative patriarchal Pākehā society, especially a stone's throw away from the Beehive when they're in a swarm of their own male Pākehā corporate hive of conformity. Difference needs to be defined, so it can be controlled, so it can be consumed. As those businessmen, who were 'just joking', tried to do with their country's first Pasifika Poet Laureate."

Selina says she has used the Wellington incident at keynote speaking events in order to "story my way to empowerment". She says for the most part her tenure as Poet Laureate had been wonderful and she presented Aotearoa New Zealand as a place that celebrates diversity.

Like the person who sparked her self-confidence, Sam Hunt, Selina comes alive when performing her poetry and is in big demand from schools where children are enthralled by her style and passion.

During levels one to four, she's kept match-fit for such performances in her usual way, running all over Waiheke Island where she lives. Also, like Sam, there's a dog by her side, recently rescued from a shelter and now loving life.

"To be honest, lockdown was marvellous for me as a writer. Yes, I had several big international festivals that were cancelled and a potential fellowship in a 13th-century Italian castle. I was also meant to go overseas in October to Ubud and Bangalore. But it's given me so much more time to 'make'.

"In terms of the demand for me to speak at schools, previously I could never get through all

the requests. In two weeks of level one, I was able to visit seven schools by Zoom all over the country. I don't actually have to be there in person."

For someone whose style of presentation is very physical, how does that work on Zoom?

"I'm finding other ways to create that energy and create a new kind of dynamic between myself and the students."

She's had a bit of experience doing that round home over the years too, being the mother of three boys, the youngest of whom is in his final year at college, but none of whom have shown much interest in poetry.

"I'm one of the writers in schools with Te Pou Muramura (Read New Zealand, formerly the New Zealand Book Council). Te Pou Muramura Zoomed writers into schools during lockdown as levels permitted. It's now a viable way for writers and students to engage. I simply can't get to all the schools with my full-time job at uni and other Pacific leadership work I do. This way works."

She's also putting the finishing touches on *Mophead Tu: The Queen's Poem*, in which she recounts the rules she had to abide by in her commissioned poem for the Queen as part of Commonwealth Observance Day. As she did for the first *Mophead*, she's doing the drawings through an iPad app which she's been learning as she goes, trialling different techniques.

"I've got to redraw things repeatedly to create space on the page because, as in poetry, less is more. Space on the page is like breath in the poem. I've got to declutter the pages and take it back again to its primary message. I've described *Mophead Tu* (where Tu plays on two, and means 'to stand' in many Polynesian languages)

as 'colonialism 101 for kids'. It's about being politically, economically and culturally bullied, and the resilience and empowerment offered by creativity. The pictures do so much clever work because the story is everything. If you engage with readers' hearts, its subversive message needn't be told didactically. Mophead's sassy attitude, her unruly hair, enables people to care about the bigger issues."

Her main 'adult' project is by no means on the back-burner. It's the stories of 16 Pacific women poets who are the first to publish their own collections, from 16 Pacific Islands. Selina needs to take theory-driven 10,000-word chapters from her PhD thesis and distil them into 4,000 word chapters for a book.

"I feel a responsibility and obligation to bring their stories to the broadest readership possible."

But there's also another curly subversion being unfurled – with plans for a third book. Selina acknowledges the power of print in conveying messages to children of all ages.

"I love how graphic storytelling touches different tiers in New Zealand society, whereas my academic research would tend to only reach my peers here and overseas. But when you get into the schools and you also appeal to caregivers and grandparents and people who, for whatever reason, feel shut out of academia or education, barriers are broken. It's incredible."

■ Denise Montgomery

WIN: Be in to win a copy of *Mophead: How Your Difference Makes a Difference*. Just email your name and contact details to: uninews@auckland.ac.nz by 25 August.

GOOD TO KNOW

ERUPTION ALERT SYSTEM READY TO GO

New volcanic alert system could save lives.

University of Auckland scientists have devised an alert system that could have given 16 hours' warning of the deadly 2019 eruption at Whakaari White Island.

New Zealand doesn't have an advanced real-time warning system for volcanic eruptions. Instead, GNS Science operates a Volcano Alert Level (VAL) system, which provides a measure of the current status of a volcano and is updated every few weeks or months. It relies on human judgement and consensus among scientists to spot activity that could signal a pending eruption.

Three weeks before last year's fatal eruption at Whakaari, the VAL was lifted to Level 2, indicating heightened unrest. After the eruption occurred, it was raised to Level 4 as per the design of the VAL system.

Engineering scientist Dr David Dempsey says the eruption was preceded by a strong burst of seismic energy 17 hours earlier.

"We think this was a sign that fresh magmatic fluid was rising and pressurising water trapped in shallow rock and loose deposits filling the vent.

"The resulting explosion was like a pressure cooker blasting its lid off. The early seismic burst is the most common indication of imminent eruption at Whakaari. It's a warning sign that could have been detected almost instantly by the forecasting system we have developed."

With funding from the Ministry of Business,



Whakaari erupted on 9 December 2019, claiming 21 lives and leaving many people seriously burned. Photo: Shane Cronin

Innovation and Employment, the new system developed by David and Dr Andreas Kempa-Liehr from the Faculty of Engineering, and Professor Shane Cronin from the Faculty of Science, uses sophisticated machine-learning algorithms from the data fed into it.

The system 'learns' from patterns in that data so is able to signal almost instantly when a particular pattern matches that of the build-up to a previous eruption. With data from the past ten years at Whakaari, the new system predicted four out of five past eruptions, missing only one unusual event – in 2016 – which showed a different data pattern.

"Machine learning means it learns from 'experience' and so constantly improves its accuracy," Andreas says.

A prototype of the forecaster has been operating continuously for five months and the development team is working with GNS to implement it alongside their systems.

One of the challenges of the project was refining the threshold at which an alert is triggered. The new system uses a threshold of 8.5 percent probability an eruption is imminent, which, in simple terms, means it raises an alert when there is a 1 in 12 chance of an eruption

occurring. Each alert lasts about 5 days.

Researchers say that will mean a trade-off if the new system is adopted because the Island would likely be off-limits for about one month a year.

"This system detects eruption types that are most likely to be fatal," says Shane. "The loss of life at Whakaari was a dreadful human tragedy and we hope an automated forecasting system such as this could avoid loss of life but it's a question of whether policymakers, land owners, iwi and tourist operators want a system that, once an alert is raised, would need to be enforced."

The next phase will be to 'teach' the new system about the eruption history at New Zealand's other volcanoes, including Tongariro and Ruapehu, which both attract tens of thousands of visitors a year.

■ Anne Beston



Dr David Dempsey



Dr Ciara Cremin will speak on 12 August in the Winter Lecture series.

GENDER ON THE LECTURE AGENDA

The theme for this year's free Winter Lecture Series is Sex, Gender and Identity in Aotearoa New Zealand: Contemporary Problems and What to Do About Them.

The first lecture was on 28 July but the remaining five run through August. The second lecture in the series is by Professor Tracey McIntosh on 3 August (1pm) and titled Wāhine Māori and Prison. Dr Ciara Cremin presents The

Problem with Masculinity on 12 August (midday), Anjum Rahman presents Inequity within Gender: Dealing with Bigotry and Racism on 17 August (9am), Professor Nicola Gavey's lecture on 25 August (11am) is on Beyond consent: Sexual Violence Prevention with Young Men, and Dr Caroline Blyth on 31 August (1pm) talks about "An unlikely and lovable murderer": Depictions of intimate partner homicide in the media and popular culture.

The Winter Lecture Series is an annual set of six public lectures hosted by the University and free for anyone to attend.

For all the details about the lecture subjects and locations, and to register, head to:

auckland.ac.nz/2020-winter-lectures

SYMBOL OF UNITY

A moving dawn blessing took place on 20 July on the lawn behind Alfred Nathan House near AskAuckland. The occasion was the unveiling of Ngā Roimata o Ranginui, a sculptural collaboration between artists Ngahina Hohaia and Anton Forde.

The sculpture comprises a roimata (tear drop) with carved pounamu raukura (feathers), sitting in a basalt kete. It was created as a symbol of peace, unity and remembrance for the 51 lives lost and the 40 injured in the Christchurch mosque attacks of 15 March, 2019. The unveiling, held on the last day of Matariki, was attended by the artists along with Vice-Chancellor Professor Dawn Freshwater, Kaiarataki Michael Steedman, Campus



Life and representatives of the University Muslim community to whom the memorial was gifted.

The University's Muslim chaplain, Shahela Qureshi, says as well as marking the lives lost, "the monument is a reminder that from that tragedy we saw a huge outpouring of love and kindness from all over the country. It's a physical manifestation of that love and kindness, especially coming from the Māori community who have experienced similar tragedies in the past".

She says the University has provided pastoral and spiritual support to staff and students since the attack, including a remembrance service in 2019, and commemoration in 2020. "But there's still a lot of work to be done to confirm our commitment to working towards a safer Aotearoa, and to dedicate ourselves to strengthening the bonds of love, understanding and respect for each other, with all our similarities and our differences."



Above: Guests at the dawn blessing for the unveiling of the memorial included (below) Vice-Chancellor Dawn Freshwater, Imaam Muhammed Shaakir and Kaiarataki Michael Steedman.



PERIOD POVERTY ADDRESSED

Free sanitary products are available at the University in Semester Two, funded by donations from the 'Staff for Students: Well-being Fund'.

Staff have so far donated \$25,000 to the fund, established last year specifically to support students either through a one-off donation or a regular salary deduction.

Period poverty, when people are unable to access menstrual items due to the cost, has been selected as one of the initiatives to receive funding. Period products will be made available in partnership with AUSA and piloted in first-year halls of residence, AUSA reception and the University Health and Counselling Service. Products will initially be available at reception points for students to collect, and students won't have to interact with staff to obtain them.

"The pandemic has been a highly stressful time for our students, with many experiencing unexpected financial difficulties," says Anne-Marie Parsons, associate director of Student Well-being and Engagement.

"Having access to menstrual products is a

pragmatic way we can support the well-being and health of students to help them thrive."

Meanwhile, the Government is allocating \$2.2 million to provide free sanitary products in schools following an in-depth study that showed students have been missing school because of period poverty. The Youth19 survey, co-led by Associate Professor Terryann Clark from the University of Auckland and Dr Terry Fleming from Victoria University of Wellington, surveyed 7,890 young people about their health and well-being, including 4,000 on their experiences of period poverty. It found a lack of access to menstrual products leads to embarrassment and shame, skipping school, work and other opportunities, and can cause infections and health problems.

Terryann, who is based in the School of Nursing, says New Zealand previously had little data on the problem. "Period poverty perpetuates inequity and cycles of disadvantage, particularly for our poorest communities and for Māori and Pasifika students," she says. "Nineteen percent of Māori youth have experienced period poverty, and 16 percent missed school because they couldn't afford menstrual products."

The research showed 12.5 percent of young people who had their first period missed out on menstrual items due to cost and 7.5 percent

missed school because of it. The number of students missing school rose to 20 percent in lower-income areas.

The Government roll-out of free sanitary products began in 15 Waikato schools this term. From 2021 all state and state-integrated schools will be able to opt in to the scheme, although Terryann would like the national roll-out for schools to happen sooner. "We also need to think about how it's implemented, so it doesn't shame those who need it. One of the concerns is that people are dismissive of the issue of period poverty and blame and shame people who can't afford the basics.

"Young people and their families should never have to choose between food, rent, power, transport expenses and period products. Living with dignity means all people should have access to these necessities of life; they are not a luxury."

■ Period poverty is one of many health issues covered in the Youth19 Rangatahi Smart Survey (youth19.ac.nz). Its findings will be released on 13 August (1-2pm) via a webinar and face-to-face at the Epsom Campus on the same day (4-6pm) with a Q & A. Terryann Clark says it will look at where there's progress or worsening of New Zealand youth well-being over the 20 years since data started being collected by researchers.

DARL KOLB: THE BUSINESS OF METAPHOR

Professor Darl Kolb's interesting background is reflected in his approach to teaching and research.

As far as metaphors go, coming up for air, treading water and riding the wave all resonate pretty well with Professor Darl Kolb from the Business School.

The world's first Professor of Connectivity was once almost disconnected from this mortal coil while working as a rafting guide on the Rio Grande.

"It's a very technical part of the river, called the 'Taos Box,' and it was springtime and the river was flooding," says Darl. "When I got down to the main waterfall I realised there was a big wave at the bottom. I'd learned to row on the Colorado and other big rivers and knew you can spin a raft around and row backwards to get more power.

"I suggested that to the apprentice guide, but we got halfway around and hit this big hole and the raft flipped."

Despite being athletic, Darl isn't a strong swimmer. "It was terrifying. I was trapped under the upturned raft with no air space. I was flailing and then I had the whole out-of-body experience. I looked at myself dying, the whole thing.

"Somehow I popped out and then saw my colleagues in another boat. They got a rope to me and pulled me to safety.

"The whole experience was pretty profound."

Besides rafting, Darl worked as an instructor for the Colorado Outward Bound School and Santa Fe Mountain Centre for a decade, in wilderness areas in Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Texas and Alaska and later guiding on Denali (Mt McKinley), the highest peak in North America (6,190m).

He says Outward Bound's challenges are a giant metaphor for living and probably what got him interested in our use of metaphor. Students face physical and mental challenges that reflect similar challenges in life, and the insights and confidence gained from the experience often stay with learners for life.

Darl grew up on a small farm in the Allegheny Mountains, part of the Appalachian chain of mountains in the Eastern US. His family name is German and his hometown (Accident, Maryland) has deep German roots. His grandparents' first language was German, despite living on the family farm since the mid-1800s.



Professor Darl Kolb's year of sabbatical sees him pulling together his academic research, book writing and working with *The Icehouse*.

Photo: Elise Manahan

Darl's first degree was in sociology, after which he'd taken a year off to travel around the world. Returning to the States, "I met someone who was going to do a master's degree in experiential education at the University of Colorado. I thought that sounded like me so I rented a room in Denver from someone I'd met on my travels and I got into the same programme.

"I was a farm kid doing this internship, camping 10,000 feet up in the Rockies, carrying a pack. I was 23 and had never camped in my life, but when I got asked to do this wilderness stuff for work, it just suited me."

He also worked with youth at risk. "We wrote forensic psychology reports on how well participants would integrate back into society. My sociology degree was a good background for all that."

After his near-death experience, Darl decided to pursue his long-time goal of getting a PhD. While he was clear about his vision, leaving Santa Fe to move to Ithaca, New York was one of the

hardest things he's ever done. Darl had met his French American wife in Colorado and they were married in New Mexico.

"My spiritual home is out west, northern New Mexico, in particular Santa Fe and Taos. I don't miss much about the States at all but I do miss that area. Northern New Mexico is magical."

Darl completed his doctorate at Cornell University in organisational behaviour and programme evaluation, and moved to New Zealand sight unseen in 1992. He has earned a number of teaching awards on his path to professorship. The title Professor of Connectivity has afforded Darl research funding from the Vodafone Foundation and a serendipitous but long-lasting engagement with the Pentagon's 'future army' think tank, which he says was fascinating for a pacifist with no military background. He has written papers on reconceptualising distance and the concerns and conundrums of living in a connected world.

One of his first major papers considered

the 'metaphor of connectivity.' But Darl says connectivity has become much more than a mere metaphor. It is the infrastructure of globalisation as well as our daily digital lives.

"These days the issue of connectivity has grown dramatically and there are more people than ever researching everything from user experience to surveillance to working at home. I used to say, 'connectivity isn't everything, but it's almost everything' but increasingly the ability to disconnect is valuable, if not necessary, to lead healthy lives."

Darl is co-editing a special issue of the journal *Organizational Studies* on connectivity in and around organisations, which is due out later this year. He is also on research and study leave in 2020 and was overseas when Covid-19 changed the world. "I had a few days in San Francisco, Silicon Valley. Looking back, anything we were doing before lockdown now seems so surreal. I was at Facebook in late February with a former student/now friend who works there.

"One of the nice things about being at this stage of my career is we have these great students who eventually become friends.

"But that visit to Facebook was sort of like the Roman Empire before everything went to custard. It was a Disney-like atmosphere with all these wonderful, bright people from all over the world just strolling around having their free lunches."

"Of course, within a month they were working at home and the whole place was empty. I came home on the first of March and got the message from our University that we weren't going anywhere else. I was meant to be at Cambridge in the second half of the year but that's fine. I'm glad to be here and safe."

Working at home near Bethells Beach, Darl has several irons in the fire including new research on metaphors. He's running a survey at metaphorsinuse.com to explore how people use metaphors to understand life experiences, in particular digital life and working from home.

He's also working on a new book.

"It's probably the last full year of sabbatical in my career and I'm using it to pull together strands of what I've done in my whole career, not just the academic part. I enjoy writing and I'm pleased to be able to do that in book form. I want this new book to be helpful for students, twenty-somethings, thirty-somethings, and older alumni who may be interested in the case studies I am pulling together from a range of people I've taught and met over the years."

Darl also still works closely with The Icehouse (theicehouse.co.nz), which was co-founded in 2001 by David Irving, with Deb Shepherd and Christine Woods of the University of Auckland

Business School and corporate partners to assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in New Zealand. Darl joined the facilitator team in 2007 and remains involved in its owner-manager programme (OMP), a five-month learning programme that meets three days a month in residence for 20-25 participating business owners.

"The programme is based on a couple of simple principles and one is the safety of conversation with people who understand and are in a similar situation. We discuss things like the headaches and nuances of being a business owner, or when it's a family-run business, there are issues with succession or trying to grow the

"I used to say, 'connectivity isn't everything, but it's almost everything'. But increasingly the ability to disconnect is valuable, if not necessary, to lead healthy lives." – Professor Darl Kolb

capacity of the business to meet family needs, which change over time."

He says many business owners don't have business training so the programme teaches business principles, and covers the basics of managing people and organisations, strategy, marketing and finance. He says many people use accountants but don't really know how to interpret their numbers.

"It's trusted advice because we put them in groups with business advisers and there's a panel. It's not a Dragon's Den, but you share your information with several other businesses right down to the profit and loss and balance sheet, which you'd never do in an MBA class."

"So they're really trusting each other and then they get me or another facilitator, plus an experienced business mentor, asking questions and trying to help them deal with the major issues in their business. It's a real privilege to be part of these conversations and I've learned so much about all kinds of businesses. It's terrific."

In June he led the first post-lockdown workshop of owner-managers in Queenstown. He says Covid-19 had challenged people's mindsets.

"The conversations recognised the issues facing the business environment, but in general people taking part were surprisingly optimistic. A lot of them are entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs

are always optimistic, but others have quite big businesses and/or operate in the ag sector or infrastructure – and they were doing fine actually."

He says of the 23 businesses at the recent Queenstown event, plenty were doing way better than expected, considering Covid-19's impact on the economy. For example, boat-builders had a 'rush on', with people realising they probably won't be able to travel for a year.

"They were laughing saying, 'yeah, we think boats are an essential service'."

In response to the Covid-19 crisis, The Icehouse has designed a new product that's offered online. It's called Taking Your Business Forward and the initial intake in July included 40 percent women, most likely a sign that the online format worked better for women business owners.

He says adaptation to what businesses need is one of the reasons for the programme's longevity. With programmes like this you might expect to have five good years but this has gone a long time because businesses really appreciate it.

"During the GFC, I remember sitting in a hotel room and listening to these businesses and wondering how they were going to go. The programme kept going and in fact, I think that's when businesses feel like they need us most. There's a lot of knowledge at the Business School."

Academic expertise and insights that come from working closely with New Zealand businesses have helped in the second book he has co-authored with Deb Shepherd, Chris Woods and David Irving called *Gearing Up: Leading Your Kiwi Business into the Future*. It's a follow up to *Changing Gears: How to Take Your Kiwi Business from the Kitchen Table to the Board Room* and features case studies of SMEs in New Zealand. Although it went to press before the Covid crisis, Darl says it's highly relevant.

"In fact, we nearly made the title of the book *Leading Your Kiwi Business into an Uncertain Future*. Turns out that would have been 100 percent accurate."

■ Denise Montgomery

See video of Darl Kolb at Raising the Bar 2020: auckland.ac.nz/darl-kolb-raising-the-bar

WIN

We have one copy of *Gearing Up: Leading Your Kiwi Business into the Future* to give away. Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz with your contact details by 25 August.



SELF-PROMOTION IN CLUNKY GLORY

An exhibition of photographs on show in Old Government House (OGH) captures the construction of New Zealand identity in the mid-20th century, and the clunky ways we saw and tried to sell ourselves.

The exhibition, *The National Basement*, is the work of Emil McAvoy, originally produced for his Postgraduate Diploma of Fine Arts at Elam in 2010 and the subject of further research for his Masters of Fine Arts (2011-13) and beyond.

It features a suite of 17 digitally restored and reprinted archival photos curated from the New Zealand government's National Publicity Studios (NPS). The exhibition emerged after Emil was awarded the Archives New Zealand 50th Anniversary Scholarship in 2009, a research project that involved sifting through 250,000 images from the below-ground storage facilities of Archives New Zealand in Wellington.

The photos depict displays used to promote New Zealand tourism, trade and positive public relations. Although the originals have since been lost or destroyed, these photographs were taken by the NPS as internal records of the promotional displays, and never intended for publication. Emil says the images have been "lovingly restored, made public and reframed in a new context".

The images prompt a playfully critical look at the ways in which New Zealand has officially and collectively promoted itself. They are not the kind of images that tempt us to immerse ourselves in the beautiful scenery, but oblige us to step back and see the way we saw ourselves. There's a photo of a suitcase into which can be packed a pop-up display of the nation's best sides: its landscapes, houses on quarter-acre sections, its growing cities, geothermal power and aerial top dressing.

There are also moments of awkward post-colonial irony. A photo of a pamphlet holder in the



Alumnus Emil McAvoy is holding a thought-provoking exhibition of photos in Old Government House.

shape of a whareniui was photographed resting on a sign in the NPS workshop emblazoned with the word DANGER.

"In a contemporary context, this unintentional contrast speaks to longstanding Pākehā appropriation and commercialisation of Māori taonga and culture," says Emil. The original negative features a smaller rectangle inscribed in pen to indicate the intended crop marks for a print to be made, and where the 'danger' sign is cropped out. Emil has printed the negative full-frame to emphasise the colonial dynamics at play in the construction of national identity evident in New Zealand's early tourism promotion.

The National Basement was part of a larger exhibition at City Gallery Wellington in 2018 called *This Is New Zealand*, curated by Robert Leonard and Aaron Lister, in which artists explored how our country has represented itself and what those representations have included and excluded. In the catalogue for that exhibition, Aaron Lister said: "By focusing on the mechanics of display, McAvoy lets the NPS's problematic politics reveal themselves, while offering us an alternative 'tiki tour' through a New Zealand that never really was. He doesn't return these images as things to be laughed at or longed for. Part of his point is that

this is the very New Zealand people talk about when nostalgically pining for the good old days."

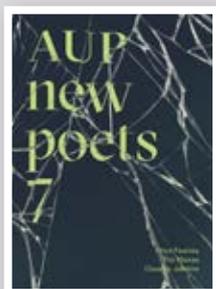
Displaying the exhibition in OGH provides an idiosyncratic backdrop, says Emil. "This site played an important part in our government until 1865, which contributes another dimension of meaning to the exhibition. There is soft propaganda evident in these images, intended to sit a bit awkwardly in this historic building."

■ *The National Basement* is on display at OGH (8am-7pm, Monday to Friday) until 22 September.



An image from the exhibition: AAQT6401-A31250, Archives NZ, Department of Internal Affairs Te Tari Taiwhenua

BOOKS

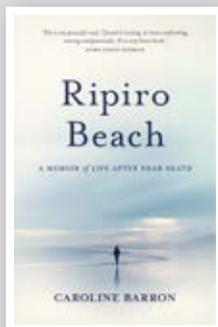


Editor Anna Jackson, AUP, \$29.99

AUP New Poets 7

Edited by alumna Anna Jackson, this is the third *New Poets* in the series that was relaunched in 2019. This edition features the poetry of Rhys Feeney, Ria Masae and Claudia Jardine.

WIN: *AUP New Poets 7*
Email: uninews@auckland.ac.nz by 25 August.



Ripiro Beach: a Memoir of Life After Near Death

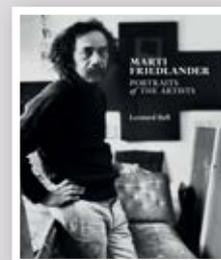
Alumna Caroline Barron's memoir is an honest exploration of a family's mental health issues, suicide and incarceration and the belated discovery she is Māori.

Caroline Barron, Bateman Publishing, \$34.99
WIN: *Ripiro Beach: a Memoir of Life After Near Death*. **Email:** uninews@auckland.ac.nz by 25 August.

Marti Friedlander: Portraits of the Artists

Leonard Bell's 336-page hardback presents 250 of Marti Friedlander's arresting photos of New Zealand's cultural contributors from the 1960s into the 21st century. It is released on 27 August. (See story, opposite page.)

Leonard Bell, Auckland University Press, \$75
WIN: *Marti Friedlander: Portraits of the Artists*. **Email:** uninews@auckland.ac.nz by 25 August.



THROUGH THE LENS OF MARTI

‘A portrait: what could be more simple and more complex, more obvious and more profound,’ said Charles Baudelaire in 1859. That’s certainly true of photographer Marti Friedlander’s portraits, writes Leonard Bell.

Marti Friedlander (1928-2016) and I were very close friends. She was passionate, warm, free-thinking and critical, at times fierce (usually necessarily so), argumentative, sometimes infuriating. A friend described her as a ‘whirlwind’.

She was also one of New Zealand’s most outstanding photographers. Her career here spanned nearly 60 years and she worked in a variety of genre: documentary reportage, ‘street’ photography and portraiture, most notably. Her best-known portraits are probably those in *Moko: Māori Tattooing in the 20th Century* (1972, with later editions through to 2019). *Moko* features portraits of elderly Māori women. These portraits not only document their subjects with empathy but also helped Marti, a displaced and rather alienated young migrant from England, feel more at home here.

In New Zealand from 1958, she began photographing writers, artists and other creative people in 1959 and continued to do so to the end of her life. She probably produced more such portraits (around 400 different people) than any other quality professional photographer in the country. Yet those that have been published and exhibited make up only a minority of these portraits. The majority have not been seen publicly. This book, while including some already-published portraits, features around 250 novel and compelling images of both well-known and now ‘forgotten’ or little-known artists, writers, craftspeople, actors et al. All of them, nevertheless, were prominent players in

expanding and vitalising cultural fields in New Zealand in the 1960s, 1970s and later.

Marti’s first portrait of an artist or writer (Maurice Gee) was published in the periodical *Landfall* in 1960. This developed into a lifelong project. She wrote: “As I was travelling around the country, a priority was to seek out artists. It seemed to me that artists were struggling for recognition. I resolved to photograph as many of them as I could”.

Her portraits appeared in many periodicals and newspapers, notably the *New Zealand Listener*, the *New Zealand Herald*, Marcia Russell’s proto-feminist *Thursday*, and *Art New Zealand*, as well as in exhibition catalogues and performance brochures, notably for Kees and Tine Hos’s New Vision Gallery, and books (many authors’ photos, for instance). Jim and Mary Barr’s *New Zealand Artists A – M* (1980) features her portraits.

Marti Friedlander: Portraits of the Artists shows and explores their range and diversity in terms of subject, style, format (single figure or groups, close-up to full-standing in their studios or work and performance environments), lighting, ‘look’, black and white and colour. These photographs, sharp-eyed and arresting in themselves, also offer a form of socio-cultural history, full of invaluable insights into cultural milieus and social changes here from the 1960s on. A portrait, such as Marti’s, can have implications far beyond the depiction of its particular subject in her/himself. They are imaginative documents bearing complex relations to history and social actualities.

Her portraits also reveal brilliance in visualising qualities of individual personality and temperament. She caught seemingly conflictual states in the one face or situation. If ever a riposte to the stereotype that New Zealand was a land of ‘passionless people’ was needed, her photographs of creative people provide it. My book presents an array of independent-minded, unconventional and idiosyncratic people, most of whom, like Marti herself, went their own way irrespective of the ‘rules and regulations’ of mainstream society and officialdom. We need more people like them now.

Photo-historian William Main characterised Marti as the first photographer here ‘to take up the challenge of trying to tell you something about a person through the very nature of her photographs... [her work] put New Zealand portraiture on the map’ (1990).

Marti, who studied a couple of papers in Art History here in 1976, was awarded an Honorary



Artist Gretchen Albrecht. Below: Poet Fleur Adcock.
Photos: Gerrard and Marti Friedlander Charitable Trust, 2020

‘Her photos, sharp-eyed and arresting in themselves, also offer a form of socio-cultural history.’ – Leonard Bell

Doctorate by the University in 2016. That the archive of her prints, negatives and related documents held at the Auckland Art Gallery was recognised and honoured with its elevation to the UNESCO Memory of the World New Zealand Register in November 2018 – the first such in Australasia – is a measure of the status and substance of her oeuvre, in which her portraits of artists, writers et al. have primary places.

■ Associate Professor Leonard Bell teaches Art History in the School of Humanities. His book *Marti Friedlander: Portraits of the Artists* (Auckland University Press) is out this month. Hardback, \$75

TELLY TRIBUTE

***The Medium Is the Message* is an exhibition that marks 60 years since the first official public television broadcast in Aotearoa.**

It came from Gus Fisher Gallery’s iconic heritage building which used to be radio and TV studios. The exhibition considers television’s past and reflects on the role of the medium now by presenting rarely seen archival film footage and ambitious artworks by renowned artists.

■ *The Medium Is the Message: Television Now and Then* runs from 1 August to 17 October at the Gus Fisher Gallery, 74 Shortland Street. See gusfishergallery.auckland.ac.nz





“Judith Collins’ ability to dance on the spot ... makes the election more competitive.”

POLITICAL PIROUETTES

There’s no better time for politicians to do the dance of political management than ahead of the 19 September election, writes Associate Professor Jennifer Lees-Marshment.

Given the close election result in 2017, no party has a safe path to victory in September. Each party’s ability to manage their candidates and campaign, as well as seem like they could manage our government, is under scrutiny and in the run-up to the election wasn’t looking good.

Political management requires four Ds: deliberating, designing, dancing and discharging. Deliberating is about reviewing and reflecting; designing is concerned with planning, thinking and strategising; dancing requires being artful and adaptive to any situation; and discharging is about implementing plans and managing people – it’s the more functional ‘getting things done’ aspect of political management.

Although Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is riding high in polls, the Labour Party has clear weakness in political management. The party didn’t really have time to deliberate on its vision, having been thrown into government somewhat unexpectedly. Ardern’s elevation to leader was premature, given she’d seemed happy waiting in the wings, but that’s turned out well for them.

However, the Covid-19 crisis has made it even harder to create a vision for the future. We don’t really know what Ardern’s New Zealand is supposed to look like so it’s hard to know if we agree with that vision. Labour had suggested a design for economic recovery with some key policies, mostly focused on jobs, but there is still a sense of a lack of an overall recovery plan, let alone the path to get there. But Ardern is a skilful dancer and has proven an effective leader of a complex coalition government, although that doesn’t mean there haven’t been questions over

her ability to ensure government policies, such as KiwiBuild, actually work.

This leads us to the ‘discharge’ – Ardern and Labour’s big weakness. Despite efforts to deliver their 100-day plan, they have had policies, such as the capital gains tax, thwarted by their coalition partners. Will voters blame them for this? It’s up to Labour to convince us it can do so much more if they get more of our votes and become the transformational, visionary government for the new normal ahead of us.

Opposition parties are usually great at the deliberating side of political management, as they get more time to review and reflect. Under Simon Bridges, National created a lot of discussion documents, but it is only under the new leadership of Judith Collins that the party has started to communicate its policy design. The transport infrastructure plan offers a long-term vision for Auckland, in particular, and responds to increasing concerns about the impact of traffic on the quality of life. However it is vulnerable to the same attacks National often hurl at Labour, such as a lack of costings and detail to ensure it can be discharged. Collins’ ability to produce both visionary and practical proposals in a short time during a global crisis is extremely constrained.

But her ability to dance on the spot, drawing on her vast experience and strength of character, makes the election more competitive. Collins can also dance to her own tune at times and if she can harness her entrepreneurial side in response to the challenges New Zealand faces, we may see new thinking from National that offers ideas beyond just returning to business as usual.

As for the minor parties, Winston Peters is a renowned dancer, so expect the unexpected. New Zealand First can certainly point to preventing policies being discharged that their supporters did not like, but they also need to communicate what they did actually get done and convey what new design is on offer for 2020 and beyond. Their first policy was to offer the return of a universal family benefit, putting them in direct competition

with their Labour/Green coalition partners. A more sensible approach would be to devise their own dance to suit their distinctive supporters.

The Greens’ political management so far is promising. They have taken time out to think of new ideas and talked about now being the time to be ambitious by investing in projects that provide jobs the post-Covid economy needs and which create social and environmental benefits. They’ve also proposed policies on nature-related jobs. Having been in government, they can call on a new reputation for ‘discharging’ with key achievements such as the Zero Carbon Bill. But will they have satisfied their traditional supporters who may seek more vision and innovative design than the party has had the chance to devise and promote while in a coalition?

As for ACT, they have skilfully completed a difficult dance with their new deputy party leader, Brooke van Velden (a former student of this University), and getting the End-of-Life Choice Bill passed to enable a referendum on euthanasia. They can at least claim to have given us all the chance to express our views on this issue, and build off this achievement to attract more votes.

Another way for the public to express their views is by using TVNZ’s Vote Compass 2020 engagement tool being launched this month. It’s a great way for the public to understand how party policies align to their own views.

The key is for people to make sure they vote. Because even if the dance moves are dodgy and the partnerships seem a little out of step, we still need a winner in the dance-off.

■ Jennifer Lees-Marshment (pictured) is an associate professor in Politics and International Relations in the Faculty of Arts. She is an expert in political marketing and political management and academic adviser to TVNZ’s Vote Compass. Her 16th book, *Political Management: The Dance of Government and Politics*, is out this month.

This article reflects personal opinion and is not necessarily that of the University of Auckland.