

PRESS RELEASE

Because of where I live

6 June – 30 August 2025, Gus Fisher Gallery

Daegan Wells (Aotearoa)

Gus Fisher Gallery is proud to present the first solo exhibition by Southland-based artist Daegan Wells in Tāmaki Makaurau.



Selected as part of a newly established open-call programme called *The Changing Room*, Wells' presentation brings the materiality of his Southland surroundings into the gallery through a combination of handwoven textiles and furniture made from locally sourced timber.

Since 2018, Wells has lived on his partner's family farm near Riverton. Since the 1800s the farm and surrounding whenua have undergone many stages of evolution, including being the site of one of Aotearoa's earliest gold excavations, home to a large Chinese settlement in the 1870s, and supporting various sawmilling operations.

Daegan's loom, in his home studio on the farm.
Image courtesy of the artist.

For his presentation at Gus Fisher Gallery, Wells' partner's family farm becomes a case study for gaining insight into the people, industry and processes of the area. Wells has connected with his partner's extended family, interviewing and gathering archives from whānau who grew up on the farm, including residents of the farmhouse from the 1930s and his partner's great-aunt who used to live in the cottage.

Drawing on fine craft skills learned locally from rural weavers, Wells has created a collection of household objects inspired by handmade furniture once found in the original 19th century farm cottage. This includes a series of daybeds and a hand-made sheepskin rug, which required the artist to learn how to tan and process leather for the first time.



Pakohe Toki, documented moments after discovering the half-buried taonga. Image courtesy of the artist.

Studio test, hand felted wool from pet sheep. Image courtesy of the artist.

Learning new skills such as tanning leather speaks to a specificity of place, and methods of regeneration and renewal that can be commonplace processes for communities living rurally. For Wells, site and the politics of place have been a constant thread in the development of his practice, with this project emerging as a strong need to engage with and understand his surroundings.

As part of the display, Wells has created a video drawing on existing stories, oral histories, photographs and fragmented archival documents. The resulting work extends the artist's research into the area where he lives, offering insight into the intersecting histories, persons, places and events that make up the place he calls home.

He recalls: *"In early 2024, while walking, I found a Pakohe Toki half-buried and only visible in the rocky coastal soil of the rural Southland farm where I live with my partner. I took the Toki to the local rūnaka for advice on what to do with such a precious artefact. This led to a serendipitous encounter with a kaumatua from Ōraka-Aparima, who blessed the toki with a karakia in the car park of our tiny local Supervalue. The discovery of this long buried taonga and its repatriation has led me to reflect deeply upon the history of this place that I call home and the events that have shaped and defined it."* – Daegan Wells

**Press release end

For further information please contact:

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High resolution images available on request, a selection below:

All images courtesy of the artist.



FOR YOUR DIARY:

Exhibition opening at Gus Fisher Gallery on Friday 6 June 2025, 5.30 – 7.30pm. Artist talk with Daegan Wells at Gus Fisher Gallery taking place on Saturday 7 June, 1pm.

This exhibition will launch alongside **Tala o le tau**, featuring work by Angela Tiatia, Yuki Kihara and Moata'a Aualuma Community (Sāmoa).

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY:

Daegan Wells graduated with a Masters of Fine Arts from Ilam School of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury in 2015. Through his archival and sculptural practice, Wells uses narrative to address political, environmental, social and cultural events from recent history. Recent exhibitions include: What thrives on these soils (group, curated by Sophie Davis), Te Whare Toi o Heretaunga Hastings Art Gallery, Heretaunga Hastings, (2025); Living Room (group, curated by Kim Paton and Caroline Billing), ObjectSpace Sir Miles Warren Gallery, Ōtautahi Christchurch, (2024); Made for the Home, Laree Payne Gallery, Kirikiriroa Hamilton, (2024); Finest Fushias, William Hodges Fellowship Exhibition, Waihōpai Invercargill, (2023); Local Makers (The Project, curated by Micheal Do), Aotearoa Art Fair, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, (2022); World made of Steel, made of Stone, (group, curated by Abby Cunnane), The Physics Room, Ōtautahi Christchurch, (2021); Bush Coat, Enjoy Contemporary Art Space, Te Whanganui-a- Tara Wellington (2020).

Gus Fisher Gallery is a centre for contemporary art in Tāmaki Makaurau and a project space for artists. As the flagship art gallery for Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland, Gus Fisher Gallery advocates for experimental exhibition making by being a platform for new opportunities and enabling an extension of artistic practice. Gus Fisher Gallery's programme comprises inhouse initiated exhibitions and a public programme of events for creative and diverse communities. Housed in a 1934 heritage building, Gus Fisher Gallery shows a strength in artists moving image consistent with its building's pioneering broadcasting history.

Open during exhibitions Tuesday - Friday 10am-5pm, Saturday 10am-4pm

Gus Fisher Gallery
74 Shortland Street
Auckland Central

Free entry