

At Gus Fisher Gallery this winter, Southland-based artist Daegan Wells reflects on the significance of place. In *Because of Where I Live*, Wells transforms the city-centre gallery into a deeply personal study of one rural site: the Riverton farm where he lives with his partner, a property layered with the histories of goldminers, sawmillers, settlers and whānau. This marks Wells' first solo exhibition in Tāmaki Makaurau and will be shown in the inaugural year of The Changing Room, Gus Fisher's new open-call initiative. The exhibition takes form through a series of handcrafted textiles and furniture — daybeds, a sheepskin rug, woven elements — made using materials and techniques sourced from or learned within the region.

# Because of Where I Live

Wells worked closely with extended members of his partner's family to build this body of work. Their stories, photos, and archives form a quiet chorus behind the objects. Oral histories have been folded into a video piece that plays within the space, grounding the physical work in the voices of those who've inhabited the land long before. That sense of history came into stark focus in early 2024, when Wells unearthed a pakohe toki — a traditional adze head — while walking along the farm's rocky coast. The event led to its blessing by a kaumatua from Ōraka-Aparima, a moment that became a turning point in the artist's thinking. As Wells puts it, "The discovery of this long-buried taonga... led me to reflect deeply upon the history of this place that I call home."



Stool with wheels, hand-woven wool from pets, 2024



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.

*Because of Where I Live* is on show from 6 June — 30 August 2025.

Clockwise from top: Stool with wheels, hand-woven wool from pets, 2024; Daegan's home studio, 2024; Stool with sheep skin, 2025



Because of Where I Live

Beyond its poetic and material richness, *Because of Where I Live* also foregrounds acts of making as acts of honour. Learning to tan leather, sourcing wool from a pet sheep, felting by hand — these are not nostalgic gestures, but living, practiced skills embedded in rural life. In a gallery known for its focus on moving image and experimental exhibition-making, Wells' contribution brings a grounded, deeply reflective lens — one that doesn't just document a place, but listens to it.