



WHATEVER

EVERY TIME



Left:  
**Interval Timer**, 2022, acrylic, oil pastel, graphite,  
600 x 760mm

Cover:  
**The Lost Supper; Everything on the Table**, 2022,  
acrylic, oil pastel, graphite, 1225 x 1525

Overleaf:  
**Walkers and Riders**, 2022, acrylic, oil pastel,  
graphite, 1225 x 1525mm

**Pleiades; Storm Warning**, 2022, acrylic, oil pastel,  
graphite, 1225 x 1525mm

# A Matter of Time

## Wes Fieldhouse

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## A Matter of Time Wes Fieldhouse

Over some 30 years of exhibiting, Wes Fieldhouse has presented everything from photorealism and romantic landscapes through to highly provisional abstraction. True to form, this exhibition marks another stylistic shift. This absence of a signature style is not, however, from any lack of critical focus. Despite being a risky strategy, Fieldhouse has made a conscious decision to reject the traditional demand for aesthetic consistency. His position on this is perhaps best summed up by Washington Post arts critic, Sebastien Smee, in his article on German artist Charlene Von Heyl:

*[This Demand] fosters the illusion that an artist is delving deeper and deeper into a kind of creative essence... but there is peril in consistency. 'Know thyself' may be wise counsel. But perhaps we need to accept the extent to which we are not, in fact knowable. Nor are we necessarily one thing. It follows that we should refuse to let any one single expression of ourselves snuff out all other possibilities... to contemplate a career like Mark Rothko's or Jackson Pollock is to sense not just the limitations of a signature style, but also certain psychic dangers (Smee, 2018).*

As Whitman observed – we contain multitudes – locking them up seldom goes well.

To some extent the aesthetic of this exhibition is a response by the artist to his recent experimentation with a combination of media (acrylic, oil pastel, graphite) an interest in painting and drawing, and the inherent tensions between abstraction and figuration. These, however, are not the main act. They are secondary to the process itself which is sovereign, and has always been the main impetus and central focus of his work – everything else is ancillary. It is a process of addition, subtraction, making, unmaking, marking and erasure, a process in which an image is ‘discovered’ rather than produced with prior intent.

As a painter Wes Fieldhouse creates his own meanings and understandings of his work during a direct engagement in the process – in the standing back, evaluating, analysing, and questioning. This is

the only way he understands the work and feels it is not something that can be easily written about, or that can be completely understood by reading about it. But as John Berger said, “All genuine art approaches something which is eloquent but which we cannot altogether understand. Eloquent because it touches something fundamental. How do we know? We do not. We simply recognise.”

Perhaps for Fieldhouse words cannot be used to explain the art but they are a vehicle and an attachment that won’t let go. He displays a deep awareness of contemporary concerns, climate change, rising sea levels, the dislocation of forced migration, the passing of time, how that passing will affect the next generation. These aren’t paintings about nothing, they have stories, recurrent themes, we live in a world where time has become precious, images of time’s passing are everywhere, both within the paintings and in our lives. Fieldhouse paints vessels with time (water) flowing in and out,

the hourglasses, timers, a ghostly figure on a horse, a walking frame, a table with ‘everything’ written on it and yet beside it an empty bowl, and another table beside that with ‘whatever’ written on its top. Is this a ‘whatever’ shrug, or a hint of despair? The isobars in the painting *Pleiades: Storm Warning* may sum up the whole show, the frangipani flowers, what could be an empty kava bowl, a turbulent sea below the bright Pacific blue, how easy it is to feel the concerns, to see the mind at work. “How do we know? We do not. We simply recognise.” Is it all a matter of time?

In January 2015 Wes was involved in a motorcycle accident resulting in serious injuries, a number of long surgeries and a long period of recovery. It was during this time however that Wes was able to reflect more on his practice and to re-engage in making work for exhibition. The works are part of that process.

## References

- Smee, S., 2018, Nov 30, ‘How one abstract artist refuses to be boxed in’, <https://washingtonpost.com>
- Whitman, Walter, *Leaves of Grass*, Viking Press, 1855.
- Berger, John, *Portraits: John Berger on Artists*, Verso Books, 2015.

Overleaf:  
**Migration**, 2022, acrylic, oil pastel, graphite, 755 x 1015mm  
**Seedfall**, 2022, acrylic, oil pastel, graphite, 755 x 1015mm





## CV

- 1992** Wes Fieldhouse joined Elam School of Fine Arts where he studied under, Dick Frizzell, Ronnie Van Hout, Fiona Pardington, Carole Shephard and the late Don Binney amongst others. After completing his foundation year, he had already received some critical success and favourable reviews as a painter through his exhibitions with OREXART. In his second year he transferred to Te Toi Hou, the school's newly established Māori arts department which allowed him a somewhat broader range of exploration, studying under Selwyn Muru, Kura Te Rewari and Brett Graham.
- 1996** Postgraduate studies at Auckland University of Technology's (AUT) School of Art and Design where he graduated with an MA with Honours and was subsequently invited to take up an Academic Leadership and Lecturers roles with AUT School of Art and Design. In these roles he led the School's Foundation programmes while also working as a Lecturer and eventually Senior Lecturer in both Studio Practice and in Theory, History and Philosophy in visual practices.
- 1990–2003** Continued to develop his own visual arts practice and contributed to a number of group shows and mounted several solo shows in Auckland, Wellington and Germany. This included exhibitions with Auckland's OREXART, ASA and George Fraser Galleries, Wellington's Kudos Gallery (Brooklyn) and Gallerie Grabenheinrich in Bielefeld, Germany.
- 2007** Resigned his tenure at AUT and, after extensive travelling in Europe and South East Asia he moved to Te Tai Tokerau (Northland) where he has lived since 2008. Since then he has pursued a number of personal and professional projects including the consistent development of new work.

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