

Clay remembers being pounded flat or rolled into a ball, in the same way that it remembers being the basalt rocks of a mighty mauka or the silt swept along the bottom of a braided awa.

In this solo exhibition, Nicholson continues to explore recycled, reclaimed and collected whenua materials. Through laborious and intimate ceramic processes to create the work they pay particular attention to the non-linear transformation of the materials – considering this as a metaphor for the process of reconnecting, belonging, and feeling at home in one’s body and land.

They investigate this tension and discomfort through the old pottery adage ‘clay remembers’. This saying, usually used in a technical context, also speaks to the te ao Māori belief that we are born from, belong, and ultimately will return to the land.

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Ko Maukatere te mauka

Ko Rakahuri te awa

Ko Te Uruao te waka

Ko Waitaha, Kāti Mamoe me Kāi Tahu kā iwi

Ko Kāi Tūāhuriri, Kāi Te Atawhīua, Kāi Aotāumarewa me Kāti Wairua kā hapu

Ko Tuahiwi te Marae

Ko Jess Nicholson te ikoa

**Jess Nicholson** is a ceramic artist from Ōhope, now based in Ōtepoti, with a practice grounded in Kāitahutaka and environmental sustainability. They explore the transitional and non-linear nature of re/connecting to whakapapa and whenua by transforming local, collected, and reclaimed materials (uku, pōhatu, oneone, and ash) into ceramic forms that act as a metaphor for the self – to make real and permanent the emotional and cultural connections they feel to te taiao. Nicholson rejects capitalist notions of ceramic production, instead prioritising labour-intensive and intimate processes that explore belonging, domesticity, and acceptance.

In 2025 they exhibited with Paemanu: Ngai Tahu Contemporary Visual Art Collective at the 11th Asia Pacific Triennial at Queensland Art Gallery /Gallery of Modern Art in Meanjin/Brisbane, they were awarded the Caselberg Creative Connections Residency, exhibited *Re: Wild / Mohoao / Gwylt* in Pōneke with Llyr Williams, received second place at the ILT Arts Murihiku awards and received a Merit prize at The Portage ceramic awards.

## Ka maumahara te uku (the clay remembers)

Jess Nicholson



1. ***We used to be a mighty mauka***  
 Reclaimed clay, found ceramic and glass from Whaka Oho Rahi, Basalt from Blackhead Quarry, Rakiura Doc hut fireplace ash, Sage Green rock from Whaka Oho Rahi (Broad Bay), White Tāmaki Makaurau clay from Rowena and Barry’s house, Matatā pumice, Maukatere gold clay, Blue Whakatāne clay from Freddy, Chalky White rock from Whaka Oho Rahi, ash from Moewai’s Nan’s frieplace, Maukoroa from Karitāne, Grey River silt, Rakahuri clay, Logan Park kōkōwai from Aroha  
 6100 x 200 mm  
 2026
2. ***Papa potential***  
 Reclaimed clay, found ceramic and glass from Whaka Oho Rahi, Maukatere clay  
 890 x 500 mm  
 2026
3. ***E noho***  
 Reclaimed clay, found ceramic and glass from Whaka Oho Rahi; Karitāne sand, Basalt from Blackhead Quarry  
 450 x 435 x 370 mm  
 2026
4. ***Ka maumahara te uku***  
 8 min audio of uku from Maukatere, Grey River, and Rakahuri awa slaking down in water, looped  
 2026
5. ***We used to be a braided awa***  
 Reclaimed clay, found ceramic and glass from Whaka Oho Rahi; Karitāne sand, Grey river silt, Matatā pumice, Maukatere gold clay, Karitāne maukoroa

2700 x 1120 mm  
 2026

6. ***Whakamenetia (to gather together) I***  
 Reclaimed clay, found ceramic and glass from Whaka Oho Rahi, Basalt, Logan Park kōkōwai from Aroha  
 275 x 460 mm  
 2026

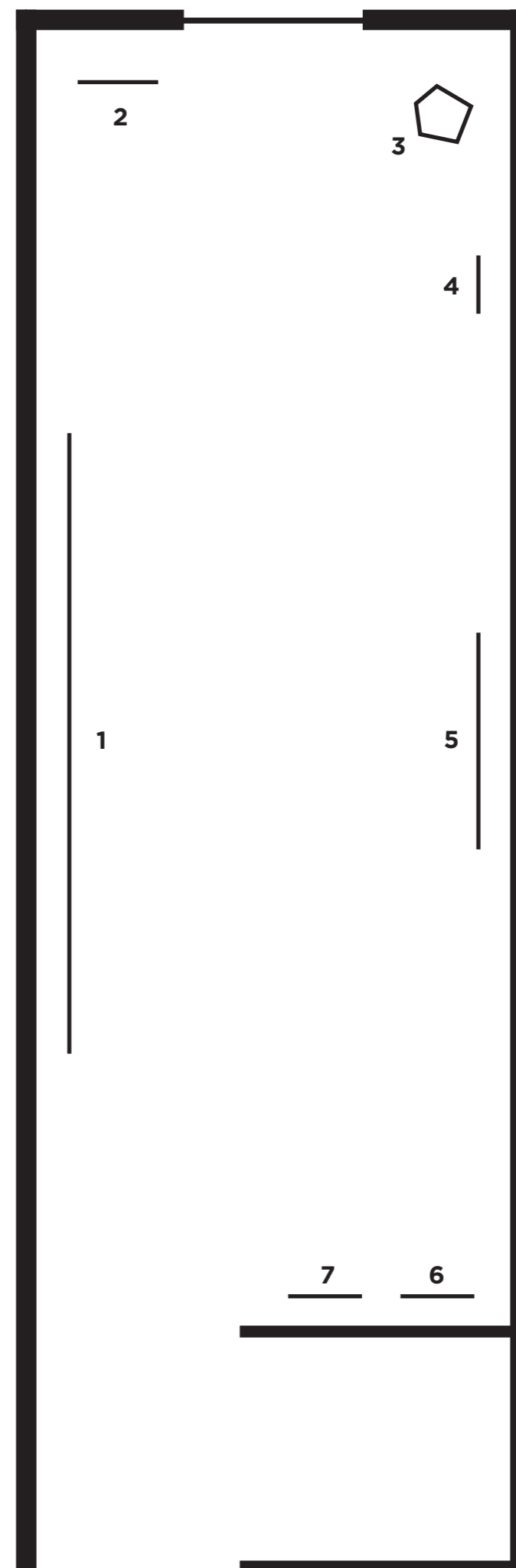
7. ***Whakamenetia (to gather together) II***  
 Reclaimed clay, found ceramic and glass from Whaka Oho Rahi, Basalt, Logan Park kōkōwai from Aroha  
 280 x 450 mm  
 2026

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