

Word on the Street

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Where do you go? - Erica Van Zon

By [Martyn](#) • 3 Jul 2018



Erica van Zon

Wellington-based mixed media visual artist [Erica van Zon](#) creates work that drinks deeply from the wellspring of her personal experience: memories, desires, small moments, and souvenirs. She re-imagines objects from the world around her utilising the vernacular of re-makes, props, pastiche and parody. Direct translations, medium shifts, re-creations, cartoons and abstraction are her tools, and when she's done, Erica gives us the opportunity to shift our perspectives and ways of seeing.

Erica is showing new work at Wellington's newest contemporary art gallery, [Millers O'Brien](#), in their inaugural exhibition, The Gates. Martyn had a yarn with Erica about the Welly visual arts scene, her favourite crazy 90s architecture, her best op shop scores and where to get the best polenta chips.



“Coming from Auckland, I really appreciate the built heritage here, and ironically the crazy 90s architecture in this city. The little bits of original modernist Wellington are easy to find in the architecture and urban spaces around town.

What parts of Wellington do you live and work in? What do you like about them?

I live in Aro Valley and have a studio at home; I also work part-time at [Toi Pōneke Arts Centre](#) on Abel Smith Street and tutor at [COCA Massey University](#). I love being able to dip in and out of the city from home and work; it's super easy to go out, get errands done, go to the markets and be part of what's going on. The walks through Central Park and around Polhill makes you feel like you're not in the city, which is quite unique.

Outside of those areas, what are your favourite things about the capital?

I love how each area has its flavour and vibe. I really think having such a cool supportive creative scene and pro-arts city council make a huge difference to a lot of creative people who have chosen to live here. Being in a smaller pond means you're more supported with more opportunities.

Coming from Auckland I really appreciate the built heritage here, and ironically the crazy 90s architecture in this city. The little bits of original modernist Wellington are easy to find in the architecture and urban spaces around town, my favourite Wellington tiles are in the block around the mid-bit of Cuba Street and Leeds Street, down to Wakefield. There nothing like Cuba Street in the rest of NZ, oh and Moore Wilson's!

You work in mixed media visual art. For those of us who aren't as plugged into those worlds as you, what are some of the interesting recent local developments around these disciplines that we should know about in Wellington?

I work a lot with textiles and handmade processes and see these as being celebrated a lot in NZ currently. NZ Pottery Club memberships are through the roof! The Dowse Art Museum has always been a centre for jewellery and houses a great collection of art and craft works.

Museums are giving more space to craft practices, the Pacific Sisters and Lisa Walker surveys at Te Papa highlight this. As craft has been traditionally associated with women, working with these methods and materials contributes to a feminist dialogue. Showing these practices in galleries and museums adds to righting past gender imbalances in public exhibitions and collections.

The mushrooming of artist runs spaces and new dealer galleries in the city has added to venues for the visual arts, with the next generation of savvy artists working hard running them with lots of great energy.



- A 90s architectural doozy

“For a special night out I’d recommend the wonderful Rita in Aro Street or Cicio Cacio in Newtown - delicious! If you’re in for a fun flavourful bite, try my faves the tofu bao at Mr. Go’s, or prosecco and polenta chips at Ombra. The ginger caramel cakes at Floriditas/Loretta are like an elevated Dutch breakfast gemberkoek and bring back great memories.

Where do you like to go to eat out?

Le Moulin on Willis Street, Wellington Sourdough, and Leeds Street Bakery are my favourite bakeries; I just shop according to budget and mood. Best Ugly at the Airport is the best; I make quite a bit of time before flights at the airport to chill there as I’m always scared of missing my flight.

If we go out to the Dowse, I'll stop by Zany Zeus on the way home in Moera for treats. It's no secret that the Rhubarb and Caramel Scones from Gipsy Kitchen on Jessie street are the best in the land, and their Hot Cross Buns this past Easter were next level.

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The lovely folks at the delicious, addictive A Taste of Home on Vivian Street and St Pierre's Sushi Cuba street fill your BYO container, I'm trying to reduce single-use plastics in my life, and they get it. I love the chickens from the Chook Wagon at Moore Wilson's; they also do gift vouchers which are great presents for Christmas or new mums.



Where do you like to shop around Wellington?

I love op shopping. The City Mission Shop on the corner of Abel Smith and Taranaki is my favourite; once I scored a fully boxed, never used early 1980s Lego set. I also scored a Rosenthal early 1980s Dorothy Hafner "Flash" piece from the Salvation Army Shop on Willis Street.

Most of the shopping I do is for my art practice; I love craft shop [Made on Marion](#) on Tory Street, the staff are awesome. Maryanne Cathro, the owner, knows how to make pretty much everything. I'm always at [The Fabric Store](#), [The Fabric Warehouse](#), [Exhibit A Framers](#), [Spotlight](#), [The French Art Shop](#) and [Gordon Harris](#). Further afield The Glass Shoppe and Pete's Emporium in the Hutt are great.

I pretty much only wear sports shoes now and get them from Rebel Sport, and love Miss Crabb clothes; you can buy them here from [The Service Depot](#). Having a pedicure at [Lotus Beauty](#) or buying some fresh treats at [The Nut Store](#) is just 10 minutes from our front doorstep, two of my favourite local businesses.

“The Michael Fowler Centre impresses me every time I'm near. The lines, surfaces, and materials are so classy, and inside there are beautiful commissioned artworks by Gordon Crook. I'm also a huge fan of the Freyberg Pool.

What are some of your favourite public spaces around the capital?

The [Michael Fowler Centre](#) impresses me every time I'm near. The lines, surfaces, and materials are so classy, and inside there are beautiful commissioned artworks by Gordon Crook. I'm also a huge fan of the [Freyberg Pool](#).

Galleries and public art in Wellington are free and great! Most of the commercial galleries are condensed around Te Aro and well worth visiting. You'll always find something interesting going on the artist-run spaces around town, like [Enjoy](#). Toi Māori have just opened a new gallery on lower Tory Street that I'm keen to check out. There's always artist talks, late nights or symposiums on to go to every week for free.

City Arts and Events run all of the cool free events in the city, so keep an eye on the calendar, they bought Alien Weaponry here for Waitangi Day and the beautiful Ahi Kā event for Matariki.

“...the best night out we had recently was seeing the Muppets live at the Jim Henson Retrospectacle. My partner is a huge fan, we were beaming! It was an hour and a half of pure joy. Wellington was the place to be that night.

Where do you go for a night out?

I'm more of an art opening/film fest/odd theatre/odd orchestra gig/VR at home type of person! Our friends get together and have Fizzy Friday now and again, just to celebrate the end of the week – usually at Mr. Go's or Loretta.

CubaDupa is a fun weekend out; the private parties are great to dip into, Suite Gallery had incredible 90s DJ's playing a couple of years back, it was so memorable dancing in the rain with a frozé.

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Finally, and I ask everyone this: what is your favourite section in the public library?

Definitely the magazine section for the awesome collection of World of Interiors magazines.

You're invited!

To the launch of Millers O'Brien and their inaugural exhibition, The Gates, which features work by Erica.

Friday 6 July, 5pm - 8pm

Level 1, 85 Victoria Street, Wellington



Another 90s architectural delight

visual arts, wellington art scene, where do you go



Millers O'Brien Gallery

Level 1, 85 Victoria Street, Wellington

Millers O'Brien is a new contemporary art gallery
located in the recently strengthened Mibar Building
above The Lido.

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