



1.

AYESHA GREEN

Born: 1987

Price range: \$2,500–\$7,000

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At first glance, **Ayesha Green's** (Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāi Tahu) paintings appear simple. They are characteristically flat, with a light bright palette and cartoonlike quality that almost disguises their political clout. Almost, but not quite – for this is a calculated flattening, a rigorous condensation of ideas into one searing, hard-to-forget image. Green's paintings look iconic, feel urgent, and with two exhibitions already under her belt for 2018 and plenty more on the horizon (including plans to head to Melbourne Art Fair with The Physics Room later this year), people are clearly taking notice.

Green's would best be described as a research-based painting practice. She tells me that her work interrogates the history of painting, "...its materiality, but also how paint acts as a socio-political tool." She describes her

own practice as seeking "to understand the power of representational painting, and to use that power as a way to unpick history and uncover political implications."

This is perhaps most clearly seen in the diptych which won her the Seagers Walters Prize in 2016. Entitled *Tama Ki Hikurangi, Rēnata Kawepo*, both paintings are of the same man, Green's tipuna (ancestor), leader **Rēnata Kawepo**, and are copied from two distinct portraits of Kawepo made by the famed portrait artist **Gottfried Lindauer** in the year 1885. In copying these historic works, Green exacerbates the tension between the idea of the 'copy' and the 'original', opening up a space to question the assumptions of authenticity and authorship within the settler artist/Indigenous subject dichotomy.

1. // Ayesha Green, *I'll Meet You in the North, and We Will Go West*, 2017. Acrylic on ply, 120 x 80cm. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

AYESHA GREEN (CONTINUED)

Each of Green's paintings seem to come with a story attached. When asked where she finds her material, she tells me that in fact, it's the other way around: her work tends to be borne out of "stories and snippets of history, things that on the surface seem linear. These stories and histories are connected to my past, to my whakapapa, and I attempt to envision them in the present, to understand what those stories and those histories mean today."

One of the ways these histories often become material, in the world and so in Green's practice, is through the machinations of the tourism industry. Her 2015 painting *Mei* was made in direct response to the history surrounding the popular tourist attraction Pania of the Reef, a bronze statue which sits on Napier's Marine Parade. That the painting is entitled *Mei* rather than Pania is telling: this is a portrait of **Mei Robins**, the young Māori woman whom the bronze Pania was modelled upon. Through investigating her own personal connections to objects that historicise stories and people, such as when Lindauer painted Kawepo or Mei's likeness was cast in bronze, Green's remarkable paintings explore ongoing colonial compulsions and shed light on the tension between Māori as a living people and their framing in the tourism industry of Aotearoa.

Lucinda Bennett

2. // Ayesha Green, *For Hine*, 2017. Acrylic on vinyl, 320 x 570cm.

3. // Ayesha Green, *After School 01*, *After School 02*, 2017. Acrylic on ply, 120 x 120cm.

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST. PHOTOGRAPHY: SAM HARTNETT.

4. // Ayesha Green, *Tama Ki Hikurangi, Renta Kawepo* (detail), 2016. Acrylic on board, 175 x 125cm.

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND THE STEVENSON COLLECTION.

