

Sarah Hudson's Exhibition at Setouchi Triennale 2025: *Reconciliation*

McCahon House Trust

March 2025

Aotearoa, New Zealand artist Sarah Hudson (Ngāti Awa, Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Pūkeko) is set to debut her new works at the prestigious **Setouchi Triennale 2025** in Japan this April, following her selection as the first artist from Aotearoa to undertake a residency at the Benesse Art Site Naoshima. Hudson's participation in this iconic international art event builds on the longstanding collaboration between the McCahon House Trust and the Fukutake Family and is made possible with the support of founding partners, STILL and Asia New Zealand Foundation Te Whītau Tūhono, as well as The Tomorrow Group, Art Front Gallery, Setouchi Triennale 2025 and Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa.

For Hudson, the Setouchi Triennale's setting on the islands of the Seto Inland Sea holds deep resonance. The Triennale has long been celebrated for its ability to intertwine contemporary art with the region's unique cultural and natural landscapes.

Hudson's work, deeply informed by Māori traditions, explores themes of tino rangatiratanga (sovereignty), whakapapa (genealogy), and matemateāone (longing and belonging), through site-specific installations, performance, and the use of natural materials, including earth pigments. Hudson's participation in the Triennale offers an exciting opportunity for cultural exchange, bringing the richness of Aotearoa's indigenous art to a global audience.

From Aotearoa to Setouchi: The Making of New Work

During her residency in Japan, Hudson engaged with the local community and its rich cultural history, creating new work in dialogue with the landscapes of Megijima, an island located in the Seto Inland Sea, which is included in the Benesse Art Site Naoshima.

As part of the Triennale, artists are invited to present their work in natural environments, alongside shrines and in abandoned or unused buildings. Hudson's body of work titled, *Reconciliation*, will be displayed in the nurse's office of the abandoned Megi Elementary School, on Megijima Island. *Reconciliation* will encompass *The Stones Remember and I Listen*, a series of watercolour paintings made using earth pigments sourced from her ancestral lands of Moutohorā, combined with indigo pigment from the Kagawa prefecture. Stone pieces forming *In my teeth, the DNA of cliffs, the taste of old stories*, using pebbles from Megijima and video work, *Belonging*. This new body of work will explore themes of memory, disconnection, and reconciliation, addressing Hudson's own journey of reconnecting with the land and her whakapapa.

A Cross-Cultural Dialogue Through Art

Hudson's involvement in the 2025 Setouchi Triennale builds on her previous experiences with Mataaho Collective, a group she co-founded and known for large-scale, site-specific installations. Her work also reflects her ongoing commitment to sustainability, using natural materials to engage in an active dialogue with the land. Her earth pigment workshops as part of her residency at Miki Junior High School, where she introduced local students to natural

dyeing methods, further underscore her belief in the power of art to forge connections between cultures and generations.

A Message of Reconciliation

Drawing from her experiences of separation from ancestral land, Hudson's work at Setouchi will serve as an act of reconciliation, not only with the land but with the shared histories that bind the two locations. Discovering the presence of stone walls on Megijima used for protection from the wind reminded her of the defensive stone walls on Motoutohorā, where Hudson's ancestors once lived off the coast of Whakatāne where she lives but has not been able to visit as access to the island is restricted.

Hudson shares. *"Being invited to someone else's island, to walk among their stone walls and engage with their histories, made me long even more for the ability to do the same on my own ancestral island."*

"Reconciliation," she explains, "is an ongoing process, an acknowledgement of disconnection and a commitment to restoration. Through my art, I aim to address the complexity of these relationships, whether between people, places, or the natural world."

A Special Collaboration

Jude Chambers, Executive Director of McCahon House Trust, adds, *"Sarah's work contemplates the connection between land, islands and identity. We are thrilled to support her as she embarks on presenting new work in response this unique context. Her participation in the Setouchi Triennale 2025 is a significant milestone, not only for her personal artistic journey but also for the ongoing exchange of Māori art with the world."*

- *Kia Mau Festival - Wellington*
Exhibition of Belonging I & II in conversation with a poem that was written by AI using my research for this project, then translated into te reo Māori. The exhibition has an emphasis on poetry and memory.
June 2-15th
- *Te Kōputu - Whakatāne*
 1. *Exhibition of Belonging I & II, 5 largescale watercolour paintings, historical imagery of Moutohorā in conjunction with Whakatāne Museum and Archives, the poem, and a new series of sculptural works looking at archaeological documentation of wāhi tapu on Moutohorā.*
Opening Friday the 4th of July at 5:30pm
Show runs 5th July - 6th of September

ENDS

Founding partners:

McCahon House Trust was established to preserve and protect cultural legacy and contemporary art practice, and to share it with all New Zealanders. Alongside the McCahon House Museum, the Trust has been hosting artist residencies since 2006 and has demonstrated competence in the necessary infrastructure and pastoral care around ensuring a successful residency experience. The Trust has recently established two international partnerships offering sought-after opportunities for New Zealand artists. The McCahon House team will manage this new initiative and lead the fundraising campaign through the generous McCahon House Trust donor group.

STILL is a community of businesses, projects and social enterprises, founded by Hideaki Fukutake in 2020. STILL is based in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the business espouses a unique worldview focused on the development of art, culture and nature. The Fukutake family have lived here since 2009. As founders and guardians of the Benesse Art Site Naoshima, they are pleased to be able to facilitate connections between Japan and New Zealand. In addition to various business responsibilities including Director of Benesse Holdings, Hideaki assumes the roles of Chairman of the Fukutake Foundation.

Asia New Zealand Foundation Te Whītau Tūhono is New Zealand's leading authority on Asia. They provide experiences and resources to help New Zealanders build their knowledge, skills and confidence to thrive in Asia. The Foundation's activities cover more than 20 countries in Asia and are delivered through nine core programmes: arts, business, education, entrepreneurship, leadership, media, research, Track II diplomacy and sports.

The Foundation's arts programme aims to bring Asia into the mainstream of New Zealand arts by inspiring New Zealand arts professionals to grow their connections and knowledge of Asia. They help New Zealanders build their knowledge of Asia through partnerships with influential individuals and organisations in both New Zealand and Asia, offering opportunities for international collaborations and professional development.

Benesse Art Site Naoshima, Japan

"Benesse Art Site Naoshima" is the collective name for all art-related activities conducted by Benesse Holdings, Inc. and Fukutake Foundation on the islands of Naoshima and Teshima in Kagawa Prefecture and on Inujima island in Okayama Prefecture. Their fundamental aim is to create significant spaces by bringing contemporary art and architecture in resonance with the pristine nature of the Seto Inland Sea, a landscape with a rich cultural and historical fabric. Through contacts with art and nature, sceneries and inhabitants of the Seto Inland Sea region, they seek to inspire visitors to reflect on the meaning of Benesse's motto - Well-Being. In all their ongoing activities, they are committed to fostering a relationship of mutual growth between art and the region, aiming to make a positive contribution to the local communities.

Setouchi Triennale

An internationally regarded contemporary art event in Japan's Seto Inland Sea with typically over 150 artists participating and attracting 1.2 million visitors throughout the 9 months of its duration. The Seto Inland Sea has been a vital transportation route since ancient times. Ships plying its waters stopped at different islands where their crew passed along the latest cultural and lifestyle trends. The distinctive local cultures that emerged through such interactions can still be found today. The islands' unique identities, however, are being eroded by the shrinking and ageing of their populations and the region's diminishing vitality, which have accompanied the acceleration of globalisation, optimisation and homogenisation. Through the Setouchi Triennale, we aim to revitalise island communities that once thrived within the spectacular setting of the Seto Inland Sea, a nexus of trade and cultural exchange, and transform this region into a Sea of Hope for the world.

Setouchi Triennale Executive Committee President: Toyohito Ikeda (Governor of Kagawa Prefecture),
General Producer: Soichiro Fukutake (Honourable Chairman of the Board, Fukutake Foundation),
General Director: Fram Kitagawa (Art Director)