

# Sacred Sites

Jen Bowmast

23 Jul–23 Aug 2019

Opening event:  
Tues 23 Jul, 5pm

What do we do this all for?  
This thing called life?

Some make art, some explore space, some seek higher and higher education, some go to Church, some consult the tarot cards.

As humans we have an instinctual drive to be meaning-makers. Searching for threads and new perspectives to understand our existence here on this planet. Each generation finds their 'why' in their own way, looking to contextualise their experience of the world and find meaning within their lifetime. To find solace in the knowledge of something that will outlast and outlive their lifespan.

**Sacred Sites** is a meditative yet powerful exhibition by New Zealand artist, Jen Bowmast, that makes a space for contemplation whilst exploring 'ways of knowing' and the human impulse to connect to ideas larger than the self. Jen's work, spanning installation, performance, photography and object making, also explores themes around spirituality. These areas of curiosity have led Jen to an interesting practice of engaging psychic mediums in her research and making processes.

Turning to the 'unknown' as a way of researching destabilises the dominant hierarchies of knowledge (think art history, philosophy and western structures of research that are taught in tertiary institutions). In Jen's practice the ephemeral and 'felt' take precedence over the intellectual and rational—one might say 'women's intuition' can be seen at work.

Jen has long learnt to trust her intuition—and that's where the creative rebelliousness of her art practice can be seen. During her Masters study, Bowmast found herself increasingly frustrated by the academic trope of referring back to long-dead, (often) French philosophers, all of whom were definitely men. Jen decided to engage psychic mediums to explore how knowledge gained directly from a 'living woman' might expand and develop her artistic practice.

What began as perhaps a quip (and certainly as a commentary on academia's fixed knowledge systems), turned into a beautiful exchange that enhanced and shifted her practice. An authentic connection between medium and participant was forged. Jen utilised this to explore her future as an artist and in a sense her present, as it influenced her ways of working. These exchanges acted as research tools, that informed her material and conceptual practice. The artist became the future-maker.

Accompanying **Sacred Sites** is a written work titled **The Future is Obsidian** by Natasha Matila-Smith.

Natasha is an intuitive writer whose practice often deals with social exchanges and anxieties, across installation and digital contexts. In this piece Natasha lets her 'self' come to the fore. Laid bare in her frankness, Natasha's words both explore her own point of view and expose larger ideas that talk to the universal—the quest for love and the search for a hidden meaning in the chaos of the world. Her personal sense of spirituality that is self-made inspires the reader to find solace in their own mish-mash of meaning-making. Just like Bowmast's critique of the accepted 'ways of knowing', Matila-Smith's work questions the way we 'do' spirituality.

In the way that only artists can, both Jen Bowmast and Natasha Matila-Smith, present work that allows us to see our own place in the world in a new light. Feeling a connection beyond our rational ways of knowing, helps us to discover (or build) our own 'why' and to become future makers of our own legacies.

Essay by Wendy Richdale,  
Curator—Ramp Gallery



Tuesday–Friday  
12.30–4pm  
or by appt.

R Block, Collingwood St  
Hamilton 3204  
New Zealand

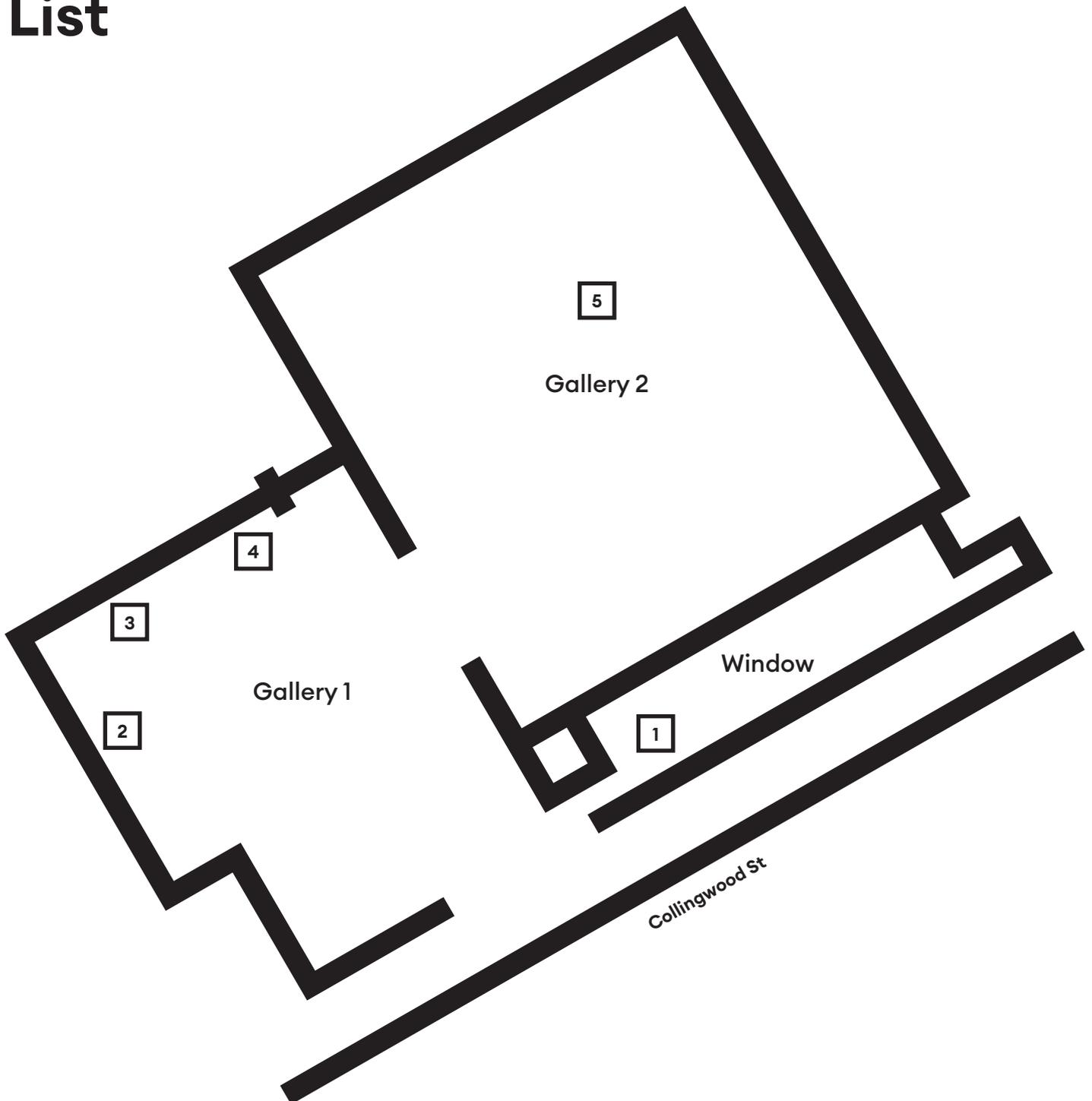
rampgallery.co.nz  
+64 7 834 8800 ext 3228  
info@rampgallery.co.nz

RAMP  
GALLERY



SCHOOL OF  
MEDIA ARTS

# Works List



## Window

1. **Live Psychic Reading**

## Gallery 1

2. **I am not sure that's where your vibration is right now**  
photographic  
inkjet print  
2018

3. **A gorgeous holy darkness**

photographic  
inkjet print  
2018

4. **Becoming a better seer**

photographic  
inkjet print  
2018

## Gallery 2

5. **Calling in the Divine**  
clay, copper, glass,  
marble, nephrite jade,  
obsidian, peppercorns,  
rope, sugar, wood  
2019