

SWAMP SONGS

8 September – 5 October 2026

NICHOLAS BURRY

ELEANOR DIAZ RITSON

1. *Embassy*
Nicholas Burry
oil on canvas, 240x275mm, 2026, \$1400
2. *Red Rock*
Eleanor Diaz Ritson
water-mixable oil on canvas,
200x250mm, 2026, \$950
3. *Farewell, Farewell, Farewell!*
Nicholas Burry
oil on canvas, 900x800mm, 2026, \$3800
4. *Mire*
Eleanor Diaz Ritson
textile relief, 435x310mm, 2026, \$550
5. *Silt Husk*
Eleanor Diaz Ritson
textile relief, 175x310mm, 2026, \$450
6. *Tide-borne Fold*
Eleanor Diaz Ritson
textile relief, 455x430mm, 2026, \$600
7. *Dirty Landscape*
Nicholas Burry
oil on canvas, 500x400mm, 2026, \$2800
8. *Flat Fish*
Eleanor Diaz Ritson & Nicholas Burry
oil on canvas, 600x550mm, 2026, \$2300
9. *Marshwrought*
Eleanor Diaz Ritson
textile relief, 405x275mm, 2026, \$550

Eleanor Diaz Ritson (b. 1998, Mexico City, MX) is an Ōtautahi-based artist and silversmith. Her work contemplates the archival qualities of rock and earth, retaining traces of pressure, fracture, erosion and accumulation across both vast and fleeting scales of time. Working with processes that are unplanned and unrepeatable, Diaz Ritson's work becomes the site of material change, shifting between the organic and the geological, the transitory and the enduring.

Diaz Ritson graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Toi Rauwhāangi College of Creative Arts, Massey University, Wellington, in 2021, and a Master of Fine Arts (Massey Research Scholar) in 2023. In 2022, she was the Enjoy Summer Artist in Residence at the Rita Angus Cottage.

Nicholas Burry (b. 1997, Ōtautahi, NZ) is a painter in the figurative tradition. His foundational medium consists of rich oil paints that hold a solemn, earthy weight. He integrates tactile industrial elements such as tar, mesh, resin, builders-bog and contract filler to enhance the physical texture of his subjects' environments.

His works are largely concerned with themes of history and memory; both the artist's personal recollections and his society's memory. In particular, they are works that address, in visual terms, the historical process and the effect of being a subject in time.

SWAMP SONGS

Eleanor
Diaz Ritson
&
Nicholas
Burry

At the eastern fringe of Ōtautahi lies Ihutai, a coastal wetland where the Ōtākaro and Ōpāwaho Rivers meet the sea: its nutrient-rich silts gathering and eroding, its gentle brackish shallows pulsing with the tide. It's a potent place that defies imposed systems of order, unmaking geometry and contrived form. Ihutai is not simply a place to enter, but one that pulls you inward. Every grazing whētiko, every bottom-dwelling pātiki, every tide-borne branch and forgotten belonging is drawn downwards, mudbound, into the pressing sludge.

This sedimentary biome contains an estuarine force of its own. It collapses contradiction, where decay and vitality coexist, their pungent fusion saturating the air. Some estuary-dwellers bear shells and exoskeletons, while others have acquired slick elongated or flattened forms, all suited to their mudcrawls. Still others wade stilt-legged through the swamp, able to take flight from its squelching grip, the hollowed tracks that lie in their wake becoming a part of this shifting tideland.

For centuries, Ihutai has sustained mahinga kai, where the use of natural resources is bound to their care and protection. Yet this vulnerable ecosystem continues to rely on the active protection of those who live alongside it. Recent ecological research found that “none of the monitored sites across Ihutai were categorised as being in a pristine or unimpacted state” (Berthelsen et al. 70), reflecting a landscape in which the marks of industry, both historic and present, are difficult to separate from the estuary itself. Today, Ihutai exists within a tension between the development and commerce that occupy its margins and the growing need to restore and protect it. Amid this tension, the wetland remains a place where occupation, upheaval and renewal exist alongside one another. From tuna kūwharuwharu, kōtuku ngutupapa, ōiōi and ground wētā to silt, rust, algae and concrete, all are bound together in the same restless swamp.

This collection of work emerged from returning to Ihutai across changing seasons, witnessing the wetland as it continually forms and un-forms. Rather than seeking to resolve the conditions of the estuary, it follows their traces through a landscape so potent it cannot be held in its entirety. Instead this work turns towards the quiet, passing moments: a clay bank slowly giving way, a glistening veil receding with the tide, feathered flocks hunching against the wind.

Ihutai
Avon-Heathcote Estuary

Ōtākaro
Avon River

Ōpāwaho
Heathcote River

whētiko
mud snail

pātiki
flounder

tuna kūwharuwharu
longfin eel

kōtuku ngutupapa
royal spoonbill

ōiōi
jointed wire rush

Resources

Avon-Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Trust. *Estuary Management Plan 2020–2030: The Avon-Heathcote Estuary and Lower Reaches of the Ōtākaro (Avon) and Ōpāwaho (Heathcote) Rivers*. August 2020, <https://estuary.org.nz/our-estuary/estuary-management-plan/>.

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