



# **Judges' Commentaries on 2022 Finalists and Winners**

11 May 2022

## 2022 Ockham New Zealand Book Awards

One hundred and sixty titles were submitted for the 2022 Ockham New Zealand Book Awards, with ten debut books featuring in the longlist and five in the shortlist. Twenty-two independent presses were represented in the four longlists, twelve in the four shortlists, and seven out of the eight winners.

The judging panels' remarks on each of the four categories, and citations for all the winners, are published below.

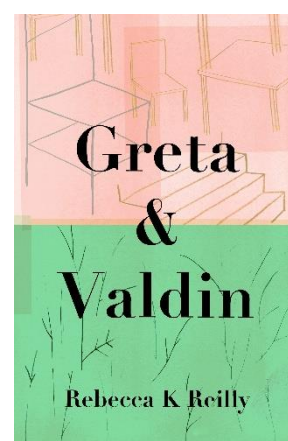
## Crystal Arts Trust Best First Book Awards

### The Hubert Church Prize for Fiction

***Greta & Valdin*** by Rebecca K Reilly

Published by Te Herenga Waka University Press

With her first novel Rebecca K. Reilly has created a modern classic. An Auckland book, a queer book, a Māori book, *Greta & Valdin* is equal parts wit and heart, with flawless dialogue and a diverse cast of memorable characters. A thoroughly enjoyable and undeniably clever book, *Greta & Valdin* sat comfortably alongside the novels by more experienced writers that made up the Jann Medicott Acorn Prize for Fiction shortlist.

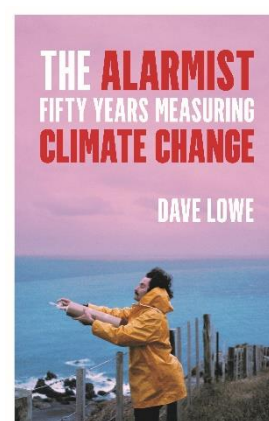


### The E.H. McCormick Prize for General Non-Fiction

***The Alarmist: Fifty Years Measuring Climate Change*** by Dave Lowe

Published by Te Herenga Waka University Press

Dave Lowe's book combines autobiography with his expertise in charting climate change over thirty years, in a way that is accessible and thought-provoking. *The Alarmist* provides insight into New Zealand's contribution to the global scientific evidence base over a significant period of time. It is courageous in casting light on the systemic bias and political pragmatism that has ultimately contributed to the world's climate emergency. *The Alarmist* can be read by a wide public and makes an important contribution to New Zealand's literary canon.

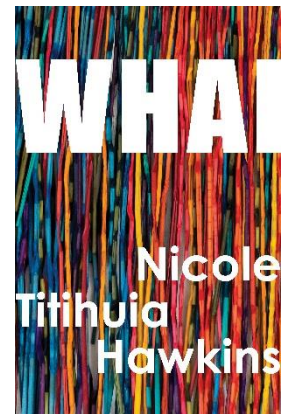


## The Jessie Mackay Prize for Poetry

***Whai*** by Nicole Titihuia Hawkins

Published by We Are Babies Press

*Whai* speaks to relationships with parents and childhood, with identity, with students, and with the self. Nicole Titihuia Hawkins writes with a masterful command of the English language, enhanced by ngā puna waihanga Māori, the inspirational creative springs of Māori culture and language, resulting in unique and powerful poetry. With gentle, compelling confidence Titihuia Hawkins explores themes of colonisation, ancestry and education, without losing her sense of beauty and humour.



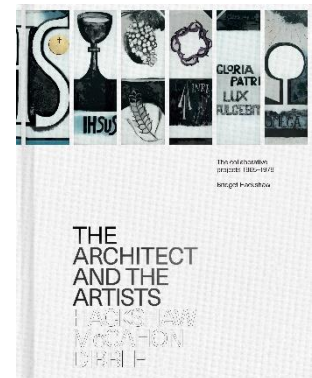
## The Judith Binney Prize for Illustrated Non-Fiction

***The Architect and the Artists: Hackshaw, McCahon, Dibble***

by Bridget Hackshaw

Published by Massey University Press

A daughter's clear labour of love has brought to light the little-known collaborative efforts of three creative individuals on twelve New Zealand buildings. Hackshaw has delved into archival material and paired this with an informative range of essays by expert contributors. A set of powerfully evocative photographs by the author provide a strong visual argument on their own. Her work is an intimate tribute and a classic example of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts.



## Ockham New Zealand Book Awards

### Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction

#### *Judges' remarks*

Reading the 39 entries for the 2022 Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction was an absolute privilege. We were repeatedly reminded of the wealth of literary talent we have in this country from both established and emerging authors.

Thank you to the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards Trust and my fellow judges Gemma Browne and Kelly Ana Morey who approached this process with diligence, humour and great zeal. We are also indebted to our international judge John Freeman who fought through a bout of Covid to bring us his brilliant insights which allowed us some precious outside perspective in choosing our winner.

I'd like to congratulate all the authors and publishers represented in our longlist. To narrow the field to a shortlist took many hours of deliberation and robust discussion, and while the responsibility may have weighed heavily on us it never felt like a burden. Our final four were notable for their genre-defying mastery. They featured time travel, complex family dynamics, the retelling and reinvention of myth and the exploration of a troubled mind. But to attempt to distil them into a simple soundbite is to do them an injustice. Each work contained its own magic, each a unique taonga.

#### **Kurangaituku** by Whiti Hereaka

Published by Huia Publishers

*Kurangaituku* is an extraordinary novel: unashamedly literary, utterly innovative and yet still irrevocably rooted in all that is Te Ao Māori. It's an epic poem of a novel, resonant of Māori oral traditions, that gives a voice, form and a name to the bird-woman from the myth *Hatupatu and the Bird-Woman*. The ogress Kurangaituku tells us not only her side of the story but everything she knows about Te Ao Māori. It's not often longing and mourning, desire and revenge can be seen so clearly, so movingly, in a single book. *Kurangaituku* is poetic, intense, clever and sexy as hell. It's also an important novel—a game changer.



## General Non-Fiction Award

### *Judges' remarks*

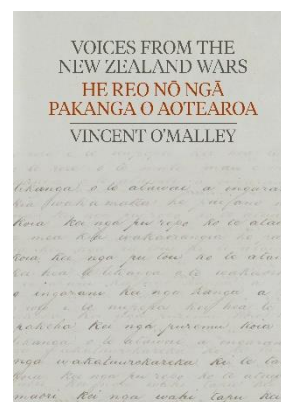
General non-fiction means many, many genres corralled together under one heading – memoirs, biographies, autobiographies, essays, polemics, reportage, history books, treatises on economics, examinations of art and other sub-genres. How do we compare one genre with another? It is a daunting task.

This year we read and assessed 56 non-fiction books. Of these, we judged very many to be good and readable books, worthy of competition but in some cases aimed at very specialised audiences. All the time we were looking for books of real literary merit that were accessible to a wide readership, that were well presented by their publishers and that were of lasting value, not ephemeral and not merely topical. By these criteria, the ten books in the long list were excellent and the four books in the short list are outstanding.

All 56 authors are to be thanked for submitting their work as are the publishers, editors and designers of their work. As convenor of the non-fiction awards I personally thank my two fellow judges – Leilani Tamu was very astute at pointing out what did and did not ring true in any book we judged and Aaron Smale provided much expertise on Māori matters as well as writing detailed critiques of books on Māori themes. Our discussions of books were intense and detailed, but harmonious; and all our decisions were unanimous.

### **Voices from the New Zealand Wars | He Reo nō ngā Pakanga o Aotearoa** by Vincent O'Malley Published by Bridget Williams Books

Vincent O'Malley's book meets all the criteria for a great work of non-fiction. It is the fruit of close historical research and accessible to a wide readership. It tells us of the past but is relevant to the present when public debate feeds New Zealanders' hunger to know how our country was formed. It is nuanced in its balance of both Māori and Pakeha voices and it respects the attitudes and assumptions of people who lived in an era different from our own. In bringing together these voices, O'Malley creates a coherent history of the New Zealand Wars, gives greater attention to wahine than earlier historians have, and deals carefully with contested events. The excellent book production is a credit to the publishers.



## Mary and Peter Biggs Award for Poetry

### *Judges' remarks*

Tena tatau katoa rau rangatira ma. Nau mai haere mai ki te whakanui i nga mahi o wenei kai tuhituhinga.

and still the wheels and cogs turn in the machine  
to pump the springs of poetry  
so the fountain of many voices  
bursts forth from the heart, mind and wairua  
of our poets  
in such turbulent times

like the sea in all its moods  
depths shallows and delightful rock pools  
like the tides that come and go  
poets have landed 33 waka,  
poetry books on our shores  
while sailing us across  
many oceans

Maori and Pacific Island poets  
wear well the korowai of poetry with mana  
as do all these fine poets who call and weave  
a cloak of many worlds

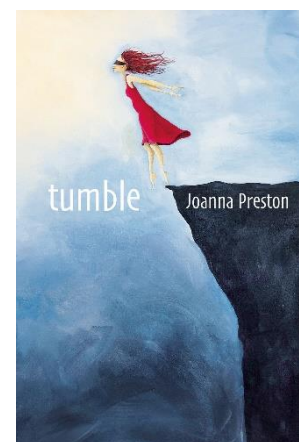
to all those who entered  
there was merit in every waka

Congratulations to those long listed and shortlisted. Your work demanded robust intricate and lengthy discussion from myself, Saradha Koirala and Jane Arthur. As judges in our discussions we listened to and learnt from each other.

**Tumble** by Joanna Preston

Published by Otago University Press

*Tumble* is a celebration of poetry and the long tradition that has led to this moment. Through her layering of art, re-imagining of historic moments and firm nods to poets past Joanna Preston reminds us of Louise Glück with her precise, evocative narratives, chiselled out of stone to reveal what was always there. Preston writes with pristine imagery and adept command of vocabulary while crafting her poetry to deeply satisfying musicality, rhythm and cadence. Simply written, yet dramatic and powerfully eloquent, each poem in this book is a banger. *Tumble* is an exhilarating read that hurls us across time and space giving us the sense that all of it—from Lucifer's fall to Christchurch's earthquake—is part of the same powerful play.



## BOOKSELLERS AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND AWARD FOR ILLUSTRATED NON-FICTION

### *Judges' remarks*

The numerous lockdowns and shipping delays that characterised another extraordinary year meant that as judges, we were reading the thirty-three books submitted to the Illustrated Non-Fiction category right up to the eleventh hour. But what a treat they were as the days dragged into weeks and the weeks into months.

The titles traversed a diverse range of subjects, from the peaks of Mt Everest to the tussock covered hills of New Zealand's high country. They showcased the breadth and depth of our artistic talent and revealed some not so well-known histories. They also included an array of cooking and gardening titles that allowed us to find comfort in these simple pleasures in such unsettling times.

Our shortlist is remarkable this year in that three out of the four titles are first books. I want to thank my fellow judges, Jane O'Connor and Patrick Reynolds, for the vigorous debate we shared and their careful diligence in coming to our final decisions. Together we applaud the efforts of all the authors and the publishing teams behind them.

### **Dressed: Fashionable Dress in Aotearoa New Zealand 1840 to 1910**

by Claire Regnault

Published by Te Papa Press

Even those who believe themselves to be without interest in either clothing or our history will be seduced by *Dressed*. Readers will find themselves transported to other worlds, populated by people, Indigenous and immigrant, both heartachingly familiar and surprisingly exotic. Beautifully illustrated and deeply researched, it is the complete package. *Dressed* is a valuable addition to our nation's story and a great example of the possibilities of historical enquiry and non-fiction publishing.

