

ENTER THE MULTIVERSE ENTER THE MULTIVERSE ENTER THE MULTIVERSE

BUILDING A STRONGER SECTOR FOR
OUR ASIAN ARTS PRACTITIONERS



THREE PILLARS TO RAISE THE ROOF

Over the past three decades, we have seen our Asian communities in Tāmaki Makaurau not only grow — now making up 28% of the city — but become more diverse, encompassing a multitude of ethnicities, languages, generations of migration, class, religion, gender and sexuality.

Alongside this, we've witnessed the emergence of our Asian arts practitioners, with increasingly rich and nuanced work being developed across the city. Despite this, little progress has been made to understand and serve this rapidly evolving part of the sector. As institutions start to express interest in working with Asian artists — recognising the need to reflect the population they serve; recognising that Asian art is something that can be homegrown, rather than imported — an increasingly pronounced gap emerges, with short-term programming creating temporary visibility but failing to strengthen sector capability. In other words, we keep investing in freshly-cut flowers, rather than the garden itself.

The impact? It's what we're seeing now: a fragmented sector, still in its infancy, at risk of stunted growth. This research is a response to this, and seeks to deepen our collective understanding of the necessary investment needed to lay the foundation for a flourishing arts sector for our Asian arts practitioners in Tāmaki Makaurau.

Through this research, we have heard about practitioners' sense of isolation, as well as their lack of access to culturally supportive opportunities for development — whether these relate to deepening creative practice, building ancestral knowledge, developing skills across producing, marketing, and governance, or having access to mental health support, networks, and mentorship.

Interventions at this stage have the potential to have an immense impact on the sector's long-term trajectory. Accordingly, we see it as critical that investment over the next ten years is focused on the following three outcomes:

- Mid-career practitioners are supported to become leaders in Aotearoa on an international stage (Page 3)
- Early-career practitioners have culturally-safe opportunities to build capability (Page 6)
- Asian diaspora artists have access to the opportunities and resources to develop a distinctive voice within Aotearoa (Page 9)

In designing different ways to achieve these outcomes, it is vital that investment is strategic and developed with a long-term view in order to support transformative, lasting, sustainable change. It's only through hyper-targeted investment focused on these outcomes that we will be able to build career pathways, nuanced and multiperspectival Asian diaspora art-making that reflects voices unique to Aotearoa, and culturally confident supporting infrastructure that has been built on the belief that our Asian communities belong in a Te Tiriti-centred Aotearoa.

We recognise that many of these conversations will have resonance beyond our community, because our own success is tied to the success of our peers, and to the industry at large. We hope to create a place for our many Asian whānau within that ecology, and that — over time — these conversations will feel ancient, a distant memory, barely visible in a garden so flourishing you feel giddy.

Ngā mihi nui

1. Mid-career practitioners are supported to become leaders in Aotearoa on an international stage

It's essential that we are investing in our mid-career practitioners, supporting them to develop as leaders and to take on senior roles across the industry. Very few opportunities to do so currently exist, an issue we know is prevalent across the sector, but for Asian arts practitioners means there is almost nobody working at a senior level.

This has profound, trickle-down effects. "A career is only imaginable if you feel there's somewhere to go when you start," says filmmaker and Pan-Asian Screen Collective co-founder Shuchi Kothari. "We're seeing a bottleneck, and there are very few Asians at the top." Filmmaker and theatre producer Julie Zhu agrees. "There needs to be support at multiple tiers to propel people to the next step, and the next step. It feels like we get stuck."

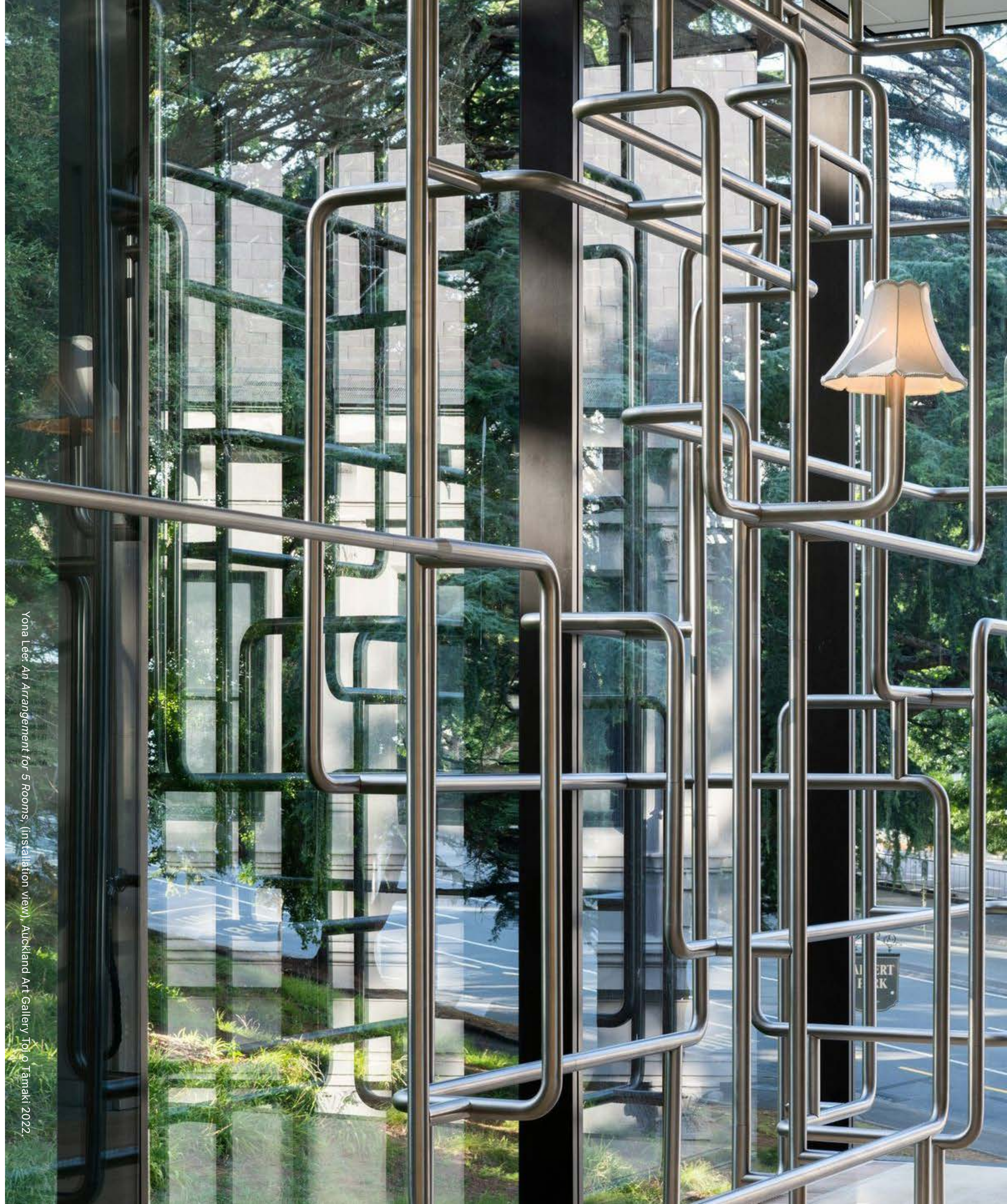
Not a catapult, but a ladder

Nearly all our senior-career Asian arts practitioners have already left Aotearoa in order to build a sustainable career elsewhere. This leaves only a handful of practitioners who are overburdened, burning out, and at risk of exiting the sector themselves. Creating opportunities for development and support is vital for this cohort. "As someone who identifies as emerging," comments producer, actor and playwright Marianne Infante, "I feel like I've had to step up when I don't feel ready to do that."

"Grants and residences favour artists on the two extremes of the career arc," adds theatre maker and Arts Laureate Ahi Karunaharan. "We need those opportunities for mid-career artists. Currently, there are no other senior South Asian practitioners in this country other than Jacob Rajan. We don't have any artists whose practice is steeped in capturing the contemporary diaspora experience or experiences of forced migration."

Crucially, these opportunities need to be culturally informed. In many of our conversations with practitioners who have left, it became clear that this had been fuelled, in part, by a frustration that the conversation around 'Asian art' was not evolving, and that there was still very little valuing of Asian knowledge and experience at an institutional level.

"There's a limit to the kinds of conversations you can have in Aotearoa around your work," says curator Vera Mey. "[In London], I can refer to the Cold War era in Southeast Asia and people know what I'm talking about. Or, if they don't know what I'm talking about, they'll know that's for them to deal with. But [In Aotearoa], there's a level of conversation that's not being reciprocated, and that's exhausting... I think also, as you get older, you want to have other dimensions of yourself come to the fore. But that conversation doesn't seem to be progressing." Artist Tiffany Singh echoes this sentiment, though acknowledges there are



Yona Lee: An Arrangement for 5 Rooms, (Installation view), Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki 2022.



Performance for Marc Conaco and Louie Bretaña, Sykes, 21 Nov-21 Feb 2021 at Objectspace — Photo: Hōhūa Kurene / Fashionista; Dennis Sayat / Performer; Diesel of the House of COVEN

wider issues impacting career sustainability. "It's actually cheaper to live in London, believe it or not."

Even now, there are very few opportunities for Asian diaspora and migrant practitioners to move beyond the gallery walls, the stage, or the page into roles within institutions themselves — a move that feels vital given the fact that 92.7% of our respondents consider it important to be able to work with institutions who are able to support Asian artists through a cultural lens, but with only 5.5% feeling they have adequate access to this, and with more than half (53.9%) feeling they have no access to this at all.

One of the bigger issues this circles around is what decision makers consider to be 'Asian art' — not only in terms of what expressions and modes of storytelling are considered 'Asian' enough to be programmed or funded — and who that work is for — but what might be considered 'art' itself when framed through the many Asian worldviews that shape our communities here.

Equally, we know it's not as simple as creating roles. In many cases, it might be culturally unsafe to do so without consideration of what organisational culture a person is entering into and the unexpected demands and challenges of doing so. It is not simply representation that we are seeking to create, but inclusion: not simply a seat at the table, but a table where everybody feels safe and supported to speak.

It's vital that we examine ways of addressing these issues sustainably. The risk we take each time we invest in short-term interventions rather than systems change is that we lose another generation of senior practitioners. Each time this happens, the cost of catching up increases exponentially.

In the long term, focusing on the development of our mid-career practitioners has the potential to address many of the issues currently reported by our Asian arts practitioners, including the need for opportunities to develop creative practice, for appropriate mentorship, for culturally safe support when working with institutions, for access to deeper knowledge about the history of Asian arts practice in Aotearoa, and access to ancestral knowledges and practices.

"The support that is available is too general. It doesn't advocate for Queer, Asian, BIPOC artists and their needs. Often, it's not run by people like us... Usually because the expertise comes from experience and that limits who can lead these opportunities."

— Emerging Practitioner (Producer, Marketing)

"There are very few people who can actually teach or mentor, not just the technical skills but with knowledge and lived experience of POC issues embedded in. There are some who can mentor, but they're always so busy. It feels like a burden to ask."

— Senior Practitioner (Producer)



This is Us – Directed by Ghazaleh Golbakhsh. Mahmood Bihkoo, looking at the ceiling of the Ponsonby Masjid Mosque he helped to build. Photo: Ainsley Duyvestyn Smith

2. Early-career practitioners have culturally-safe opportunities to build capability

Alongside the development of our leaders, it is equally important we support the development of our early-career practitioners, and that we do so holistically: looking not only at their development and well-being, but our art form ecologies more broadly, and the gaps where targeted support will have the most impact.

This requires strategic investment in two parallel strands: the development of creative practice and the development of capability in skills like producing, marketing, fundraising and governance.

"It's capacity building that feels the most urgent," says playwright Renee Liang. "Trying to find a producer who's Asian? It's very difficult." Producer Yee Yang 'Square' Lee agrees. "There's been a strong focus on supporting creators, less so in the supporting roles... There are two people in our sector who are experienced and trained in PR / comms / marketing." Creating those opportunities means targeted, long-term investment. "What if there was a fund that gave five producers a year's stipend and funding to produce multiple projects?" says Julie Zhu. "That would have huge ramifications. Those small interventions like 'learn how to do budgets' don't contribute to meaningful long-term change."

It also means looking at roles that are essential to the ecology but are more under-developed than others. In theatre, for example, practitioners mentioned the need for more directors, dramaturgs, designers and critics. "[Dramaturgy] is a good example of a role where, without it, we're not going to see a more robust sector," says theatre-maker

Alice Canton. "In the same way: where are the writers, the critical writers, the reviewers? Do we have the people to step into these opportunities? I'm not sure, which is why we need serious long-term investment."

Underscoring these paths is the need to foster networks and create opportunities for peer support — something that was identified as a key priority for many practitioners, with 93.9% reporting that having opportunities to build these networks were essential to the development of their career.

"Relationships with other Asian creatives, to feel a sense of community and that I am not alone, is as important as enriching my art. This is extremely important to me due to the lack of support from family who are very against pursuing arts as a career."

— Emerging Practitioner (Artist, musician)

"I just want to feel... that there are other Asian artists doing the same and we are together. That we are being employed for our talent or respect for our culture and background, not just a tick on the box in a diversity list. I want to meet, talk and be inspired [by] other Asian artists."

— Emerging Practitioner (Actor)

To address this, we suggest a multi-pronged approach that includes the delivery of hyper-targeted funding and capability building initiatives, along with opportunities for cross-sector gathering at a national level:

The Mourning After — written and directed by Ahi Karunakaran and produced by SquareSum&Co. Photo: Abhi Chinniah



Fresh off the Page. Photo: John Rata

1. Hyper-targeted funding and capability building initiatives

Invest in project funding that encourages collaboration, co-creation and mentorship as well as targeted long-term capability-building initiatives that have the potential to significantly impact on the sustained development of practitioners' careers. This capability building might take the form of a new initiative, but might also include equipping existing initiatives with the resources to strategically sustain and grow.

These should be delivered not only in culturally safe but proactively supportive ways, with institutions undertaking cultural audits and training where necessary.

Importantly, while we recognise that many of these needs apply across the sector, these initiatives need to be developed to address cultural barriers surrounding participation and perceived 'permission' to engage. "Targeted project-based callouts really encourage newer people to apply," says Julie Zhu. Nathan Joe agrees. "The stuff [that I took part in earlier in my career] that felt specifically for Asian playwrights gave me permission because everything else seemed really daunting and didn't seem like I was allowed to."

2. Cross-sector national opportunities to learn from one another

The success of the Pan Asian Screen Collective (PASC) in transforming the screen sector highlights the value of sustained investment. Many practitioners across other art forms have brought up the lack of infrastructure like this in their own fields, and in particular the lack of cross-sector cross-city opportunities to learn from one another — an area where targeted investment would strengthen the sector as a whole:

"There are not many opportunities that intentionally bring together Asian artists from across the arts sector to build relationships. For a period of time, the Asian Aotearoa Arts Hui played a role in facilitating that space for Asian creatives to come together, but it has since gone into hiatus and it would be great to see the return of AAAH or a new body or organisation to play that role. It might also be worth noting that the opportunities that do currently exist are often bonded by the city of residence, and there aren't as many opportunities to connect with other Asian creatives based in different cities."

— Emerging Practitioner
(Arts administrator)

"There's potential for an institution that serves as a space for gathering and community... a regular, more intimate version of the Asian Aotearoa Arts Hui. Curated exhibitions would be cool. Performances would be cool. But personally I would prefer talks and small-scale workshops. Discussions. Opportunities for people to share skills, but also perspectives. Having people to look to and ask questions. I have so many questions about art all the time. Like, should I even be doing this? Is it ethical to be practising art in New Zealand as a migrant? We need that space to do that right now. Because how do we connect more? How do we have cross-disciplinary cross-generation relationships and collaborations? Just structures and platforms to foster relationships. I really believe the only way to work together is to really know each other, and care."

— Qianye Lin



Tāl

3. Asian diaspora artists have access to the opportunities and resources to develop a distinctive voice within Aotearoa

Perhaps our greatest opportunity is to support the development of a range of artistic voices wholly unique to Aotearoa. To do so means creating access to three key knowledge pathways: to ancestral knowledges and practices; to te ao Māori and te ao Moana Oceania and what it means to be Tangata Tiriti in Aotearoa; and to the histories of Asian artists and art in Aotearoa.

Deepening ancestral knowledge to inform creative practice was important to 8 in 10 of respondents (80.6%), and this was ranked one of the highest priorities when it came to career development. Yet nearly a quarter of respondents felt they had no access to opportunities to do this (24.9%), while a further 4 in 10 reported barriers to being able to access this knowledge (41.2%).

“Personally, being half Singapore / Cantonese Chinese and half Pākehā it’s become increasingly important to find out what and where my place in the world is, so deepening my ancestral cultural knowledge is pretty key right now. I think opportunities to meet other Asian artists and share these kinds of experiences aids in that as well, and could be helpful in terms of collaboration on more meaningful projects.”

— Mid-career Practitioner
(Graphic artist)

“Outside of my family (majority of which do not live in New Zealand) I don’t have much access to widening my ancestral (Thai) knowledge, especially in a creative sense.”

— Emerging Practitioner (Visual artist)

Deepening knowledge of te ao Māori and te ao Moana Oceania were ranked highly alongside this, and in particular developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of what it means to be tau iwi or Tangata Tiriti in Aotearoa — again, emphasising the recognition among many in our Asian communities that to live here is to not simply feel connected to our whakapapa, but to appreciate the whenua on which we are now living and working as an artist. Investing in existing initiatives like Asians Supporting Tino Rangatiratanga would have a clear and resounding impact, but so too would be the development of resources and space for this conversation to deepen and expand across our Moana Oceania communities as well.

“It’s important to understand where we come from and where we are standing. Deepening our relationships with Pacific and Māori communities will deepen the work we make in Aotearoa and change the lens through which we view our own work.”

— Emerging Practitioner (Actor, Writer,
Dramaturg, Director)



Claudia Kogachi. Photo: Rob Tennant



Areez Katki — No other home but this. Photo: Sam Harthett

Finally, no centralised initiative currently exists that documents New Zealand Asian artists and their work. It's no surprise, then, that access to information about what is happening in Asian arts in Aotearoa was one of the top ranking needs identified by respondents, with 93.9% citing it as important — yet with 1 in 5 feeling they had no access to this at all (22.6%), and a further 60.7% citing barriers to access including not knowing where to look.

Access to information around the history of Asian arts in Aotearoa also ranked highly, with 87.8% citing the need for this — but with more than 1 in 3 reporting no access to this (37.9%) and a further 5 in 10 reporting barriers to access (51.0%):

"I do a lot of reading, and I'm not sure where to access the history of Asian Arts in Aotearoa or news about Asian arts. The news about Asian arts I get from my friends who are Asian and who work in the arts. But outside that, I dunno where to get info."

— Mid-career Practitioner (Illustrator)

"None of this information seems to exist or is very hard to find. You would need to go digging and the information would not be compiled together in one place."

— Emerging Practitioner (Artist)

"The history of Asian arts in Aotearoa is schematic and not well documented. I don't come across a lot of news about Asian arts in the course of my regular routine."

— Mid-career Practitioner
(Creative Producer, Writer, Director)

This is not simply about the documentation of the Asian arts scene for short-term visibility and promotion: it is about the ways in which we are able to write ourselves into the history of Aotearoa, and the resources we create for future generations. Because no such initiative currently exists, histories are lost, erased, and forgotten. Supporting the Asian arts community means recognising their existence in Aotearoa, celebrating the work they are doing and creating space for genuine critical discourse. Doing so will enhance the sense of community that is currently lacking as well as providing another arena in which creative practice can be pushed and developed.

Prioritising these three threads is critical to the development of a more sophisticated practice for our artists, and the development of more distinctive voices that express the myriad experiences of being of Asian descent in Tāmaki Makaurau — voices that soar on an international stage as powerfully as they do at home.



Under Construction

Towards a shared understanding of 'Asian' in Aotearoa

"Two years ago, we were working with [a major institution in Tāmaki Makaurau]. They had commissioned a work, and after one of our meetings, they sent us a message asking if we could change the work to "look more Indian" because "It looks Asian." It came out of nowhere and was incredibly upsetting. We ended up sending them a Wikipedia link to the traditional Indian folk art that the work had quite directly drawn on — and explained that it probably did look like art from other Asian countries because it was based on a concept found in religions that are common across Asia... of which India is part of."

— Senior Practitioner

In many ways, 'Asian' threatens to be an impossible term, a magic trick, a word so full it feels empty. In Aotearoa, it reaches across oceans to lay claim to anywhere up to 51 countries — depending on which colonial construction of 'Asia' you wish to use — and even within this we are consolidating nearly 2,300 living languages along with a multitude of religions, class experience, and conceptualisations of gender and sexuality. It combines people with wildly different and sometimes even violently opposed histories of colonisation and imperialism into a single category. It flattens together different generations of migration, and different degrees to which people themselves identify as Asian.

Within an arts sector context, the word 'Asian' often clunks into a reductive nod to

a broad whakapapa, and this becomes even more complicated when we start considering the handful of works that have been commissioned, funded, and celebrated: works that cumulatively tell a story not only about a community, but its place within Aotearoa.

For many, living in Tāmaki Makaurau as an Asian person means being shaped by a distinct set of experiences unlike anywhere else in the world— one that jigsaws multiple worldviews into a kaleidoscopic whole. Some aspects of this reflect a more generalised Asian diasporic experience in Western contexts — a more distanced relationship to one's ancestors through a loss of connection to place, to people, to language, as well as a deep understanding of what it means to be hurt, to survive, and to succeed in colonial spaces — while other aspects are more unique to this place, including the specific make-up of our Asian communities as a result of immigration laws and our geographic positioning, our relationship to tangata whenua and our Moana Oceania and other migrant communities, and the opportunities we have to learn, appreciate and honour the many worldviews that shape our city.

For many, it means existing in a world where many people do not have the knowledge to understand or support you. "People expect you to, like, teach them about Asia or something when you're still trying to teach yourself," laughs Allan Xia. Many practitioners are doing this within an environment where they have limited access to that knowledge, where the knowledge they *can* access is fragmented.

Āhua Collective — Hazel Zishun 榛子譚. Photo: Patil Tyrell





Takeout Kids — Directed by Julie Zhu with Daryl J. Wong as Director of Photography.

"This knowledge barrier is one that I have become accustomed to," observes ceramic artist Ruby White. "The majority of the information I have access to about Chinese culture is predominantly through its touchpoints with the Western world." And when that information is accessible, as artist Robbie Handcock reflects, "it takes a longer time to figure out what it means in relation to yourself, and how you might express it in your practice in a way that is comfortable for you." Without that time, we risk an unintentional romanticisation, a compromised representation, but rarely are we afforded that space. As a result, artists are too often denied the opportunity to achieve a desired level of sophistication — to go beyond "the celebratory mode of exoticisation," as curator Vera Mey describes.

Many others grapple with this clumsy expectation to present a certain kind of 'Asianness' in their creative practice in order to even be considered 'Asian'. "It's more convenient for Kiwis to box me into something that 'fits,'" observes Rina Chae, who is often pigeonholed as the 'K-pop Queen' despite the fact that she is a leading practitioner in other dance styles. "Then they don't have to think any deeper than that." This one-dimensional definition of 'Asianness' — sometimes explicitly communicated, other times accumulated and internally shaped over a lifetime of prejudice — has led many to form a tenuous or uncomfortable relationship to their whakapapa.

"I find it hard to be an 'Asian creative' as I am a descendant of Asian immigrants... My experience as a second generation New Zealand Asian is not necessarily the same as those who have just arrived, for example. It is this wide variety of experiences that inform different creative practices and there is not truly one 'Asian creative' way."

— Senior practitioner (Designer)

"As much as I tautoko representation for marginalised identities and Asian identities in particular, sometimes I really tire of it and feel pigeonholed by it. I don't think 'telling our own stories' should be an expected part of being an Asian creative... I am never gonna want to talk about my personal experiences with racism, harassment, etc publicly, yet sometimes I feel like I'm expected to in my creative storytelling career. It is unsafe for people like me to have to worry that we're not going to succeed creatively unless we're willing to make extremely vulnerable and sometimes re-traumatising art."

— Emerging practitioner (Actor)

"Let Asians be themselves," adds Vera Mey, "Even if they don't want to be that 'Asian'. Diversity isn't just ethnic diversity but class diversity and diversity of relating. It's not all about recovery. There are lots of Asian people who might be distant from their culture in a way they're perfectly happy and comfortable with."

The word 'Asian' as a label is also a tricky space to occupy as a migrant, where the only reward for assimilation is invisibility. "I'm hesitant to say that I'm an Asian New Zealand artist," says Allan Xia, "Because I don't even know what that means." As someone who works closely across China and Aotearoa, he is constantly grappling with this tension:

"If I go to China, they don't even consider me a New Zealand artist, because I'm Chinese and speak Chinese. So what does that mean? I'll be in situations where I'm being asked to plan an art residency in China, for example, and I feel like Asian New Zealand artists would

be more appropriate for those kinds of opportunities. But I've seen people push back against that because they don't meet the expectation of what a 'New Zealand' artist should be. And that's on both sides. But then, what is your definition when you say 'New Zealand artist'?"

It's also important to acknowledge that 'Asian' tends to be conflated with 'East Asian', and in some cases, 'Chinese', when we all know this label attempts to encompass a much larger community. This means that East Asian voices have historically been privileged here in Aotearoa, something that those within Asian communities have felt acutely and something that is only starting to shift now.

"When it comes to Asian culture whether it be knowledge, initiatives, opportunities — the definition needs to be broadened to include South Asians and South East Asians because right now it still feels quite exclusionary to everyone but East Asians."

— Emerging practitioner
(Screen industry)

"I connect more with the term 'South Asian', or 'Middle Eastern', but as I get older, and as I interact with more creatives, I'm starting to see myself as part of one bigger ['Asian'] group. Middle Eastern is starting to feel part of that group without ripping out the relevancy of the sub-group. You can see yourself as both."

— Pax Assadi

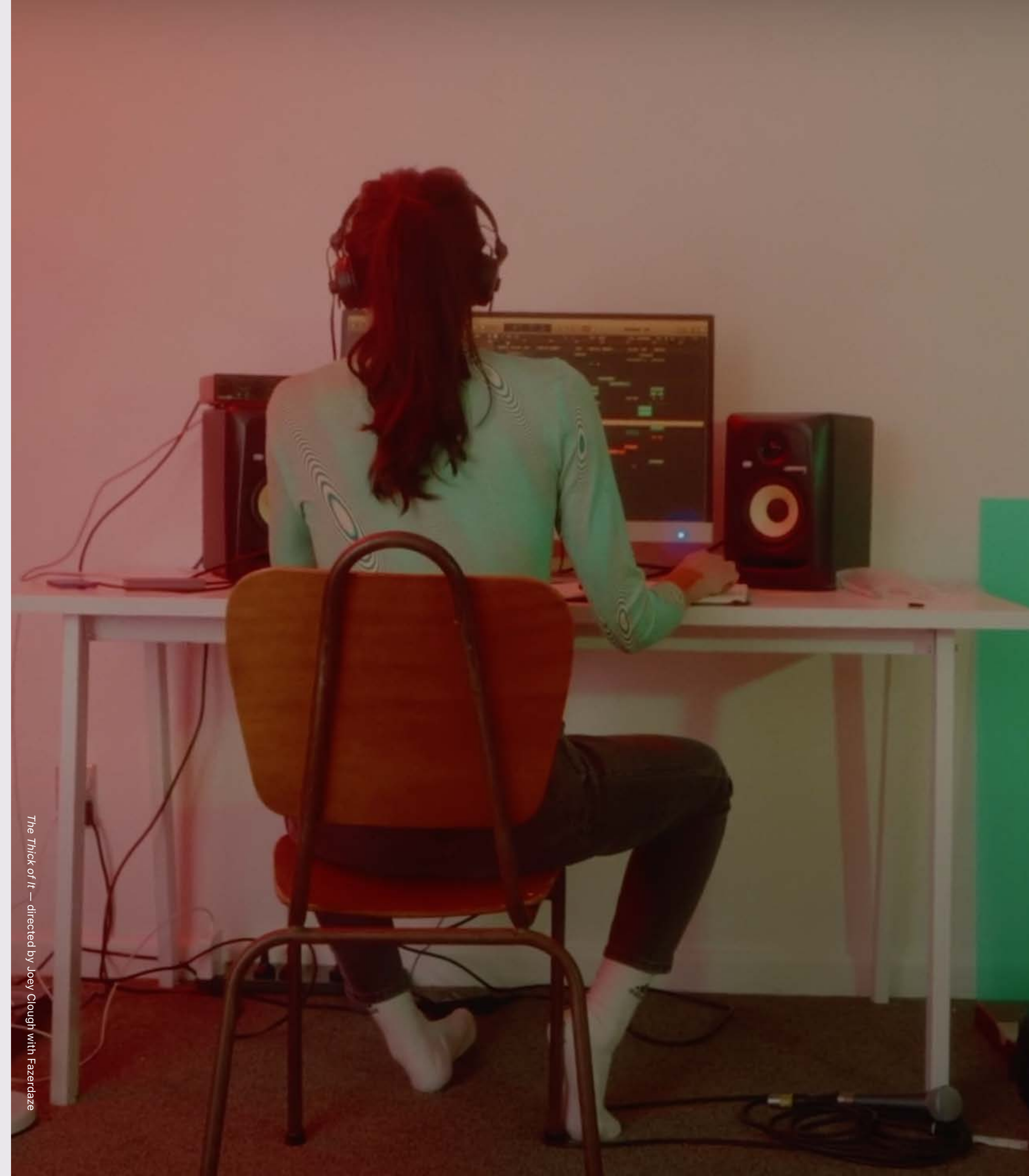
In so many ways, 'Asian' is a label edged with risk — deployed by others as a reductive categorisation, and most often used by the community as a gesture of solidarity, a mobilising tool, a strategically-used identity in

response to prejudice, racism, violence. There are tensions within the phrase too, in terms of who gets to be considered 'Asian' and whose voices are privileged in these conversations. Yet there are opportunities for the conversation to move beyond this: to one of what it means to be living in Aotearoa, in one of the most multicultural cities in the world, as Tangata Tiriti. There is an opportunity to articulate a wholly unique lived experience — and, as such, a wholly unique creative voice — distinct from anywhere in Asia, distinct from Asian diaspora voices in other Western contexts, a voice unlike anywhere in the world.

To have this conversation is a privilege, and one that very few people feel they have access to. In writing these recommendations, we acknowledge a privilege not afforded to those who are simply trying to survive, who may be working as underpaid labourers, who are attempting to build a life in the gig economy, but we simultaneously recognise the importance of this conversation in order to create this sense of belonging, this sense of home, a confident place from which our artists can create and our communities can live.

"In my darkest moments," Manying Ip admits, "I do not think Asians will ever belong." As Emma Ng asked in *Old Asian, New Asian*, "What will it take for general sentiment towards a permanent Asian presence to be warm and steady enough that it cannot be stirred by economic hardship and the churning of politics?"

"I think the way that [my sibling and I] work really shows how we're floating," says artist Qianye Lin. "We're not grounded, or we don't stand because of the total fear of using any identifiers of this place. I think that really shows that migrant anxiety." Yet the aspiration is always to make work that is empowered, imbued with "more meaning — not in terms of a shared



The Thick of It — directed by Joey Cough with Fazerdaze

trauma, or shared suffering, but meaning in the more nuanced sense." It's this destination that we are all aspirationally moving towards, but to get there we need to understand this context from which we are travelling.

For funders, programmers, curators and editors, it is vital that we are considering the narratives that we are reinforcing when we are working with or adjacent to an Asian diaspora or migrant lens: which voices are heard, which experiences are portrayed, and which narratives, which presentations, are sub-consciously or implicitly considered 'Asian', or 'Asian' enough. The stories we see — and the people telling them — shape our collective identity, and gift us the futures we feel are collectively possible. Let these be many. Let these be rich. Let these be expansive and ever-evolving.

Scenes from a Yellow Peril — written by Nathan Joe, directed by Jane Yonke, and produced by SquaresSums&Co and Oriental Maidens. Photo: Andi Crown.



Appendix: How did we do the research?

This research was supported by Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi. Ngā mihi nui to Jane Yonge, Alison Taylor and Elyssia Ra'nee Wilson-Heti.

Data collection

Data was collected between 14 May and 29 August 2022, and included qualitative one-on-one interviews, a workshop, and a survey.

Respondents self-selected through online channels, and in order to participate, had to identify as a creative worker with Asian heritage, 18 years-old or older, living in Tāmaki Makaurau. The survey collected 165 responses, with respondents screened out if they did not meet the above criteria. Please note that responses were not weighted due to a lack of existing information about the current make up about the Asian arts community.

Interviews

One-on-one interviews were conducted with Alice Canton, Basant Madhur, Renee Liang, Yee Yang 'Square' Lee, Yabing Liu, Julie Zhu, Robbie Handcock, Allan Xia, Hanju Kim, Nathan Joe, Rina Chae, Vera Mey, Qianye Lin, Angelique Kasmara and Pax Assadi.

Workshop

Participants in the workshop included Pennie Chang, Bhavesh Bhuthadia, Eric Ngan, Tommo Jiang, Mariadelle (Abbey) Gamit, Angella Dravid, Ghazaleh Golbakhsh, Sherry Zhang, Marc Conaco, Nisha Madhan, Padma Akula, Cindy Jang, Karen Hu, Marianne Infante, Jane Yonge and Amit Ohdedar.

Advisory group

The advisory group for this research included Shuchi Kothari, Sarina Pearson, Sums Selvarajan, Emma Ng, Nahyeon Lee, Ahi Karunaharan, Sananda Chatterjee, Julie Zhu, and Vera Mey.

This research was led by Rosabel Tan. Design by Lindsay Yee.



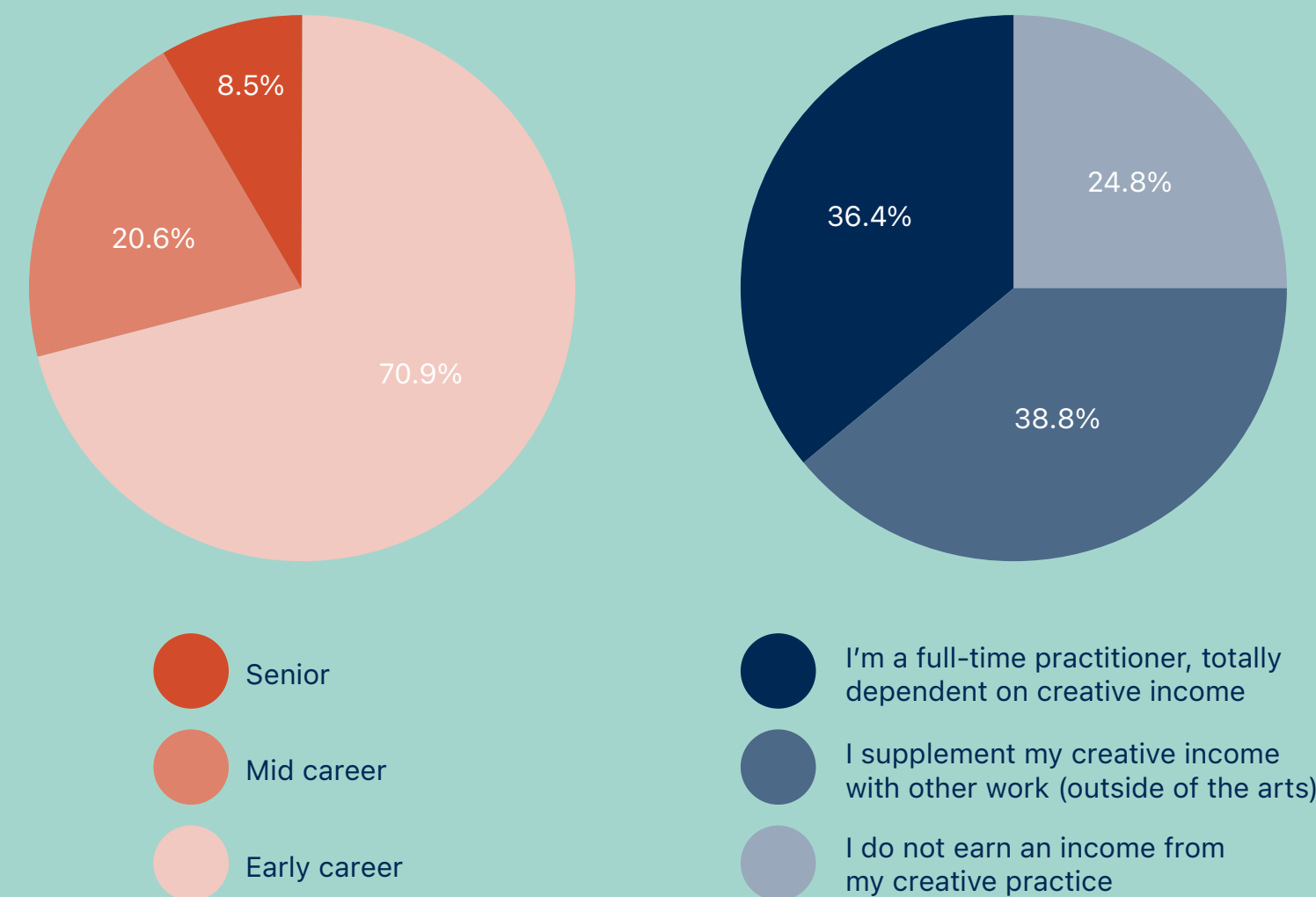
Signs — presented by Strange Goods and Satellites. Photo: Julie Zhu

Sample Information

Of those who responded, a range of artforms were being practised:

Visual arts	56.4%	Music	18.2%
Design	43.0%	Literature	17.6%
Performance or Movement	33.9%	Architecture	4.9%
Screen	30.3%		

These practitioners represent a range of different career stages and with different levels of career sustainability:



In terms of whakapapa, we saw the following breakdown:

Chinese ancestry	26.1%	Thai ancestry	2.5%
Filipino ancestry	15.3%	Hong Kong ancestry	1.9%
Indian ancestry	14.6%	Sri Lankan ancestry	1.9%
Malaysian ancestry	10.2%	Pakistani ancestry	1.3%
Korean ancestry	7.0%	Maldivian ancestry	0.6%
Japanese ancestry	5.1%	Cambodian ancestry	0.6%
Singaporean ancestry	4.5%	Iranian ancestry	0.6%
Taiwanese ancestry	3.8%	Iraqi ancestry	0.6%
Indonesian ancestry	2.5%	Vietnamese ancestry	0.6%

Just under half (44.0%) spoke an additional language to English. Of those who could speak an additional language, the most common were:

Mandarin	32.9%	Spanish	4.3%
Cantonese	17.1%	Bahasa	2.9%
Korean	12.9%	German	2.9%
Tagalog	11.4%	Hokkien	2.9%
Hindi	8.6%	Malay	2.9%
Te Reo Māori	5.7%	Tamil	2.9%
Japanese	4.3%		

We saw a female-leaning sample, itself representative of the arts sector more generally:

Female	65.0%	Genderfluid	1.3%
Male	26.9%	Genderqueer	0.6%
Non-binary	5.6%		

They also tended to be younger, reflecting also the career stages already mentioned above:

18–24	6.3%	45–49	1.3%
25–29	18.8%	50–54	0.9%
30–34	19.4%	55–59	1.3%
35–39	11.9%	60–64	1.3%
40–44	7.5%	65+	0.6%

with 6.3% reported having accessibility needs that impact the creative work they do.

Finally, there was a relatively wide geographic range, with greater concentration in the central suburbs:

Albert-Eden	31.6%	Maungakiekie-Tāmaki	11.3%
Devonport-Takapuna	3.1%	Ōrākei	4.4%
Franklin	1.3%	Ōtara-Papatoetoe	1.9%
Henderson-Massey	6.9%	Papakura	0.6%
Hibiscus and Bays	1.9%	Puketāpapa	0.6%
Howick	8.1%	Upper Harbour	3.1%
Kaipātiki	1.9%	Waitākere Ranges	2.5%
Māngere-Ōtāhuhu	1.3%	Waitemātā	14.4%
Manurewa	2.5%	Whau	3.7%



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