



Embargoed until 6am, Wednesday 29 July

SHORTLIST CELEBRATES THE MOST BEAUTIFULLY DESIGNED BOOKS IN AOTEAROA

The most beautifully designed books in Aotearoa are recognised today with the announcement of the finalists for the 2026 PANZ Book Design Awards.

The Publishers Association of New Zealand Te Rau o Tākupu (PANZ) established the awards to promote excellence in, and provide recognition for, the best book design in Aotearoa New Zealand.

"The standard of entries this year was incredibly high and some difficult decisions had to be made to reach a shortlist," said Convening Judge Erica Harrison.

There were more than 130 entries across all categories and the judges were particularly pleased to see a significant increase in numbers of Emerging Designer entries, indicating the wealth of developing talent in the industry.

Erica, who is a designer, illustrator and co-founder of Messy Press, was joined by Carly Yates of Auckland based design Studio Seven, Dr George Hajian a designer, artist, and Senior Lecturer at Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau, Auckland University of Technology and Courtney Smith, co-owner Lamplight Books, an independent bookstore that champions beautiful books.

The judges found the job of selecting the shortlist for the **Penguin Random House New Zealand Award for Best Illustrated Book** particularly tricky, as the design, typography, and production value of the books in this category were exceptional.

"We spent a lot of time on this category because there were so many beautifully-crafted books. They had to be really special to make it onto the shortlist."

They also noted that this year, simple design is doing the heavy lifting as many of the shortlisted books are smaller formats and don't have the same high specs often seen amongst finalists.

The trend towards more neutral tones, observed last year, has continued with the colour palette leaning more towards sombre, earthy shades contrasted with pops of red and moody blues. The judges were pleased to see a good spread of Māori and Pasifika titles represented this year and observed strong design principles rooted in te ao Māori and Pasifika-centric values.

The judges must now select the winners of the nine categories and choose the recipient of the main prize, the **Gerard Reid Award for Best Book sponsored by NielsenIQ BookData**. The winners will be announced at a special ceremony in Auckland on Thursday 24 September. At the event attendees will also be able to vote for the People's Choice Award, which this year will be renamed the **Keely O'Shannessy People's Choice Award**, a fitting tribute to a talented book designer and friend of many in book publishing who passed away in June of this year.

The industry's design talent will assemble the next day for the PANZ Book Design Workshop which provides the opportunity to dissect the awards, enjoy panel sessions led by leading book designers and network with peers.

The 2026 PANZ Book Design Awards finalists are:

Penguin Random House New Zealand Award for Best Illustrated Book

- *Atlas of the New Zealand Wars: Volume One 1834–1864, Early Engagements to the Second Taranaki War* by Derek Leask (Auckland University Press). **Designed by Alan Deare & Dave McDonald (Area Design)**
- *He Puāwai: A Natural History of New Zealand Flowers* by Philip Garnock-Jones (Auckland University Press). **Designed by Duncan Munro (Lucky Stairs Studio)**
- *The Len Lye Centre* edited by Zara Stanhope and Antony Rhodes (Govett-Brewster Art Gallery / Len Lye Centre). **Designed by Tana Mitchell (Tana Mitchell Design)**
- *Mr Ward's Map: Victorian Wellington street by street* by Elizabeth Cox (Massey University Press). **Designed by Jo Bailey**
- *New Zealand Photography Collected: 175 Years of Photography in Aotearoa* by Athol McCredie (Te Papa Press). **Designed by Alan Deare and Dave McDonald (Area Design)**
- *Sio fakaTonga 'ae 'Aati fakaTonga: Tongan Views of Tongan Arts* by Professor Hūfanga He-Ako-Moe-Lotu Dr 'Ōkusitino Māhina, Associate Professor Māui-Tava-He-Ako Dr Tēvita Ka'ili, Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai MNZM. (Kula-'Uli Publishing). **Designed by Shaun Naufahu & Giordano Zatta (Alt Group)**

Award for Best Non-Illustrated Book

- *Black Sugarcane* by Nafanua Purcell Kersel (Te Herenga Waka University Press). **Cover designed by Momoe i manu ae ala atea'e Tasker, interiors designed Ashleigh Young**
- *Capital Trees: The arboreal legacy of Te Upoko-o-te-Ika the Wellington region* by Susette Goldsmith (Te Papa Press). **Designed by Megan van Staden**
- *Kim, A Journey Between Worlds* by Kim Rangiāonui Logan (Ugly Hill Press). **Designed by Alan Deare and Dave McDonald (Area Design)**
- *Ngā Oro me Ngā Iere a Ōpōtiki Mai Tawhiti – Sweet Harmonies in Song by Ōpōtiki Mai Tawhiti* by Te Kahautu Maxwell (Huia Publishers). **Designed by Te Kani Price**
- *The Origins of an Experimental Society: New Zealand, 1769–1860* by Erik Olssen (Auckland University Press). **Designed by Arch and Jane MacDonnell (Inhouse)**
- *Tony Fomison: Life of the Artist* by Mark Forman (Auckland University Press). **Designed by Arch and Jane MacDonnell (Inhouse)**

Scholastic New Zealand Award for Best Children's Book

- *A Guide to Rocks / He Taonga te Toka* by Sacha Cotter, illustrated by Josh Morgan (Huia Publishers). **Designed by Te Kani Price, Tahlia Conrad-Hinga & Sophie Hooper**
- *My First Ikura* by Qiane Matata-Sipu, illustrated by Isobel Joy Te Aho-White (QIANE+co). **Designed by Chloë Reweti Design**
- *Omnibird* by Giselle Clarkson (Gecko Press). **Designed by Vida Kelly with Giselle Clarkson**
- *Pūkeko Who-keko?* by Toby Morris (Penguin Random House New Zealand). **Designed by Vida Kelly (Vida and Luke Kelly Design) with Toby Morris**
- *Rākau: The Ancient Forests of Aotearoa* by Ned Barraud (Te Papa Press). **Designed by Kate Barraclough (Kate Frances Design)**
- *Twigs and Stones* by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Gavin Bishop (Gecko Press). **Designed by Vida Kelly with Gavin Bishop**

PANZ Award for Best Education Book or Series — Primary

- *The Living Tree: A New Zealand Habitat* by Dave Gunson (Bateman Books). **Designed by Alice Bell and Dave Gunson**
- *My First Ikura* by Qiane Matata-Sipu, illustrated by Isobel Joy Te Aho-White (QIANE+co). **Designed by Chloë Reweti Design**
- *Start Right My Topic Research Workbook* by Lucy Pritchard (LearnWell). **Designed by Lucy Pritchard, Barnaby McBryde & Pietro Lubich**

PANZ Award for Best Education Book or Series — Secondary/Tertiary

- *Mana Moana: Ngā Urungi o Te Ohu Kaimoana Toitū mō Anamata / Navigators of Sustainable Fisheries for the Future* by Carla Houkamau and Robert Pouwhare (Auckland University Press). **Cover designed by Neil Pardington Design, interiors designed by Amy Tansell**
- *Toitu te Whenua* by Lauren Keenan (Penguin Random House). **Designed by Cat Taylor**
- *Walker Maths — Phase 4: Foundation & Walker Maths — Phase 4: Elevation* by Victoria and Charlotte Walker (Cengage Learning Australia Pty Limited). **Designed by Cheryl Smith (Macarn Design)**

Award for Best Cookbook or Lifestyle Book

- *Eat Wild* by Sophie Merckens (Penguin Random House). **Designed by Megan van Staden**
- *Family Cooking* by Di McHardy (Di McHardy, Mama's Meals Limited). **Cover designed by Logan Smith (Sunday Best) and interior designed by Georgia Yates (Sunday Best)**
- *The Hungry Cook* by Olivia Galletly (Allen & Unwin Aotearoa New Zealand). **Designed by Megan van Staden**

- *Māori Ora* by Hira Nathan, illustrated by Huriana Kopeke-Te Aho (Allen & Unwin Aotearoa New Zealand). **Designed by Megan van Staden, illustrations by Huriana Kopeke-Te Aho**

Allen & Unwin Award for Best General Cover

- *The Book of Guilt* by Catherine Chidgey (Te Herenga Waka University Press). **Designed by Todd Atticus**
- *The Last Living Cannibal* by Airana Ngarewa (Hachette Aotearoa New Zealand). **Designed by Megan van Staden**
- *Three Wee Bookshops at the End of the World* by Ruth Shaw (Allen & Unwin Aotearoa New Zealand). **Design by Katrina Duncan, illustration by Sophie Watson**

HarperCollins Publishers Award for Best Cover

- *All Her Lives* by Ingrid Horrocks (Te Herenga Waka University Press). **Designed by Sarah Wilkins**
- *Black Sugarcane* by Nafanua Purcell Kersel (Te Herenga Waka University Press). **Cover designed by Momoe i manu ae ala atea'e Tasker, interiors designed Ashleigh Young**
- *The Collector: Thomas Cheeseman and the making of the Auckland Museum* by Andrew McKay and Richard Wolfe (Massey University Press). **Designed by Carly Yates & Gideon Keith (Seven)**
- *Mr Ward's Map: Victorian Wellington street by street* by Elizabeth Cox (Massey University Press). **Designed by Jo Bailey**
- *There is a Horse in the Art Gallery!* by Sarah Pepperle (Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū). **Designed by Aaron Beehre**
- *Whenua* edited by Chloe Cull, Felicity Milburn & Melanie Oliver (Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū). **Designed by Aaron Beehre**

Te Papa Press Award for Best Typography

- *Atlas of the New Zealand Wars: Volume One 1834–1864, Early Engagements to the Second Taranaki War* by Derek Leask (Auckland University Press). **Designed by Alan Deare & Dave McDonald (Area Design)**
- *Black Sugarcane* by Nafanua Purcell Kersel (Te Herenga Waka University Press). **Cover designed by Momoe i manu ae ala atea'e Tasker, interiors designed Ashleigh Young**
- *Chris Knox: Not Given Lightly* by Craig Robertson (Auckland University Press). **Designed by Alan Deare & Dave McDonald (Area Design)**
- *The Len Lye Centre* edited by Zara Stanhope and Antony Rhodes (Govett-Brewster Art Gallery / Len Lye Centre). **Designed by Tana Mitchell (Tana Mitchell Design)**
- *Mr Ward's Map: Victorian Wellington street by street* by Elizabeth Cox (Massey University Press). **Designed by Jo Bailey**
- *Sio fakaTonga 'ae 'Aati fakaTonga: Tongan Views of Tongan Arts* by Professor Hūfanga He-Ako-Moe-Lotu Dr 'Ōkusitino Māhina, Associate Professor Māui-Tava-He-Ako Dr Tēvita Ka'ili, Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai MNZM. (Kula-'Uli Publishing). **Designed by Shaun Naufahu & Giordano Zatta (Alt Group)**

Hachette Aotearoa New Zealand Emerging Designer

Thomas Cumming

- *What Is It, If It Is Not This?* by Thomas Cumming (self-published)
- *SYZGY* by Thomas Cumming (self-published)
- 978-0-473-74052-8 [This Number is a Sentence] by Thomas Cumming & Krista Barnaby (self-published)

Victoria Wigzell

- *The Floral Dream* by Olivia McCord (Potton & Burton)

ENDS

For more info and book images please visit: www.bookdesignawards.co.nz

High-res images and spreads are available [here](#)

FOR INTERVIEWS OR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Gemma Finlay on behalf of PANZ, gemma@notablepr.co.nz

THE JUDGING PANEL:

Erica Harrison (Convenor) is an illustrator and children's book designer based in Auckland. She is the co-founder of new children's publishing studio, Messy Press, which recently won Best Children's Publisher of the Year for Oceania at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. With over 20 years of experience in the publishing industry, she has designed activity books, board books, and illustrated non-fiction for some of the world's best children's publishers. Her graphic novel for young readers, *Detective Stanley and the Mystery at the Museum*, is a finalist at this year's New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults.

Carly Yates is a designer at Seven with over 11 years' experience across a range of design disciplines, with editorial design holding a special place for her. She enjoys solving the puzzle of organising complex content into engaging, considered reading experiences, creating tangible pieces that reflect the care and craftsmanship behind them. A few of her notable book projects include *Making Space*, *The Collector* and *Edith Collier*. Having spent much of her career preparing and entering work for design awards, she is excited to be on the other side of the judging process. She looks forward to celebrating the craft, creativity and collaboration behind exceptional book design in Aotearoa.

Dr George Hajian is a designer, artist, and Senior Lecturer at Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau, Auckland University of Technology. His design practice focuses on publication design, printmaking, and self-publishing, with a strong emphasis on analogue processes and material experimentation. Originally from Beirut, Lebanon, George has worked across the design and publishing industries in Aotearoa New Zealand and abroad. His art practice brings together collage, screen-printing, and mark-making, with a particular interest in printed matter, paper, and the tactile qualities of the handmade.

Courtney Smith is the co-owner and book buyer for Lamplight Books, an independent bookstore that champions beautiful books. Lamplight was awarded Bookshop of the Year in 2023 and serves a lively community of artists, architects, and designers.

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

NielsenIQ BookData

HarperCollinsPublishers
Aotearoa New Zealand

ALLEN & UNWIN
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

hachette
AOTEAROA | NEW ZEALAND



Penguin
Random House
New Zealand



SCHOLASTIC