

Jamie Te Heuheu

You and I in Unison

27 June - 26 July 2025

Jamie Te Heuheu (Ngāti Tūwharetoa) is an artist based in Ōtautahi Christchurch and is one of New Zealand's leading young colour field painters. Te Heuheu graduated from the Ilam School of Fine Arts at the University of Canterbury in 2020 with First Class Honours, and in 2021 he co-founded The Den, an artist-run space in Christchurch that profiled emerging artists in that city. In 2023 Te Heuheu had his inaugural Starkwhite show *Quiet Thoughts and Quiet Dreams*.

For his latest exhibition *You and I in Unison*, for Te Heuheu's process went through several iterations. He was inspired by the scale of Ralph Hotere's *Malady Panels*, which eventually evolved into grey colour field diptychs. Initially Te Heuheu was interested in grey as a neutral, restrained, calm and unemotional colour, but as life is wont to do, and after a personal moment of reset, the artist launched into fields of vivid colour.

The touchstone for this change was the Russian painter Aleksandr Rodchenko's famous 1921 triptych, *Pure Red Colour*, *Pure Blue Colour*, *Pure Yellow Colour*. This work was a major declaration of change in painting, not least because of the conservative tenor of Soviet art at the time. Rodchenko's paintings were a formal rejection of the idea, dating back to the early Italian Renaissance, that a painting was a kind of illusory window you looked through into a perspectival scene beyond. It reimagined painting as being colour on a surface with a reality and specific qualities all of its own. This was revolutionary, though not the right sort of revolutionary for the Soviets who regarded such things as bourgeois decadence. For them painting was exclusively in the service of socialist realism to convey party propaganda. Colour fields cannot convey any such message.

"For me," says Te Heuheu, "these paintings have been a deep dive into colour theory, basic things missed from my art school education. I've been learning more about how colours interact, what they evoke, and how to mix and create them. I've also been thinking about how to push my practice further by investigating multi-panel paintings."

Te Heuheu isn't quite the purist Rodchenko was. The artist hasn't completely eliminated himself from the work and is still present in gesture, application, and colour mixing. The gestures are more simplified than in earlier work, "but," says the artist, "I still want the works to feel dynamic, to move with the viewer, to encourage a slower way of looking".

Te Heuheu's palette acknowledges his whakapapa and the traditional Māori colour path, though not explicitly. Red reflects whenua. Yellow with ochre is closer to kōwhai. The red, yellow and blue paintings are shown together in homage to Rodchenko. The red, black, green, and blue panels were also conceived as one painting. Not all the grey went away, however. The diptych *You and I in Unison* which supplies the name of the exhibition, the last work painted by Te Heuheu in this series, is grey, closing the circle.



Jamie Te Heuheu
The Melody of You (I - IV), 2025
Oil on canvas, gamvar varnish
Each work, 180.5h x 105.5w cm

Jamie Te Heuheu
The Melody of You (I), 2025
Oil on canvas, gamvar varnish
180.50h x 105.5w cm
NZD \$18,000 incl. GST



Jamie Te Heuheu
The Melody of You (II), 2025
Oil on canvas, gamvar varnish
180.50h x 105.5w cm
NZD \$18,000 incl. GST



Jamie Te Heuheu
The Melody of You (III), 2025
Oil on canvas, gamvar varnish
180.50h x 105.5w cm
NZD \$18,000 incl. GST



Jamie Te Heuheu
The Melody of You (IV), 2025
Oil on canvas, gamvar varnish
180.50h x 105.5w cm
NZD \$18,000 incl. GST





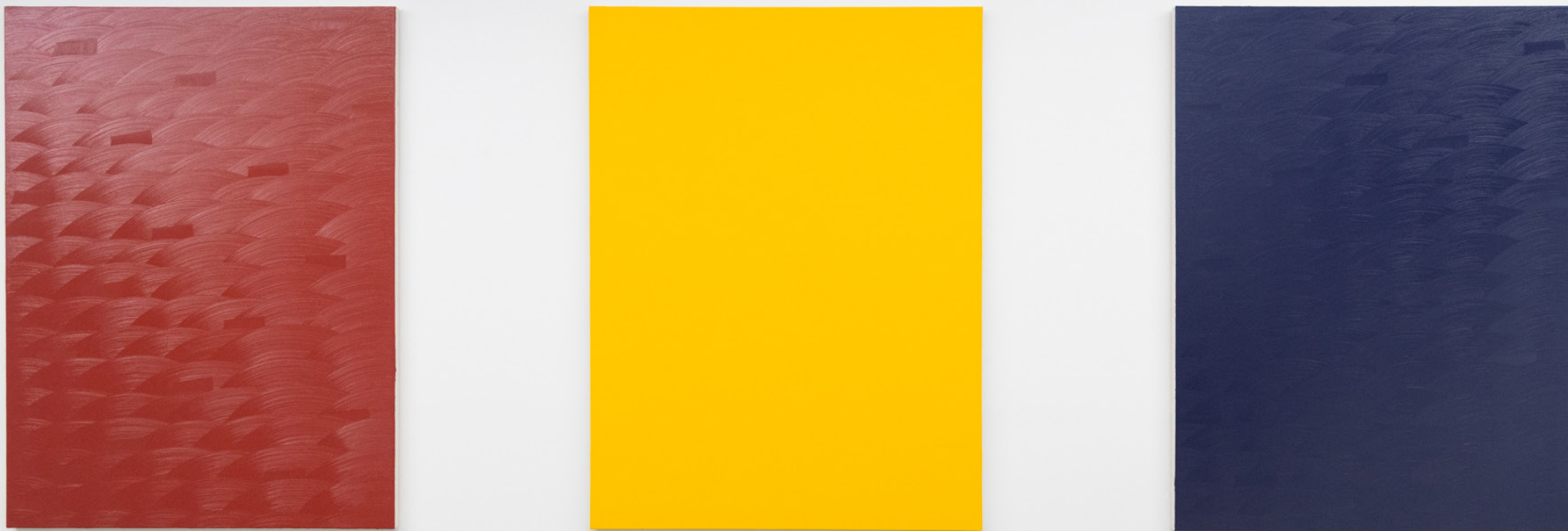
Jamie Te Heuheu
You and I in Unison, 2025
Installation view, STARKWHITE Auckland



Jamie Te Heuheu
You and I in Unison, 2025
Oil on canvas, gamvar varnish
Diptych, each work 180.50h x 105.5w cm
NZD \$24,000 incl. GST



Jamie Te Heuheu
You and I in Unison, 2025
Installation view, STARKWHITE Auckland



Jamie Te Heuheu
For Sentimental Reasons, 2025
Oil on canvas, gamvar varnish
Triptych, each work 200h x 150w cm
NZD \$55,000 incl. GST



Jamie Te Heuheu
You and I in Unison, 2025
Installation view, STARKWHITE Auckland

Jamie Te Heuheu
Beyond the Sea, 2025
Oil on canvas, gamvar varnish
200h x 150w cm
NZD \$24,000 incl. GST

