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ENTERTAINMENT

## Wild Creations bring nature up close

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Artist Shelley Simpson on her way to Rakiura/Stewart Island to work on Wild Creations.

NZ Herald

By: Dionne Christian, **Dionne Christian**

Art partly inspired by a visit to Stewart Island goes on show in Auckland this week, among the first work to come out of the reinvigorated Wild Creations scheme.

Revived last year by Creative New Zealand and the Department of Conservation, Wild Creations funds artists to spend time at natural and historic heritage sites then to make art inspired by their visit. DOC says the artwork produced directly supports several objectives, including bringing our history to life and connecting New Zealanders to conservation.

The scheme ran from 2002–2012 with 24 artists developing craft/object, photography, film, mixed-media, literature, music and theatre pieces. It was re-launched last year in a slightly different form with artists Shelley Simpson, Michel Tuffery and Jonathan Carson chosen for a pilot to see if Wild Creations could be continued.

CNZ has announced Wild Creations will run for another two years with a minimum of two artists given the opportunity to experience DOC environments and/or programmes between December and next June.

As part of Wild Creations, Simpson, a self-confessed city dweller, visited Rakiura/Stewart Island for the first time and describes the scheme as a chance for artists to challenge themselves and expand the way they work.

"Having that opportunity has definitely changed some of the ways I approach work and some of the issues I deal with in my work," she says.

"My work deals with ecology and how we relate to the natural environment. I hadn't really been in a place before where, for example, the weather could change and see you cut off for days on end so you were constantly having to be mindful of conditions or carry personal locator beacons. It's probably the farthest south I will ever go."

Simpson spent time at Port Pegasus on Stewart Island, where a tin mine was active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It's a remote environment, accessible only by boat or on foot, and is now mostly devoid of human activity.



Shelley Simpson photographed and magnified forest floor worlds while Sarah Callesen has produced audio to accompany the images.

Images she captured of forest-floor worlds in the surrounding temperate bush now appear in *The Entities*. Simpson's photographs are accompanied by a sound piece by fellow artist Sarah Callesen to question how technology influences the way we perceive the natural world.

Using these visual and audio recordings, they have constructed a "natural" world, exploring relationships between human and non-human, natural and artificial, culture and nature. As Callesen points out, even much-loved natural history

documentaries use special effects to enhance what we're seeing and hearing, shift scale, play with the way time unfolds and generally create an illusion of what we might see and hear if we were lucky enough to travel to the setting.

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While it might make us long to be there and experience it for ourselves, we're often separated from the realities of that nature.

- This is the first of several exhibitions that Simpson's Wild Creations work will feature in. *The Entities* opens at 6pm this evening with screenings of the work at 6.30pm and 7.30pm

### Lowdown

**What: The Entities – a collaboration between Sarah Callesen and Shelley Simpson**

**Where & when: RM Gallery & Project Space, Samoa House; until July 23**

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