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2017 MARTI FRIEDLANDER
PHOTOGRAPHIC AWARD

Tim Melville first encountered the work of **Roberta Thornley** in 2007 at her Graduation Show (Auckland University's Elam School of Fine Arts). "Her work was installed right at the top of the biggest and most rabbit-warren-like building on the campus... and I'd left and was on my way back to the car when I realised the photographs were haunting me and I needed to return."

New Zealand photography icon, **Marti Friedlander** saw Thornley's first show at the Tim Melville Gallery in Auckland in 2008 and commented at the time, "Roberta has potential." The show was a sell-out, and Tim Melville held on to Friedlander's comments which according to him were, "high praise from one of New Zealand's photography icons, known for her high standards and uncompromising taste as well as for being a formidable force of nature!"

Almost a decade later, and just a year after Friedlander's death, the Whanganui-based photographer was awarded the 2017 Marti Friedlander Photographic Award by the New Zealand Arts Foundation. The prize included a NZD\$25,000 donation towards the development of Thornley's career.

Back in 2010, critic **Dr Kriselle Baker** wrote in *Art New Zealand* that Thornley's work begins in the 'everyday world'. The works "are discrete images about the simplest and yet most evocative of ideas. Contained within each work is a sense of the efflorescence of life and the wet, dark, decaying extreme that is part of its cycle of disintegration and renewal. Her work has an underlying element of unease, as if each image marks a crucial connection between beauty, desire, and the 'bible-black' of melancholy..."

Thornley was born in Auckland in 1985. She graduated from Auckland University's Elam School of Fine Arts in 2007. In 2011, she was the inaugural recipient of the Auckland Festival of Photography Annual Commission and in 2014 she was awarded a residency at Tylee Cottage with the Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare o Rehua, Whanganui.

Thornley has exhibited in Australia and throughout New Zealand. Her work is held in collections including the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna O Waiwhetu, the Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare o Rehua, Whanganui and the Wallace Arts Trust.

Ashley Crawford





1. Portrait of RobertaThornley.

PHOTO MICHAEL CHEYNE

2. Roberta Thornley, *Trampoline*, 2017. Archival pigment ink photograph on Hahnemühle Photo Rag, 67x 100cm, Edition: 5

3. Roberta Thornley, *Low Tide*, 2017. Archival pigment ink photograph on Hahnemühle Photo Rag, 67 x 100cm, Edition: 5

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND TIM MELVILLE GALLERY, AUCKLAND

