

The Forest Dwellers

:jane-louise: kellahan

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Artist Bio

i am :jane-louise: kellahan - self-taught, award-winning, and devoted to painting for more than 30 years. i work with oils and gold and an unshakable belief that art is not just seen - it's felt. From the wild skies of New Zealand to the calm light of my Wanaka studio. Each canvas becomes a profound meditation—a deliberate cycle of layering, scraping, blending, and refining until a mystical synergy emerges. Since 1996, I've exhibited across New Zealand and internationally, earning recognition including the Australia's Cricket Art Prize (Winner 2009), Biennale of Chianciano, Italy (3rd prize 2011), London Art Biennale (Special Mention, 2015). But titles and awards are not my real measure of success — it's when someone stands before my painting and feels something stir inside them.

Artist Statement

Inspired by a recent art expedition to Bali, *The Forest Dwellers* explores the sacred, symbiotic bond between humanity and the natural world. The figures in this series possess an innate awareness of the unseen, restorative energies of the ancient forest, viewing the trees as living sanctuaries of physical and emotional healing. Exploring themes of duality, the collection features shamanic figures and the *Kokokan*, *Kotuku* (white heron) as quiet messengers between the earthly and the divine. This mystical realm is brought to life through a rich palette of lush canopy greens, punctuated by vibrant berry pinks and striking turquoises. Woven throughout, bronze and 24ct gold leaf catch the light, symbolising divine illumination and spiritual purity. *The Forest Dwellers* invites viewers into a world where humanity and nature exist in reciprocal healing, urging us to reconsider our own connection to the living earth.



The Forest Dwellers, 100 x 100 cm, oil on board, 24ct gold leaf

Sailing the open skies, a pair of kōtuku/white heron manifest the energies of purity, patience, grace and awakening. Deep within the woods, forest dwellers hold candles in collective reverence for the cycle of the sun, honoring it as the divine carrier of light and life force. This sacred celebration is framed by a cascading waterfall, a visual testament to perpetual renewal and the fluid energy that connects us all.



The Messengers, 100 x 100 cm, oil on board

This artwork explores the universal law of polarity—the delicate balance between light and dark, mind and body. Opposing cliffs mirror life's profound thresholds: conscious and unconscious, fear and faith, the known and unknown. Divided by a steep valley and a cascading waterfall, two silhouette figures embody a liminal space, capturing the tension between competing truths and the internal bridges required to unite them. Within this divide stands a shamanic figure—a silent witness, spiritual anchor, or manifestation of inner guidance during times of trial. Breaking the stillness, three majestic kōtuku (white herons) soar as quiet messengers of transition, patience, and hope.



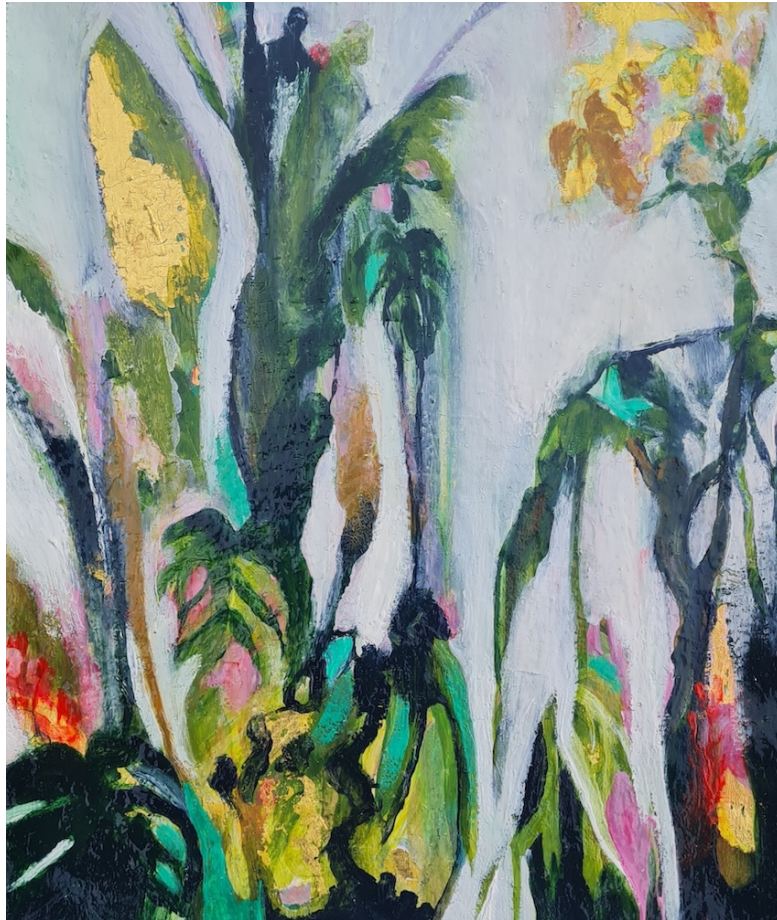
The Newcomers, 50 x 50 cm, oil on board, 24 ct gold leaf

A ship breaches the mist; an uninvited presence threatens a quiet world. Observed from the shadows by feathered warriors, this work balances on the fragile edge of harmony and total disruption. The inclusion of 24ct gold brings a sacred, luminous permanence to these woodland guardians, contrasting sharply with the shifting, uncertain future arriving by sea. It is a study of a world unravelling—a snapshot of the heavy, silent breath taken just before history changes forever.



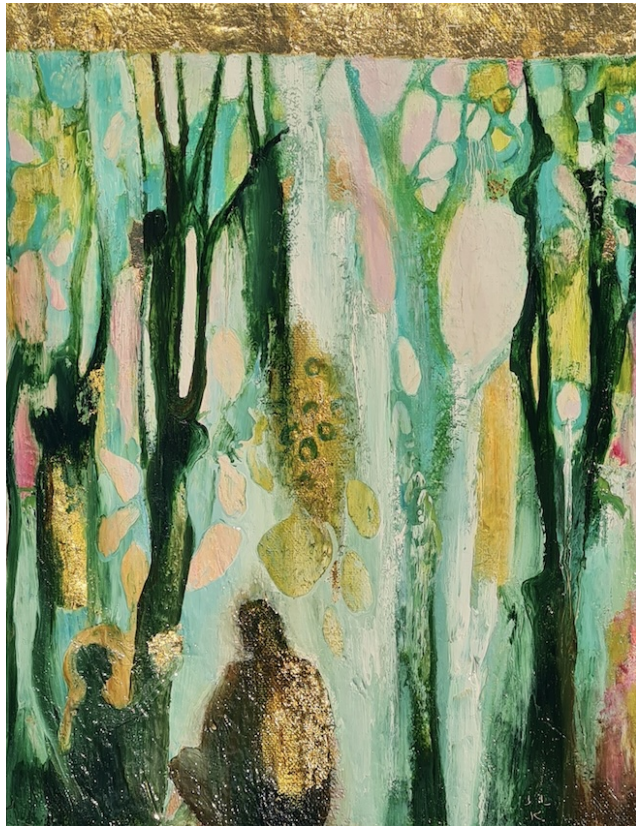
Garden of Eden, 50 x 50 cm, oil on board, 24ct gold leaf

Navigating the sacred space between the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, the majestic kōtuku (white heron) soars through a brilliant expanse of native forest flora. The scene invokes a paradise of harmony, peace, and cosmic connection. Interwoven with this natural sanctuary are 24ct gold leaf light bulbs, glowing as physical conduits for divine illumination, higher perception, and the sudden awakening of consciousness.



The Watchers, 29.7 x 42 cm, OC, 24ct gold leaf

Deep within the tropical canopy sit the watchers. High above the forest floor, spider monkeys serve as vigilant guardians, casting their sharp cries across the trees to warn fellow dwellers of approaching danger. My work captures this delicate state of alert, exploring the invisible threads of communication and protection that bind the ecosystem together.



Forest Tapestry, 29.7 x 42 cm, OC, 24ct
gold leaf

In this work, human life is conceptualized as a woven fabric, where individual threads of experience, choice, and relationship intersect. Intertwining both joyful and painful realities, the composition reveals how separate moments ultimately form a unified existence. This theme of interconnectedness is anchored by the figures of a father and child. Holding a 24ct gold leaf heart, the offspring embodies absolute transparency and emotional vulnerability. The shimmering heart represents the delicate, sacred act of entrusting your core self to another, serving as a visceral testament to raw devotion and sincere love.



The Cleansers, 25 x 25 cm, oil on canvas, 24 ct gold leaf

Set within a lush, tropical landscape, this work captures practitioners immersed beneath a waterfall, engaging in ascetic water meditation. Through this rigorous ritual, the imagery explores the convergence of spiritual purification, mental discipline, and the quiet testing of human endurance.