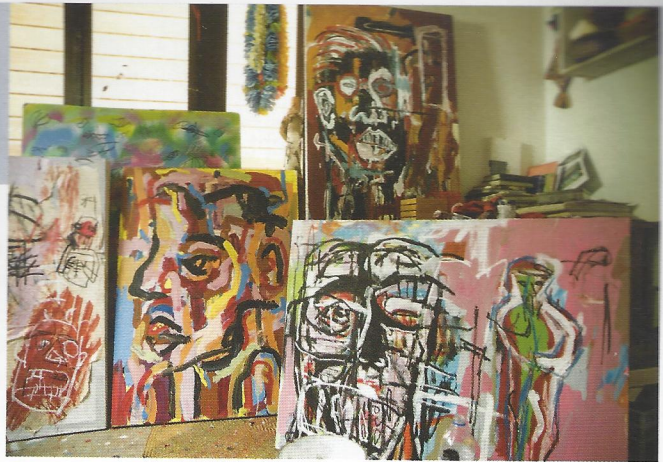
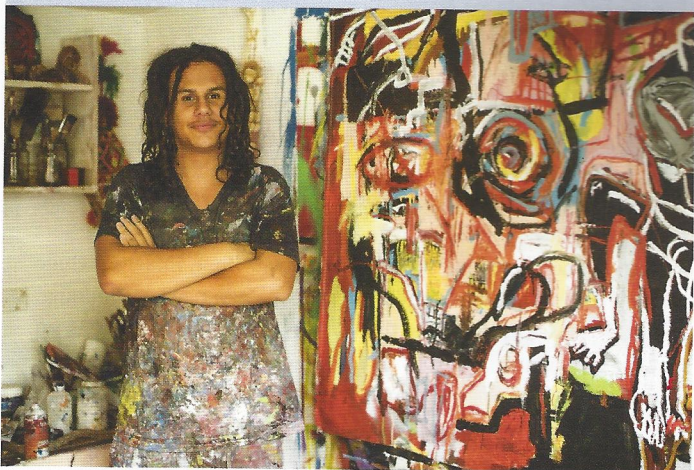


## Catching colour early

Young painter impresses in first show.



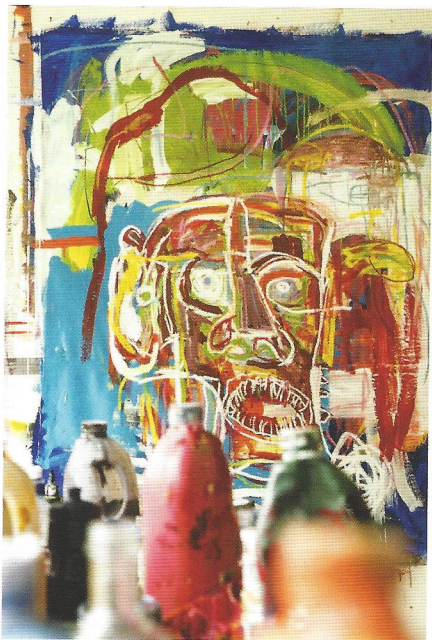
Do any of us remember what we were doing at 16? What we were thinking about, what consumed us?

Erçan Cairns was just 16 years old when he went into his mother's small Auckland studio, picked up her paint brushes and began to paint.

Now 17, he seems to have accomplished a remarkable amount in that short period.

The son of Tongan/German painter Dagmar Dyck, Cairns has had a head start in the business of putting thoughts onto canvas, surrounded at home by the dynamic and expressive Pacific art of his mother – but his results are still rather surprising.

What is remarkable about the young painter's work is the confidence with which he applies paint. His vision is clear, direct, bold. He's not afraid to use colour discordantly, erratically, using acrylics, oil pastels, cans of spray paint.



All works are untitled and are by Erçan Cairns. Images courtesy of the artist and Miranda Farm Gallery

Cairns cites the influence of Picasso, Basquiat, de Kooning, Matisse and Australian David Aspden, and in his studio, the books of these artists can be seen – open and paint-spattered – with oily, well-thumbed pages. Dagmar has made sure that her son has had as much access as possible to the painters of the world. Their influence is immediately visible in Cairns' paintings, but this is not mere imitation – he is finding his own voice in experimentation while paying homage to the street art/abstractionism of another time – all screaming heads and anger. These are confronting works, disturbing to a point, but powerful and immediate. Sometimes he draws on Pacific structures, but seems to be dragging them into the modern light.

Many artists draw on the works of others to locate their own particular imagery, and Cairns is certainly no exception, but the results are refreshingly new and original for that reason.

His is a strong, instinctual voice forming dream images, dark images – of an earlier anthropological age. This is raw expression. The graphic heads are larger than life-size and the paintings are able to suggest noise, with their open mouths singing or chanting.

Erçan Cairns seems to be thinking deeply for his age. A lot of 17-year-olds have other things on their minds, but he is making images

so sophisticated, it's truly hard to believe they're from such a young artist.

He paints frantically, often through the night, often on a few paintings at once, on the floor, on an easel. Some are huge, taking up an entire wall of the studio. Now he's moved into the garage – more space there. Work seems to be pouring out of him with true artistry, true experimentation, great creativity.

Cairns has been mentored by Tongan artist Tevita Latu, who is part of Seleka International, an avant-garde art group based in Nuku'alofa. Tevita has spent a lot of time with Cairns both in Auckland and in Nuku'alofa, often starting a painting and then handing it over to Cairns to finish, and vice versa. The Seleka group has made many similar collaborative paintings, often involving eight artists on one canvas. It's an unusual way to teach but a great way to learn. As Cairns suggested, "if you get stuck, you can hand it over to someone else to finish..." The collaborative paintings are busy and dense, with a lot going on, as if a whole village were truly on the canvas.

Additionally, Andy Leleisi'uao and Fatu Feu'u are both in contact with Cairns, available for mentoring and advice.

Erçan Cairns' exhibition *Solo Show 2019* is opening at Miranda Farm Gallery, 1107 Miranda Road, Firth of Thames, on 11 May and will run for a month. [mirandafarm.co.nz](http://mirandafarm.co.nz)



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