

FLORACIÓN DE CORAZÓN A KARANGA TO MEXICO

9-19 SEPTEMBER 2025

NOA NOA VON BASSEWITZ

ELVIS BOOTH-CLAVERIA

MANIAH WAIHAPE

IMOJEN HANCOCK

CARLOS KNIGHT

DAWN WILCE

OLIVIA ROSE



THE ENGINE ROOM



Floración de Corazón – A Karanga to Mexico

The Engine Room, September 9th to 19th 2025

This exhibition features works by eight Massey University fine arts students and graduates who travelled to Mexico in November 2024 on the Prime Minister's Scholarship. Together, they formed the "Tocayo_collective".

Their artworks reflect themes of culture, identity, love, loss, life and death, and ingenuity, expressing the profound impact that Mexico had on them. The exhibition serves as a heartfelt thank-you—a karanga—to Mexico for its generosity and rich cultural history. The title *Floración de Corazón*, meaning a blooming of the heart, captures the deep personal and creative growth experienced during the exchange.

The eight artists who did not know each other before the trip ranged from 3rd year to recent graduates. Each artist worked independently on their contributions to the exhibition. Imagine their surprise to see the unity of the themes and colours that this exhibition brought together! There is a tangible flavour to Mexico that made it under their skin and into their hearts, a truly life changing experience for each of them in unique but also shared ways.

This show also responds to recent funding cuts to the Prime Minister's Scholarship and arts education in New Zealand. The group acknowledges that they may be among the last to benefit from such opportunities. Through this exhibition, they celebrate the value of cultural exchange and artistic education, and protest the loss of vital support for these kinds of experiences.



Noa Noa von Bassewitz

Māori, German, Scottish

Noa Noa is a long term Wellington wind lover and mother of many boys. She has a background in anthropology and has an obsessive interest in children's books, comics, myths and fables that tell archetypal tales that transcend cultures. A print maker of many moons, she has now morphed into a multidisciplinary artist sculpting with fabric and air as well as incorporating photography and projection into her practice.

Through deep engagement with materiality, Noa Noa reveals her inner worlds and her place in this world. Her work tells relational stories as she strives to make visual embodiments of the lived female experience. Noa Noa uses the self-created theory: auto-archaeology, she enjoys excavating in the Jungian collective consciousness as well as her own archive of collected memories. Currently working on a giant scale, her "performance sculptures" speak to the soft power of 3rd life female becoming.

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Cempasúchil Time-Flower

Retired parachute nylon, dye , bicycle tyre rim, fan+air.

This work is inspired by symbolism pertaining to love, life and death, woven from a German children's book and a traditional Mexican story about a flower. I found a copy of my favourite childhood book "Momo" by Michael Ende at the UNAM* students market. The "time-flower" from this tale has deeply informed my concept of the value of life. Finding a copy of this socialist tale in Mexico felt like synchronicity. The ubiquitous Mexican Cempasúchil* flower represents a sunlike physical manifestation of Xóchitl the female character from the pre Colombian mythic love story between Xóchitl and Huitzilin. Mexico reminded me to live with an open heart. Death is always waiting just around the corner. There is no need to live in fear of the cycle of life.

Storm Womb(an)

Retired parachute nylon, ink, bicycle tyre rim, dye , fan+air.

Storm Womb(an) was made on Samhain, on the Southern Hemisphere seasonal equivalent of the Mexican Día de los Muertos*. On this day it is said that the veil between the living and the spirit world is at its thinnest. The work's creation was an enacted ritual, a physical engagement with the womb of the world, the portal between life and death.

The ink marks are remnants of hieroglyphic symbols washed away by the raging storm on the night of the work's creation. The seen and unseen worlds are both symbolically present. Hine Nui Te Po, and Persephone also belong to this lineage of global mythology connecting women to love, life-giving and death.

Storm Womb(an) is an entity and a visual embodiment of lived emotion. Her body resembles a giant bloom. She speaks to the wear and tear of life and loss, her breathing bulk stands as a reminder to the viewer to keep breathing, keep smiling. We are not alone, simply a bridge to all who have come before and all who come after. We all belong to Earth.

Opening, Os, Opened

Archival Inkjet Photographs

Resembling the wings of the Monarch butterfly, which in Mexican culture represent the souls of the departed here on earth. They are attracted by the scent of the Cempasúchil. We spent our days in Mexico absorbed in looking at art, tasting, smelling and being immersed in Mexican culture. The photos represent focused attention, up close and personal "looking" at a feeling. A ritual rebirth glimpsed and captured like pinned butterfly wings for posterity.

* Nauatl word for Marigold

* Day of the Dead, celebrated on 1 November, an autumnal celebration.

* National Autonomous University of Mexico

Elvis Booth-Claveria

Pākehā, Chilean

Elvis was born in Te Papaioea, Manawatū, and based in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington. Working across performance, video, sculpture and installation based mediums. Their writing, curatorial and practice centres on reconciling land/body/queerness/atmosphere both as an autotheoretical process and an intimate site of connection and vulnerability.

A synthesis of documented performance engagements that place Booth-Claveria in an environment that becomes a stage to enact nonlinear or nonverbal ideas. Transitioning through states of embodiment and disembodiment, seeking to view the body through a non-hierarchical lens, rejecting the prioritisation of the head, brain, and mouth over the rest of the system. This reiterative process builds a bigger scape where braiding positions of queer, colonial and political identity aren't answered or simplified but expanded and interrogated.

@elvisboothclaveria



Monte Albán

Single channel video 2 minutes

The day we visited Monte Albán was the day of the Toitū Te Tiriti activation back here at home. I remember feeling sad because I felt like I was absent for such an important moment. So perhaps it made me more sentimental while being at the site, it's large and rich in size, history and culture but not in a boisterous way. It hummed but in the way humming can grow and vibrate.

This work is a brief response retracing the sensory information I can remember.

Our guide's name was Juan, the same name as my grandad. I liked him a lot, he was giggly and would oscillate between funny and poetic.

The notes I have from him are below:

We are always in a hurry
When I'm in a hurry I can't think
When I can't think I can't feel
o is god
God is the presence of the absence
Here for communion with the sky
Where is the knowledge of the deer in the head or the nature of it

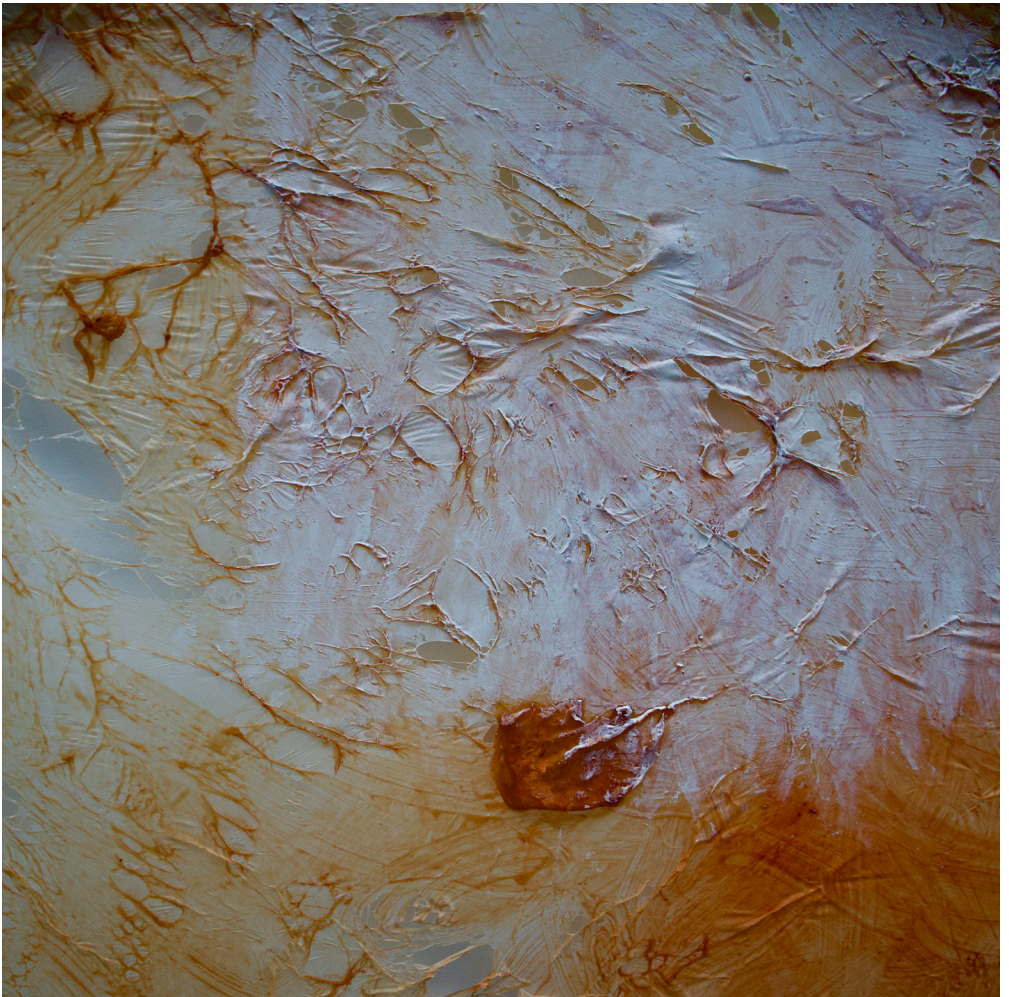


Maniah Waihape

Māori, Ngati Kahungunu ki te Wairoa

I explore the lived intersectionality I have experienced as a half-European and half-Maori wahine. Reclaiming that identity while within a colonised society through my subjectivity from my distinctive world view and view upon me. I enjoy creating uncomfortable art, confronting, and sometimes political art. Usually taking the media of sculpture in a bodily form, where it also has a lifespan of its own, from the environmentally conscious materials I use.

@maniahssart



The Buffing

Latex, acrylic paint, kokowai

It's difficult to encapsulate the true impact and life-changing nature of this opportunity. It has informed me beyond what I expected and positively influenced my life since. Without this adventure granted to me through the scholarship, I don't think I would have ever had the chance to experience this amount of rich culture, history, of course, art and gain perspective in my life otherwise. I am forever grateful.

While walking down the street of Oaxaca, I spotted this lonely graffiti on a church wall, translating to "I HATE THE GRINGO". This was not an isolated statement and was quietly present in many contexts.

This image encapsulates the intensity of emotion from the natives whose families have lived in this country and specifically this city for generations. With a recent surge and encouragement of tourism within Oaxaca from government and private investors, it has gentrified the area and caused concerns for local culture being lost in souvenirs rather than the personal artistic efforts of each town's traditions and means of income. Now, with multigenerational families forced out by tripling rent/costs, a fire of protest has begun. A powerful proclamation regarding gentrification, something I have been exploring, the feeling of culture being taken or pushed aside for self-benefit. I was told that graffiti like this happens commonly and gets taken down/painted over daily, with Toitu Te Tiriti happening at home, I couldn't help but connect to the calm but not quietness in protest.



Imojen Hancock

Tangata tiriti

Imojen is a Wellington artist and former illustrator who began creating eyecatching sculptural and audiovisual works to show off at parties. Drawing from the larger-than-life visual language of the contemporary New Zealand summer festival scene, as well as their experience getting up close and personal with other artists' works as an exhibitions technician for local galleries, Imojen's art practice plays around with ideas such as the interstitial role of art spaces, and how encountering the surreal and unexpected can break habitual thought patterns and allow us to see from new perspectives. For some reason, this usually involves visual motifs related to fish.

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Relative Angle

MDF, dichroic film and fabric

Identity is a slippery thing. In an advertising-driven world which treats people as the sum of their demographics, I like to consider alternate frameworks of identity - are we the people we choose to relate to? The intersection of our common experiences with others? What draws us to such experiences, to the forming of group bonds, and is there a catch?

Durkheim's concept of Collective Effervescence describes the social mechanism by which people create and solidify group identities through synchronised activity.

A national anthem, a pumping dance floor, a classroom sing-along,
A team-building exercise, a political rally, the collective chant of a cult.

How do you tell human culture from human nature? In experiencing the culture of Mexico, in observing the differences and similarities with that of Aotearoa, we were given a gift of greater self-awareness. Circumstance recontextualises humanity, it swirls and remixes our ideas, and through comparison the underlying patterns and points of unity become more clear. Identity becomes not what makes us different, but what makes us the same.

A lure may be deceptive, and still beautiful. A hook may be dangerous, and still pull forth a home from empty ocean. Nobody has one face. Everything looks different from every angle.

Image: Danza de los Voladores



Carlos Knight

Pākehā, Montenegrin

Carlos Knight's work is a response to his daily life and the environments that he passes through. Using objects from urban and domestic spaces, he acts upon moments of curiosity that appear in the poetics of life. Born and raised in Otautahi Christchurch and now based in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, his embodied research is shaped by shared environments and scenes of human behaviour. He considers these moments as 'found sculptures'. Unknowingly, each person who played a role in that moment becomes a participant in the work. These personal experiences of everyday life are realised in physical modification, where objects are altered or recreated via acting on their existing classifications. Through playful subversion Carlos's sculptures go beyond the readymade; leaving traces of the original object, structures, people, and places. By storytelling with commonplace objects and imagery Carlos hopes to create space for the viewer to make their own personal connections with the work, like he has.

@carlosknightart



Entrada

Found tyre, house paint, ink print transfer

Pestalozzi St to Reforma

Found steel gate, chain, lock

When I reflect on my time in Mexico I struggle to pin-point an exact moment, activity, or artwork amongst the dozens we viewed. Instead, my thoughts turn to the travels; bus and train rides through Mexico City, and hours of walking as we followed Raul like ducklings. Although we had an itinerary planned for the entire month our days seemed to exist as clueless journeys, we never truly knew the adventure we were about to embark on. I loved this; it's not often you get to go travelling having done such little planning of the activities yourself.

The walks that followed bustling streets saturated in colorful buildings, food stands, and foreign street signage told me about Mexico's culture and presented a way of doing embedded in Mexico. I noticed signs of interaction, ingenuity, and the intertwine of nature with Spanish colonial architecture.

Every street sign I looked at was decorated in stickers, every wall was layered in paint and posters that were peeled back to reveal the previous coat; by the end of the trip I began to consider these surfaces as public canvases marked in interaction from the dense population of people. Displaced arrangements of objects existed in streets to form new purposes; cars jacked by bricks, signs held by car rims, and bikes converted into portable food stalls. Back cabs of Utes were used to their full potential, often precariously filled with handmade goods as street vendors made their way to set up at markets for the day. These scenes existed amongst a rich landscape filled with historical buildings and colonial security architecture, where in its cracks and crevices, Mexico's greenery sprouted.

Over the accumulation of the daily routes we travelled, often making our way into Paseo de la Reforma Mexico City, I began to admire the combination of ingenuity, architecture, and nature that filled Mexico's urban landscape. These travels provided endless spontaneous findings of artistic material and formed an understanding of the beautiful place I was in.

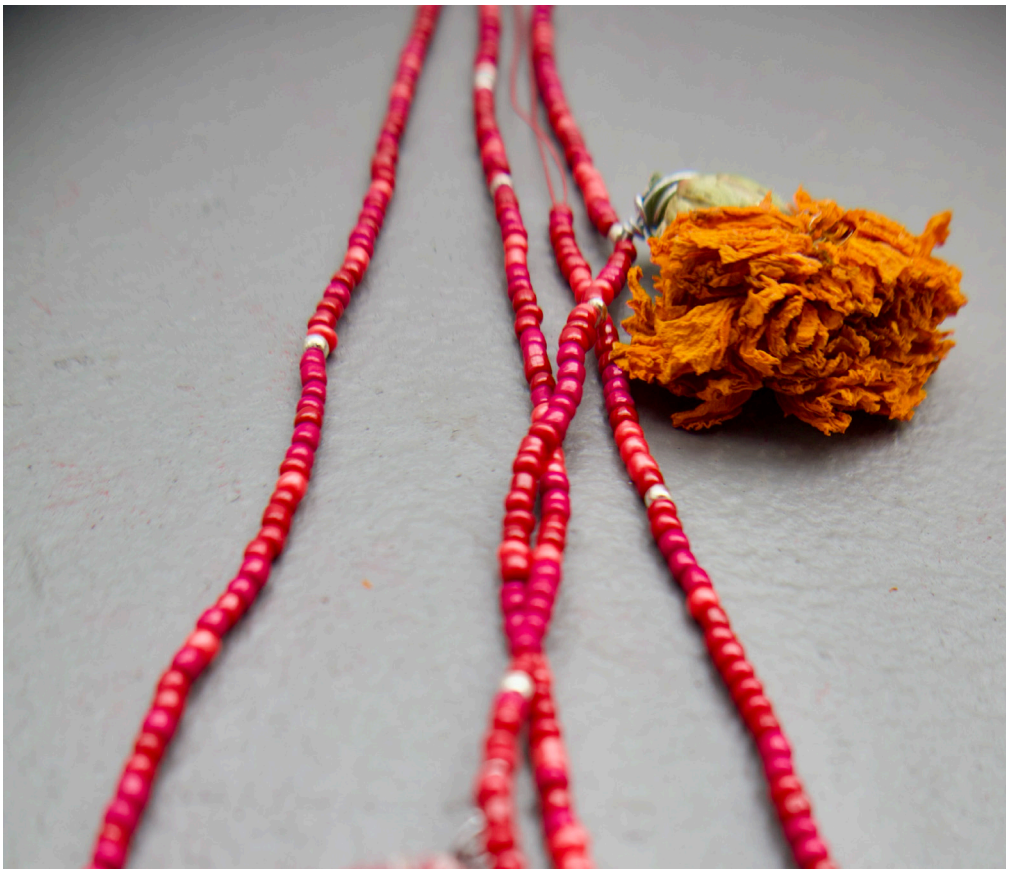


Dawn Wilce

Welsh, Pākehā

Dawn is a contemporary artist based in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington. Her practice sits between contemporary jewellery and site-responsive installation, creating a constellation of material interventions that inhabit the space between adornment and infrastructure, offering and fixing, sacred and industrial. Her practice fosters encounters that are intimate, disorienting, and attuned to the layered histories that linger in our collective memory. Wilce treats the gallery itself as a collaborator—not merely a backdrop—inviting viewers to look closely and question what is seen, what is overlooked, and how we locate ourselves.

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Take the Red Line to La Reforma (Threshold)

Glass seed beads, tin coated steel, thermally bonded thread.

Take the Red Line to La Reforma (Fused)

Found mica fragments from Oaxaca, glass seed beads, tin coated steel, thermally bonded thread.

Take the Red Line to La Reforma (Grounded)

Dried Cempasúchil (Mexican Marigold) and Celosia cristata (Cockscomb), glass seed beads, tin coated steel, thermally bonded thread, oil pastel.

About the Work

Take the Red Line to La Reforma unfolds as a field of attention where fragments become offerings, thresholds transform into shrines, and materials shimmer with endurance and memory. The title gestures to a tether linking the intertwined colonial histories of Mexico and Aotearoa—a bloodline carrying traces of indigenous resilience alongside Wilce's personal journey as Welsh-Pākehā learning to locate herself within a layered past. Wilce's interventions invite viewers to explore the tension between presence and absence, visibility and invisibility, history and memory.

In response to her time in Mexico, Wilce draws from a collection of found material fragments gathered from Mexico City and Oaxaca. Carefully combined with a restrained palette of tin-coated steel and glass seed beads, the pieces hum softly and steadily, like a low-frequency memory vibrating through the architecture. The mica shards shimmer with archaeological presence and dried flowers become delicate offerings.

The jewellery-like forms mimic hinges, brackets, latches, and edges; places of transition and tension. Bonded with the architectural thresholds of the gallery, they are an invitation for slow looking, second glances, and quiet discovery. The subtle, recurring motifs in the tin plate—stamped rivet circles and sun-ray shapes—evoke both the devotional symbolism of Mesoamerican art and the industrial textures of manufacturing.

The Engine Room's former life as a motor workshop and the deep colonial legacy of its Pukeahu site subtly pulse beneath the surface of these works. A trap door propped ajar reveals the detritus of previous lives—fallen glitter, rusty nails, dust. Tuned to the building's breath, this work resists spectacle in favour of intimacy, it resonates with history, care, and quiet insistence. It's the kind of sound you feel more than hear—the kind that asks you to lean in.



Olivia Rose

English, Cantonese-Chinese, Pākehā

Olivia's current art practice is concerned with the absorption, assimilation, and recollection of information in its various forms. From a common position of living within frameworks designed to oversaturate, distract, and dilute, she likes to produce work that communicates a curiosity in acknowledging what information matters and how we make use of it. Lately her practice has shifted to operate in a way that serves her family and community circles—using painting to cherish knowledge and memories (others and her own), as well as to share in the process and product.

@nixorose

It is a good thing to be out of place.
Wide-eyed gweilo.
Tongue-tied. The dog is not a drunk.
Privileged, someone speaking on your behalf.
Having your hand held.
The day is set, be pulled through it.



Reframing the anatomy of grief

Artwork made in collaboration with Nathan, Sarah, & Ian Rose

Plywood, modelling paste, acrylic paint, coloured pencil

Death parenthesised my time in Mexico.

A laminated photo of my grandad packed away into a borrowed black suitcase.

Absent of the colour I edited out.

There is a brief window, right after death occurs, where we are graced with the space to share in visibly feeling and expressing grief—and then it closes. Grief is cut short by the expectations of efficiency. A person's memory becomes dulled by solemnity, intentional infrequency, and excessive caution.

In Mexico, where the concept of death is woven into life and culture, I saw that window open. Confronted by new parameters through scheduled time and space for grieving together. Where the event of remembering—in the form of Día de los Muertos—sits in the subconscious of the masses.

My grandad was old, my dog was old. I tied their fates together in my head.

It was over a year before they met each other again.

A role reversal, the guide catching up to the wandering.



Floor Plan

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9 Pestalozzi St to Reforma
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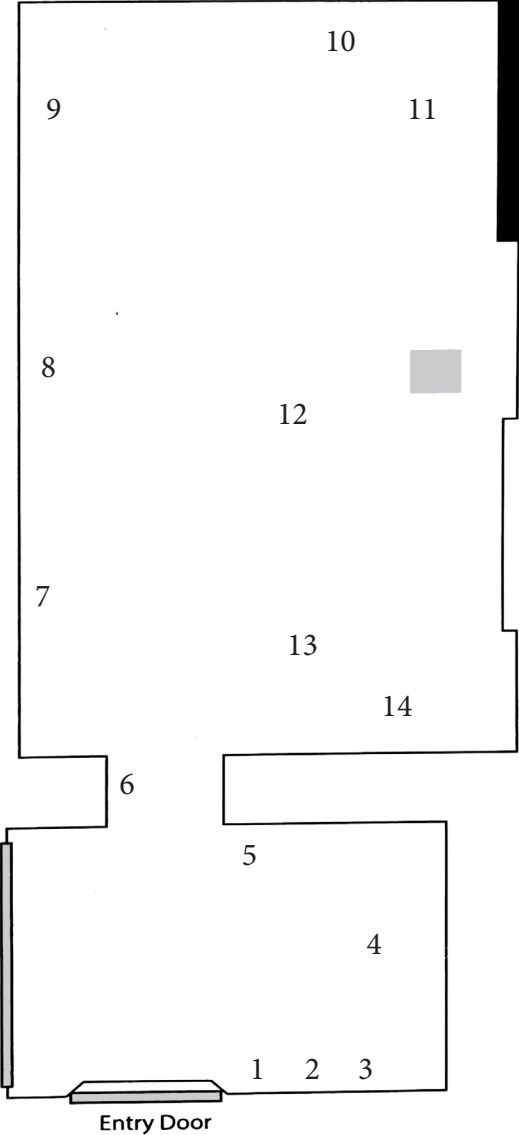
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Thank you Adair Valentine-Robertson for her
"Mexican Taxi Driver Recommendation Spotify Playlist"
<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/4E2El3gaGFuiiXtaDA9yNm?si=ireU-2GxpTbOf1o17t-yv5Q&pi=AH4w2XBZT7OYp>

Pamphlet, poster designed by Noa Noa von Bassewitz

Cover art: detail of "Heart Flower" mono print by Noa Noa von Bassewitz

All photos courtesy of artists.

Scan here to read more about our
Prime Minister's Scholarship trip to Mexico.



SoA students explore Mexico