

NGUTU KĀKĀ

Published by Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery at Te Kura Toi a Hoahoa – School of Art and Design, Auckland University of Technology, to accompany the exhibition: *Gil Hanly | Undocumented*, 28 November 2025 - 23 January 2026

The framed photographs were taken in and around Auckland in 1987, commissioned for *Poorman Oranges: Women in Community Houses in Auckland*, then published by the Department of Internal Affairs in association with the *New Women's Press*. The editors commented that 'Documentation about community houses thus far has tended to be factual and statistical. We considered other things needed to be said. There were stories to be told, experiences to be shared'. Hanly's careful and unobtrusive photographs present the domestic realities for women and children supported by community housing at this time.

In 2016 these exhibition prints were as presented as part of 'All Lines Converge' curated by Chloe Cull, Govert Brewster Gallery.

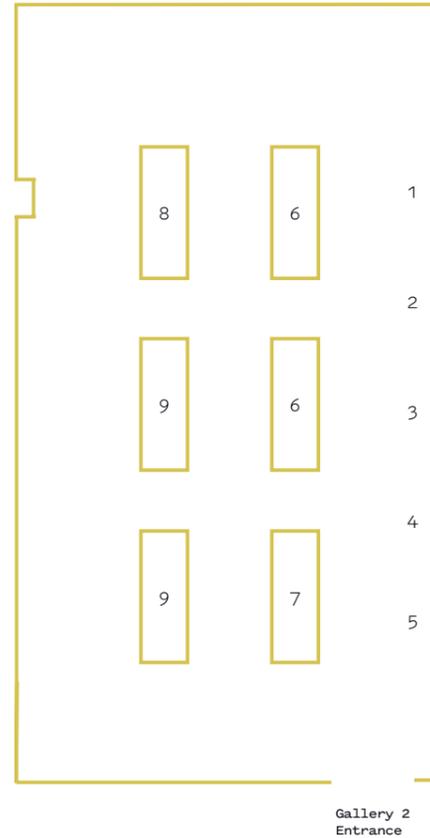
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- 1 **OUTING TO THE COMMUNITY HOUSE**
1987, digital print
from 35mm film
- 2 **MORNING TEA BREAK AT CRÈCHE. DEVONPORT COMMUNITY HOUSE**
1987, digital print
from 35mm film
- 3 **SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAMME - MAKING BRACLETS. DUNKIRK CENTRE, PANMURE**
1987, digital print
from 35mm film
- 4 **SORTING ORDERS FOR THE FOOD CO-OP. GLENFIELD**
1987, digital print
from 35mm film
- 5 **WATER PLAY - CRÈCHE. GLENFIELD**
1987, digital print
from 35mm film
- 6 **TABLES**
Emergency housing, House Building Programme, and protests circa 1982
- 7 Karangahape Road, 1980's and 1990's
- 8 Mana Motuhaka Party Hui 1980 Northland, and nationwide movement and activism
- 9 Trade Union strikes Sept 1986, May Day demonstrations 1991

All works courtesy of the artist and Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira



A leading figure in the documentary tradition, Gil Hanly has amassed a significant body of photographs that survey touchstone events in Aotearoa's recent history, including protest movements confronting the injustices of Apartheid, supporting anti-nuclear and women's rights movements, and those advocating for the unceded sovereignty for Māori.

Yet, a quick survey of her archives also reveals a tendency to focus on what might be termed 'undocumented' communities. In these photographs, Hanly developed a singular body of photographs exploring easily overlooked experiences of the working class, the unemployed, and the disenfranchised.

Well away from the spotlight, it is through these tender works that we witness Hanly's singular vision, her determination to capture life here in Aotearoa, and her keen sense of justice - an unwavering and honest lens.

Undocumented is a focused exhibition that provides a rare glimpse into the archives of this important photographer.

Gil Hanly ONZM (b.1934) is a celebrated documentary photographer. From the 1970s onwards Hanly steadfastly focused on capturing the social, political and cultural landscape of Aotearoa. Always motivated to document issues that significantly impacted local communities, she attended many nationwide protests against Apartheid, the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior, the land occupation at Bastion Point, and the 1984 land hikoi.

Hanly attended Ilam School of Fine Arts in Christchurch in the early 1950s where she trained to be a painter. After graduation she moved to London for five years where she worked as a props buyer for a production company, then on her return to New Zealand she worked for the feminist publication *Broadsheet*. Hanly's photographs of the women's movement in the 1970s and 1980s featured prominently in the exhibition at Auckland Museum *Are We There Yet?* which marked the 125th anniversary of women's suffrage in Aotearoa.

Hanly's archive is now housed at Auckland Museum.

Sitting in the lush haven that is Gil Hanly's garden at the Hanly House Residency and Museum launch earlier this year, I fondly recalled the privilege of being in this very garden in my younger days.

The garden is the work of a lifetime of care and labour. Located near the maunga in Mt Eden, it is a rare ecosystem, and home to an impressive and established collection of subtropical and native species. To Gil, the garden is an important site to explore what it means to tend the land, maintaining diversity and renewal.

These early visits to the garden were spent with my dear friend Amber Rhodes; daughter to Pat, stepdaughter to Gil. Both aged twenty and fierce, we dreamt of our futures, and the films, art, and babies we would each make. Amber, a body double in Xena Warrior Princess, and myself a recent Elam School graduate (along with a healthy cohort of friends) flourished in the garden. We didn't recognise it at the time, but Gil had created a place for us to dream.

Gil - the gardener, incredible cook, artist, wife of an artist, mother to three, and grandmother to seven - somehow also found time to pursue her life's work, photographing and documenting the societal issues of her time. Every generation has their defining struggles, and for Gil the injustices of Apartheid, unceded sovereignty for Māori, nuclear threat, gender inequality - which were all actively protested nationwide, became her steadfast areas of focus from the 1970s onwards.

As I sat in the garden at the launch event, fellow artist Judy Darragh, who visits and cares for Gil each Wednesday in her rest home, spoke of her recent visits. She recalled how Gil had over time largely

stopped speaking, in a slow but steady process of unravelling from this world; more sleep, less talk. Throughout this frail period she nonetheless had retained dignity - and in this sense her silence represented a sort of stoic relinquishing. Yet, Judy recalled that on her most recent visit, Gil had brightened and outwardly exclaimed: 'Amazing'. Just one word. A good word.

Judy and I marvelled at what she might have been thinking. Was she reflecting on her occupation as an artist? All the people she had met and photographed, proudly occupying in their state homes, caravans, and garages; women and children on stoops, kids playing in backyards and community centres. Perhaps she was recalling the numerous times spent on hikoi, rallies and protests, or her early life; meeting Pat at Ilam and working for the feminist publication *Broadsheet*. Or, perhaps more likely, she was simply taking in the moment, the flowers Judy had especially brought for the occasion, and being surrounded by old friends...but I even wonder if in the slippery timefullness of end-of-life she was in fact envisioning future images, photographs of events yet to come to fruition, the life and times not only of her children, but her children's children.

Hidden inside the garden is Gil's studio, where hundreds of archive boxes are meticulously catalogued with her own organisational system. The boxes, each brimming with reference prints and hand written notes, are efficiently labelled with their contents; Bad Housing, Trade Unions, Unemployment, Emergency Houses, 1990 & 1991 protests, Mangere Immigration, Women Friends, Te Hikoi Ki Waitangi, Home Birth, Older People, Racism, Antiapartheid, Polynesian Festival, and so many more.

The lived experiences she documented, particularly those involving extreme poverty, racial injustice and intergenerational trauma, are inherently personal. No matter how informed or empathetic the external observer, it is impossible to fully grasp the reality of those living it. However, with Gil's singular vision and determination to capture life in Aotearoa in vast detail, she moved through the world with a keen sense of justice. Her lens often focused on the working class, the unemployed, the disenfranchised, the unseen and undocumented.

The images presented in *Undocumented* feature several events across the 1980s, such as Mana Motuhaka Hui, Housing Network demonstrations, Trade Union conferences, and protests against welfare cuts. In many sobering images we also witness marginalised families living in cramped conditions, burnt out houses, back alleys, and cars.

I thought of my own tamariki and their experience of life in Aotearoa, the societal issues they could face across the decades to come. What precarities will be forced upon them, and in what reigning paradigm? What needs of theirs will be unmet? Who should and could serve those needs? Who will hold power? What governments with what unfettered policies?

I mused on the political work of Luke Willis Thompson, and the two exemplary film works, *Whakamoemoeā* (2024) and *Soro* (2025), that will be exhibited in the galleries adjacent to Gil's. In his speculative future of the coming decade, Luke imagines a world where political agency for Māori is an absolute reality. Where the vision of Moana Jackson and hundreds of iwi and

community groups finally result in constitutional transformation. Where Matike Mai, a commitment to human values, is upheld for all peoples living in Aotearoa, building worlds where people would never be ripped from their homes, as they were in the Dawn Raids that began in the 1970s.

Sitting in the garden, I imagined what struggles Gil would fearlessly document in years to come, and the people she would photograph along the way to this future of self-determination. I do think that somehow, in some way, she will be there to witness that future, the future she has fought for, for Aotearoa.

I can't help but agree, that yes, it will be amazing.

Nat Tozer, 2025