

Timothy Webby
Someday My Prince Will Come
Coastal Signs, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland
18 June - 25 July 2026

Disneyland occupies a unique position within contemporary culture. More than a theme park it exists as a purpose-built environment dedicated to the production of wonder, offering visitors the sensation that this place exists specifically for them. Park-goers arrive seeking intimate connections to childhood memories, personal fantasies, and cultural myths, experiencing these moments collectively yet privately.

Disneyland is a site designed not only to be seen but as an experience to be documented and perpetuated *en abyme*. The inanimate subjects within Tim Webby's photographs, shot on film during a single visit to Tokyo Disney in 2026, appear aware of this condition, as though they have been constructed with their future image in mind. This awareness creates an uncanny tension throughout the series as though the exhibition itself was predestined.

Webby's photographs often feel positioned on the precipice of joy rather than within it. Central to this affect is Webby's use of hand-colouring; the application of colour returns the viewer to whimsy while drawing attention to the artificial nature of both images and subject matter. The photographs thaw beneath these interventions, as though colour itself were attempting to resurrect a frozen world. The hand-colouring directs our attention while intensifying the sense that the fantasy is being carefully managed. Lanterns on the pirate ship glow in the darkness, scarlet clouds settle over Peter Pan's shoulders, and fireworks magnificently light up a night sky. Rather than restoring reality, colour compounds the illusion, pushing the image further into a dream state. The atmosphere of the exhibition is similar to the eerie sensation one has just before waking – lucid, seductive, and subtly deceptive... Looking at these works feels akin to encountering a creepypasta.

Much has been made of Disneyland in spectacle theory and queer theory over the last few decades – Webby's images seem to metabolise much of this content, while also feeling self-possessed and distinct. Curiously, if anything, there is a Warholian aspect to some images; the faux-lithographic stipulation of pale primary colours over the flowers in *Tulips (Disneyland)*, or the Marilyn-toned pink and yellow castle in *Sky Full of Colours with Full Moon (Disneyland)*. *Bluebeard's Tomb with Prams* looks like a saccharine addendum to the *Death and Disaster* series. One experiencing Webby's images might recall the childhood photograph of actress and Warhol superstar Candy Darling, who drew a fashionable fringe onto her own childhood portrait. Such gestures reveal the desire to participate in a legible, accepted image-culture while simultaneously problematising and recognising one's exclusion from it.

Disneyland's promise of belonging is here presented as both sincere and impossible, a fantasy continually offered yet never fully attained. The distortion present throughout the series reinforces this fickle, contradictory dynamic. In not one but two images, side-by-side, the façade of a dirty golden castle distorts as if exposed multiple times on the same negative. In another image, *Canopy with Chandelier (Disneyland)*, the developing chemicals have literally peeled back sections of a vaulted glass-ceiling. Taken all together, the works form an unlikely community bound by a shared condition. Subjected to the same chemical and painterly treatments, they emerge as odd friends inhabiting a dreamworld that is simultaneously seductive and unsettling as the seams subtly come apart. Hovering between enchantment and unease, the works dwell in a space where dreams are made tangible yet remain strangely out of reach.

Millie Dunstall