

Sarjeant Quarterly 84

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Newsletter of the
Sarjeant Gallery
Te Whare o Rehua
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FRONT COVER: **Tia Ranginui**, *Purerehu*, 2020, archival pigment ink. Courtesy of the artist.

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From the Director

The Sarjeant Gallery has happily moved into the Orange alert level setting of the COVID-19 Protection Framework and with much-reduced restrictions, we can now resume something close to business as usual.

By the time this newsletter reaches you we will already have had a series of events including, a drop spindle workshop with Annie Mackenzie; an opening for Vicki Fanning's show *Upon a Moment*; and artist talks by both Vicki and Annie. The Footnote New Zealand Dancers presented a physical response to Annie Mackenzie's exhibition *Genuine Article* and we hosted broadcaster Noelle McCarthy, who spoke about her memoir *Grand* with our Mayor. Most recently, we have had the excitement of Tia Ranginui's opening for her exhibition *Tua o Tāwauwau* followed by her artist talk the following day. Coming up we have *Testing Ground*, an exciting new show of eight artists working in the realm of contemporary craft. The exhibition was curated by Milly Mitchell-Anyon who was the Gallery's Blumhardt Foundation Curator for 2021 and is now on staff as the Assistant Curator while Jessica Kidd is on parental leave.

I would also like to take a moment to note the passing of Ross Mitchell-Anyon ONZM (1954–2022)—expert potter and long-time supporter of the Sarjeant Gallery. I've been in Whanganui nearly 15 years now and I have to say that it was a daunting prospect moving to a community where I knew few people and taking responsibility for a nearly century-old institution with its storied past. But thanks to a small group of people I met when I arrived, I was quickly made to feel welcome, and notable among that group was Ross Mitchell-Anyon.

I've lost track of the number of times in those first few years that I spent Friday evenings around the fire at his house on Bedford Ave. Ross was never shy about letting me know, in his opinion, what was going well or not so well at the Gallery. We spent countless hours putting the world to rights in that smoky haze and although the memory of those nights is beginning to fade a bit, I'll be forever grateful to him for helping me find my feet in those early days here in Whanganui.

It's important that we celebrate Ross's fantastic legacy in clay that he has left us. He was a master of his craft and the product of his numerous firings lives on in places as diverse as people's kitchens and dinner tables; through to some of the country's leading art museums and collections. Whether you knew him as an artist, a maker, an agitator or a politician; the one thing many of us will agree on is that we and our community are a lot richer because of Ross.

GREG ANDERSON

New Arrivals

The Sarjeant Gallery whānau has grown with the addition of Dale Thrasyvoulou. Assistant Curator Jessica Kidd and her partner Costas welcomed their second child into the world on 9 April. Congratulations.

We are very pleased to announce that Milly Mitchell-Anyon has joined the Gallery team as Assistant Curator while Jessica is on parental leave. For the last year Milly has been working closely with the Gallery team as the Blumhardt Curator and the exhibition *Testing Ground* which is featured in this Quarterly, is the result of that time. Whanganui is Milly's hometown and since graduating in 2018 with a Masters of Arts in Art History from Victoria University of Wellington she has developed an impressive CV and portfolio of exhibitions and writing. In 2019 she undertook a Creative NZ Curatorial Internship in Contemporary Art at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery and in 2018 was the Blumhardt Creative NZ Curatorial Intern at the Dowse Art Museum. Mitchell-Anyon has also worked in Collection Management roles at Puke Ariki and the Whanganui Regional Museum. Welcome Milly it's great to have you as part of the team.

Auckland-based painter Andrew McLeod is our current artist-in-residence at Tylee Cottage for May–June. McLeod was the inaugural artist-in-residence at The Gullies in Marton earlier this year so it's great that he will get to spend more time in the region and further develop work he started at that time. Welcome Andrew.

GREG DONSON, *Curator & Public Programmes Manager*



Milly Mitchell-Anyon

Friends Update

The Friends Executive Committee is delighted to welcome the following new members to the Friends of the Sarjeant. Welcome to Patsy Deverall, Chris Nelson, Sarah O'Brien and Angela Stratton. What a great time to join up as a Member now the Gallery is back into the full swing of events and openings.

By the time you read this, our reconfigured Friends of the Sarjeant Executive Committee will have had their first live face-to-face meetings at the Gallery and we are looking forward to meeting with Friends and Volunteers at the upcoming events. Executive members are always wearing a name tag at events so feel free to introduce yourself. Please keep an eye on the e-newsletters from the Sarjeant in between the release of the Sarjeant Quarterly, and for event flyers in cafes, restaurants and shops.

The Friends Executive would also like to welcome the new CEO of Whanganui District Council, David Langford to his role and to Whanganui.

If you know of any new residents to Whanganui, New Zealand's only designated UNESCO City of Design, we would be delighted to welcome them as Friends of the Sarjeant Gallery. Membership forms are available at the front desk of the Sarjeant or from any Executive member.

In the meantime, take care. Ka kite ano,

IAN GLENNY, *President Friends Executive*

A Piano for the Sarjeant

Long-term friend of the Gallery, niece of Edith Collier and trustee of the Edith Collier Trust, Helen Gordon (née Collier) has made a unique and wonderful bequest to the Trust for the benefit of the Sarjeant Gallery—a striking Yamaha baby grand piano. This is a generous gift, which we will all benefit from, and which will attract world-class talent to the redeveloped gallery when it re-opens in 2024.

Helen Gordon is from a gifted artistic family and, having trained as a concert pianist at home in New Zealand, she trained at the Sydney Conservatorium then in London and Vienna for three years. Her career took her all over the world.

Helen's base was always with her husband Ronald, and their children, on a farm 25km out of Taihape. At 92, she still plays the piano to the very highest standard and practices every day. We look forward to sharing the joy the piano will bring and to telling you more about this extraordinary gift in the future.

Redevelopment Update

The seismic strengthening work in the basement and interior of the 103 year old Sarjeant Gallery is continuing to make steady progress. The new foundations and suspended floors are complete in the east, west and south quadrants and the building really looks and feels like it's ready for the next 100 years. Substantial progress has also been made under the central dome as shown in the adjacent images captured three weeks apart. Once steel reinforcing has been put in place, concrete is poured against the formwork to create the strengthened ground beams. A series of lighter beams are then placed horizontally to support the suspended Traydec steel composite flooring system.

Up at the roof level, the old brickwork and parapet capping stones in the east and west zones have been removed to allow replacement of the internal downpipes and to repair the cracks in the existing Oamaru stone structure. This process involves taking the original stone off-site for assessment with the aim being that as much of the original stone will be retained and re-used.

A specialist team has removed the old asbestos membrane roofing and preparations are underway to construct the diaphragm ring beam, which is the main seismic strengthening element on the dome.

The network of pipework and underground services around the new building has been completed and soil and sand taken away during the excavation phase has been returned and used as backfill around the building perimeter where construction of the next level is already underway.

GAYE BATTY, *Sarjeant Gallery Redevelopment Project Director*

OPPOSITE TOP: Ground beams under construction in the central dome area with horizontal beams as needed for the Traydec metal flooring system. Photo by Barry Robin, Project Manager.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Metal Traydec has been placed over the horizontal beams under the central dome ready for the concrete floor to be poured. Photo by Barry Robin, Project Manager.



Tia Ranginui

Tua o Tāwauwau

28 MAY–21 AUGUST, 2022

As a child Tia Ranginui's grandfather told her stories about patupaiarehe—fairy folk. For Māori they were the fairy people of Aotearoa. Red or fair-haired, they had pale skin and were mostly nocturnal—direct sunlight could be fatal. They lived in the forests and mountains, building their homes from swirling mists. Like sirens, the patupaiarehe were known to lure people, especially young women into their company. Those stories were about patupaiarehe being mercurial tricksters, causing people to get caught up in the mist, lost, dazed, confused and transported to another place. Hence the title of this exhibition *Tua o Tāwauwau / Away with the Fairies*.

Ranginui (Ngāti Hine Oneone) grew up at Koroniti on the Whanganui River. The stories her grandfather and uncles told her were easily imagined for a young child. The Awa was right there, the mists of the patupaiarehe were not in the past but in the present and still are. It wasn't just the stories of patupaiarehe, but giant people, like the giant from up the hill that came to visit her grandfather. There were taniwha, ghosts and Ranginui remembers dressing up and staging plays—a childhood ripe with imagination and a place of exploration and dreaming. Her whanau moved to Whanganui for practical reasons but Koroniti is never far away, physically or in her memory. Ranginui now lives on the banks of the Whanganui River, in town and near where the Awa meets the sea. Observing its subtle changes everyday.

Ranginui is a self-taught photographer and would call herself more of an image-maker rather than a photographer. She's been composing photographs for most of her life but it was the camera in hand that made her start capturing the images. For *Tua o Tāwauwau* the patupaiarehe have migrated from her childhood memories into town but they're not hiding anymore, they are out and about in the wilds of the Whanganui suburbs of Gonville and Castlecliff. Ranginui's approach to taking photographs is decidedly lo-fi, slow and swift at the same time. She's not one for photoshop or remembering that her models don't have the right shoes on, the swirling mists of her childhood stories are replaced by vape clouds and a smoke machine.

GREG DONSON, *Curator & Public Programmes Manager*



ABOVE: **Tia Ranginui**, *Royk*, 2022, archival pigment ink on Hahnemühle Photo Rag, courtesy of the artist.

Tua o Tāwauwau was first shown in the exhibition 'Gonville Gothic' curated by Robert Leonard for City Gallery Wellington 14 August–31 October, 2021 and was generously supported by Creative NZ.

Testing Ground

Curated by Milly Mitchell-Anyon

18 JUNE–16 OCTOBER 2022

What does the future of craft look like? There is no black or white answer when it comes to what constitutes contemporary craft, no rulebook or right answer. *Testing Ground* is an exhibition that features eight contemporary craft practitioners from New Zealand. The show looks at just some of the new generation of makers, highlighting their practices and providing a new curatorial context to view their work together. These artists are at the forefront of experimentation, pushing their practices in new and exciting directions in taonga pūoro, textiles, ceramics, jewellery, furniture and industrial design.

This exhibition looks at how these makers approach their practice and how they use craft to express contemporary concerns through making things. Whether this constitutes new ways of working, adopting new technologies, or thinking about traditional materials and methodologies from a new angle.



Making is, after all, about testing out ideas.

Turning our attention to the future of craft requires, as always, a consideration of the past and the historical context that we place the history of craft within. It is fitting that this exhibition takes place at the Sarjeant Gallery; with Whanganui recently designated New Zealand's only UNESCO City of Design, alongside the historical precedent of Whanganui being a centre for craft and making.

The exhibition also emerges from the Blumhardt Foundation's Curatorial Pilot Scheme with Milly Mitchell-Anyon selected as the inaugural 2021–2022 Blumhardt Curator with this exhibition as the culmination of it. The scheme has been jointly funded by the Blumhardt Foundation and Creative New Zealand, with Bronwyn Lloyd also selected to curate a show for the Dowse Art Museum.

IMAGE: Zhu Ohmu, Organ Pipe Mud Dauber, 2021, clay, private collection.

Vicki Fanning

Upon a Moment

14 MAY–31 JULY, 2022

Vicki Fanning is the third generation of her family to work closely with glass but her use of the material is quite different to her father and grandfather. Fanning’s grandfather, Aubrey Fanning helped build up the ‘Wanganui Glass Company,’ which was the main producer and distributor of etched and sandblasted doors and windows in New Zealand. Today these designs can be found in homes throughout the country, from stags, ships, dancers and nymphs—there were many designs to choose from. As a communications technician, Fanning’s father Brian worked with Brazilian Quartz Crystal, which was used for transmitting communications and today is used in fibreoptics for our ultrafast connections to the virtual world. Fanning has drawn on this family history with glass and created three works inspired by designs from the original catalogue of the Wanganui Glass Company—*The Beast*, *The Dancer* and *The Glade*.

The sculptures were made using light and shadow, with Fanning tracing and retracing the designs to then reconstruct them into abstracted three-dimensional sculptures, made from moulded polycarbonate and covered in shimmering scales, tendrils and spikes formed from clear Borosilicate glass, each painstakingly manipulated through flame working.

Fanning’s sculptures resemble imagery in motion, like information travelling through fibreoptics. The forms are elongated, blurry and sharp at the same time—glitching from a virtual to a real space, between fact and fiction. She has captured them in a moment of almost arrival, mid-transmission.

As Fanning explains she’s exploring “the idea of glass as a metaphor,” as a conduit of an in-between state. The etched glass doors that were being designed and produced during her grandfather’s time at the Wanganui Glass Company originally operated as zone dividers in homes—outside and inside, between public and private spaces. Fanning’s sculptures operate in a similar way, the works are physical and gestural, changing when viewed from different angles. Fanning’s project and research highlight a unique local design story that adds to Whanganui’s growing reputation as the glass hub of New Zealand.

GREG DONSON, *Curator & Public Programmes Manager*



Spread from ‘Catalogue of Sandblast Designs’ by The Wanganui Glass Co. Ltd, circa 1940s. To see Vicki’s work that was inspired by this design, have a look at our back cover.

Ann Verdcourt 1934–2022

As noted by Gallery Director, Greg Anderson, the whole team were saddened not only at the passing of Whanganui potter Ross Mitchell-Anyon but also that of ceramicist Ann Verdcourt (1934–2022). The Sarjeant has had a long-standing relationship with Verdcourt and we are fortunate to have a number of works by her in our collection. The Gallery staged solo exhibitions of her work in 1990, 1999 and most notably in 2010 with a major survey exhibition, developed in partnership with Te Manawa, which toured nationally and was accompanied by a publication.

One of the things that made Verdcourt unique is that not only was she a skilled and knowledgeable ceramicist, but that she also saw clay as a medium that, for her, was as much about sculpting and making sense of the world through objects that were often intrinsically connected to everyday life. Verdcourt's elegant works are full of narrative and wit and they reside in a unique hinterland between the worlds of pottery, sculpture and fine art.

Verdcourt was a remarkable artist who was ahead of her time. As a person she was fiercely intelligent, funny and generous and was a great friend to the Sarjeant. Her works will stand the test of time and the ceramics world will miss one of its best. Our deepest sympathies go to Ann's husband, John Lawrence, and their two children.

GREG DONSON, Curator & Public Programmes Manager

OPPOSITE: **Ann Verdcourt, *Picasso's Muse*, 2008**, grogged paper clay, slip and stains. Collection of the Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare o Rehua Whanganui. Gift of the artist, 2010.

“Over eleven years Marie-Thérèse Walter was Picasso’s inspiration for hundreds of paintings, drawings, etchings, collages and sculptures. My favourite works are those paintings that show Marie-Thérèse wearing a hat or a garland of flowers around her head. One painting in particular shows her wearing a beret and a coat with a large collar. The wonderful profile combined with the sculptural aspects of the beret and collar made me reach for the clay bags.”

ANN VERDCOURT, 2010



UPON A MOMENT

VICKI FANNING

14 MAY – 31 JULY 2022

Vicki Fanning, *The Beast*, 2022, glass and acrylic.



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Sarjeant Gallery is a cultural facility of the Whanganui District Council

Sarjeant
On the Quay