

Sarjeant Quarterly 90

Summer 2023/24



Newsletter of the
Sarjeant Gallery
Te Whare o Rehua
Whanganui
ISSN 2624-408X

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COVER IMAGE: Former Sarjeant Gallery Director Bill Milbank in the gallery's collection store in 1994

BELOW: Isabella Loudon's one-off building takeover in Marton is not to be missed in December



From the Director

Nau mai, haere mai,

As we go to print with our summer issue of the Sarjeant Quarterly, we're still processing the loss of former Sarjeant Gallery Director, Bill Milbank QSM (1948–2023), who passed away on November 4th. As I sit down to write, I've just returned from one of his favourite local eateries, where I felt obliged to take his usual order, a pain aux raisin—cheers, Bill!

This issue of the Sarjeant Quarterly is dedicated to Bill and includes a poignant tribute from our Curator & Public Programmes Manager, Greg Donson, who worked with Bill from 2001 until Bill's departure in 2006, and has collaborated with him on subsequent projects. Whanganui and the wider arts community owe Bill a huge debt of gratitude for his substantial contribution over many years.

In particular, Bill's memory will live on through the redeveloped Sarjeant Gallery, a project that he initiated and championed tirelessly for us all. It is pleasing to see in Project Director Gaye Batty's report, an impressive list of important milestones all reaching completion. By the time our next issue is out, we will be very close to moving in and starting the fit-out of our new and restored spaces in readiness for the big opening later in 2024.

Meanwhile, we're pleased to continue with a lively programme of events and activities, some of which are also detailed here, including our monthly offsite art talks. In particular, Isabella Loudon's one-off building takeover in Marton is not to be missed in December. We hope to see you there or at one of our other events over the coming months.

Lastly, I must offer our congratulations to our colleagues at the newly reopened Kāpiti Coast district gallery, Toi Mahara; another longheld vision that has now become a reality. More than ever, the drive from Wellington to New Plymouth offers a rich array of cultural attractions and we encourage you to check out the coastal arts trail website. We hope you'll do some exploring through this exciting part of Aotearoa over the summer months.

Mā te wā,

ANDREW CLIFFORD, Director

From the Sarjeant Gallery Trust



Ngaire Young

As we draw closer to the Sarjeant Gallery reopening at Pukenuamu Queen's Park, it is important to think back to all those who have helped the Redevelopment Project reach where it is today. One of those people is Mrs Ngaire Young who made a generous bequest of \$500,000 in her will. Her wishes were that the bequest was to be made for art acquisitions. In 2013 when Arts Minister Hon. Chris Finlayson ring-fenced \$10 million of government money for the redevelopment, the Sarjeant Gallery Trust had no budget for fundraising activities and government applications. So we were forced to delve into this money, which we did after consultation with the Estate Trustees, Mr Ian Young and Mr John Tripe. However I am pleased to say that we now have been able to release these funds back to the Sarjeant Endowment Fund and honour Ngaire's wishes as stated in her will.

One must wonder, what is it that would motivate a person to give part of her fortune to the city of Whanganui (she also donated \$750,000 to the Whanganui Regional Museum). It has been hard to find out very much about Ngaire Young as she died aged 84 in 1995 and had no children. However as it happens, my godmother Mrs Belinda Galbraith and Ngaire's godson, Mr Ian Young still have strong memories of her. This is what they have told me:

Ngaire Russell was born in 1911. She married Mr Stewart Patterson who was "a gentleman farmer"

known to be "tremendous fun" and together they pursued strong interests in trout fishing at their Taupō bach and owned and raced horses. They had a wide circle of friends in Whanganui who were all very proud and supportive of their city.

It is through her friendship with Mrs Patricia Carver (Belinda's mother) that Ngaire probably developed her interest in the Sarjeant Gallery. Patricia was a long time President of the Sarjeant Gallery Friends Committee. After her first husband died Patricia married Mr Douglas Young. And then sadly she died and Douglas married the widowed Ngaire Patterson when they were both in their late seventies.

Ngaire Young was known to enjoy new shows at the Sarjeant and after these excursions would always enjoy discussing the art at length with her friends. She was a deep thinker and well educated, having a disdain for shallow chit chat. She had exquisite taste in furniture, and always dressed beautifully with an elegant coiffure to match. Belinda said that Ngaire loved the Gallery and Whanganui was in her heart. So it does not surprise her that Ngaire gave so generously to her city.

We at the Sarjeant are deeply grateful to Mrs Ngaire Young as her legacy bequest has been pivotal in ensuring that the Sarjeant Gallery lives on for another 100 years.

NICOLA WILLIAMS,
Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board Chair



TOP: Glazing being installed in the ground level of Te Pātaka o Sir Te Atawhai Archie John Taiaroa
 BOTTOM: Visitors from Tourism New Zealand, seen here on the newly installed air-bridge

Sarjeant Gallery Redevelopment Update

Heading into the last quarter of 2023 the project team is ticking off the milestones.

Starting with Te Pātaka o Sir Te Atawhai Archie John Taiaroa, the roof is now completed, the air-bridge connecting the upper floors of the new wing with the heritage building has been installed and the ground floor level that will house the café, retail shop and auditorium space is now fully enclosed by glass.

Inside the new wing the partitioning walls have been installed on all three levels providing a real sense of how each of the gallery spaces will look and feel. In the basement, where the precious Sarjeant collection will be stored, the ducting for the temperature and humidity control system has been installed, the floor, ceiling and walls have been sealed and painted and specialists have installed the CO2 fire suppressant system. Civil works, underground services connections and the new access road on the eastern side from Pukenu Drive leading down to the basement have made good progress with just the footpaths to complete at time of writing.

The 104-year-old heritage-listed gallery passed a significant milestone with all seismic strengthening works now complete. Steel rods have been threaded from the roof down through the exterior walls to create a link between the two main seismic elements, the new concrete ring beam at roof level and the new ground foundations in the basement. Each rod has been pulled into tension and locked into place by a large nut. These vertical rods form a cage like structure to provide rigidity and strength.

Inside the original Sarjeant Gallery building, painting and plastering is moving at pace and the contractor will soon commence re-installment of the original matai floors that were uplifted, numbered and stored during the refurbishment. These will be laid into place and given a gentle sand ahead of sealing and finishing.

The next significant milestone is the installation of the dark granite façade on Te Pātaka o Sir Te Atawhai Archie John Taiaroa. Over the coming weeks vertical railings will be secured against the upper level which have been wrapped in a thick, impenetrable vapour barrier. The façade will be built from rhomboid shaped slabs, some polished, some honed, to form an Aramoana pattern, unique to Whanganui. The choice of dark granite is a bold departure from the creamy Oamaru stone of the original design. It will be complimentary to the early 20th century heritage gallery and an expression of the relationship with Te Awa Tupua and Mana Whenua, signifying a bridge between old and new, past and present.

GAYE BATTY, *Sarjeant Gallery Redevelopment Project Director*

Two Years / One Building

A Studio Show:

Isabella Loudon

8–10 DECEMBER, 2023

What if an artist was given free rein to infiltrate a building extending beyond their studio space with their own sculptural work? From 8–10 December sculptor Isabella Loudon is opening up the building she has been working in for the last two years. This is a rare chance to see a site specific multi-room installation before the building is demolished in 2024.

In late 2021, due to a bad bout of glandular fever, Loudon found herself having to return home to her family in Marton to recover. One of the benefits of being in Marton was access to a studio space in a vacant commercial building owned by her parents. Initially it was just the former bookshop space downstairs and not the empty flat upstairs, but as she settled in and was recovering from fatigue, the prospect of occupying the entire building became more appealing and over the last year she's done just that. The building has become a giant artist project, with each of the rooms offering her an opportunity to bring works into conversation and play with each other. Given the building is scheduled for demolition and with understanding and supportive parents as landlords, the gloves have been off, walls demolished, carpets pulled up, the building peeled back.

In Wellington, Loudon's studio was a windowless basement studio where she could easily hideaway, absorbed in her own world. In Marton with a large street front window there's been a fair amount of curiosity about what's going on in there, especially with the window now occupied by a family of elegant suspended organic slug-like forms made from black rubber innertubes.

Loudon is a 2016 Fine Arts graduate of Massey University, Wellington and since that time she has been making a name for herself as one of Aotearoa's most interesting sculptors. Her work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions, including 'Labyrinth' at the Dowse Art Museum in 2018, a sculptural drawing made from concrete-covered twine; the group exhibition—'The Tomorrow People'



in 2017 at the Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi and a large installation Platforms in the group exhibition 'Unravelling' in 2019 at City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi. Her primary medium at that time was concrete but over the last two years she has branched out into plaster, copper and discarded rubber inner tubes from cars, trucks, tractors and bikes. For Loudon, the space a work occupies is often integral to how it is read, she makes the comparison to how her drawings occupy the space of a page—'chaotic with one thing talking to another'. She likes to keep things tidy and organised in the studio but the instinctive way she works leads to a certain kind of chaos.

WHAT TO EXPECT: Loudon's studio is located in Marton at 214 Broadway, approximately 30 minutes from Whanganui. Visitors will be able to view the spaces upstairs and downstairs. Works occupy the walls, floors and ceiling. Access to the upper floor is via stairs only. The artist and gallery staff will be present over the three days.

ARTIST TALK: Isabella will be in the space for the duration of the three days but will give an artist talk in conversation with a member of the gallery's curatorial team on Saturday and Sunday 11.15am and 2.15pm.

WHAT & WHEN: 214 Broadway, Marton Friday 8, Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 December from 11am–4pm

TRANSPORT: Visitors are free to make their own way to Marton or the Sarjeant is offering a minivan shuttle service on Saturday and Sunday for \$10 return.

Shuttles departing for Marton from 38 Taupō Quay 10.30am and 2.00pm
Shuttles returning to Whanganui from 214 Broadway 12.30pm and 3.30pm

Gallery Research Trip to Kāwhia

The Sarjeant Gallery's reopening programme in 2024 will include the launch of a substantial publication on the work of early Whanganui modernist painter Edith Collier. Accompanying the main essay by Jill Trevelyan will be texts which examine aspects of Collier's work that have not been considered in earlier publications. This new volume edited by Jill Trevelyan, Jennifer Taylor Moore and Greg Donson, commissioned by the Edith Collier Trust and published by Massey University Press, is timed to coincide with an exhibition of Collier's work curated by Jill Trevelyan as part of the Gallery's reopening.

In 1928 Collier spent six months staying with a friend in Kāwhia and painting portraits of kuia she met as well as the stunning local landscape. As part of research for the upcoming book, we made contact with the trustees of Maketū Marae at Kāwhia and in September a contingent from Whanganui were invited to visit and stay at the marae. Kaumatua Uncle John, Jasmin Ratana, Jill Trevelyan, Edith Collier Trust chair Fiona Horrocks, Collier's nephew Gordon Collier, as well as Gallery staff Andrew Clifford, Greg Donson, Michael McKeagg, myself and Te Maari Barham made the trip.

Our generous hosts for the weekend were Marae trustees Roy Willison and Shirley Tuteao and it was an incredible privilege to be invited to spend the night in Auau-ki-te-rangi, the stunning wharenui at the Marae. Almost a century after Collier was there we watched the sun rise over the misty reaches of Kāwhia harbour and witnessed for ourselves scenes that felt so familiar to us from Collier's work. Of particular interest were the paintings of Maketū Marae. It was fascinating to see the changes in the landscape and buildings since Collier's time; to be able to identify some of the kuia in Collier's paintings; to stand at some of the sites from which Collier would have done her paintings; and to hear the korero that her paintings generated amongst the local iwi.

We are so thankful to Roy, Shirley and Maketū Marae for inviting us and, along with the Edith Collier Trust, we look forward to inviting them to join us in Whanganui in 2024 to celebrate the launch of this exciting new publication.

JENNIFER TAYLOR MOORE



TOP: Listening to Maketū Marae trustee Shirley Tuteao's korero are (l-r) Jennifer Taylor Moore, Te Maari Barham, and Jill Trevelyan

ABOVE: Our generous hosts together with the Whanganui manuhiri at Maketū Marae on the shores of beautiful Kāwhia harbour

Bill Milbank 1945–2023

The Sarjeant Gallery team were saddened to learn of the passing of former Director Bill Milbank on 4 November.

Bill was at the helm of the gallery from 1978–2006 and during his tenure he developed facets of the gallery's programming and collecting that remain the cornerstones of what we still do today.

During his time, the Sarjeant Gallery redevelopment project moved from a pipe dream to a realised design by architects Warren & Mahoney and we were so hopeful that Bill would be with us in 2024 to celebrate the reopening of a gallery he had dedicated his life to.

Bill's directorship was marked by a remarkable support of artists, many of whom began their public gallery exhibiting careers at the Sarjeant and have since gone on to become Aotearoa's leading artists—Philip Trusstum, Gretchen Albrecht, Mervyn Williams, Andrew Drummond, Laurence Aberhart, Anne Noble and Peter Peryer are but a few in that field. As well as having a good eye, Bill knew when to let an artist drive a project and when he needed to fold support around them. He was well ahead of his time in the inclusion of contemporary Māori practices in the gallery's programme with the



Sarjeant staging some landmark exhibitions through the 1980s and 1990s. He was also responsible for forming the strong relationship with the family of painter Edith Collier and it is because of him that we are permanent custodians of Collier's work.

Bill had strong networks with other institutions and was a significant figure in national sector bodies. He was a driving force in getting New Zealand art abroad with international touring exhibitions.

After his time as Director came to an end Bill established the

WHMilbank Gallery and, until his declining health forced the closure of the gallery, he remained dedicated to his stable of artists and particularly his long-time friend Philip Trusstum. His gallery was part of Whanganui's arts community ecology and many local artists were encouraged and supported by him.

In 2005 he was awarded a Q.S.O in the Queen's Birthday Honours for his Community Service. The list of Bill's achievements are long but we thank him for his legacy, commitment to the Sarjeant, Whanganui and for his unwavering



Bill Milbank with artist and long-time friend Philip Trusstum in 1980 (left), and more recently at Sarjeant on the Quay in 2022

belief in the power of art to change peoples lives and the way they see the world.

Our deepest sympathies to Raewyne, Bill's wife, our former colleague and friend. Your care of Bill over the last couple of years is nothing short of extraordinary. To Bill's three children and three step children and his wider extended family and friends, we are so sorry for your loss. Rest in peace dear Bill, you'll always be with us, stitched into the stone, present in the dome and in the bays of the wings.

GREG DONSON, *Curator & Public Programmes Manager*

Friends Update

The Friends of the Sarjeant Gallery held their AGM on Thursday 5 October at the Whanganui War Memorial Centre's Pioneer Room. We had a healthy turnout of almost 50 people and among other business discussed it was resolved that two Life Memberships, and an Honorary Membership be granted. Our ex-director Greg Anderson has accepted an Honorary Membership of the Friends of the Sarjeant Gallery, and Raewyne Johnson and Bill Milbank were honoured with Life Memberships. We are so pleased that Bill was able to receive this honour before he passed away on November 4.

We would like to welcome our new Friends recently signed up—Michaela Pinkerton, Denis Rainsforth, Heather Mackenzie, Channah Knuckey, James Fortune, J F Eden, Michael Fitzgerald, Hanne Andersen, Kitty & Andy Young and Victoria Cullen. The Friends Executive wish you all a most calm quiet happy and safe Christmas.

Recent & Upcoming Events

Despite the Sarjeant Gallery having been closed since June, it's been a busy time for gallery events in 2023. We have used all sorts of different venues around Whanganui and it has meant we've remained in close contact with our community while we wait for the big reopening of the Sarjeant in 2024. A recent exciting event was the Friday Night Soirée at the Hot Shop which was hosted by the Friends Executive at New Zealand Glassworks. We had a terrific turnout with food and drinks plus a talk by Whanganui favourite, the glass artist Vicki Fanning. We were treated to a fabulous demonstration by Glassworks resident glass artist Philip Stokes whose incredible skill, strength and flair were on display as he created a stunning "flyaway platter" in the hot shop on the night! The platter was then auctioned and the lucky winner not only took home the beautiful piece, but has contributed directly to the gallery. We are so grateful to NZ Glassworks for the support they always show to the Sarjeant Gallery and this occasion was an outstanding display of their creativity, professionalism and generosity. Thank you to the whole team at NZ Glassworks for an unforgettable night. Can we do it all again?!

At the time of writing the Sarjeant team are planning Ngā Tai Huri Huri at the Royal Whanganui Opera House on Sunday 3 December. Already we've had bookings from all over the country—no doubt due to the stellar line-up of stars including Stephen Diaz and Deborah Wai Kapohe plus the inclusion of Gareth Farr's sunning and dramatic composition Ngā Tai Huri Huri.



Sarjeant on the Quay closed on 30 June 2023 in advance of the reopening of the Sarjeant Gallery at Pukenuamu Queen's Park in 2024

Keep an eye out in the Quarterly, newspaper, website and social media for events and programmes while we are closed and moving to the newly strengthened and extended gallery facility at Pukenuamu Queen's Park.



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Sarjeant Gallery is a cultural facility of the Whanganui District Council