



# SARJEANT QUARTERLY

96

Newsletter of Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery ISSN 2624-408X / Spring 2025



2	3	From the Director
Spring 2025	4	Chris Yri Connolly: <i>What we take with us</i>
	6	Christopher Ulutupu: <i>West</i>
	8	Mata Puare Mā—The Opening Eye
	10	Collection Conservation
	12	Hemi Macgregor: <i>Waiora</i>
	14	Education News
	16	Tylee News
	17	Friends of the Sarjeant Gallery Update
	18	Philanthropy and Support



Cover: Christopher Ulutupu *West Part 1* 2024, single channel video. Photographer: Kasmira Krefft DOP: Haz Forrester, image courtesy of the artist

Right: Collection relocation underway beneath Te Pātaka o Ta Te Atawhai Archie John Taiaroa

Tēnā anō koe,

With Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery's redevelopment complete, we're now able to celebrate its achievements and accolades. In July we confirmed that 100,000 visitors have already been through our facilities, including more than 3,000 for education programmes. Surveys indicate that 60 percent of these visitors are from outside Whanganui and economic data suggests this will generate \$17.6m of economic activity in our region each year. There have also been a number of prestigious design and architecture awards received, including the Civic Award in the 2025 Interior Awards, the Premier Award at the 2025 Concrete Construction Awards and both the Public Building and Heritage Awards at the NZ Institute of Architects (NZIA) western region awards—our fingers are crossed for the NZIA national awards in November, and we're excited to be finalists for that occasion too.

We are making excellent progress delivering all the outcomes the redevelopment promised. But there is one important task that still remains. A key driver for the redevelopment was the need to create purpose-built collection storage for the care of our nationally significant art collection. Several articles in this issue focus on work taking place with the gallery's collection. The final phase of the redevelopment sees the relocation of the collection into the new storage facility beneath Te Pātaka o Ta Te Atawhai Archie John Taiaroa. At the time of writing, we have moved over 6500 artworks from a total of more than 8000.

We are grateful to the supporters who enabled special care for the Sarjeant Gallery collection in the lead-up to our reopening, and ongoing conservation work too, most notably the B & C Hewett Charitable Trust. We are also delighted and grateful with some recent gifts and bequests of artworks that will add to the depth of our collection. And we appreciate the continued support of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust, whose fundraising efforts have created an endowment fund from which we can continue acquiring artworks for many years to come.

Andrew Clifford  
Director

## Chris Yri Connolly: *What we take with us*

11 October 2025–1 February 2026

4 Spring 2025

As a generous addition to Pattillo's role as principal sponsor of the annual Whanganui Arts Review, they have supported a gallery-led initiative called the Pattillo Project which is an opportunity for the open award winner to develop a solo exhibition project with the gallery. Since 2019 this has been a highlight of our programme and has given each of the recipients a chance to develop a focused project with the support of the gallery's curatorial team.

Chris Yri Connolly was the 2022 recipient with his work *Past Possessive, Future Possessive—Umpire Chair in six parts*, an enigmatic and elegant sculpture crafted from poplar and other components. For his solo project, Connolly was inspired by the Roorkee Chair invented by the Indian Army Corps of Engineers in Roorkee, India in the late 19th century to provide lightweight, portable seating during fast moving campaigns. The components of the chair essentially broke down to a bag of sticks, making it an early version of 'flat pack furniture'.

Connolly's 'chair' is made of eleven components. By creating multiple sets, he reimagines these as a body of sculptural works that offer a multiplicity of readings. The works are an expanded exploration of the exhibition's title, *What we take with us*—considering, both literally and figuratively, what the

unknown might prompt us to carry. The lead pieces in the installation are cast from sculpted and found objects. Some, belonging to people varying in familiarity to Connolly from close to near stranger, have particular significance to their owners and were cast with their blessing. *What we take with us* also reflects on movement; movement through time, moving on from somewhere, physically and in memory. For Connolly that is collective memory but also personal—in particular, exploring movement as an homage to his grandmother, who was a lifelong dancer.

Unlike the mass production of most flat packed items, Connolly's components have been painstakingly hand crafted from poplar, much of it being timber that would normally be rejected. He sees the labour of transforming his chosen material as an important part of the process of creating the work. Connolly's works celebrate the physicality of construction, making us consider that efficiency and productivity are not always the right path to an object that might rather be imbued with humanity. He is interested in gesture and the invitational aspect of a chair. With a background in choreography, sound and design, Connolly's works are lyrical, residing poetically in the space they inhabit. The skeletal frameworks of the chairs laid flat suggest archaeology while others stand



in for actors in a performance, with gangly legs and arcing dowels.

Since 2022, Connolly has been crafting a 'project' that had its beginnings in the form of a chair but from that he has cast out multiple lines of enquiry that converge in a light and thought-provoking installation.

Greg Donson  
Senior Curator & Programmes Manager

Chris Yri Connolly *Searching for evidence of a tuskless small fry* 2025, mixed media installation. Courtesy of the artist

5 Spring 2025

## Christopher Ulutupu: *West*

27 September 2025–22 February 2026

6 Spring 2025

Christopher Ulutupu is a contemporary artist of Samoan, Niuean and German descent, working in video and photography. His works carry a unique cinematic visual language, honed throughout a career of working both as an artist and in stage design for theatre performances. They explore his indigenous identity and the representation of Pacific culture, myth and spirituality. Ulutupu often collaborates with family and friends, giving his works both a sense of ease and making them deeply personal. His post Tylee residency exhibition, *West*, filmed in and around Whanganui during his time here in 2023, will show at Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery until February 2026.

The *West* series is a departure from his earlier more theatrical works towards quieter, more contemplative moments, and signals an aesthetic and thematic shift in Ulutupu's practice. This stillness is captured in works such as *West Part 4* 2024, which features his nephew Typhon sleeping in sand dunes between takes with a halo behind his head. The halo was one of several props handmade with the help of his cast and crew, drawing on Ulutupu's research into pre-colonial

Samoan rituals, specifically *moe manatunatu*, the concept of dream-based dialogue with ancestors and atua (gods). These props were designed as instruments for channelling and embodying these spiritual elements, anchoring the work in a space between the sacred and the cinematic.

In this series, Ulutupu explores the concept of 'west' as both a geographical

direction and ideological construct, citing both the significance of Samoa dropping the adjective 'Western' from its name in 1997, and engaging with the western cinematic tropes his works often display. His practice is grounded in spontaneity and experimentation, which often leads to directions Ulutupu himself hadn't anticipated, reaching toward the atmospheric rather than prescriptive. *West* blends the mystical with the everyday,

setting the scene for new indigenous narratives and representations of indigenous histories—a new body of work which is open-ended, playful and powerfully collaborative.

Jessica Kidd  
Curator—Exhibitions & Projects

7 Spring 2025



Right: Christopher Ulutupu *West Part 4* 2024, single channel video. Photographer: Kasmira Krefft DOP: Haz Forrester, image courtesy of the artist

## Mata Puare Mā— The Opening Eye

The influence of Professor Robert  
(Bob) Jahnke PhD. ONZM

8 Spring 2025

Bob Jahnke's dynamic neon *Mata Puare Mā* was an alluring and alerting presence in the gallery space as a statement piece for the exhibition *Kanapa ki Runga—Kanapa ki Raro*. An impressive list of artists who have studied with Professor Bob Jahnke at Massey University through the Māori Visual Arts programme Toioho ki Apiti are featured alongside their mentor; Rangi Kipa, Ngahina Hohaia, Hemi Macgregor, Wī Taepa, Russ Flatt, Maihi Potaka-Butler, Isiaha Barlow, Aaron Te Rangiao Gardiner, Ta Piri o te Rangi Pirikahu, and Israel Tangaroa Birch. Also included in the exhibition from our collection was a work *Tera Tetahi Manu* by Shane Cotton, who was lecturing on the Massey Māori Visual Arts programme in the 1990s. At that time, I was a Fine Arts student at Quay School of the Arts, Whanganui, in a cohort that included Wī Taepa, Hemi Macgregor, Colleen Lenihan, Natasha Keating and Maiangi Waitai. Our sculpture lecturer Robert Bourdon drove us from Whanganui to the Massey campus in Palmerston North every week to attend Jahnke's classes. Bob Bourdon greatly revered Bob Jahnke, utilising many examples of his work in class discussions about contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand art.

*Mata Puare Mā* was a magnet for the many students that visited our gallery during the exhibition, homing in on the neon light in the darkened interior. The endless reflective depths of the mirror ignited their imagination. Jahnke has offered a poignant description of his work: "The work is an illusionistic expression of Te Ao Marama (the world of light) cosmo-genealogical principle of light and knowledge emerging out of the darkness of Te Po (the night) activated by the layering of the illuminated patterns in the manner of whakapapa (genealogy). The emphasis on the kowhiti (cross-stitch) high-lights one of the critical structural elements in arapaki (lattice work) without which the structural integrity of customary arapaki would collapse. Within the context of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the cross signatures carry an ambiguous evocation of assent and dissent but ultimately endorses tino rangatiratanga. Light and dark, colour and illusion collude in a visual expression of arapaki wrought in glass and electricity to celebrate the dawning of Puanga."

With the rising tide of restlessness expressed through the powerful Toitu Te Tiriti movement, the deeper concepts of this statement artwork are provocative and serve as a catalyst for other artists to challenge through art.



This growing attitude towards the erasure of Te Reo Māori and constant political attacks on Te Tiriti o Waitangi are the impetus for kaitoi Māori to hold the memory of our ancestors, the history of our whenua and continue the legacy of many leading artists such as Professor Bob Jahnke, whom we are honoured to have shown at Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery.

Cecelia Kumeroa, Curator—Programmes & Engagement

Above: Bob Jahnke *Mata Puare Mā* (2021–2025) wood, paint, neon, one way glass, mirror, electricity. Courtesy of the artist

## Collection Conservation Supported by Family Trust

10 Spring 2025

In 2021 Jeremy Goodwin, Chair of the B & C Hewett Charitable Trust, approached the Sarjeant Gallery wishing to fund conservation treatment for the collection. "I thought, in relation to the reopening of the gallery, they're going to have a beautifully restored old section and a lovely new building, what could we do that might have some impact?" Goodwin, part of the Hewett family, has connections with Whanganui that go back several generations. A Whanganui Collegiate oldboy, he was one of the first students to enrol in the school's history of art programme. "I did it for two years and used to spend a bit of time going to galleries to look at paintings of the type we were studying in the history of art. The Sarjeant was probably the first gallery that I visited and spent any significant time in."

Working with Studio Carolina Izzo in Auckland, the B & C Hewett Charitable Trust not only funded the conservation treatment of five paintings, which were displayed in the reopening suite of exhibitions at the Sarjeant Gallery, but they also funded the treatment of a further eight paintings by Vivian Smith. Previous poor storage conditions had caused some of the darker paint pigments to develop a white bloom while many of the frames were not structurally sound. Now that treatment has been completed, the new storage facilities in the redeveloped gallery will provide these paintings with a stable, climate-controlled environment, ensuring that the generosity of benefactors such as the B & C Hewett Charitable Trust has a long-lasting impact.

Vivian Smith (b.1883, d.1946) was a competent artist whose practice spanned portraiture, drawing, printmaking, design and war art. After studying at the Royal College of Art in London he emigrated to New Zealand in 1913 and taught art classes at both the Wellington and Wanganui Technical Colleges. His daughter Lilian Ida Smith (b.1920, d.1983) donated approximately 800 items to the Sarjeant Gallery upon her death. The Smith Family Collection includes artworks by both of Lilian's parents Vivian and Mary Smith, family archives and their library of art books. Surprisingly Vivian Smith seems to be little known in New Zealand and the Sarjeant Gallery may be the only public collection with his work, which makes the completion of this conservation treatment project all the more significant.

Jennifer Taylor, Curator of Collections



Before and after treatment of *The Gold Turban* by Vivian Smith, circa 1927, oil on canvas.



11 Spring 2025

## Hemi Macgregor: *Waiora*

27 September 2025–

22 February 2026

12 Spring 2025

In this solo exhibition, Hemi Macgregor explores the spiritual elements that connect humans to the external worlds of te taiao, te taimoana, te taiwhenua and into tātai tuarangi (the cosmos). Working across painting, sculpture and installation, Macgregor draws on geometric structures, patterns and processes found in raranga, tukutuku and taniko. Pūrākau are referenced throughout the exhibition to reflect our connection with the sky, water, earth, and seasons.

*Waiora* acknowledges Tane Te Waiora and the role of the environment in contributing to human wellness, which is implicitly linked to kaitiakitanga. Through the intersection of whakapapa, mātauranga, pūrākau and te reo me o na tikanga, *Waiora* identifies a series of genealogical webs that traverse time and space, acknowledging how te mana o nga atua shapes te ao marama.

Although grounded in the celebration of the enduring mana of the atua, *Waiora* also responds to the effects of industrialisation and colonisation

on the natural environment. Today, we desperately search for approaches that enable sustainable ecological and economic systems. It is here where Māori cultural beliefs and practices, like many Indigenous cultures, understand the universe as a holistic interconnected system where nothing exists in isolation. This is the grounding principle of kaitiakitanga where we see that all things must be understood as relevant to their relationships and connections.

Hemi Macgregor (Ngāti Rākaipaaka, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāi Tūhoe) is a highly respected artist and educator, who graduated from the prestigious Māori Visual Arts programme at Te Pūtahi-a-Toi, Massey University in Palmerston North, and prior to that a graduate of Quay School of the Arts, Whanganui. He is based on the Kāpiti Coast and is an Associate Professor at Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa Massey University's Major, Mātauranga Toi Māori. *Waiora* was recently shown at Te Whare Toi o Heretaunga Hastings Art Gallery to critical acclaim. Macgregor's selected recent exhibitions include *Matarau*, with guest curator Shannon Te Ao, City Gallery Wellington, 2021–2022; *Toitū Te Whenua*, *Toitū Te Moana*, *Toitū Te Tangata*, Mahara Gallery, 2021; and *Toi Tū, Toi Ora Contemporary Māori Art*, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2020–2021.

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Hemi Macgregor, *Hine Moana*, (detail), 2022, paint and timber. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Cheska Brown.



We are excited to share that since January, we have welcomed over 3000 students, teachers and whanau into our education space, from kohanga reo through to adult students. From May through to July we spent a significant amount of time discussing the glistening stars coming into focus as Puanga ma Matariki arrived in our early morning sky. As students and whanau looked towards the stars to celebrate the Māori New Year, we ran a range of sessions on how to find Puanga in the morning sky over Whanganui.

Students created folded paper waka, decorated with symbols of their pepeha in visual form, and learnt about the role of the constellation Te-Waka-o-Rangi. We made spinning thaumatropes showing the kereru perched on Tautoru (Orion's Belt) as it reaches up to eat the miro berry, Puanga. Lots of stars were folded and woven to brighten walls and support the students' learning.

*Kanapa ki Runga—Kanapa ki Raro* was a welcome and exciting exhibition to share, reinforcing concepts around our stargazing explorations and pushing the boundaries of creativity within the Māori world view.

We enjoyed Paul Maseyk's *Jugs in NZ Painting* exhibition. Students responded by making three-dimensional artwork



inspired by the exhibition. Using large paper cups, paper and watercolour, the students' imaginations ran wild resulting in some amazing creations.

Lastly, our *Big Art Day Out* that invited senior art students from all schools in the region was a great success, hosting 35 students from years 12 and 13. The gallery transformed into a creative conference space, introducing our rangatahi to four established artists who shared what it is to have creativity as a core function in

their lives, following up those presentations with hands-on activities.

Vanessa Edwards & Sietske Jansma  
Educators

Above: Students from Whangaehu School engage with our Puanga rising presentation for Puanga Celebration 2025

Right: Natasha Keating speaks to a captive audience of secondary students about her work in *Kanapa Ki Runga—Kanapa Ki Raro*





Isabella Loudon arrived as our artist in residence at Tylee Cottage in July and will be with us until November this year. 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 intriguing sculptors. Her work has been included in large group shows in Wellington at the Dowse Art Museum, Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi and City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi. Her primary medium at that time was concrete but over the last three 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.

In December 2023, supported by the Sarjeant Gallery, she opened her studio in Marton to the public in the site-specific multi-roomed installation *two years / one building*. This project spanned an entire two storied building, which Loudon had spent the previous two years infiltrating with her own experimental sculptural works. A resounding hit with visitors, we're excited to see what Loudon develops in a similar vein when it comes to her site-specific installation in the Sarjeant Gallery's heritage galleries, which will take shape in the later months of her residency this year.

## Friends of the Sarjeant Gallery Update

In late March the executive committee of the Friends of the Sarjeant Gallery welcomed 22 Friends of the Christchurch Art Gallery to a weekend of unique Whanganui hospitality, a tour of the Sarjeant Gallery and private visits to artists' studios. The Friends hosted lunch, which was followed by an exclusive tour of the Sarjeant Gallery's new and refurbished galleries led by Senior Curator & Programmes Manager, Greg Donson. We hope that this is the first of many similar visits.

The next Friends event is a Patron Members event on 27 September when Patron Members will be invited to a 'Meet the Artist' function and enjoy a preview of the Christopher Ulutupu exhibition prior to the public opening.

Our 2025 Annual General Meeting will be held on 8 October, 7-8.30pm, in the event space at Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery. A key topic will be the membership structure changes planned to take effect from 1 July 2026, pending 2025 AGM approval. The rules governing the Friends of the Sarjeant Gallery have been reviewed and re-drafted to comply with the Incorporated Societies Act (2022). The first draft of the constitution has been completed and is now available to view on the Sarjeant website, <https://sarjeant.org.nz/membership>. Honorary Memberships will be presented to Nicola



Williams and Gaye Batty and there will be an acknowledgement of service for Ian McGowan. Our guest speaker will be Carolina Izzo, Head Conservator of Studio Izzo.

On Wednesday 22 October there will be a Friends of the Sarjeant Gallery trip to Stratford to visit the Percy Thomson Gallery where a talk has been arranged for us. The trip will also include visits to the museum, district library and café, Fenton Street Gin Distillery and Eltham cheese shop. Cost per person is \$60, but Friends of the Sarjeant Gallery are eligible for the reduced cost of \$50 (so it's a great time to sign up as a member). Book at the Sarjeant Gallery or online at <https://shop.sarjeant.org.nz/collections/events>

Friends of the Sarjeant AGM Wednesday, 8 October, all welcome

## Philanthropy and Support

18 Spring 2025

It is at a time like this that Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery realises how fortunate it is to be held in such high regard and receive the support of special members of our community.

Last month the gallery received a most generous and wonderful bequest. Two important works have been gifted to the collection by Diana Beaglehole, a prominent writer and historian with strong Whanganui connections, who passed away on 21 January 2025.

Born in Whanganui, Diana taught in Whanganui and Wellington. Whanganui remained special to Diana. She knew every historic building, regularly wrote for the Whanganui Chronicle and visited the Sarjeant Gallery whenever she could.

The bequest includes an exemplary Colin McCahon, entitled *Kauri*, 1953. A cubist work in oil, painted soon after the family moved to Titirangi, it is inspired by the kauri forest surrounding McCahon's new home in West Auckland. This work is one of a small series, so is rare and therefore particularly precious. The second work is a superb Frances Hodgkins watercolour, *Māori Woman and Man in an Old Canoe*, 1900. I imagine this painting feeling very at home in our new collection store, settled alongside our other Frances Hodgkins works in the collection and joining those of her pupil Edith Collier.

On behalf of the gallery and the people of Whanganui we'd like to thank Diana and her family for this most generous bequest. Thanks must also go to the Kelliher Arts Trust for their recent grant to the Sarjeant Gallery acquisition fund. Their support has enabled the gallery to purchase works by two Whanganui artists that were exhibited in the opening exhibition, *Nō Konei, From Here*. James Kirkwood's large oil on canvas, *Para Para Panorama: Landscape in a Valley with a Room and a View*, 2024 depicting an interior dissolving into a Whanganui landscape, and a significant photographic work by Tia Ranginui from her *Ahi Teretere* project commissioned for *Nō Konei* and shown in the heritage gallery.

We thank the Kelliher Arts Trust for their foresight in supporting these acquisitions. It is particularly important to the gallery to be able to acquire these works for the collection and celebrate the once in a lifetime occasion of the opening last November.

Support through grants and gifts such as these not only help develop the collection, they are also building a legacy for future generations, fulfilling the dream of the gallery's first benefactor Henry Sarjeant—to build a gallery “as a means of inspiration for ourselves and those who come after us”.

Nicki Manthel, Head of Development



Left: Colin McCahon *Kauri* 1953, oil on paper on board

Below: Frances Hodgkins *Māori Woman and Man in an Old Canoe* 1900, watercolour



19 Spring 2025



For more info:  
[sarjeant.org.nz](http://sarjeant.org.nz)

Pukemania  
Queen's Park  
Whanganui

TE WHARE O REHUA  
SARJEANT GALLERY

