

outstanding

Nga Whenu Aronui

Nga taonga nui ki uta ki tai

Wanganui District Public Art Strategy 2010 – 2012



Ross Mitchell-Anyon
Handspan 2002
Peace sculpture
Queens Park



Wanganui's* public spaces provide a unique and dynamic realm for the expression of our culture, identity and rich history. Our Riverfront, civic venues, streets, laneways, buildings and parks provide a public domain where public art activity can be developed and our people can engage with expressions of our past, our present and our future.

Council's primary purpose here is to provide the vision, leadership and infrastructure to facilitate and support the development of public art activities in selected spaces and places, allowing residents, families, workers and visitors to explore, absorb, feel part of, and have fun in our city.

* Following a New Zealand Geographic Board decision in 2009, the spellings Wanganui and Whanganui will both be accepted as correct, once the decision is formally gazetted in 2010.

Te Runanga o Tupoho and Te Runanga o Tama Upoko have historic agreements with Wanganui District Council whereby it is formally acknowledged that Te Runanga maintain the Whanganui spelling is correct and that the legal name under the Local Government Act is Wanganui District Council.

For the purposes of this document therefore, the spelling Wanganui is used throughout, although it is acknowledged that community partners may be using dual spellings.

Setting the scene: our city, our district and our cultures

How we experience and relate to our physical environment is fundamental to our wellbeing.

The connection to our river often sits with our soul. The appearance of our natural and built environment is very important to us, and excellent design of the built environment is about much more than the purely visual. Done well, it uplifts and energises us, and transforms how we feel, behave or interact with each other. In short, the very best architecture and urban design improve quality of life and how we connect to each other. This is particularly important to us as a family-friendly community.

Wanganui is witnessing a renaissance: not just in terms of artistic activity, but also with standards of new building and environmental improvement. This form of regeneration creates exciting opportunities for collaboration between planners, developers, architects, landscape architects, urban designers and artists, and provides the context and inspiration for public art. The opportunity for Whanganui Iwi, Atihaunui a Paparangi, to lead projects, and influence the look and feel of our public spaces, is significant.

Wanganui's public art strategy takes a broad approach to the definition of public art activity. Wanganui will incorporate historic memorials (including war and peace commemoration) in public art planning and development. Public art activity may include the commissioning and creation of historic monuments or memorials which will have a high artistic value as well as serve a commemorative function. Public art activity may also include projects where artists engage with and re-interpret existing memorials. By including commemorative approaches within the range of possibilities for public art activity in Wanganui we recognise the special cultural characteristics of the city and district; and seek to reinforce the importance of developing public art which has both integrity of idea or concept and a suitable relationship to its site.

The Wanganui Public Art Strategy integrates high quality public art and cultural expression with architecture, landscaping and urban design within the planning and development process. It also creates opportunity for local people and communities to be involved in schemes that reanimate or redefine their physical, social and cultural spaces. The quality and range of contemporary public art produced in this way influences the making of our family-friendly city and district.

As Supplementary Planning Guidance, the Wanganui Public Art Strategy will assist those who seek to shape the visual quality of the environment by outlining how Wanganui District Council will foster public art activity, provide guidance on the commissioning process and profile examples of good practice.

Public Art Strategy Working Group
September 2009



Whanganui UCOL
Side entrance pare



Seating by River
walkway



Compass
Victoria Park, St Johns
Hill



Sarjeant Gallery with
Mount Ruapehu behind

A vision for public art

Wanganui's vision is to celebrate the distinctiveness of Wanganui's environment, history and cultural identity, and enhance our experience of the built and natural environment through a diversity of quality public artworks.

Public artists extend the concept of building function beyond its physical aspects to include a social, cultural or spiritual dimension. They are well practised in creating works of art that respond to a given place, time or event. By applying a set of different professional skills and competencies from that of other design practitioners, they can exponentially enrich a development project.

Public art activities can strongly support the telling of the Wanganui/Whanganui story. They can also provide public manifestations of our family-friendly strategy. Arts speak across time, across age-range, across language.

It is essential that the management of public art in Wanganui be sufficiently flexible in order to cater for our community's varied tastes and perspectives. This must allow for public art to be community-driven when specific landscapes belong to specific communities. Paradoxically, we must also ensure that the standard of curation and decision-making be of the highest standard.

The strongest relationship must be formed between existing and future public artwork and their contexts.



Jo Auld
Wood and glass
Castlecliff Beach



Steuart Welch
Round and Around 2009
Bason Botanic Gardens



Children's mosaic, 1967
Alexander Heritage & Research
Library
Queens Park

Council's strategic aims for public art are:

- To shape, change and improve the perception, image and visual quality of Wanganui through outstanding examples of public art
- To encourage the integration of social, cultural and spiritual dimensions through innovative public art into all urban design practice
- To lead by example.

There are six major themes that define us as a city, a district and a community. These leading themes can provide a powerful framework for public art activity in its many forms.

- Awa City/Whanganui River
- Wanganui Historic City
- Wanganui BiCultural City
- Wanganui Peaceful City
- Wanganui City of Light
- Wanganui Surprising City



Neil Ranganui
Pare (detail) 2008



Light reflection
Whanganui River



Student sculpture
Winter Gardens
Virginia Lake

Wanganui public art strategy

Wanganui has a long and proud history of cultural expression and artistic achievement. We have also experienced a rich and turbulent history, which has shaped our natural environment and informed the design of our built spaces.

Our region's tribal history underpins all, and the current lives of Atihaunui a Paparangi, Nga Rauru and Ngati Apa people shape our world significantly yet their art forms are not yet prominent within the public environment.

We have been blessed with many public benefactors, who have gifted us art works over a period of some 160 years. The contemporary interpretation of these works may differ from those that understood the significance of the art work in its early context.

We are not yet a wealthy community: and yet we are committed to good stewardship of the collection of public artworks that celebrate our community's life, love and pride.

The importance of an integral approach to procurement and sustainability of architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, lighting, civic memorial and public art is advocated within national and local policy and planning guidance.

At a local level the Council's strategy is to support and develop public art activities; and to assist the funding of art in public places, with the aim of improving the quality of life and creating an atmosphere and image of Wanganui compelling to residents and visitors.



Gordon Smith
War Memorial Hall 1960



George Sherriff
Lion Monument 1892



Para Matchitt/Manu Bennett
Untitled
Davis Central City Library



Public art is art created for the public realm. It embraces a wide range of activities involving artists, intended to be accessible to the public. From site-specific sculpture, civic memorials, and permanent shaping of our environment, to temporary installations or interventions that excite and challenge our perceptions of the world.

Governance, Commissioning, Funding, Implementation

It is recommended that the commissioning of enduring public art is supported through the planning and development control process, respective development briefs and the use of Section 198 of the New Zealand Local Government Act 2002, or conditions attached to the resource consents.

Wanganui's strategy for assuring the creation of outstanding public art is to:

- Use the planning and development control processes to negotiate the integration of public art, architecture, landscape architecture, creative and effective lighting and urban design in all key developments.
- Use contributions imposed under the Local Government Act to secure funds to support the Public Art Strategy, whereby a negotiated proportion of the capital cost of public development is allocated for the commissioning of new works of art. The purpose is to incorporate, at the master-planning or design concept stage, the ideas and work of artists in order to affect the highest standards of creativity and innovation in the planning and design of buildings and public spaces.
- Show Council leadership by allocating funding each year through the Annual Plan for the implementation of the Public Art Strategy.
- Ensure that prior to the development or redevelopment of public places, including streets, consideration is given to urban design principles
- Encourage public and private sector developers to appoint an artist as a collaborative member of the professional master planning or design team at the earliest opportunity to establish a project's creative vision and to develop public art proposals that elevate the quality and character of our buildings, landscape or urban environment.
- Require that the principles of the Public Arts Strategy are reflected in the 10 Year Plan, District Plan, Design Guides, Companion Document for Subdivision and Development, Reserve Management Plans, and other strategies and bylaws developed by Wanganui District Council. It should also reference to the Growth Strategy and the Urban Design Protocol.
- Devise and implement quality programmes of community participation and education as an integral part of public art development.



June Gellies/Olaf Wehr-Candler
Memorial window 2003
War Memorial Hall



Hamish Horsley
Leapfrog 1985
Virginia Lake



Mark Southcombe/Void Architecture
Water feature 2007
City Bridge

- The Wanganui Public Arts Strategy Working Party will monitor the implementation of the strategy for 2 years: 2010-2012, at which point the strategy will be reviewed.
- A separate body such as a charitable trust will facilitate funding applications.
- A Steering Group will perform the “arbiter/selector” role, which will also include commissioning work (when appropriate), advising on suitability of work, and judging Council-commissioned competitions for public art work. The Steering Group will comprise representation from Wanganui District Council; the fund-raising body (as above); WDC Urban Planning team; Whanganui Iwi; Artists/Curators (including the Sarjeant Gallery’s Senior Curator); and a Community advocate.
- Clear and accepted delineation of roles, and the nature of working relationships, is paramount to the successful implementation of the Public Art Strategy:
 - The District Council will take ownership of, and responsibility for public art maintenance (through its asset management plans); and provide leadership through the establishment, implementation and review of the Public Art Strategy.
 - The separate funding body will be the mechanism through which application for funding is made; and will act as a champion for public art.
 - The Steering Group will be the decision-maker and the protector of art standards, ensuring that work both in conception and execution is of the highest standard; and will act as an advocate for community-based initiatives.

The Council will adopt a strong asset management approach to public art, yet must allow flexibility for retirement of art when necessary. Permanent and temporary public art can form strong memories and associations with place. All new artwork considered permanent should be planned to have a lifespan of at least 25 years in its anticipated environment.

Sustainability of public spaces against vandalism or degeneration depends on the strength of connection and engagement our people have to it. The more our community see relevance in the place they live, the better the connection, the community and the space.

It is acknowledged that stewardship and kaitiakitanga responsibility for works of cultural and spiritual significance exist beyond installation and should determine change of ownership, location or disposal practice.



Watt fountain
Victoria Avenue



Student sculpture
Winter Gardens
Virginia Lake



Landscape
North Mole

Awa City/Whanganui River

The Whanganui Awa, the River, is central to the city and district.

The River will be a major focus for public art, both intentional and incidental. Because the Awa is the essence of Whanganui Iwi, public art near it will strongly, but not exclusively, reflect Whanganui Iwi.

The recent revival of the city's focus at the river end of the CBD, the establishment of the Board Walk and the River Traders Market all contribute to our community's engagement with the living icon that is central to our city's existence.

Works elsewhere will also reflect the Awa and its significance.

Whanganui Historic City

Atihaunui a Paparangi patterns of settlement along the River predate by many centuries the establishment of the colonial settlement. The city of Whanganui is one of New Zealand's oldest and we are lucky that so much of our history is still visible in the landscape and the built environment.

Whanganui has a wide range of items reflecting its colonial and settler history. However, there are gaps which will be filled from time to time. There is also a much longer Iwi history, which is not well represented in the urban space. New public art is an opportunity to reflect the complete story of all of the people of the district.

Because of the relative age of our built environment, the regular maintenance of historic art and memorials needs to be addressed. Whanganui's overall role in telling the story of New Zealand is becoming more apparent as national historians recognise our significance.

Industry and Art

By acknowledging our waterfront and its industrial/maritime heritage, we can place significant emphasis on the links between industrial history, culture and heritage. Our industrial buildings are constructions that defined an era, and are monuments to Whanganui's changing economic prosperity.

There is also an opportunity to develop an appropriate arts context to frame sustainability, using "urban debris" of industrial objects, inorganic and organic materials.



**Te Tauranga Waka O Nga Matua
Tupuna**
Significant landing place,
Whanganui River



Whanganui River by night



Landscape
Whanganui River

Wanganui BiCultural city

Wanganui's ethnic make-up differs from the rest of New Zealand in that we have a higher proportion of European and Maori, and fewer of other backgrounds. Maori make up over 20% of the Wanganui population, and this proportion is increasing. Further, the average age is lower than that of the whole population. Many have Tangata Whenua status.

Public art needs to reflect both the interests and aspirations of this part of the population and also to reflect the increasing diversity of the whole population.

Wanganui Peaceful city

Memorials

It was historian Jock Phillips (in *Heartlands*, 2006) who first called us "the War Memorial Capital of the World". He did so because "Within a square kilometre around the centre of Wanganui there are more war memorials of genuine variety and interest than anywhere else we could imagine."

Unity

Handspan, a large sculpture created to symbolise a culture of peace, was designed by local artist and potter Ross Mitchell-Anyon and dedicated on the 21st September 2002 by the then Governor-General of New Zealand, the Honourable Dame Silvia Cartwright to "a culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world".

This impressive structure is approximately 20m in diameter and 3 meters high and consists of a double-spiral pathway, with walls covered with more than 4000 clay hand casts, made mostly from hands of community members of all ages. Hand casts made in glass (by Wanganui UCOL glass studio), are also placed on the walls, through which a fibre-optic lighting system illumines the pathway of the sculpture at night.

Veteran Steps

The Veteran Steps is a powerful monument to our conflicted past, and offers an equally powerful opportunity to present a unified and accepting future.

The rededication of the Veteran Steps in November 2006 offered the opportunity to place our war and conflict history in context: tribal representatives from Atihaunui a Paparangi, Nga Rauru, Ngati Ruanui and Ngati Apa stood alongside representatives from the Wellington West Coast and Taranaki Regiment.

The peaceful future of Wanganui could be represented within the Veteran Steps in the form of a stunning and inspirational work of illuminated public art.



Veteran Steps
Queens Park



Memorial Gates
Former Queens Park School
Queens Park



War Memorial Tower
Durie Hill

Wanganui City Of Light

Wanganui has a unique opportunity to create a dynamic, exciting and safe city environment by integrating innovative lighting projects into our public spaces. To enhance the night-time environment of the city and show it off to its best effect - particularly along the river frontage - will create a unique point of difference for our city nationally, while also providing a creative, efficient method of enlivening essential infrastructure.

Light reflection on water is a mesmerising and dynamic manifestation of art in its most natural form.

Lighting is a key element that affects how we feel about a place. It will influence whether we will visit places after dark, how we travel around places in the dark, whether we feel safe enough to walk or use public transport. Lighting can influence how visually attractive a place is at night, can be used to highlight whole buildings, tree-scapes or architectural features and can define streets, spaces and neighbourhoods. It can also be public art in its own right as both a light sculpture, for example, or as specially designed street furniture, and it can be used to create a spectacle for celebrations, special places or occasions.

Lighting Wanganui could happen in many ways. Developers, landowners and our business community would incorporate lighting proposals into developments; organisations would include lighting as part of celebrations, significant events and festivals (e.g. Puanga/Matariki, the Glass Festival and Boxing Day Cemetery Circuit) and the District Council would initiate and facilitate lighting partnerships between the public and private sectors, as well as managing the planning process to achieve enhanced lighting within the city. The most cost-effective and environmentally sustainable lighting solutions will be used for any significant lighting initiatives.

The cumulative effect of lighting schemes as part of new developments, particularly within the city centre, waterfronts and Old Town will place Wanganui at the forefront as a creative, safe city at night as well as during the day.



Reflections



Durie Hill Elevator



Relections

Wanganui Surprising city

Maverick

The maverick nature of our community, and its predilection for never doing as it's told offers a wonderful opportunity to surprise, delight and refresh our city and district environment.

Exciting opportunities exist to harness this aspect of our communal gene pool to create outstanding works of art.

Secretive

We like to keep our secrets. Our inner-cityscape is riddled with small, between-shop lanes that lead to public/private spaces behind the CBD that are often stunning architectural reminders of our history. Great places to explore...and to be led to surprising destinations.

Without losing the city's secret, private nature, we can leverage its exploration potential to the fullest extent through public art.

Literary

What evidence is there that some of New Zealand's finest literary names lived here at some stage of their lives? James K Baxter is firmly established in our history – but what about Robin Hyde, Ian Cross, Janet Frame (of Gonville) to name but a few?

Public art is a mechanism for linking these famous lives and their writings to our built and natural environment.



Jeff Thompson
Corrugated iron sculpture
Heads Road



Mosaic
Red Eye Café
Guyton Street



Street art
Rutland Street

Challenges

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of public art is its ability to challenge and question accepted conventions or ideologies. Temporary events, installations or interventions in public spaces often interrogate or interrupt one's ordered view of the world. Encouraged to engage with what confronts them, people question their experience of the work and seek clues to the intention of the artist.

Statues of Our Famous

Wanganui continues to support the tradition of honouring its heroes, civic leaders and patrons by commissioning (often through public subscription) commemorative sculptures. Notable examples include (the two) John Ballance statues, Te Rangihiwiniui Kapa ("Major Kemp"), and the recently-commissioned Peter Snell statue in Cooks Gardens. This tradition can be continued through serendipitous commissioning, or through the establishment of a more formal "commissioning list" that fills the significant gaps in Wanganui history.

In this way we could acknowledge through Atihaunui history, that there is another community perspective on leaders and heroes – and that this story must be illustrated, manifested and told as well.

Youth And aRT

Wanganui has recently created a number of youth/artist collaborations, most notably the Michel Tuffery "Gonville Umbrellas". There is significant opportunity through both WDC Youth Committee and independent commissioning to increase Wanganui youth's input into the public art landscape, particularly through engagement with Whanganui UCOL.

Street Art

The current controversy of whether street art has legitimacy in a public art context is still under discussion. Wanganui's recent history of stencilled art in secret locations provides another dimension to the city's art landscape, yet to some this represents nothing more than anti-social graffiti. The jury is still out.

Life span: for ever or just for a while?

Public art can capture the people's imagination with the idea of an empty plinth, and with the possibility of "borrowing" pieces of sculpture for a limited period, without having to own them permanently. Our community could enjoy more ephemeral works such as fire sculpture, low-tide driftwood sculpture or the temporary manipulation of nature.



Street art
Rutland Street



Trompe l'oeil
GK Gallery
Taupo Quay



Student art work
Winter Gardens
Virginia Lake

Keynote Projects 2010-2012

Wanganui Public Art Strategy identifies the following keynote projects for delivery by 2011.

Wanganui Gateways

Through public art we recognise the importance of reinforcing the approaches to Wanganui as key gateways through significant consultation in design with Tupoho Runanga, and to profiling the architectural landmarks and associated public spaces, while also improving links to the CBD, Queens Park etc.

The Public Art Strategy can positively influence the master planning and definition of key public spaces on either side of key arterial routes.

The commissioning of major public art projects can assist in forming or marking new gateways to the city.

River Edges (including up-river)/walkway/Taupo Quay

The establishment of an annual public sculpture competition that provides public art of a high standard sited along the river walkways will ensure spaces are constantly refreshed and renewed.

The opportunity to develop creative lighting projects along the river, on the bridges and along the arterial routes is discussed earlier under City of Light.

Schedule of Art works and Memorials

A top priority is to identify through Council's asset management framework every item of art work and memorial, provide a site and condition report and a plan for their maintenance and long-term sustainability.

Further References

Wanganui District Council. Urban Landscape Policy Dickson Lonergan Architects
 Wanganui Town Centre Lighting Report. Premier Consultants, 2004
 Arts Policy
 District Plan
 Urban Design Action Plan
 Moutoa Quay Development Plan
 Wanganui District Council Visitor Strategy
 Economic Development Strategy
 Plaques and Memorial Policy

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Children's Murals
Kowhai Park



Children's Murals
Kowhai Park



Children's Murals
Kowhai Park



Maori War Memorial
Pakaitore/Moutoa Gardens