

Newmarket Arts Trust: A brief history (2004–2021)

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“Imagine a world with no artists, no honest expression, no light, no beauty, no truth.”

Christiane Amanpour (Unesco, 2015)

Background

The Newmarket Arts Trust (NAT) was formed in 2004. The original trustees were a mixture of people involved in the art world together with community people. The trustees were:

- myself
- Sue Haigh (no relation to the author, local resident and active member of the Newmarket Park Beautification Group)
- Deborah White (owner of Newmarket gallery Whitespace)
- Joy Tongue (owner of Newmarket gallery Studio of Contemporary Art)

I was appointed the first chair and have been in that position through to the present (2021). Sue Haigh has also been involved since 2004 to the present. The following people have been trustees at various stages:

- Dr Robin Woodward (The University of Auckland, Elam School of Fine Arts)
- Ana Ivanovic-Tongue (gallery owner, Studio of Contemporary Art)

- Emma Fox (owner, Fox Jensen Gallery)
- Emma Pritchard (owner, Seed Gallery)
- Lindy Leuschke (architect, Leuschke Architects)
- Megan Sadgrove (store manager, Smith & Caughey)
- Mark Knoff-Thomas (CEO, Newmarket Business Association)
- Di Goldsworthy (Arts and Heritage Manager, Newmarket Business Association)

The trust was established by the Newmarket Business Association (NBA) and was tasked with promoting arts, especially public art in the Newmarket area – roughly the area within the boundary of the old Newmarket Borough Council and now the boundary of the NBA. I had been closely involved in establishing the NBA and ensuring that the Newmarket area had a special Mainstreet rate that was devolved by Auckland City Council (ACC) to the NBA. These special rates were essential in funding a regular and substantial part of the costs of future artworks.

NAT is a community organisation registered with the Charities Commission. Its constitution includes the following purposes:

- Promote art and culture in Newmarket
- Establish and support a Newmarket art and culture fund to commission works and promote the arts
- Purchase artworks for public display in Newmarket
- Encourage public art in all new developments and redevelopments in Newmarket
- Encourage artists to set up in the Newmarket community

Public artworks in Newmarket

The NAT has focused its attention on the purchase and display of public art in Newmarket. It has installed five quality artworks by five Auckland artists. It has also engaged in community activities that will be discussed later in this report.



Figure 1. Terry Stringer, *The World Grasped*. Photo: Newmarket Business Association

The first project was a large bronze sculpture by well-known sculptor Terry Stringer (Figure 1). It was originally located on Broadway, near the intersection with Remuera Road. In 2020 it was moved to overlook the roundabout at the intersection of Broadway and Parnell Road. This outstanding sculpture is entitled *The World Grasped* and is best appreciated by walking around it to see its three changing features. Like most of Terry Stringer's sculptures, this one has an irresistible quality that pulls the viewer to touch, feel and stroke it. The title *The World Grasped* comes from Jacob Bronowski's BBC series *The Ascent of Man*:

We have to understand the world that can be only grasped by action, not by contemplation. The hand is more important than the eye The hand is the cutting edge of the mind. (1973, 41:05)

Terry Stringer has made the following statement:

My sculpture has a series of images that are revealed to the viewer as they circle the work. From one direction is seen the head of a boy resting on his hand in thought. From another this hand is seen to be plucking an apple. And from a third direction, this apple is the world supported on the shoulders of Atlas.

The idea of the work is to engage the passer-by with its changing appearance. The two images of a monumental scale face the traffic in each direction, while a life-sized figure stands on the pedestrian side of the footpath. This makes the work something of a puzzle to encounter in a busy street.

The message of the quoted text, written on the side of the piece, encourages the viewer to continue with the experience of the world around them. And with its emphasis on touch, this makes a case for more sculpture to be part of that world, endorsing the work of the Newmarket Arts Trust. (T. Stringer, personal communication, 2004)

In a media release, I, as Chair of the Newmarket Arts Trust, said, "This Terry Stringer bronze will be a major part of Newmarket's cultural landscape for years to come. I am sure that this artwork will stimulate people's imagination and creativity."

Cameron Brewer, of the Newmarket Business Association, praised the sculpture:

As principal sponsor, the Newmarket Business Association is very happy with this latest work of Terry Stringer's. The sculpture is a welcomed addition to Broadway.

With Newmarket intensifying and with our footpaths and Lumsden Green about to be upgraded, we're increasingly focused on public art acquisitions. Newmarket may be a bustling commercial centre, but we also want our streetscapes to be interesting and interactive. (C. Brewer, personal communication, April 2, 2004)

The NAT was fortunate to gain this artwork. To a large extent this occurred through the personal links between Deborah White and the artist. We were also fortunate to have the support of Shyrel Burt, a streetscape planner for Auckland City Council (ACC), who organised the original location following advice from the artist and provided the plinth upon which the artwork sits. The artist created the artwork specially for the site. The total cost of the artwork including installation was \$50,000. This was funded by NBA, ASB Trusts and Arrabo Property.

Only one problem occurred for the trust. Just before the signing of the contract with Stringer, it was learned that his work in Aotea Square had been removed by ACC without consulting him. He decided to do no further work

for ACC, and the Newmarket piece was included in that decision. However, following discussions between myself and Stringer, the matter was settled and the contract signed. The unveiling was held on April 21, 2005, with former Mayor of Auckland Dame Catherine Tizard officiating at the ceremony.

Following completion of the project, a bailment agreement was signed between the NAT and ACC that left ownership with the NAT, with security and maintenance of the artwork the responsibility of ACC.



Figure 2. Virginia King, *Sliver*. Photo: Newmarket Business Association

The trust sought proposals for the second artwork at a site developed by ACC, on the corner of Broadway and Khyber Pass Road. The upgrade consisted of new plantings, seating and a space for an artwork.

Eventually the trust settled on a work by Virginia King (Figure 2) that was on sale via Brick Bay Sculpture Trust. The cost was \$79,000.

The trust was fortunate that the upgrade was being carried out by the Isthmus Group, a landscape company that was co-operative and helpful. The company designed a special curved wall to act as a plinth for the chosen artwork. Virginia King made the following statement:

The circular artwork can be viewed as an archetypal symbol of time.

The stainless-steel sculpture is perforated with a series of radiating elliptical spheres. The disc, nominally three metres in diameter, stands on its edge, silhouetted – a delicate yet powerful presence in the environment. The central aperture plays with the concept of a lens,

focusing outlook and perception. The work makes reference to hubs, the wheel, cyclical time, genetic pools and micro-organism structures. The circular wheel form of *Sliver* becomes a symbol of the constant traffic that flows through this busy corner, the reflective, shiny stainless steel reflecting the movement, light and energy of the metropolitan surrounds.

The turning wheel also references the hub of energy, and the coin and the wheel of commerce. Rotating on its axis, it also alludes to the rotation of the seasons and night and day.

The pivoting base allows the work to be moved, while providing fragmented glimpses of the urban environment, and changing and varying points of view of the surrounding city. Currently the pivoting spindle is set 800mm into a 450mm-diameter concrete footing 1500mm deep. The work is extremely robust. (V. King, personal communication, May 10, 2006)

Funding for the project came from the NBA, NAT, ASB Trusts and the Lion Foundation.

One problem occurred. We were advised that a building consent would be required, with appropriate engineer's calculations and certificate. When I visited the ACC building inspectors' department to apply for a consent, I was advised that because the public site did not have Lot and DP numbers the computer could not process the application. The counter officer suggested we insert the Lot and DP numbers for the nearest building (at the time, the BNZ building). When I was transferred to a building inspector, I was told that the application could not proceed because of the wrong Lot and DP numbers and because the actual location might be too close to a sewer. I was told to go to Watercare Services and get the measurement between the artwork plinth and the sewer. I argued that the measurement was available on the screen in front of us, but the officer would not co-operate and provide the measurement. I asked to see a senior officer, who came within a short time. This manager was also unco-operative and supported his staff member. I asked to see the overall senior building inspector. Fortunately, this person knew about the project, was more helpful and approved the consent forthwith. This took me many hours to negotiate. We later found out that building consents for artworks in public places were not required. The \$2500 for the permit was returned to the trust.



Figure 3. Seung Yul Oh, *KnockKnock*. Photo: Newmarket Business Association

The nine colourful eggs (originally titled *Globgob*, now *KnockKnock*) were created in 2010 by a young South Korean artist, Seung Yul Oh (Figure 3). Oh was chosen from a number of artists who submitted concepts of artworks to NAT for the area in Teed and Osborne Streets, which was being upgraded by ACC. Oh proposed a concept that was a single piece set on a plinth. The new public art adviser to ACC had earlier suggested that instead of a piece on a plinth we should try for something on the horizontal. We discussed this with Oh, who came back with the idea for nine eggs, at a cost of \$70,000.

Funds for the project came from NBA, ACC, the Lion Foundation, Peter Bolot and Tramlease. The foundations to hold the heavy eggs were extensive, and were provided by ACC as part of the street upgrade. Each egg was filled with an epoxy resin. The Isthmus Group carried out the landscape design, and once again they liaised with the artist and the trust to ensure the success of the project. The artist called the artwork *Globgob*, but subsequently withdrew that name and it is now more commonly referred to as *The Eggs*. They are a symbol of life and the colours add vibrancy to the area. The artwork is particularly popular with young children, who seem to enjoy the colour, texture and child-level size. Children can be observed stroking, climbing on and sliding

down the artwork. One child aged around three years was observed kissing each egg in turn.

Within one year of installation, the trust had to deal with a major event in which the eggs were damaged. The then manager of NBA gave unauthorised permission for the eggs to be used by an advertising agency. During the process of photographing them, they were all badly damaged and had to be removed for repairs. The individual had no authority to give permission; in fact the contract with the artist prohibited the artwork being used for commercial purposes. This event created a serious relationship problem between the NBA and the NAT. The artist was also shocked that his art was used in such a destructive way. Fortunately, a board member of the NBA took responsibility for repairing the eggs, and the NAT received an apology for the unauthorised approval and damage to the eggs. The relationship improved with the resignation of the manager and his replacement by Mark Knoff-Thomas, a person who now appreciates the artworks and their contribution to the Newmarket district.



Figure 4. Reuben Paterson, *Ándale Ándale*. Photo: Newmarket Business Association

Ándale Ándale, by Reuben Paterson, was created and installed in 2013 (Figure 4). It involved the making of a painting on the wall adjacent to Newmarket Station in Remuera Road. The painting was on 15 large sheets of aluminium that were attached to an aluminium frame and the frame then attached to the wall. The wall is owned by Auckland Transport (AT). After many delays, AT finally agreed to NAT's use of the wall. Lighting was installed to highlight the

artwork at night. The painting process was complex. The aluminium had to be cleaned to remove any oxidation so that it could take the paint. Following painting, glitter was added (in the particular style of Reuben Paterson). Finally, each sheet was coated with a clear acrylic to protect the paint and then baked in an auto-paint oven.

Reuben made the following artist's statement:

Ándale Ándale is very much about the Latin American translation of 'Let's go' and 'Hurry up.' From the outset I've seen the motion of the fabric as a bullfighter's cape.

This expression of movement talks to the motion of people entering and exiting the station, through the stage-like curtain of this cape – or entering and exiting worlds in thoroughfare.

As a transport hub and place of motion, the retro floral design moves from its own historic place of the 60s into the contemporary world, or specifically the fashion hub of Newmarket – this movement can also be read as a short journey through time. Just as the earlier *kōwhaiwhai* works of mine allowed for the eye to move toward *koru* ends, which signify a person in a tribal lineage, the journeys of the florals' warp become organic and fluid in nature and adept as memory cues. (R. Paterson, personal communication, 2003)

The cost of the artwork completed and installed was \$64,000. Donations were from the NBA, Auckland Council, Waitemātā Local Board, Peter Bolot and NZ Cladding Systems. The latter company supplied the aluminium and was helpful throughout the project.



Figure 5. Ray Haydon, *Heliograph*. Photo: Newmarket Business Association

The sculpture *Heliograph* (Figure 5) is made of steel and aluminium and was created by Ray Haydon, an artist who has strong links with Newmarket. An opportunity arose due to the streetscape upgrade of Teed Street and a site was provided by the Waitematā Local Board. In the presentation to Auckland Council, the NBA representative stated the following:

Nestled under Maungawhau, ‘mountain of the whau,’ Newmarket held a position of strategic importance to the various iwi that occupied the land here, including Ngāti Awa, Waiohua, Ngāti Whātua, Ngā Puhī, Ngāti Pāoa. Many land ownership challenges ensued but by the time European settlers arrived in the vicinity the tribes were sparsely dispersed across the isthmus, making it easier for Ngāti Whātua to engage with the British Crown and then ultimately negotiate the sale of land.

Māori knew Newmarket as Te Tī Tutahi, ‘Sacred Cabbage Tree Standing Alone.’ The original cabbage tree stood at the corner of Mortimer Pass and Broadway. The tree was sacred to Māori and was a well-known landmark. Everyone knew where the cabbage tree was when travelling en route to the city or to Onehunga and beyond. Newmarket developed into a major trading post and transport hub, long before the advent of bus, rail and car.

Sadly, Te Tī Tutahi was cut down in 1908 as it was considered ‘a danger to children’ attending the local school. Contentiously, this act may have been more of a snub aimed at local Māori. The Buckland family, headed by Alfred Buckland, a local businessman, farmer and auctioneer, lived nearby in Highwic House, and rescued some of the shoots from the tree. These shoots were used to populate the trees on Lumsden Green many years later, and will also be used for the trees for the Teed Street upgrade. Cabbage trees have strongly featured in Newmarket’s history and identity.

Several years ago, the Waitematā Local Board devised the Newmarket Laneways Master Plan – this document set out to develop a blueprint for a ‘laneways’ programme for Newmarket’s side streets and alleyways. Over the next decade we will see the programme rolled out and will include Teed, Kent, York, Nuffield, Melrose, McColl and Roxburgh Streets.

[Teed Street was originally called Market Street after the Buckland’s cattle market located there, [and] when the markets were relocated to Great South Road it was renamed Station Street, due to the proximity to the new train station. The authorities finally settled on Teed Street after David Teed, who was Mayor of Newmarket from 1911-1915.

Teed Street has been at the heart of Newmarket’s economy for generations, and has ably managed to reinvent itself to find contemporary relevance. It has housed cattle yards, ironmongers, Chinese markets, nearby saw mills and bakeries amongst other things. In short it has been a work horse, housing multitudes of businesses over the generations and has provided thousands of jobs to workers. Its industrial past segued with a burgeoning Chinese economy that has latterly re-identified itself as a high-end city-fringe strip, where you will find an abundance of commercial buildings, local and international retailers and hospitality

outlets. It is one of very few streets in Auckland that still has an original concrete carriageway, a direct connection to its light-industrial roots. It has maintained an authenticity to its past, while embracing change for the present and future. Teed Street is a caption of the Newmarket personality – a fast-tumbling evolution of change, morphing and twisting, but always maintaining its vitality. (M. Knoff-Thomas, personal communication, February 23, 2017)

Picking up the theme of Te Tī Tutahi, the following is a statement by the artist:

Heliograph is a symbol of Te Tī Tutahi – our modern-day cabbage tree standing alone. Our tree has come home. The Buckland family rescued the shoots, it is fitting that the significance of their future-thinking gesture is recognised near where they had their business. It is a story we will be proud to tell. *Heliograph* is our beacon, our way-finding symbol on Teed Street. It will be a meeting place. The scale is such that it will draw eyes down Teed Street, from both the Broadway and Crowhurst Street ends. It will entice people to wander down and investigate. It will enable the upgraded Teed Street to fulfill its role of reclaiming some public realm. It will be loved, and it will also probably be loathed by some, but it will most certainly be a conversation piece.

Heliograph draws from nature, the top form moving slowly and gently with the changes in the wind. The fluidity of the ribbon articulates the constant evolution and change the precinct has seen – the ebb and flow of people, the expansion and contraction of the local economy, and the constant movement. The bright red colour of the ribbon is a poignant homage to the many generations of Chinese families who have helped develop Newmarket, from the beginnings of market gardens lining nearby roads, to the markets established on what was once named Market Street, and these days the restaurants and cafés – all playing an equally key role and adding substantially to Newmarket’s eclectic and diverse tapestry.

Finally, the brushed stainless steel of the tower base references the industry of the area and, in particular, the contribution made to the local community by Hayes Metals Limited.

The scale of the sculpture juxtaposed with the backdrop of the Vocus building is perhaps the most ‘Newmarket’ of all features. We are a heavily urbanised precinct and have a constant and symbiotic battle of new and old, beauty and brutality, complexity and simplicity – this is Newmarket’s identity. And we are proud of it, proud of our history and so very proud of what we have the privilege of representing. (M. Knoff-Thomas, personal communication, February 23, 2017)

The cost of the artwork was \$52,500. Funds raised were from the NBA, Waitemātā Local Board and Stride Properties. The Waitemātā Local Board met the costs of foundations for the artwork and the ground-level lighting. At the time of writing this paper, the artwork is being repaired by the artist. A car backed into it, causing damage to the steel tower and the red artwork.

Art in a day

A few years ago, my wife and I visited Italy. At one stage, we stayed with friends who ran a B&B in Sansepolcro, Southern Tuscany. We were taken to an ancient hilltop village called Anghiari, where every year the local council ran an 'art in a day' competition. Artists had to paint a scene of the village in one day and lodge the painting at the village hall for judging. In the evening there was a party where artists, friends and villagers were invited and prizes handed out. This community event was a great success. I thought this project could be replicated in Newmarket, Parnell and Grafton, and sought support for the idea. The first Art in a Day was held in 2010 and was a huge success. The Parnell Community Centre was the location for administering the project and the final evening party saw many people come together. Prize money was by way of a grant from the TSB Bank. Since then, the project has been taken over by other organisations and the successful events have continued.

Reflections

I have been asked a few times why and how I became involved in public art. There are a few reasons, but probably the first was a visit I made in the 1970s to the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. I was astonished by the beauty of the Botticelli and other Renaissance paintings. I later visited the cave paintings of Lascaux in the Dordogne region in France. The fact that such amazing animal paintings were created 17,000 or so years ago made me realise that artistic creativity has always been part of human nature. As my interest in art grew, I recognised the importance of public art. I recall a Mexican artist speaking to the Hobson Community Board. He explained that in Mexico City, art is everywhere. And I thought, "Now there's an idea for Newmarket!"

When I was younger, I was a community worker; hence organising people and events is second nature. Community development within the public sphere can take many forms: recreation, social services, education, health and art. An active civil society is an essential aspect of a democratic system. Civil society has come to mean that part of society that is not government and not part of the corporate sector. It includes charities, community organisations, places of worship, families and unstructured groups. However, a strong civil society will create links and bonds with government agencies and the business world. It is civil society that builds social capital, the glue that holds people together. It is based on the principles of trust, support and reciprocity. It was this that I saw in Anghiari.

I have also come to recognise the importance of artistic expression in society. In 1965, Jennie Lee, Britain's first arts minister, said:

In any civilised community the arts and associated amenities, serious or comic, light or demanding, must occupy a central place. Their enjoyment should not be regarded as something remote from everyday life. (Quoted in Henley, 2016, p. 10)

The NAT has tried to support artists to create public artworks that people may use, enjoy and perhaps puzzle over. They make a statement that Newmarket is more than just a shopping destination. Along with the popular art galleries, art supply shops and murals, these artworks bring a lasting pleasure to a visit to Newmarket.

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David Haigh has a long career in community development. He is the former head of CD for the Auckland Regional Authority and has recently retired from Unitec New Zealand, where he taught in social practice, sociology and not-for-profit management. David is active in Auckland Action Against Poverty.