

NZ Museum Award 2011 Finalists Announced**6 April, 2011**

Religion, war, colonialism, impressionism, science fiction – and Wellington – were some of the subjects covered by the 10 finalists in the 2011 NZ Museum Awards. The strong, diverse field of entries showed museums and galleries using new ways to interpret and share New Zealand’s art and culture, social and historical stories.

“All of the finalists were multi-faceted projects. An exhibition might be the core of the project, but they all involved the development of other initiatives such as public and educational programmes, publications and online elements,” says Phillipa Tocker, Executive Director of Museums Aotearoa.

“Engaging communities in different ways is increasingly important. The finalists show that our museums and galleries are constantly finding new ways to be part of their communities, and not only provide an exhibition experience. They are taking a more active role and we are recognising that.”

There were exhibitions about pre and post European New Zealand. New Plymouth’s Puke Ariki took a dynamic bicultural approach to the Taranaki Wars – how they came about and their ongoing legacy. In partnership with Te Rūnanga o Waihao, the Waimate Historical Society celebrated the lives of the Waihao people who lived in the region before and after the arrival of Europeans.

Nelson's Provincial Museum developed an evocative exhibition and educational programme telling the story of the voyages of the first European colonists. The region's historic Isel House celebrated its 160th year with a visitor experience which highlighted the history of habitation at the homestead.

Exploring culture and history through art was a theme shared by many of the finalists. *Back & Beyond & Here* offered visitors to the Museum of Wellington City and Sea an interactive opportunity to delve into the capital city through art. Fantasy and sci-fi fans had a treat at the Dowse Art Museum with sketches, concept drawings, paintings and models by New Zealand's best sci fi and fantasy illustrators, many of whom have worked on movies such as the Lord of the Rings and Avatar.

The Whangarei Art Museum brought together a collection of art works exploring religion and spirituality by an impressive range of New Zealand artists including Colin McCahon, Philip Clairmont, Tony Fomison and Ralph Hotere. Expressions Arts and Entertainment Centre told the story of an art movement, nurtured near Upper Hutt, which explored and developed New Zealand's own Impressionist style.

The Auckland Art Gallery has developed a rich integrated website to share their collection of archive material about, and art works by, Gottfried Lindauer. At the other end of the country, the Dunedin Art Gallery celebrated its 125th anniversary with an exhibition of beloved art works, including paintings, sculpture, photography and the decorative arts, accompanied by a comprehensive publication.

Entry numbers were slightly down this year, with no entries from Christchurch museums and galleries, who have previously been strong contenders in the Museum

awards. "Unfortunately entries closed quite soon after the February earthquake – we look forward to seeing them back next year," Ms Tocker says.

The award judges, Ian Athfield, Greg McManus and Priscilla Pitts said there was a strong field of contenders showing excellent examples of museum practice, especially in the areas of community engagement, rethinking curatorial approaches and reaching out to new audiences.

"We established the NZ Museum Awards to acknowledge and showcase the outstanding achievements of individuals and project teams in our museums and art galleries, says Ms Tocker. "We are grateful for the support of major sponsors Story! Inc, and our prize donors Philips Selecon, NZ Micrographic Services and National Services Te Paerangi." Award winners will be announced at a celebration dinner on Thursday 14 April at Museums Aotearoa's MA11 conference, which will be in Nelson from 13-15 April.

New Zealand Museum Award 2011 Finalists

Institution	Project
Auckland Art Gallery	Whakamāharo Lindauer Online
Dunedin Public Art Gallery	<i>Beloved</i>
Expressions Arts and Entertainment Centre	<i>Bohemians of the Brush</i>
Isel House	Isel's 160th Year
Museums Wellington	<i>Back & Beyond & Here</i>
Nelson Provincial Museum	<i>Port Nelson, Haven Ahoy!</i>
Puke Ariki	<i>Te Ahi Kā Roa, Te Ahi Kātoro, Taranaki War 1860-2010: Our Legacy, Our Challenge</i>
The Dowse Art Museum	<i>White Cloud Worlds</i>
Waimate Museum	<i>Ka Takata Whenua o Waihao</i>
Whangarei Art Museum	<i>Credo & Quest</i>

For more information about the awards, contact:

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