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**A WOLF ENTERS
THE FIELD OF THE ARTS IN WANGANUI
AFTER THE
2004 LOCAL BODY ELECTIONS**

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ABSTRACT

This research uses a Bourdieuan framework to explore 'the collision' between the fields of local government and the arts at the symbolic site of the Sarjeant Art Gallery in Wanganui, New Zealand. The Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project, conceptualised to make the Gallery more accessible and inclusive, had 84% of the necessary funds committed when it became a key issue in the 2004 local body elections. Once elected the new Mayor, who opposed the Project, swiftly undertook an intensive media campaign to discredit it. Within weeks, the entire Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board had resigned, the Extension Project was abandoned and the artists of the town were profoundly shocked. In response to these acts of symbolic violence by the Mayor, the artists developed a number of strategies that were ultimately unsuccessful in reviving the Project.

Pierre Bourdieu's conception of the social space as a site of struggle between fields for the many different kinds of capital he identified resonates with the aim of this research, which was to explore the possible causes and consequences of this monumental clash of fields. Undertaken in three phases, the first two stages of the research mapped the field of the arts in Wanganui and documented the events of 'the collision'. These set the scene for the fieldwork, which took the form of structured interviews with eight agents from the field of the arts who had been involved in devising strategies to respond to the attacks on their field.

Bourdieu's analysis of the field of the arts as autonomous explains why its agents looked for support for the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project from the national field of the arts instead of its own social space. This meant that the Project never gained the wide support and political leadership it needed to take it through to completion and that calling on funding from local government became fraught with difficulty even though the Project was predicated on social inclusion. His notion of habitus, an unspoken set of values and beliefs within fields, explains why the agents within the field of the arts responded the way they did to the attack on their symbolic capital, with some agents abandoning the site of struggle and others engaging in strategies that were ultimately ineffective in constructing an included and supportive public that could have persuaded the politicians of Wanganui to invest in art.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Wanganui is a quiet provincial town, nestled on the banks of New Zealand's second longest river. It was once a bustling place, in the nineteenth century, with its port full of ships and riverboats plying their trade up into the bush-covered hinterland. Although its prominence as a trading centre has completely waned, you can still get the feel of how important it once was when you stand in the main street, with its many ornate Edwardian buildings, and look up the rolling hill of Queens Park to the Sarjeant Gallery. This magnificent building, built in 1919 with funds bequeathed by Henry Sarjeant, was opened to great acclaim and the townspeople flocking to visit.

When I came to live in the town, in the early 1980s, it seemed quite dark to me. There were few jobs advertised and the place felt down on its luck. This became worse when the railway workshops were closed down by the third Labour Government and then, after the 1987 share market crash, it was hard to see a way forward for the town, its economic base was so eroded. This began to show in its main street, where many of the beautiful heritage buildings became empty and dishevelled.

A community-driven initiative to develop a tertiary institution for the town so that local people could learn new skills helped to turn things around for Wanganui. This initiative was very successful and, by the early 1990s, the arts, crafts and design courses had become a particular strength. Several accomplished artists, mostly from the United States and Britain, came to live in the town to take up teaching positions at what was now known as Wanganui Polytechnic. The field of the arts began to grow in size and capability as significant numbers of local people took advantage of these new learning opportunities and graduates stayed on to live in this beautiful town with very affordable housing and studio space.

Within a space of ten years there was a large community of a few hundred artists living in the town. Some more politically-active members of the field started to assert that the town

was an art centre. No one else really took much notice of this bold statement until, in 2001, a television production company filming *The Great Art Trip* came to town. One of the co-presenters, Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins, waxed lyrical about Wanganui, its art school, beautiful environment and wealth of talented artists. Another person who did take notice was the Wanganui District Council's Economic Development Manager, Philip Shackleton, who had just come from Dunedin where he had been involved in setting up that city's fashion incubator. He recognised that the arts could provide a way to lead the town out of its doldrums and started to consult with the field about how this idea could be advanced.

This new attention to the arts was a shot in the arm for the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board. Formed in 1993 at the behest of the Council, which until then had managed the affairs of the Gallery, the Trust Board was tasked with governing the Gallery and solving the decades-old problem of having out-grown its infrastructure. Storage and staff facilities were antiquated and unsuitable by current museum standards and it had none of the modern conveniences that art museums now provide their visitors, like a café, modern toilet facilities, retail and educational opportunities. In 1998, the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board had commissioned New Zealand's leading conservation architect, Chris Cochran, to provide advice on how best to extend this iconic building, which has a Historic Places Trust Category One classification. In 1999, this report came to form a part of the brief for an architectural competition to find a sensible solution to the institution's many issues and bring its functionality into the 21st century. In line with this brief, the winning design by Steve McCracken of Warren and Mahoney, a nationally-renown architectural firm, was simple and functional.

Once the design for the extension to the town's art gallery was confirmed by the Trust Board, it began fundraising for the \$8.3 million dollar project. Local philanthropic trusts pledged \$400,000, the Lotteries Board granted \$400,000 and a well-known patron of the arts, Dr Robin Congreve, undertook to raise \$1 million from other Auckland art patrons. Artists from around New Zealand donated their work to an art auction, quickly raising another \$160,000. In May 2004, a second application to the Ministry of Culture and Heritage's Capital Works Fund, which took into consideration the increased cost of the Project, finally secured a grant of \$2.2 million. Shortly after, in August, and just before campaigning for the local body elections began, the Wanganui District Council agreed to contribute \$2.2 million and underwrite the balance of the fundraising, which was a

condition of the grant from the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. It had taken the Council a long time to get behind the Project. The politicians, even some of those that supported the Extension Project, were not entirely convinced that it had the public backing that such a big project needed. Finally, with Council support in place, it seemed that the Project could move forward and all that it needed was one last check that the costings were correct.

The Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board, however, had become very aware of a developing threat to the Project in the form of a new political group contesting the local body elections, which were imminent. Michael Laws, a lively and intelligent publisher and talkback host, with some notoriety as a politician and political strategist, had formed the Vision Party to fight the 2004 local body elections in Wanganui. Their campaign strategy was unlike anything the town had seen before: it was smart and savvy. The twelve Vision candidates shared resources and campaigned together under one banner, so they were able to achieve extensive media coverage. One of their election promises was that the decision to fund the Sarjeant Gallery Extension would be re-visited and taken to the community for a decision. This was of great concern to the Trust Board, though many others did not see it as such a threat. At election time, the Vision team achieved their goal, winning six of the twelve Council seats and their leader, Michael Laws, was elected Mayor. I was one of those who had not been overly worried about the possible threat to the Extension Project if the Vision team was elected. This was partly because the messages from the Vision team had been so inconsistent, ranging from a suggestion that the proposal should be re-considered to an assertion that the Project would not go ahead. It seemed to me that a policy had not been fully developed and, as it was mooted that the community would be party to the decision-making, I felt sure I would be able to take part in the process and put forward my views. I could not have been more misguided.

Less than four weeks after the election I vividly remember picking up the *Wanganui Chronicle* on Thursday morning, 11 November 2004, and exclaiming with surprise 'What's going on?' The Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board was featured on the front page of the newspaper, and in the article the new Mayor of our town seemed to be saying that there was some problem with the Extension Project. I did not understand. I thought everything was fine; in fact, I was sure everything was fine. A good proportion of the funding was already in place and supporters of the project were furiously raising more...but here was

the Mayor saying that things were so amiss with the Project that 'people's reputations were at stake' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 11 November 2004:1).

That was only the beginning. Things did not get better, they only got worse and worse and worse. For the next few days, on Friday, Saturday and Monday, only a meagre amount of information was fed out to the public through the local newspaper. We were all pretty much in the dark and it was difficult to piece together just what was going on. It appeared that there was a problem with the funding for the Project and that, in some way that had not been explained, questions were being asked about the Trust's accountability in regard to ratepayer funds. The language that the Mayor was using was very authoritative and accusatory - he was 'summoning' the Trust Board to meet with the Council that Monday afternoon, 15 November 2004, at 4 o'clock.

Three things happened as a result of that meeting: the Council resolved to ask the Chair of the Trust Board to resign, the Director of the Gallery was put under internal investigation for misconduct and the Mayor announced that the Extension Project was called to a halt. This was an incredible turn of events for a project that had seemed to be progressing well. What was the explanation? How had this come about?

The crux of the matter was that although the Auckland art patron, Dr Robin Congreve, had undertaken to support the Project by raising \$1 million dollars, the money had not yet been forthcoming. The Mayor had taken the position that these funds were unlikely to eventuate, and that this not only presented a risk to the Project for which the Council could find itself responsible but also implied that the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board had misrepresented its financial position to its many funders.

The Trust Board fought back but not with sufficient vigour. Within the space of three weeks, the Board had all resigned, the Extension Project had been abandoned and the artists of the town were angry, very angry. They were particularly incensed by an editorial by the Mayor in his regular column in the *Sunday Star Times* (28 November 2004) denigrating the arts and calling those within the field elitist and bludgers.

The arts, those that practise them and those that enjoy them, have long been associated with elitism, a perception that persists today, even amongst art sociologists:

When individuals seek to understand, appreciate and collect art works, they are expressing an aspiration to membership in a status community of the cultivated (Zolberg, 1990:156).

The prerequisite education in the arts that is needed to participate in this field does work to exclude those who have not had the opportunity to acquire such knowledge. The previous Council may have found it difficult to commit to the Project because it felt it had limited relevance, and consequently support, within the social space. The new Mayor, an experienced politician, realised that coupling the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project with elitism and social exclusion would have popular appeal. In a field that is more formed from artists than arts patrons, and has a strong capacity for considering the well-being of the whole field, the accusations of elitism were galling enough. Seeing them used as a means to destroy the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project, which promised to raise the profile of Wanganui as an arts centre and make their vocation economically sustainable, was unimaginable. The artists protested, loudly and messily, at Council meetings and through the national and local media. Despite a sustained campaign over some months, of protest, lobbying and even reasoned pleas, the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project was finished with. Many people in the field of the arts were left profoundly shocked, trying to understand how this could have come about. I was one of them.

This research project is the means for me to make sense of a situation that I have found very difficult to comprehend because I am such a committed and passionate supporter of the arts. I am a founding member of the Whanganui Artists' Guild (known as WAG), which was formed in 2002 to lobby in support of the arts, and currently serve as its Secretary/Treasurer. In this role, I have presented submissions to the Wanganui District Council's Annual Plan process that have supported the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project and a review of the Council's Arts Policy. I am part of the WAG subcommittee that, in 2003, initiated the arts broadsheet, *Frisky*, and continue to be its key coordinator. As I began this research, in March 2005, I was appointed by the Whanganui Arts, Culture and Heritage Development Trust as the town's first Arts Developer and in that role I moved between the arts and political fields as I supported and promoted the art sector until the end of August 2005. Although funding was confirmed for the position for a further year and I could have continued in this role, I decided to return to work for the South Taranaki District Council as its District Community Development Advisor.

At a personal level, I am in a long-term relationship with an artist and good friends with many others. I am a small-time collector of art, a supporter of the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project, and one of those dubbed an 'art groupie' by Michael Laws. My personal situation obviously has a bearing on how I approach this research. For me, interpreting these events is much more than simply an intellectual exercise in the pursuit of knowledge 'for its own sake'. Clearly there is a risk that my interests are so direct and strong that they will somehow distort the knowledge I seek to gain. I need to be able to challenge and explore rather than merely rationalise beliefs I already hold. To this end I am committed to working in a reflexive and vigilant manner throughout this research project. I aim to do the best job I can in the interest of the integrity of the findings.

I have undertaken this research project because I feel some responsibility to do so. For many agents of the field of the arts in Wanganui the events that led to the abandonment of the Extension Project have been extremely demoralising. This research offers an opportunity for some agents of that field to speak freely without comment or being derided as 'arts activists' by agents of the media or local government. It also gathers together information about the field of the arts and its history, and records the events of this time in one place. A third purpose of the research is to look at the whole situation in a broader context using a sociological framework.

Using the 'externalist' approach of sociology, in particular art sociology, allows this research to consider the significance of the arts within the social space of Wanganui. It also provides valuable insights into the functioning of the field and its systems of classification and distinction. Bourdieu, one of the great post-war French sociologists, undertook a huge research programme to develop a sociological framework that is able to both contextualise the field of the arts within the social space and provide an analysis of the practices of that field. His conception of the social space as a place of constant struggle between fields for the many different kinds of capital he identified resonates with the concerns of this research. I am investigating the collision between local government and the field of the arts at the site of the town's art museum. Bourdieu's concept of habitus, an unspoken set of values and beliefs held within fields, helps to explain why the various agents acted the way they did. In addition, his extensive application of these concepts to the field of cultural production, but also that of the state and, to a lesser extent, the media mean that his framework has particular relevance for this research project.

Bourdieu expanded the notion of capital past the economic to include cultural, social and symbolic capital, which when aggregated determine the status of an individual. Those within the field of the arts generally have high levels of cultural capital acquired through familial transmission or higher education, which allows them to occupy a dominant, powerful position within the social space. This thesis will argue that placing Bourdieu's sociological framework over the collision between politics and art in Wanganui, looking more closely at his explanation of how the social space works, with its many overlapping fields all jostling for legitimation, provides a rationale for why events unfolded as they did.

The following two chapters establish the Bourdieuan concepts and outline the methodology that underpins my analysis of the Wanganui case. In chapter four I document the collective capital of the field of the arts in Wanganui and provide a short history of its symbolic site, the Sarjeant Gallery. This is followed by a chapter describing the issues of accommodation that the Gallery faces and how the Extension Project came to be developed. Chapter six gives an account of the struggle between the new Mayor of the town and the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board, which provides further context for fieldwork. The findings of this fieldwork, undertaken with the aim of exploring the possible causes and consequences of this monumental clash of fields, are presented and analysed in chapter seven. The final chapter draws all my findings into a conclusion.

As I will argue in this thesis, Bourdieu's analysis of the field of the arts as autonomous helps to explain why the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project never gained the public backing and political leadership it needed to take it through to completion. While the field of the arts was looking to extend itself, to gather in the wider public to enjoy art, it asked for legitimation and support from the national field of the arts instead of the agents of its own social space. To put it crudely, even though the entire Project was predicated on social inclusion and education about art for all, the agents who were driving the Extension Project only talked to those within the field of the arts and failed to communicate the benefits that it could provide across the social space. This failure was exploited by the new Mayor in ways that ultimately led to the Extension Project being abandoned altogether.

The Bourdieuan concept of habitus explains why those within the field of the arts developed the strategies they did when subjected to attacks by the Mayor of Wanganui. It explains why, when the Extension Project was denigrated in many ways, but primarily as

being a project for the elite, the agents of the field were unable to respond in a way that would resonate with the wider community. Their habitus assumed that art is valued by all and so they failed to powerfully respond to the intervention into the social space of a politician arguing otherwise and trading on the elitist history of the arts. Many of the strategies they chose, like protesting, stencilling slogans in public places and printing protest T-shirts only served to define them as 'a minority' and isolate them further from 'the mainstream', especially as the fight between the agents of the field of the arts and local government became vociferous. Once again, even when aiming to talk to others, they were talking to themselves. Their responses only confirmed the vulnerable, elitist position for which they were being attacked.

It seems tragic that the demise of a project conceptualised to make the art museum more accessible and inclusive was brought about, in part, by the habitus of its most fervent supporters. The autonomy of the field, evidenced by the Gallery's close ties to national and international art networks rather than its own townspeople, sadly led to a generally-held perception that it was elitist, despite the best efforts of the curators at this symbolic site to provide exhibitions that might engage the local people. Given that the issues of accommodation and accessibility are still facing the Sarjeant Gallery, and the need to solve these issues is still present, I hope this thesis will provide some insight into this situation as well as lessons for the future when an extension to the Sarjeant Gallery eventually goes ahead. As Bourdieu says in the postscript to *The Weight of the World*: 'What the social world has done, it can, armed with this knowledge, undo' (1999:629).

CHAPTER TWO

ART AS A SITE OF CONFLICT BETWEEN DISTINCTION AND INCLUSION

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on the struggles of the field of the arts in a small town at the site of its art museum. The charge by the leading local politician is that art is elitist and irrelevant within the social space and, for this reason its agents should not expect civic support. This chapter explores the field of the arts, its modern history and the advent of the art museum. The philosophical notion of aesthetics is an important part of this discussion, as it has long provided a means for categorising and, thus, hierarchising cultural works. For the field of art sociology, the centrality of such a doctrine of distinction has provided a challenge and the discussions around this symbolic point will also be examined here. As Bourdieu provides a sociological framework that covers the arts, the museum, politics and power, his work and theories will be examined particularly closely.

2.2. ART'S HISTORY AS A CONSORT TO POWER AND GENIUS

In our modern western civilisation, art was initially entwined with the Church and great works were commissioned and displayed for the edification of the public as they worshipped (Zolberg 1990, Duncan 1995). Artists also had private patrons, including royalty and wealthy merchants. As the influence of the Church began to decline and royalty to rise in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, kings displayed their works of art in magnificent reception halls, sealing the relationship between art and social status. As Duncan (1995:22) argues, 'The point of such a show was to dazzle and overwhelm both foreign visitors and local dignitaries with the magnificence, luxury and might of the sovereign'.

This relationship between art and status was further enhanced by the philosophical shifts of the Enlightenment and, particularly, the development of Kantian aesthetics. Kant described aesthetic judgment as more than having a taste for the beautiful. He believed it was oppositional to rational judgment and sprang from a higher intellectual feeling for the 'sublime' (Kant, 1964: 26). For Kant, art was the product of a genius made up of imagination, understanding, soul and taste: 'Genius is the innate mental aptitude (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art' (Kant, 1964: 168). Kant's concept of artistic genius encompassed the ability to create original works instead of imitating or, as Kant puts it, aping others (1964: 181). A genius is exemplary, one of nature's elect and for others to imitate.

The Kantian thesis of aesthetic judgment provided a set of guidelines for the appreciation of art. In *A Critique of Judgment* Kant distinguishes between art and practical skill or ability, which is how craft has been described in the past and which he sees as a matter of learning and knowledge. Kant goes further in his prescription of what may be described as art or as craft, and creates a hierarchy of value or status as he does so. He describes handcraft as mechanical art, which he sees as 'art depending on industry and learning' (1964: 171). Craft also implies compulsory labour, for pay and may be disagreeable (drudgery). On the other hand, according to Kant, while the fine or 'free' arts may have some aspects of a compulsory character it is freedom 'which alone gives life to the work' (Kant, 1964: 110). Beyond the reach of the everyday, free art is best created in an atmosphere of play rather than labour for pay because it is a matter of the soul.

Even esoteric forms did not escape classification by Kant, who laid down guidelines for what may be considered fine art. These are:

1. The arts of speech: rhetoric and poetry.
2. The formative arts: plastic art and painting. The plastic arts consist of sculpture and architecture.
3. The art of the beautiful play of sensations: music and the play of colour.

These fine arts were then arranged in a hierarchy of worth with poetry holding the highest rank and music the lowest because 'it plays merely with the sensations' (Kant, 1964:195).

Kant constructed a very tight definition of art as beautiful, and suggested that even if the subject matter was not what we might all agree to be beautiful such as 'the Furies, diseases, devastations of war and the like', the art itself must still be beautiful (1964: 173). He was of the view that the faculty to produce fine art must appear effortless and 'without appearing studied' (Kant, 1964: 175). Art was akin to a miracle and artists were considered creators and 'interpreters of life' (Barzun, 1973: 27) so that viewers became complicit in a quasi-religious act of contemplation. The rarefied atmosphere surrounding 'fine art' worked to mystify it so that the pursuit of the arts appeared difficult, out of the reach of everyday people. Its code of exclusivity rather than inclusivity would prove to be an ongoing conundrum for the democratic institution of the art museum, which was developing at a similar time in modern history.

2.3 THE ART MUSEUM AND THE DEMOCRATISATION OF ART

Art museums grew out of the collections of curiosities and art of the Middle Ages (Hoffman in Sherman and Rogoff, 1994: 3). However the development of the Louvre, one of the first public art museums, signalled a new intent to share this treasure with those other than the wealthy. The Louvre came into being in the late eighteenth century, during the throes of the French Revolution, when the revolutionary government of 1793 nationalised the king's art collection, made it a public institution and part of the State education system. This political act, undertaken ostensibly to dramatise the democratisation of France, nevertheless created the first public art gallery with free admission for all (Duncan 1995, Hudson 1987).

In spite of this apparent move towards democratisation through the institution of the art museum, many of the appurtenances and rituals of exclusivity were maintained, signifying what would become an ongoing cultural conflict between elitism and equality (Zolberg 1990). Duncan (1995: 24) describes how the Louvre's new directors had traits that came to characterise art museum staff everywhere and were emulated by the bourgeoisie:

Men of taste and breeding, whatever their nationality, were expected to have learned key critical terms and concepts that distinguished the particular artistic values of the most popular masters. Indeed such knowledge was taken as a sign of aristocratic breeding.

In the nineteenth century, as many royal and private art collections were gifted to the public, the Louvre became a model for art galleries and museums. The uneasy alliance between the democratic aims of the art museum to educate all and the need to revere its contents were amplified as the extravagant architectural style that started with the Louvre became a benchmark for the many new 'temples of art' that were built (Hudson, 1987: 45). The social space was also highly stratified and appreciation of art was generally only associated with the upper classes. These were the times when Alexis de Tocqueville was asserting that only the elite could appreciate high culture and Nietzsche despaired of the mediocrity of the common man (Barzun, 1974).

In the mid-nineteenth century the desire for museums spread first through France, Germany, England and Italy and then into the rest of Europe and the United States. They were well received by the public, who were 'gripped by the emergence of these centres of learning' (Flanders in Hooper-Greenhill, 1995: 72). People were keen to increase their knowledge and the art museum played an important part in their endeavours. Bennett puts this apparent change in public attitude to self-improvement and learning in the context of the development of a number of new institutions at the time including history and natural-science museums, dioramas and panoramas, national exhibitions, arcades and department stores. These institutions all

served as sites for the development and circulation of new disciplines (history, biology, art history, anthropology) and their discursive formations (the past, evolution, aesthetics, Man) as well as for the development of new technologies of vision (in Greenberg, Ferguson and Nairne, 1996: 81).

The world was opening up.

Hudson (1987: 11) discusses how the working classes were thought to have little desire for cultural activities until their strong attendance at the Great Exhibition of 1851 proved otherwise. This must have been gratifying for Prince Albert, the motivator and director of the project who had come from Germany with 'a strong sense, not only of the unity of culture – culture was something in which all classes had the right to share – but also of the public's right to direct contact with it' (Hudson, 1987: 13).

Access for all became a cornerstone principle articulated by those who strove to develop an art museum for their town or city. The concept for South Kensington Museum, seen as

a turning point in British policy because of its emphasis on public education, was developed in 1835 by a Select Committee that had in mind 'extending the knowledge of the ARTS and of the PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN among the People of the Country' (Purbrick in Pointon, 1994: 70). This came about because it was thought that the arts had 'an enlightening effect' as well as an effect on the economy.

The principles of access and education were also articulated by the founders of some smaller, private museums, like the Whitechapel Fine Art Loan Exhibition, which was opened in Spring 1881. This initiative was driven by public-spirited social reformers, Samuel and Henrietta Barnett, who had a vision of social reclamation and urban renewal as the various classes came together to enjoy art (Koven in Sherman and Rogoff, 1994: 24). The following ditty from that time and place describes how the Barnetts worked to provide cultural experiences for the residents of the East End of London, but also hints at unavoidable tensions as access to the symbolic goods of the dominant classes is negotiated:

Oh! East is East, and West is West
as Rudyard Kipling says
When the poor East enjoys the Art
For which the rich West pays
See the East and West linked in their best!
(Koven in Sherman and Rogoff, 1994: 22).

In the United States, in the early nineteenth century, accessing the arts was generally considered to be a private pursuit and not the business of the Government. In addition the arts were seen to be impractical, a luxury rather than a necessity. At worst, they were associated with 'aristocratic degeneracy', an anathema to the new republic (Zolberg, 1984: 381). However, this view had changed by the second half of the nineteenth century. The Government started to consider the arts to be an acquired taste, which all should be encouraged to develop (Zolberg, 1984: 381). This about-turn came with increasing immigration and fears of a societal split. It was thought that access to 'cultural goods such as literacy, knowledge of all sorts, and appreciation of previously inaccessible forms of art' would help to knit these disparate groups into a cohesive social fabric (Zolberg, 1984: 378).

By the end of the nineteenth century, art museums had become a symbol of civil society. They were also seen as having the power to persuade the disruptive, working classes towards a more passive, civilised way of life at a time in history when industrial relations were fraught and the poor were plagued by lack of access to housing and education (Bennett in Greenberg, Ferguson and Nairne, 1996: 109). The metaphor of improvement that was bandied around in the nineteenth century, and in conjunction with the art museum as an educative institution, involved ideas of order, cleanliness and posture. While Taylor is of the view that the underlying pretext for 'social improvement' was the eradication of crime (Taylor in Pointon, 1994: 9), art museums were recognised as one of the 'correct' forms of enjoyment and this legitimacy led to the mobilisation of a new class of art public.

The museum of the nineteenth century provided a 'soft' approach to the promotion of art and culture when compared to education in the form of disciplined schooling which, it may be assumed, is generally less palatable. The art museum was seen as a form of entertainment but was nevertheless very effective in disseminating information and gaining voluntary participation (Pearson in Greenberg, Ferguson and Nairne, 1996: 109). In this way art museums were seen as being able to gently persuade the unruly masses towards civilisation.

Although the principle of inclusiveness was widely espoused in the nineteenth century, the reality was that, in Britain, viewing artworks was mostly taken up by the middle classes in their bid to become upwardly mobile so that 'visits to the museum could be described as routine for the better classes by 1889' (Taylor in Pointon, 1994: 10). This early tendency for the museum to primarily attract middle-class patronage was exacerbated by the trade slump of the 1880s, which left the poor grappling for survival so they were little able to enjoy such leisure pursuits (Taylor in Pointon, 1994: 10).

Some researchers are of the view that the philosophy to include the lower classes was just that – there was never any real interest in putting it into practice nor any intent to alter the institution in any way that would make it less intimidating for workers. 'Temples to the arts' continued to be built and 'men of refinement' continued to guard the doors. Taylor's view is that 'the desire of the new art public was to be free of the contamination of the lower class altogether' (in Pointon, 1994: 24). This social exclusion was evident in the images that were displayed of the art museum, showing well-dressed clientele, with good posture

viewing the artworks and 'undisturbed by alien class elements, social misfits, crime, poverty and the labouring mass' (Taylor in Pointon, 1994: 24).

Zolberg puts forward the view that, although public education has been put forward as the reason for the art museum's existence, it has almost always been a lower priority than collecting, preserving and studying artworks. She contends that 'although a public mission was adduced to justify their existence, and gain access to public subsidy, in fact, art museums were never really designed to be 'democratic' (1984: 377) and this is imprinted in their origins and their conflicting purposes.

Towards the middle of the twentieth century an increased interest by scholars in the nature of cultural consumption developed and a number of researchers undertook work to discover more about the audiences for cultural works, often at the site of the art museum. To begin with came the work by Russell Lynes ([1949], 1980) who categorised audiences according to their taste in art. This was augmented by further work by Toffler (1965) and Gans (1974). These audience surveys have generally found a preponderance of society's elites, with common characteristics in terms of social origin, income, education and occupation, giving weight to the idea that 'the hierarchical structure of cultural value is reinforced by persisting processes and structures of inequality' (Zolberg, 1990: 142).

Zolberg asserts that it is simplistic to assume that people only choose to become audiences for the arts because of the pleasure they derive from viewing the art works: 'When individuals seek to understand, appreciate and collect art works, they are expressing an aspiration to membership in a status community of the cultivated' (1990: 156). This view is also held by Wolfe (1992) and Duncan (1995): 'The museum setting is not only a structure; it also constructs its *dramatis personae*. These are ideally, individuals who are perfectly predisposed socially, psychologically and culturally to enact the museum ritual' (Duncan, 1995: 13).

This persisting definition of arts audiences as society's elites must be juxtaposed against the scrutiny to which the art museum is put, as a large consumer of public money: More than ever it is required that museums are inclusive and responsive to the demands of a wider audience. During the late twentieth century, in a bid to attract a larger, more

heterogeneous audience and justify their state funding, many arts institutions undertook research to analyse their audiences and their preferences (Hood 1983, Kaplan 1995 (in Hooper-Greenhill)) so they could determine how best to engage them (Wizevich, 1993). In New Zealand, there have been studies by McDermott-Miller (1998), Stafford & Associates (1991) and Statistics New Zealand (2002). The latter found that New Zealanders enjoy a greater array of cultural experiences than ever before and that nearly half the population had visited an art gallery or museum in the previous 12 months. Of these, people with secondary or tertiary qualifications were more likely than those without such qualifications to have undertaken this activity. It also found that women were more likely than men to visit galleries and museums.

It is interesting, then, that during the twentieth century art museums have, in fact, increased and diversified their audiences (Zolberg, 1984: 377). Zolberg suggests that this has come about because art museums have changed their approach to develop popular 'blockbuster' shows and less foreboding satellite museums, away from the main 'temple'. Television has proved to be a great provider of education in the arts, building up expertise in those who may otherwise have felt intimidated by the art museum (Zolberg, 1984: 389).

Another factor that has led to change within the art museum, and has increased its popularity, is the gradual sliding away of the boundaries between high and low art before the tide of postmodernism. A wider range of artworks is shown than ever before, created by a wider range of people. It is not uncommon to see shows about architecture or design, by outsider artists or of domestic 'craft'. There are often bookstores, gift shops and cafes attached so that 'It has become possible to visit the museum, see a show, go shopping, and eat, and never once be reminded of the heritage of civilization' (Duncan, 1995: 71).

Although the institution of the art museum was founded with access for all in mind, it took around two centuries before this ideal began to be effectively fulfilled. Art museums have always been embraced by the middle classes, keen to 'improve' themselves, but few from the working class felt able to enter. This was, in part, because they felt intimidated by the grandeur of the buildings but also because they did not have the education in the arts that would make such a visit enjoyable. The development of deliberate strategies of inclusivity has only come about as museums have become more accountable for their public funding.

The initial signs are that such strategies have been successful at gathering in a wider range of people than ever before.

2.4. AESTHETICS AND ART SOCIOLOGY

The previous sections background the thesis of aesthetics that has been so dominant in the field of the arts and show the conflict that has been generated in the art museum as this philosophy rubs up against the principles of democracy and inclusivity that are articulated in western society. As a pivotal conceptual discourse of the arts, Kant's legacy has been to inform centuries of theories on the arts from a narrow philosophical rather than a broader sociological point of view. This has certainly created a conundrum for art sociologists.

Zolberg (1990: 5-6) argues that the disciplines of aesthetics and sociology are intrinsically oppositional in their approach. She describes the humanistic discipline of aesthetics as 'insider-based' where formal elements of art works are considered according to 'techniques and media used, content of imagery or language, aesthetic influences from works created in the same or similar tradition'. Aesthetics provides a theoretical and philosophical platform for valuing and critiquing art and, according to Zolberg, was instrumental in raising the prestige of the arts at the time when they were inextricably bound up with the medieval craft guilds (1990: 10).

Sociology, on the other hand, is an 'externalist approach' (Zolberg, 1990: 8). Sociologists look broadly at the significance of art in society starting from 'the premise that art should be contextualized in terms of place and time, in a general sense, as well as more specifically, of institutional structures, recruitment norms, professional training, reward, and patronage or other support'.

The dominance and relevance of the doctrine of aesthetics within the field of the arts, however, has led art sociologists to acknowledge its importance. This struggle to place Kantian doctrine within the discipline of sociology is exemplified in the work of Janet Wolff. In *The Social Production of Art*, Wolff argued that it is outside the concern of sociology to consider the subject of aesthetic quality, even though it is integrally related to values of class and discussions about cultural consumption (1981: 7). Just a few years later, in an

apparent about face, Wolff revisited the subject of aesthetics in *Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art* (1983) and concluded that although the philosophy of aesthetics is narrow in its focus, and does not consider many aspects of art making and consumption, it is a part of the social history of art that cannot be ignored.

The doctrine of aesthetics, and its associated disciplines of art criticism and art history, are criticised by art sociologists as an attempt to disconnect the arts from the rest of society. They serve as mechanisms 'to produce an ideological, 'pure' space for something called 'art', sealed off from and impenetrable to any attempt to locate art practice within a history of production and social relation' (Pollock, 1980: 57). Indeed it is their business to keep the canon of fine art alive and separate, and to maintain the categories by which art may be distinguished from that which is not (Zolberg, 1990: 12).

The maintenance of Kant's categories has proven to be problematic, however, in the face of a myriad of changes within the art world over the last 150 years. New media such as photography and film, which can be endlessly reproduced, have also been difficult to accommodate (Zolberg, 1990: 12). The broader view of sociology, however, recognises that values of taste and distinction change over time. This was illustrated in the work of Francis Haskell in 1976, which documented enormous changes in taste in France and Europe between 1790 and 1870, and related them to changes in the institutions of religion, politics and techniques of production as well as the widespread development of museums (cited in Wolff, 1983: 18). These observations question the relevance of the rigidly-defined precepts of aesthetics and link taste directly to the wider social context.

It seems that the criteria of distinction that are part of aesthetics have become so integral a part of the fabric of the field that they may be impossible to ignore. Becker, however, refuses to forefront aesthetic value within his work and takes the approach that making art is like any other form of work, and can be analysed in the same way (Zolberg, 1990: 202). This is reflected in his definition of the art world, in which he avoids the usual emphasis on 'the most fashionable people associated with those newsworthy objects and events that command astronomical prices'. Instead he uses the term to 'denote the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that the art world is known for' (Becker, 1982: x). Becker's focus is most often on the art producer rather than the art consumer.

Despite Becker's refusal to concede the centrality of Kant's categorisation of art, even he recognises that there is a hierarchy within the field, which he identifies as reputation and spells out as:

- (1) Specially gifted people
- (2) create works of exceptional beauty and depth which
- (3) express profound human emotions and cultural values.
- (4) The work's special qualities testify to its maker's special gifts, and the already known gifts of the maker testify to the special qualities of the work.
- (5) Since the works reveal the maker's essential qualities and worth, all the works that person makes, but no others, should be included in the corpus on which his reputation is based (Becker, 1982: 352-3).

This definition appears to relate very closely to Kant's theories of artistic genius. Becker, however, is more interested in how the art world cooperates as a social structure to create conventions and meanings, such as reputation. He suggests that an examination of any social organisation will bring to light

the networks responsible for producing specific events, the overlaps among such cooperative networks, the way participants use conventions to coordinate their activities, how existing conventions simultaneously make coordination possible and limit the forms it can take, and how the development of new forms of acquiring resources make change possible (Becker, 1982: 370-1).

The art world, like other social organisations, has its own conventions that are generally adhered to. To Becker, the art world is 'another way of talking about who knows what and uses it to act together' (1982: 67). His strategy, with regards to the question of aesthetics, is ultimately ambiguous, relegating it to the status of an internal convention.

Discussions about possible relationships between sociology and the many disciplines of the arts have come to the point where the current trend is now towards better integration between art history and sociology of art, both methodologically and theoretically (Tanner, 2003: 150). Criteria of distinction, as they relate to the struggle between classes within the social space, are relevant to this research and the philosophical realm of aesthetics does provide context and a rationale for many practices and attitudes that persist today. Bourdieu is cited as one sociologist who has successfully engaged with art history and considered its precepts as he developed his sociological framework (Tanner, 2003: 150).

Rather than abandoning the concept of distinction, Bourdieu redefines it as a social phenomenon, learned rather than bestowed by divine providence. In this way, Bourdieu circumnavigates the sociological tradition of opposition in ways that are particularly useful to this thesis.

2.5. BOURDIEU

Bourdieu's extensive research provided new insights into the areas of cultural consumption and production, education, the state and the media, which are all central to this research. He began his research career in 1957, in Algeria, as an anthropologist albeit with an academic background in philosophy and strongly influenced by structuralism and Marxism. Even at this early stage he was exploring 'the idea that struggles for recognition are a fundamental dimension of social life and that what is at stake in them is an accumulation of a particular form of capital' (Bourdieu cited in Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002: 70). From that time he continued to research what has been intrinsically the same issue, and to test his own theories in this regard.

EARLY RESEARCH WORKS: THE LOVE OF ART AND DISTINCTION.

During the 1960s and 1970s Bourdieu began to develop his own theories about the transmission of cultural learning. His extensive surveys, conducted over these two decades, in several European countries, led to his rejection of the concept of idealist aesthetics à la Kant. He came to view cultural distinction as a learned skill rather than the domain of those blessed with unique powers of perception.

In 1969, *The Love of Art* was published, profiling the economic, social and educational characteristics of the museum-visiting public across Greece, Holland, Poland, France and Hungary. In total, 28,443 museum visitors had been surveyed over two years as they visited 21 museums. Statistics gathered from this monumental survey confirmed for Bourdieu (1991: 37) that 'access to cultural works is the privilege of the cultivated class' even though art museums are generally accessible for free or a very small cost.

In fact, what the survey made visible was that access to cultural works is not only a matter of entering the buildings in which they are housed but comes with an education: 'In addition to visiting and its patterns, all visitors' behaviour, and all their attitudes to works on

display, are directly and almost exclusively related to education' (1991: 37). This is because works of art must be decoded or deciphered and this learned skill requires knowledge of artists, styles, periods, schools and themes.

Knowledge about the arts can be transmitted within the family as well as through the education system. However, Bourdieu was of the view that, if exclusivity was to be broken, families could not be relied upon to transmit this type of information, often simply because they do not have access to it themselves. The school then becomes in effect the only means of acquiring the familiarity and understanding of cultural works that will ultimately break down the social closure that makes art museums inaccessible to many:

'The more the school leaves the task of cultural transmission to the family, the more schooling tends to sanction and legitimate existing inequalities, since its effectiveness is a function of the existing (and unevenly distributed) competence of the individuals being schooled' (1991: 66).

Having identified education as the key mechanism for breaking down social exclusion from the arts, Bourdieu went on to observe that it is within the education system that a schism starts to develop between discourse about art and its production. In schools, art teachers are usually aligned with metalwork, woodwork and domestic science, which Bourdieu calls the 'devalued universe of technical education' (1991: 61). Art History, on the other hand, is separated out from the art syllabus and becomes aligned with 'history, a canonical discipline'. It is here that students come to realise that, being able to understand and discuss art works is the prerogative of those with greater cultural capital than those who just enjoy the process of making them.

Bourdieu continued his research into cultural consumption by undertaking quantitative surveys on 1,217 people, completed in 1963 and 1967-68. This data helped to establish two basic and related 'facts', as Bourdieu dubs his findings in *Distinction*. The first is that social origin plays a very important role in determining taste and the second is that those who have high levels of education and/or family experiences with cultural works are more likely to easily engage with the exhibits in an art museum showing the very close relationship between cultural practices and educational capital as well as social origin. In this way, families that take their children to art museums, and in other ways expose them to cultural works, are taking an active role in determining their tastes as adults.

Bourdieu also found that social origin became most obvious when the cultural works presented to respondents had less legitimacy in terms of taste. Those who had been exposed to a range of cultural works through familial educative processes were more likely to be comfortable amongst less well-known art works or as Bourdieu explains 'at equivalent levels of educational capital, the weight of social origin in the practice and preference-explaining system increases as one moves away from the most legitimate areas of culture' (Bourdieu, 1984: 13). Again, education and family background provide the key to being able to access the art museum in a meaningful way. This may provide an explanation for the criticisms of elitism and social closure that arise when art museums move away from displaying art works in styles legitimised through the education system and instead show less familiar contemporary or postmodern works.

The work undertaken for *Distinction* also laid the foundations of Bourdieu's conception of the social space, from which he developed the associated and pivotal concepts of the field, habitus and cultural capital. In the following sections the concepts of social space, habitus, capital and fields are examined further.

SOCIAL SPACE

Bourdieu saw the social space as dynamic, a place of relations and interactions, where 'visible beings, whether individuals or groups, exist and subsist in and through difference' (Bourdieu, 1998: 31). Social space is made up of many overlapping, relatively autonomous fields that exist in relation to each other and 'present themselves as structured spaces of social position' (de Jong, 2001:70) the properties of which are dependent on how dominant they are within the social space.

The social space is a place of struggles between dominant and dominated groups, which can lead to the displacement of either. These struggles come about as groups try to improve their position by acquiring capital and excluding other groups, or when the relative value of different kinds of capital are questioned (Harker, Mahar & Wilkes 1990: 142). As the dynamics of the social space change, groups may choose to mobilise in defence of their own interests.

As part of his consideration of the social space, with its struggles for power and dominance, Bourdieu acknowledges art, religion and language as symbolic systems that

can be used as 'instruments for constructing reality' as well as domination (Bourdieu, 1977: 1-2). Symbolic violence occurs when relations of communication become relations of power as dominant agents use their position to impose and legitimise meaning. The imposition of symbolic violence on communities that are already disadvantaged within the social space is one of the ways that the dominant discourses within the social space work to keep the disadvantaged in their subordinate position (Pizanias, 1996; Conway, 1997; Gonzalez, 2000; Connolly & Healy, 2004).

THE FIELD

The social space is made up of a number of overlapping fields, each of which have their own internal structure, which is also relational and in a state of constant movement. The field, however, is not a real or concrete space:

It is a metaphor for a social site where people and institutions engage in particular activities. [The] field exists only relationally, only as a set of possibilities, or a series of moves; as the site of particular forms of capital and particular narratives; and, especially, as the site of regulatory and coercive discourses (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002:68).

Each field also has its own competencies or practices that are learned, and which are unique to that field.

There are, however, also some more general laws that can be applied to the functioning of fields. The first of these, according to de Jong, is that they are places of constant struggle for legitimisation: 'In every field one can observe battles between insiders and outsiders, between the privileged and the underprivileged, the upper and under class, or between two adjacent fractions of the same class' (2001: 70).

Those agents within the field who have more capital and are more established are inclined towards conservative strategies that help them maintain their position while newcomers are likely to pursue one of two possible strategies. Those who are not trying to overthrow the system and just want a better position within it will pursue 'strategies of succession' (Swartz, 1997: 125). Others who have little to gain will pursue 'strategies of subversion' that can radically rupture the field by challenging the dominant group's legitimacy.

Bourdieu illustrates a second important property of fields using the metaphor of the game. Each field has its own rules and stakes in which all its agents are complicit. This is because they all share the same fundamental interest in the field: 'Every fight presupposes agreement about what is worth fighting for, about all the suppositions that one tacitly and unwittingly accepts by entering the game' (de Jong, 2001: 71). Bourdieu calls this belief in the game, *illusio* (Lipstadt, 2003: 398). The struggles within a field, unlike those within the wider social space, are only about a 'palace revolution', they are not about destroying the field itself. This is because acceptance by individual agents of the 'rules of the game' helps to reproduce the existing structures of dominance in the field (de Jong, 2001: 71).

HABITUS

Habitus is the unspoken set of values and beliefs that groups and classes share and espouse and that binds them together: 'the tastes and distastes, sympathies and aversions, fantasies and phobias which, more than declared opinions, forge the unconscious unity of a class' (Bourdieu, 1984: 77). Individuals acquire their habitus during their socialisation process when they are 'learning and being influenced by their specific, class-related social environment' (de Jong, 2001: 73).

An important aspect of habitus is that it works on both a conscious and unconscious level: 'It is internalised, constructed of doxa or unquestioned social conceptions that acquire the force of nature' (Fowler, 1997: 92). This means that individuals tend to see their own social world as 'the only acceptable and reasonable world. The way things are, is the way things should be' (de Jong, 2002: 73).

CAPITAL

During the *Distinction* project Bourdieu found that education was able to confer advantage and functioned as a form of capital. This led to him to expand out the notion of capital past the economic to include the cultural, symbolic and social. Economic capital, a familiar term, refers to ownership of stocks and shares, property rights or more generally, monetary rewards (Fowler, 1997: 31). Cultural capital, however, encompasses education, art and forms of language: 'It includes long-standing dispositions and habits acquired in the socialization process, the accumulation of valued cultural objects such as paintings, and formal educational qualifications and training' (Anheier, Gerhards and Romo, 1995:

862). Understanding, collecting and enjoying art has been a signifier of high cultural capital since monarchs began to display their art collections in the Middle Ages as a sign of their elite status, influence and power.

Social capital is the power gained through sheer number of family members, retainers or a network of supporters generated through membership in social networks or organisations (Anheier, Gerhards and Romo, 1995: 862). Symbolic capital is manifest as mana, reputation or honour: 'It is the prestige and the 'social credit' conferred by socially accepted or socially concealed uses of other types of capital' (Wacquant, 1987:69). Philanthropy and investment in research foundations are two examples of ways that symbolic capital can be accumulated (Swartz, 1997: 91). Symbolic capital carries extra weight because of its ability to legitimise (Swartz, 1997: 127). The art museum is a symbolic site because it has 'the capacity to define and legitimize cultural, moral, and artistic values, standards and styles' (Anheier, Gerhards and Romo, 1995: 862).

Aggregating the net worth of all four types of capital indicates the overall status of an individual or field. Thus capital becomes the basis for domination in the social space and instrumental in the struggle between classes (Harker, Mahar & Wilkes 1990: 13). Capital is also mutable, with different types of capital able to be transformed into others, albeit with variable levels of liquidity and convertibility. For example, economic capital, the most liquid of all forms, can be used to purchase education and thus cultural capital. In turn, cultural capital can be easily turned into social capital. Social capital, however, is the most difficult to convert either to cultural or economic capital (Anheier, Gerhards and Romo, 1995: 862).

SOME FIELDS IN QUESTION

Bourdieu's lifetime of research practice saw him explore many of the fields that make up the wider social space. Of these the field of the arts, the media as well as the state, albeit in the form of local rather than national government, are important to this research project about the Wanganui case. All these fields are categorised by Bourdieu as occupying dominant positions within the social space, in part because of their ability to influence the symbolic systems of that space.

FIELD OF THE STATE

Given the pivotal role of local government in the Wanganui conflict, as well as in the social space in general, Bourdieu's views on power and the state are important here. In *Practical Reason* (1998), Bourdieu discusses the state as a repository for material and symbolic resources that become concentrated into meta-capital, and can then be used to regulate the functioning of different fields. This regulation can be through financial intervention, such as support or investment in the cultural or economic fields, or it can be through judicial intervention. Alternatively support and investment in any field may be withdrawn. The regulation of the fields within the social space can also be achieved through the infliction of violence, both symbolic and physical.

One of the ways that symbolic violence can be inflicted is by using the state's own named experts and immense symbolic capital and power to 'create the official version of the social world' (Harker, Mahar & Wilkes 1990: 13). This can be through defining the lifestyles of others 'from the destructive and reductive point of view of the dominant aesthetic', or more simply put, dominating another group or field (Bourdieu, 1998: 9). As I will argue subsequently, the naming of the field of the arts in Wanganui as elitist is an example of state-imposed symbolic violence.

FIELD OF THE MEDIA

Yet another field that needs to be considered within this research is the institution of the media. Many of the interchanges between the artists and the Mayor of Wanganui are through the media, primarily print media. Bourdieu situates the media as having two related, primary roles within the social space: first as a sphere of cultural production with 'a specific role in circulating to a wider audience the knowledges of other, more specialized fields' and secondly as a symbolic system, a totalising force that can sanctify certain things as having primary importance and legitimate certain categories with social significance (Couldry, 2003: 665-7).

Couldry theorises that, like the state, the field of the media has 'meta-capital through which it can exercise power over other forms of power' (2003: 667). As a symbolic system, the media can change what counts as symbolic capital and even 'affect the 'exchange rate' between the capital competed for in different fields' by elevating some people or activities

at the expense of others (Couldry, 2003: 669). In *The Weight of the World*, Champagne discusses how the media can

collectively fabricate a social representation that, even when it is rather distant from reality, persists despite subsequent denials or later corrections because, quite often, it merely reinforces spontaneous interpretations and hence mobilizes prejudices, and thereby magnifies them (1999: 47).

This power to construct can be difficult for groups and individuals caught within it to counter, particularly if they are from a dominated fraction. Champagne warns that such distortions of reality, developed by the media ostensibly to raise public awareness of issues, can lead to the stigmatisation of groups and loss of symbolic capital.

The media plays an integral role in both the political and visual arts fields. Both politicians and artists are aware that exposure can influence their success. As Champagne suggests, it is now impossible to act politically outside the media and that politicians work hard to manage the media, and they generally employ press officers to assist in this regard (1999: 56).

Given the close interdependence of the fields of the media and politics it is pertinent that Couldry (2003: 668) questions how the meta-capital of these two fields interrelate, especially as they are both able to influence the flow of symbolic capital within the social space. Although this question is not a primary focus of this research, the interrelationship between the state and the media is visible in the way they appear to cooperate to create a legitimised version of the world as it relates to the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project.

FIELD OF THE ARTS

Bourdieu not only explored the transmission of cultural learning but also had a special interest in the field of cultural production and the practices and representations of artists. A key feature of the field of the arts, explored by Bourdieu in *The Field of Cultural Production* and *The Rules of Art*, is that, in the interests of maintaining intellectual and artistic freedom, it retains a high level of autonomy relative to other fields. This means that the field of the arts functions as 'a veritable social universe where, with its particular laws, there accumulates a particular form of capital and where relations of force of a particular

type are exerted' (Bourdieu, 1993: 164). Bourdieu describes the field as functioning 'somewhat like a prism which refracts every external determination' (1993: 164).

Bourdieu argues that artists occupy a dominant position in the larger social space because they have high cultural capital and also accrue symbolic capital, through the recognition their art works gain (Bourdieu, 1998: 33). As a field, however, the arts are not powerful, partly because they are not organised around the most powerful form of capital, which is economic. Although artists make symbolic goods, which have economic value, they generally eschew economic gratification in favour of 'art for arts sake':

The symbolic revolution through which artists free themselves from bourgeois demands and define themselves as the sole masters of their art while refusing to recognize any master other than their art – this is the meaning of the expression 'art for art sake – has the effect of eliminating the market (Bourdieu, 1993: 169).

The dominant positions within the field of the arts are held by sites of legitimation, such as the art museum, which decide what is art and what is not. Also prominent are the 'priests', artists with established reputations who must defend their position in the field and the 'prophets', the avant garde who challenge the status quo. One of the doxa of the artistic habitus, which is understood by all agents is that they must invest in the stakes of the field by developing 'a deep understanding of both the history of the field and its products and the range of positions occupied by predecessors and peers' (Lane in Inglis and Hughson, 2005: 38). This cultural capital can be acquired through education or, as Bourdieu suggests, familial transmission.

Bourdieu describes the artistic habitus as 'heterodoxical', so that artists tend to break away from social norms and actively work against the status quo (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002: 177). The field of cultural production is a realm of 'permanent revolution', particularly when it comes to art practice (Bourdieu, 1996: 239). Artists are not, however, seen by Bourdieu as agents of political action. In an interview with Hans Haacke, where they discuss how artworks can be used as a mode of political expression, Bourdieu raises the point that, as a collective, artists are not easy to mobilise into political action. Haacke suggests this is because, although they value freedom of expression and individuality, they

cannot find it within themselves to organise resistance: 'Artists aren't organizers. They hate bureaucracy and meetings. It bores them' (Bourdieu, 1995: 12). This lack of organisational capability occurs despite their high levels of education, which Crossley (2003) found to be a strong indicator of propensity for activist activity. Bourdieu was of the view, however, that artists are often unaware that they have common interests until a major attack is made on their field: 'Frontal attacks and direct threats to autonomy have at least one virtue: they force interested parties to become aware of their common interests, and they encourage them to become organized collectively' (Bourdieu, 1995: 13).

2.6. CONCLUSION

As this chapter has shown, the field of the arts is a place of tensions and paradox. Much of this tension can be ascribed in some way to the problematic inheritance of Kantian aesthetics. Developed in the Enlightenment era, this system of classification and hierarchisation of artworks has played a key role in mystifying the arts, separating them off from the everyday. Paradoxically, the influence of aesthetics on the field began at around the same time as art began to be taken into the public domain through the art museum.

At the site of the art museum, the need to venerate and care for precious art works is juxtaposed against the democratic aims of access for all. Being accountable for funding to provide services to the public has led many institutions to undertake research to discover how best they can serve their audiences. This, in turn, has led to quite far-reaching changes to the functions of these symbolic sites. Exhibitions now cover a broader range of subjects and genres, and the comfort of the public is attended to through the provision of new facilities such as cafes, book stores and gift shops. This responsiveness has been rewarded by an increase and diversification of the art museum audience.

The influence of Kantian aesthetics has also provided a layer of tension for art sociologists in their discussions about the field of the arts. While some, such as Becker, have tried to minimise the importance of aesthetics, most have come to the conclusion that aesthetics must be considered as an irrevocable part of the field of the arts. Bourdieu, however, circumnavigates these debates by suggesting that appreciation of art is a learned skill rather than the domain of geniuses. His sociological framework, which considers the field of the arts within the entire social space, provides a clear basis from which the findings of

this research can be analysed. Ranging over the fields of cultural production and consumption as well as state and media influences on the social space, Bourdieu's concern with distinction and classification in the cultural field as well as conflict and disruption in the social space is closely aligned with the themes of this research.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Using a Bourdieuan framework to study the situation in Wanganui has influenced the methodology I have developed for this research project. The concept of the field is central to Bourdieu's theoretical approach. As Harker, Mahar and Wilkes argue 'a great deal of his work can be said to be an attempt to identify the structure and uses of field as a method which constructs the object of the research' (1990: 8). For Bourdieu, the field is not a clearly demarcated domain but 'a field of forces' dynamised through the struggles for position and power that go on within it and that can transform or conserve it. A field does not, however, just contain human subjects but also includes any number of inanimate objects with which the human agents relate. The field of the arts may thus be defined as

a system of objective relations between social positions, which correspond to a system of objective relations between symbolic points: works of art, artistic manifestos, political declarations, and so on (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990: 8).

It is the relationship between the symbolic points and the distribution of capital that define the structure of the field.

The research on which this thesis is based is situated in the social space of Wanganui. The thesis investigates the struggle between the field of the arts and a local government politician at the symbolic point of the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project. As the local body elections drew upon the town in October 2004, the Project became the focus of political attention and thus an election issue. The subsequent post-election attack on the Project by the new Mayor disturbed the field of the arts in Wanganui, dynamising and transforming it. According to Bourdieu, with struggle in any field, at the heart of the matter is capital, both symbolic and cultural. My research explores how the different forms of capital were

instrumental in the struggle between the fields of local government and the arts in the social space of Wanganui.

3.2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

A Bourdieuan theoretical framework will be used in the analysis of the findings of this research, as will many of his principles of research practice. Bourdieu's research practice followed an interesting trajectory, ranging from ethnography to the conventional standardised survey through to qualitative interviews. His epistemological break with the traditions of ethnographic practice in the 1960s saw him survey an enormous number of respondents to discover the relationships between class and taste (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990: 72). In the research for *Distinction* and *The Love of Art*, Bourdieu used detailed quantitative surveys as well as observation to uncover and analyse a myriad of variables so that the differences in taste between classes could be classified. Bourdieu was of the view that surveys enabled him to 'obtain a sample large enough to make it possible to analyse variations in practices and opinions in relation to sufficiently homogeneous units' (Bourdieu, 1984: 503). For Bourdieu, however, gathering data was only one side of the research equation because he took the position that empirical investigation and theory are inextricably linked, arguing that 'one cannot think well except in and through theoretically constructed empirical cases' (cited in Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002: 48).

Bourdieu acknowledges the limitations of some forms of empiricist research in *Distinction*: 'When endeavouring to grasp systems of tastes, a survey by closed questionnaire is never more than a second best...It leaves out almost everything to do with the modality of practices' (Bourdieu, 1984: 506). In a practical sense, this meant that Bourdieu collected data, not only through questionnaires but also through the investigation of 'other discourses, accounts, observations, testimonies, documents, examples, personal experiences or knowledge' (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002: 48). Over the course of his career, Bourdieu moved away from quantitative practices towards a qualitative approach, developing what he called an epistemology of non-violent communication, which emphasised creating 'a relationship of active and methodical listening' (1999: 609) between the researcher and respondent that emulates conversation. In *The Weight of the World*, the findings of the research are presented as short stories, with much of the

dialogue of the respondents unchanged, so that the integrity of their response remains intact and unmediated by the researcher.

My own research inevitably departs from Bourdieu's approach due to its small sample size and restricted timeframe. Initially, my goal was to document around seven months of activity in the field of the arts in Wanganui, from the local body elections in October 2004 until the new Council's first referendum in May 2005 that would finally decide the fate of the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project and so looked like a sensible end point. However, the sheer volume of individual and group actions, along with media statements of diverse kinds by all parties made this an impossible task for a Masters project. In addition, there has been the problem that the struggle is still ongoing.

My solution to the obvious limitations I had in terms of time and resources was to concentrate on documenting the short, sharp episode that proved to be the catalyst for this ongoing struggle within the social space. I have named this formative episode 'the collision'. My goal has been to concentrate on the modality of the responses to 'the collision' from the field of the arts and, in doing so, let the field speak for itself, to describe why and how it responded in the way it did. Bourdieu's extensive and insightful exploration of the tensions that exist within the social space, and particularly in the field of the arts, provided a framework for analysis as well as the possibility of a new way of viewing the entire situation that could help me, and hopefully others, understand how these events had come to pass.

This research project was undertaken in three phases, each of which has led into and set up the next. I felt that my first priority should be to set the scene by providing some background and context of the situation. The second phase involved documenting the events of 'the collision'. These two phases set the scene for the fieldwork, the third part of the research. This fieldwork has taken the form of structured interviews with eight agents who were integrally involved in the struggle between the field of the arts and local government. In this way, the work of the first phase set up the second and the information gained from both was integral to the refinement and focus of the fieldwork. Following is a more detailed description of each section of the research.

MAPPING THE FIELD

As this project began my first concern was to provide adequate background, and also inform myself about the field in which the research was situated, by identifying the symbolic points as well as the key organisations and institutions. This sets the scene for the discussions that follow, as well as providing valuable context. It also gives a sense of how those in the field have worked hard, gradually building up capital to establish the vibrant field of the arts, with its solid infrastructure, that Wanganui has today.

This opening section of the research can be seen as a documentation of the collective capital of the field of the arts. It describes the many institutions and initiatives that are part of the field, including the arts organisations, the role of the local economic development agency and the local tertiary institution that provides arts education. While there is not the opportunity to consider all the forces that shape this field and the struggles that go on within it, some of the information that emerged in the fieldwork has been useful in augmenting this section. As the research is primarily focused on the symbolic site of the art museum, developing a detailed account of the history and function of the Sarjeant Gallery forms an important part of this backgrounding work. This includes a description of the protracted process through which the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project came to be developed and how it eventually gained the financial support of the Wanganui District Council. This gives some indication of the struggle that the Project had from the beginning. This information was gathered from as many secondary sources that were available, mostly periodicals including the local newspapers, annual reports and brochures.

A NARRATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE COLLISION BETWEEN THE FIELD OF THE ARTS AND THE STATE

The second part of this research involved the construction of a narrative that describes what I have named 'the collision': the monumental struggle that occurred in Wanganui in the first weeks after the local body elections in 2004 between the new Mayor, Michael Laws, and the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board. Again, this provides necessary context for the following fieldwork, which focuses on discovering the causes and consequences of this collision between the art and political fields.

My reconstruction of events was developed from a small number of secondary sources. As 'the collision' was primarily played out through the media, two newspapers became the

vehicle for communication throughout the social space: the *Wanganui Chronicle*, which is the local paper, and the *Sunday Star Times*. Mayor Michael Laws had worked as a columnist for both these papers, albeit intermittently for the *Wanganui Chronicle*. As the events of ‘the collision’ unfolded, the *Chronicle* became the primary site of struggle and devoted a great deal of space to it. I was able to access all the relevant articles from the Sarjeant Gallery’s large volumes of press clippings and the Wanganui District Library’s archives.

The minutes and reports of the Wanganui District Council have provided some additional background information, as have the minutes of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board. The Council minutes and agendas were publicly available and I had already acquired many of those that were relevant because of my own interest in the issues. I was fortunate that a former Trustee gave me the Trust’s minutes, as well as the notes kept by Trust Board members during their private meetings with the Mayor.

FIELDWORK IN THE FIELD OF THE ARTS

The final research phase focuses on the struggle within the field of the arts in Wanganui during and after ‘the collision’. While quantitative methodology could have been used to gather responses from a large proportion of those in the field, working with a small number of subjects and using a qualitative approach was preferred because it provided in-depth information that has helped me understand how and why this situation developed the way it did. The fieldwork thus concentrated on interviewing eight agents, most of whom I knew had been integrally involved in devising strategies to respond to the attacks that were perpetuated within their field. I wanted to draw out and bring forward their perceptions and experiences.

Considering my very close proximity to the field, which can only be described as full immersion, any attempt to insist on objectivity and rationality through the use of an arm’s length quantitative enquiry would always be subject to scrutiny. However, Bourdieu suggests that it is advantageous for interviewers to have extensive knowledge of the social contexts of their subjects because it creates an empathy with them. In such situations, the interviewer must be able to ‘free themselves, as far as is possible, from preconceived notions and values taken from their own habitus’ (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002: 56). In reality, such disengagement from the field I inhabit has been very difficult for me to

maintain and it has been quite revelatory to discover just how pervasive habitus can be. While my commitment to the field I belong to has been a great motivator to explore why and how Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project came to be destroyed, I have found attempting to sustain critical distance quite gruelling. Having a thesis supervisor from outside the field of the arts, who has challenged many of the assumptions that come with my habitus, has been absolutely invaluable.

In some ways my proximity has been advantageous, particularly in recruiting respondents and understanding the nature of the situation. I am well-known to all the respondents as a supporter of the arts and the Sarjeant Gallery, and I think this has meant that the respondents felt safe to respond as they saw fit. My own experience of 'the collision' and involvement within the field more generally meant that I came to the research already knowing a great deal more than most about the events that are described in this research. Of course, my proximity has also been a driver to tell the story. It has, however, also made me feel that I need to be very vigilant and reflexive about my practice.

I understand that any hint of my own views can shape the responses of those I interview and I have considered this when formulating the interview instrument. One respondent who asked to view this instrument before they would consent to being interviewed suggested that the questions could all result in a pre-determined outcome. On re-examination I, too, could see that the tenor of the questions reflected my own view of the situation. This was a timely reminder of how 'a field more or less 'speaks us'' (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002: 50). As a part of the field I was operating in, I had already naturalised its values and dispositions. In particular, I was angry with the Mayor, as an agent of the state, for his intervention in the field I belonged to and felt that no good had come from this. Before this respondent would agree to be interviewed I had to assure them that I would be responsive to any and all the points of view that were put forward, even if they were contrary to my own. I am happy to confess that I found that my natural curiosity meant I was more interested in observing the breadth of individual responses than imposing my own views upon the respondents.

As part of being a reflexive practitioner I also have had to consider how I prompt the respondent during the interview process, as well as how I handle the situation where a respondent will try to elicit a response from me, which seemed to happen fairly frequently.

Given that most of the respondents are well known to me and I often have long discussions with them, it has been somewhat difficult to modify my habitual response, which would be to debate the point. In this research my intention has been to allow the respondents to speak freely and without mediation from anyone, including myself. This meant that I had to carefully and consciously consider my responses and comments when respondents tried to solicit my opinion.

According to Greenhalgh and Taylor, a qualitative approach allows the research to go to the 'core of what is going on rather than just skimming the surface' (1997: 740). The primary purpose of the fieldwork has been to provide an emic or insider view of the field of the arts and to discover how its agents reacted, both materially and emotionally, to 'the collision', with its struggle for symbolic capital. I was involved in some strategies of the counter-offensive that came after 'the collision' and was aware of many others. As the chosen respondents are some of those that had the most to lose, in terms of capital, their reactions and observations are at the heart of the concerns of this research. This research provides an opportunity for these respondents 'to testify, to make themselves heard, to carry their experience over from the private to the public sphere' (Bourdieu cited in Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002: 56).

A further motivation for this research has been to provide an accurate record of events. One of the benefits of using a quantitative methodology is that it not only builds up context and information but also offers the possibility of uncovering the unexpected. As the situation was quite complex, working with a small number of well informed agents, who can be described as holding prominent positions within the field, allowed the interviews to go into great depth and brought forward some information that has not been previously available or widely known.

3.3. ETHICAL ISSUES

This research project was assessed as being of low-risk by my thesis supervisor, Dr Brennon Wood. This decision was then subjected to review by his peers and approved to go forward to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee as a Low Risk Notification. Consequently the project was registered on the University's Human Ethics Committee's Low Risk Database.

Despite this assessment, some aspects of the research soon led me to go to additional lengths to preserve the anonymity of respondents. Some talked of being targeted by officers from the regulatory arm of the Council, while others told about having been under a great deal of stress and distress. One respondent declined to be interviewed and sent a fax explaining that they did 'not want to relive in any way the stressful period that we were subjected to'. The fax refers to 'the collision' as an 'abuse of power' and 'a horror story in itself':

The actions and reactions of the new power broker as he played with the subject in hand as well as those who opposed his high-handed actions cannot fail to present a fascinating and fairly unlovely sociological study.

Another respondent suggested that I should not ask any staff members of the Sarjeant Gallery to participate in the research because it could compromise their employment. Others, however, seemed relatively unconcerned at any possible consequences and one was quite happy to be named. Needless to say, this did not happen and I have, instead, provided non gender specific pseudonyms for all respondents, as agreed in the Information Sheet. Throughout this project I became acutely aware that, for some people, it did not feel safe to be known as an active opponent of the Mayor. For this reason I have taken the precautionary step of aggregating the characteristics of all the respondents instead of describing them as individuals, which would have made them very easy to identify.

3.4. INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

A small number of subjects were selected purposively to yield information-rich cases that could provide a great deal of information 'about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research' (Patton, 1990: 169). All are agents of the field of the arts in Wanganui and were chosen for their proximity to 'the collision'. Many had stepped up to take leadership roles and speak on behalf of the field at this time, while others had worked quietly behind the scenes.

Most of the potential interview participants were initially approached in person, often in social situations that I found myself in, and asked if they would consider participating in the research. If they were happy to consider participating they were then sent an Information

Sheet for their consideration, which asked them to participate in one-on-one, in-depth, open-ended interviews, between one and two hours long that would be recorded on to audiocassette tapes. I then telephoned each participant to discuss whether they were happy to participate. Although some had already given verbal permission, I always checked whether they were happy to continue on the process, reiterated that there was no pressure to participate and told them that they could change their minds at any time if they wished. The location of the interview was also a matter for each participant to decide.

Before each interview proceeded I asked the respondent if they had read the Information Sheet I had sent them, and in almost every case I went over its contents with the respondent. The only exceptions were those that were very definite that they had read and understood it. I also went over the Consent Form with each subject and asked if there were any questions or problems that need to be considered before the interview proceeded. I felt that I needed to be very clear with each of the eight respondents about their rights as an interview subject because I had already developed some unease about the project. It is probably for this reason that when respondents hesitated at some questions that I found myself reiterating that they could refuse to answer any question.

3.5. INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

I developed an interview instrument that had a definite structure and close relationship to the research questions I had formulated¹. It was structured around three areas:

- I started by asking several introductory questions that helped to get the respondent talking (Tolich and Davidson, 1999: 108) and also to build the collective profile of the respondents.
- Ascertaining the respondents' position in the field. This has provided a profile of the capital held by each individual, and has been amalgamated, again, to provide a collective profile of the respondents.
- Ascertaining how the respondents' responded to the situation. This part of the interview asked respondents to make observations about:
 - How the situation developed.

¹ Appendix Two contains the interview instrument.

- How they felt about the acts of symbolic violence that were perpetuated on the field of the arts.
- How they responded to these acts of symbolic violence.
- What they thought have been the consequences of ‘the collision’.

Having constructed this interview instrument I found, in practice, that some respondents provided responses that bore no resemblance to my expectations, even in terms of subject matter, so I found myself re-phrasing or re-presenting the question to the respondent until I was sure the intent was clear. Other times I would just let respondents talk freely because I found their interpretation of the question was both interesting and relevant. I feel that this was a consequence of working in an extremely complex situation where so many events had taken place that it was sometimes difficult for respondents to recall how events had unfurled. It also seemed to me that the responses were often very considered and rational, which was something of a surprise because I could clearly recall the anguish of some of the artists I knew at the time of ‘the collision’. Perhaps so much time had elapsed since the events of ‘the collision’ that the respondents had been able to make sense of them. During the interview process I would occasionally probe, if necessary, and ask further questions to illuminate any particular subject but, in general, I tended to avoid this for fear that I would contaminate the research environment. I was interested in unearthing each respondent’s individual views and experience, so subjects were given the opportunity to respond at length, in their own language and on their own terms. All raw data has been kept confidential, I am the only person who has had access to it. It will be kept securely stored for five years, after which time it will be destroyed.

3.6. METHODS OF ANALYSIS

I did not plan to make verbatim transcripts from the interview tapes, and instead had elected to edit the contents of the tapes and transcribe only the most important sections, as recommended by Fetterman (in Tolich and Davidson 1999: 123). However, there was so much relevant information spread throughout the interviews that I changed my strategy and opted to make full transcriptions. These transcriptions were then sorted into themes that were loosely arranged around the topics in the interview instrument, but also included any relevant topics that arose during the interviewing process. Responses that confirmed

and negated any particular topic were kept together. From this process, relationships were developed, interpretations made and speculative analysis undertaken. I was primarily interested in exploring how the respondents thought that the situation came about as well as why 'the collision' took the shape it did. The findings chapter has been shaped by the nature of their responses.

3.7. LIMITS OF THIS STUDY

Very early on in the research project I realised that I would have to set some limits to this study and at this point I developed the view that I would only focus on the field of the arts and its response to a particular situation - 'the collision'. I chose to interview a small number of informed respondents that I felt sure would have given the matters at the heart of this research a great deal of thought so I could explore their responses in depth. It would have been very interesting to interview the Director of the Sarjeant Gallery, Bill Milbank, who has served in that position since 1978 and substantially drove the Extension Project but, as the operations of the Gallery were being closely scrutinised by the Council, I thought it was better not to ask him to participate.

I did not attempt, or even intend, to interview any of the relevant agents from the field of the local government or the media. Many people have asked why I have not interviewed Mayor Michael Laws or others such as Sally Patrick, the Chief Librarian, and Paul McNamara, who were named by some respondents as important players. There is no doubt that interviewing a wider range of subjects would result in a more complete account of the Wanganui events than I have been able to reconstruct here. However, it needs to be borne in mind that the purpose of this research is to explore the strategies of the field of the arts in a comprehensive manner rather than view the situation from a wide range of perspectives. I understand that this approach can be seen as a further emanation of the art world only talking to itself, but it has been a useful way of keeping the project closely focussed.

3.8. CONCLUSION

The use of a Bourdieuan framework to analyse the events in Wanganui has determined the methodology used in this research project. This is most obvious in the way that the

interview instrument has been constructed with a view to mapping the field of the arts, discussing the strategies undertaken by its agents and documenting the changes in the field that came about as a result of these strategies. Bourdieu's work has also played a pivotal part in the analysis of the fieldwork and the development of the findings that are presented in the following four chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FIELD OF THE ARTS, ITS AGENTS AND CAPITAL

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Defined as 'a social site where people and institutions engage in particular activities' (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002: 68), Bourdieu's notion of 'the field' is central to this research. His concept of a social space that is made up of many different, overlapping fields that exist in relation to each other provides a framework for analysing how the field of the arts responds to attacks on it by an agent of local government. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the dynamics of the field of the arts in Wanganui and map out its key organisations and individuals. It also describes the roles played by the media and local government as overlapping and supporting fields. In Wanganui, the field of the arts entered a period of change in the late 1980s, with the establishment of an art school and, subsequently, the development of a vibrant arts community. This chapter, synthesised from secondary sources and responses gathered during the fieldwork, describes how this development has come about. It is not and should not, however, be considered to be a definitive map of the field of the arts in Wanganui.

Some respondents described a definite division between the community, perhaps better described as amateur or non-professional, and the professional arenas within the field of the arts: 'Things happen on a community level, and more on a professional level, which is what the Sarjeant represents' (Alex, arts educator). It is true that the Sarjeant severed relations with many of the arts organisations of the field in the late 1980s in favour of working with the growing number of professional artists in the field. At agent level, however, I am not sure that this delineation is so clear-cut. My personal experience is that the many of the agents in the field occupy several positions, and this includes those that are employees at the symbolic site, the Sarjeant Gallery. This means that the agents of the field cannot be partitioned off as either community or professional in any clear-cut way. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, in this chapter I have chosen to present the agents

and institutions within the field in a loosely-organised but hierarchical manner, with those possessing the greatest capital presented first.

4.2. THE SYMBOLIC SITE OF THE SARJEANT GALLERY

Fashioned in the shape of the Taj Mahal albeit much smaller, the Sarjeant Art Gallery sits above the main street of the town, looking out across the city to the sea. The roofline of the Gallery features in the town's branding, such is its status as an architectural landmark. It is held in high regard by local artists and seven of the respondents named it as a focal point or 'the linchpin that underlies the arts community' (Kerry, artist). Its place in the field was described by one artist in this way:

the prominence of the art gallery, which could be seen as a sacred site, but I would rather see as an active principle in the group of things that are actually drawcards here and connect this town with the rest of the country (Bobby, artist).

Networking with the wider field of the arts, whether at a national or international level, is one of the ways that the Gallery can connect with current discourses of the arts and is a key part of being a 'curator of culture'. Networking also facilitates access to touring exhibitions, technical expertise and artworks in other collections that could be incorporated into themed exhibitions.

The Sarjeant Gallery has a long history of reaching out from this small provincial town. In fact, one of the original purposes for its existence was to bring in art from the wider field, in particular Britain and Europe, to Wanganui. A bequest by Henry Sarjeant in 1912 provided for 'the establishment and maintenance of a Fine Arts Gallery for the people of the Borough of Wanganui' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 3 April 2003). Once land had been granted at the top of Queen's Park, the newly-formed Sarjeant Art Gallery Committee asked for advice from art galleries in New Zealand and Australia about how best to proceed with the project. It was agreed to follow the suggestion of Mr. Samuel Hurst Seager to find the best design by holding an architectural competition (Cochran, 1998: 4). The iconic Sarjeant Art Gallery was opened on 6 September 1919 to great acclaim and for weeks after its opening 'visitors continued at the rate of 180 per day' (Cochran, 1998: 9).

The longevity of the institution is part of its strength, as one respondent pointed out:

It's this central place that has a national significance and whether the arts community just sort of dip into it a little bit or on a more major scale, it's there and over the years it will always be there (Lesley, artist).

The Gallery's apparent permanence in the face of change, no doubt assisted by being built from Oamaru stone, reinforces its function as a symbolic site within the field, as the following remark by Lesley (artist) illustrates: 'So, in the arts, I see the Sarjeant because it's a permanent fixture, and artists will come and go ... but in 100 years time the Sarjeant will still be there. Like a beacon.'

The Sarjeant Gallery was administered and governed by the Wanganui District Council until changes to the Local Government Act in 1989 led to the formation of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board. Trustees are appointed by the Mayor to govern the Gallery and fulfil its contract for service with the Council: 'The Trust Board is responsible for policy and the Director retains responsibility for management, while all staff remain employed by the District Council' (Sarjeant Gallery, 1991: 15). The Trust Deed prescribes the makeup of the Trust and calls for two representatives from the Council, as well as artist, iwi, business and education representatives. The Mayor does not have the power to remove Trustees. Instead this action must be agreed to by the whole Board and there are clear guidelines for this route being undertaken. Although the Trust manages the affairs of the Sarjeant Gallery, both the building and the collection are the legal possession of the citizens of Wanganui (Sarjeant Gallery, 2001: 15).

Collection development began in 1901 and, as stipulated in Henry Sarjeant's will, the focus for the first two decades was on 19th and 20th century British and European works (Cochran, 1998: 3). Early gifts, of which there were many as the Gallery worked to establish its collection, included six works from the collection of Lord Leverhulme, the Pears soap magnate, a collection of 86 photographs by international photographers coordinated by Frank Denton and a collection of 36 paintings and watercolours by British and European artists donated by the Barraud family (Cochran, 1998: 13).

In 1926, a change to collection policy saw the first New Zealand artwork purchased and, later in the decade, one bay of the Gallery devoted to New Zealand works (Cochran, 1998: 14). By the 1970s, with the arrival of the first professional director in 1974, Gordon Brown, New Zealand art had become the main focus for collection development. Gordon Brown

was responsible for 'formulating a logical development policy' and also began an ongoing exhibition programme with a view to increasing public access (Pepper Dixon, 1998: 6).

Today sees the collection with a particular emphasis on photography, wooden sculpture and developing collections of work by selected artists including Philip Trusttum, Peter Peryer, Anne Noble, Laurence Aberhart, Gretchen Albrecht, Richard Killeen, Mervyn Williams, Matt Pine, Richard Wotton and Rodney Fumpston (Cochran, 1998: 22). The Sarjeant was also the first New Zealand gallery to actively pursue a policy of collecting contemporary Maori art (Sarjeant Gallery, 2001: 8). Augmenting the rich collection are large loan collections, including more than 500 paintings by Edith Collier, which were placed in the Gallery's care by Collier's niece, Barbara Stewart, in 1985 (Sarjeant Gallery, 2001: 8).

According to the current director, Bill Milbank, two-thirds of the collection of more than 5000 art works have been donated to the institution and 'no ratepayer money has been committed to the purchase of any of the works in the gallery's collection' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 3 April 2003). Nevertheless, the collection does represent a significant cache of economic and cultural capital. Although the entire collection has not been valued, the 'top 537 paintings were recently valued at \$11,921,350' (Wanganui District Council, 2005: 6).

As a curator of culture, the Sarjeant Gallery is a pivotal part of the field of the arts. Its forums, library and exhibition programme provide ongoing professional development for artists as well as the wider community. The Artist-in-Residence Scheme, which has operated since 1986 in partnership with the Wanganui District Council, attracts artists to the area by offering a rent-free historic cottage and a stipend. Each resident participates in the Gallery's public programme as well as the Quay School of Arts' formal teaching programme. Many become very involved with the local community and interact closely with local artists. The Scheme has also been very successful in attracting mid-career artists to live in the city.

Of special importance to the field of the arts is the annual Arts Review hosted by the Sarjeant Gallery. Artists of the Whanganui region have an opportunity to exhibit their works together and show the breadth of practice that is being undertaken in the region. Since 2003, as the number of artists in the city has increased, the Sarjeant has had to limit the

number of works submitted to one per artist, so that it is able to accommodate all the works within one wing (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 24 July 2003). With so many local artists involved, the exhibition opening is usually attended by several hundred people and is one of the highlights of the arts calendar each year.

The annual Robertson workshop and exhibition involves all the local high schools putting forward around 10 of their best art students to work with a well-known artist, usually the artist-in-residence, for a week and then exhibiting the results. The Gallery is also part of the Ministry for Culture and Heritage's LEOTC (Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom) programme, which offers art education to local schools.

The community is most fortunate in having a purpose-built art gallery of high quality carrying 'an international reputation as one of the finest, naturally lit small public galleries in the world' (Pepper Dixon, 1998: 9). However, the Sarjeant Gallery has seen little change since it was first built and, as its collection storage needs and contingent of staff has grown over the last two decades, it has found itself with accommodation issues. This has become an Achilles' heel for the institution and has restricted its functionality. While many art museums around the world have expanded their functions to accommodate the changing demands of their public, the Sarjeant Gallery has not been able to follow suit. It has increasingly become trapped inside a building that it has outgrown.

4.3. ANOTHER CURATOR OF CULTURE: QUAY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

Wanganui is well endowed with educational infrastructure. The Wanganui Regional Community Polytechnic was established in 1984 by a group of local people determined to improve the provision of education to their community. From its inception this first local tertiary institution offered courses in the arts, albeit at the level of community education. However, with the appointment of an artist as its first Principal, provision of arts education expanded. By 1988 the Polytechnic offered a Foundation Certificate in Art/Craft design and a Certificate in Fine Arts. In 1989 the Arts and Craft Department expanded to offer a Certificate in Craft Design that included glass blowing and a Certificate in Computer Graphic Design also made its debut in that year. Headed by an American graphic

designer, Hazel Gamec, this was the first course of its type in New Zealand. The Quay School of Arts, as the art department of the Polytechnic came to be named, was set up in 1993 and opened its state-of-the art building in 1994. With a contingent of tutors from the USA, the art school was soon had 200 students enrolled (*The Dominion*, 14 October 1994). The Quay School of Arts was identified by three respondents as an important institution, although it also came in for a small amount of criticism: 'The art school I have rather less respect for...why the Yanks sort of came here and set it up – not that I'm anti-American. It's just put a cast on it that maybe has become a bit warped' (Bobby, artist). Its teachers, along with those at the high schools of the town, were identified as playing an important role in the field of the arts. Many of these, although not all, are also practitioners.

Now a part of UCOL², the Quay School of the Arts has continued to provide several courses in the visual arts. These include degrees in fashion design, graphic design as well as a fine arts degree with a choice of five majors: photography, printmaking, glass, painting and sculpture. UCOL also offers a Masters in Graphic Design and supports a Masters in Fine Art, which is provided by AUT (Auckland University of Technology). A postgraduate course in printmaking is currently in the pipeline, as are degrees in the Creative Industries and Maori Visual Arts. A unique feature of the Whanganui UCOL³ campus is its focus on glass: blowing, casting and slumping are taught in the one year certificate and three year diploma in glass production. This is the only glass course available in New Zealand at this time.

Like the Sarjeant Gallery, the Quay School of the Arts has several signature events that contribute to the richness of life for those that enjoy the arts. From the first year the Wanganui Polytechnic opened, it ran very successful Summer Schools of the Arts, providing intensive workshops by leading national and international artists in the first week of January each year (*Rivercity Press*, 1 May 2003). Unfortunately, as the Summer Schools were not financially viable, they were discontinued in 1995. However, under the new management structure of UCOL, the Summer School has been revived and is now in its

² Universal College of Learning (UCOL), a Palmerston North based polytechnic, merged with Wanganui Regional Community Polytechnic in 2002.

³ The Wanganui campus of UCOL is known as Whanganui UCOL.

third successful year. Tutors come from around the country and abroad to share their skills with both local people and visitors to the town.

Another important event in the arts calendar is the annual Bad Horse Video Awards. Now in its eighth year, the event restricts entrants to videos of three minutes long. Awards, which are given for the best actor, director, technical achievement, soundtrack, documentary and most bizarre, are hotly contested.

As part of their course requirements, all the art and design students must exhibit their work and this culminates in around a week of exhibition openings in mid-November. At this time all the art spaces and spare shops in the town are filled with exciting art work, and opening nights are coordinated so there is at least one, if not two each night. This celebration of creativity is known as Arrageous.

Out of the Quay School of Arts two quite unique and very strong groupings of artists, which could be called sub-fields, have developed: the glass art and the printmaking communities. In 2002, two tutors from the Quay School of Arts set up the Central Print Council Aotearoa New Zealand, which ran a four day winter school in its first year. Aiming to foster relationships between printmakers around the country and the globe, the Central Print Council coordinates annual exchange exhibitions with other print councils around the world. The Print Council is supported by the Art School, with which it has a partnership agreement so that the Print Council has the use of the Quay School's workshops and in return furnishes those facilities with specialist equipment that both staff and students can use.

The strength of the Wanganui glass arts community became evident when a national show, *Southern Exposure*, was instigated by the New Zealand Society of Artists in Glass in conjunction with the Glasmuseum Ebeltoft in Denmark. Of the 24 artists selected to represent New Zealand, 11 were resident in Wanganui (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 20 December 2003). Although it is very hard to quantify exactly how many glass artists live in the town, a report by Enterprise Wanganui suggests a local population of around 40 (Smith, 2004: 12). Many of these retain close links with the UCOL glass school because they can hire its facilities. There are also, however, two major glass studios in the town: one owned by David Murray and Emma Camden while the other, The Chronicle Glass Studio, has been set up

by a group of three graduates of the glass school. There are also several other small studios, mostly specialising in cast glass.

4.4. THE DEALER GALLERIES

With the large number of practitioners within the field of the arts in Wanganui, it might be expected that there would be a bevy of retail outlets offering their artwork for sale, but this is not the case. The absence of art buyers in the social space has meant that in the past several years there have been around half a dozen different galleries open their doors only to find that economic sustainability was elusive. As the number of practitioners outstrips the number of patrons in Wanganui, the artists exhibit and sell their work throughout the country. This contributes to the autonomy of the field, which has developed strong national networks.

There are three dealer galleries, all currently operating, that were identified by respondents as playing an important role in the field: Te Wa, Gallery Dalgleish and McNamara Photography. One gallery owner, Paul McNamara, was also identified as an important agent within the field, as was his colleague, Peter Ireland: 'For us – Paul McNamara and Peter Ireland are substantial players in the art scene here' (Lesley, artist). Although no specific rationale was given for the prominence of this pair, it could be speculated that their long history of involvement in the arts and their national and international connections play a part in the importance they were afforded.

4.5. OTHER ARTS ORGANISATIONS

There are a number of other arts organisations within the field, mostly formed for the purposes of working collectively to increase community participation in the arts. The oldest of these is the Wanganui Arts Society, which was formed in 1896 and continues to be very active. One of their early members was Henry Sarjeant, the benefactor of the town's art museum. This early connection between these two organisations led to them enjoying a very close relationship until the late 1980s, when the annual Arts Society Exhibition at the Sarjeant Gallery was discontinued, as were those of the Potters' Society and the Wanganui Camera Club. This is where the split in the field between the Gallery and the

other arts organisations occurred, perhaps exacerbated by two factors: the new governance structure that set the Gallery at arm's length from the Council, and the development of the new art school.

In 1988, the Wanganui Arts Council was formed by a group of artists and art supporters with the express purpose of setting up a community arts facility. They succeeded in purchasing an old bus depot and developing a state-of-the-art facility, which now has retail space and two galleries, as well as an office for the town's arts developer, a functions room, pottery studio and a computer suite for Seniornet. The exhibition space is used by a wide variety of artists and arts groups, and features annual exhibitions by the Camera Club, the Wanganui Arts Society and the Potter's Society, which also has its studio and raku kiln within the complex.

A latecomer to the visual arts scene is the Whanganui Artists' Guild, which was established in 2002 by a group of independent artists who wanted to advocate for and promote the arts sector. They have developed a website that profiles 45 Wanganui artists and also publish a quarterly broadsheet and arts calendar, *Frisky*. Started in 2002, this community initiative was supported through the Wanganui District Council's Community Contract Scheme until recently, but is now reliant on other forms of funding.

4.6. ARTISTS

There is no substantive documentation of the number of artists in Wanganui. A report commissioned by Enterprise Wanganui states that art is not a big player in the Wanganui economy. In this assertion, it cites Statistics New Zealand figures of only 77 people involved in the art industry in the entire district. This figure does not include art teachers and tutors because they are included in the education sector. It also excludes all those who only draw a secondary income from art. I suspect that there are a few hundred people who would consider themselves part of the field of the arts in Wanganui but I have no means of substantiating this. I do know that the Sarjeant Gallery has around 700 members, while the Whanganui Artists' Guild has 50 members. There are usually around 175 artworks accepted into the annual Arts Review (one work per artist) and there are around 100 art students. I am also aware that many agents occupy several positions within

the field and that the key focus of the field, in Wanganui, is production of art rather than consumption.

Some respondents did not wish to identify who they felt were important individuals in the field, and I did not insist that they did so. One respondent stated that there are 'a number of people who will make themselves known above others but they're not the important players' (Lee, arts educator). Hierarchy of importance was also alluded to: 'There are certainly a number of voices but I don't think they are as equally important as the next' (Lee, arts educator). Patrons such as James Wallace and 'the people who work in the community to help artists like David Cairncross and Bryce Smith' (Dale, arts supporter) were identified as important agents, as were those who purchase art works. When it came to artists, one respondent stated that within the field there were 'a number of standout practitioners' (Tracey, artist), although only Rick Rudd (ceramics), David Murray (glass) and Ross Mitchell-Anyon (ceramics) were named. Those that exhibit internationally were seen to have more status than others, although this was only obliquely referred to once by one respondent.

The ability of the artists to promote Wanganui as a centre for the arts was alluded to by one respondent, who was of the view that some commercial art outlets in the town had been set up purely because of 'the sort of positive information that's being put out by those politically active artists in town' (Bobby, artist), a reference perhaps to the regular appearance of artists and arts initiatives in the local media. This entrepreneurial spirit is also alluded to in a summing up of the arts community in Wanganui by Dale (art supporter): 'There is still quite a vibrant community here and they're certainly not dole bludgers – there's plenty of them around who are doing quite well thank you very much'.

When the respondents were asked what they felt was most important to the field of the arts, in terms of its institutions, organisations and individuals, their responses were quite variable, with some naming organisations or individuals while others articulated what they saw as core values. The three respondents that talked about the latter named the need for recognition and acceptance as being important to the field. This was discussed in regard

to the need for individuals to be recognised as artists and also for the entire field to be recognised as important to the town:

It's important to the community that Wanganui is seen as an arts community or an arts-rich community, as an arts centre basically...I get the sense that artists become quite discouraged or disappointed when they think Wanganui's not seen as an arts centre (Kerry, artist).

While this view was articulated by a very small number of respondents, it does echo Bourdieu's view that the field of the arts is organised around symbolic capital or mana.

4.7. TWO OVERLAPPING FIELDS: THE COUNCIL AND THE MEDIA

Bourdieu's conception of the social space, with its many overlapping fields, is exemplified in the Wanganui situation where the fields of local government, the media and the arts all overlap. The following description shows that both the media and the Council are integrally involved in the field of the arts, with the Council playing a major role as the funder of the Sarjeant Gallery.

WANGANUI DISTRICT COUNCIL

The significant resources of the Council, in terms of economic capital as well as the collective cultural capital of its staff and elected members, mean it is an important player within the social space of Wanganui. In terms of the field of the arts, the Council provides some core services and also supports a number of community-driven initiatives. The Sarjeant Gallery, for example, has received ongoing and increasing Council support since its inception. That the Council recognised the importance of arts and culture within its social space is illustrated by its development of Arts and Culture Policies in 1993, although it could be argued that these policies were never implemented in any real way. My impression, as a member of the community, was that the Council saw the arts as desirable but non-essential. In the last five years, however, the arts have become recognised as a potential economic driver for the district. Many of the town's so-called negative factors, such as its isolation and stock of aged Edwardian commercial buildings, which had previously been seen as inhibiting economic development, were finally recognised as being complementary to the substantial arts infrastructure in the town and potentially able to attract visitors and new residents. As a result, in 2001, the Economic Development Unit

of the Council began a process of extensive consultation to ascertain what was needed to support the arts and creative industries.

The Economic Development Unit has been a driving force behind the creation of the Whanganui Arts, Culture and Heritage Development Trust, which was incorporated in 2004. This support from the Council has enabled the Trust to access extensive funding from Creative New Zealand's Maurangi Toi Regional Strengths Partnership Fund⁴ so that it can build up the arts infrastructure within the region and increase the level of cooperation and coordination in the arts sector. As part of this partnership, the Council has a contract with the Trust that provides funding for an Arts Developer to develop a regional arts network, an arts, culture and heritage database and support Maori arts development.

In 2003, the Wanganui District Council, Enterprise Wanganui and UCOL began to collaborate in the development of a Creative Industries precinct, to capitalise on Wanganui's reputation as a centre of excellence for cultural industries, particularly in glass art, graphic and fashion design. Although this strategy is yet to be implemented, it will complement plans by Whanganui UCOL to offer a degree in Creative Industries in 2006 and also dovetails with central government's current economic development focus⁵.

The local tourism organisation, Destination Wanganui, which is contracted to the Council's Economic Development Unit through Wanganui Inc⁶, recognises the Sarjeant Gallery as an important visitor destination and supports the sector through coordination of an Arts Trail brochure and the Artists' Open Studios weekend. Originally developed by two entrepreneurial artists, Catherine McDonald and Sue Cooke, the Wanganui Artists' Open Studio weekend has been running for five years and has become so popular that it now spans two weekends. In 2003, the event logged 3000 visits to local artists' studios, with around half of the visitors coming from out of town, and brought in \$232,000 in direct economic benefits to the community, (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 23 May 2003). By 2005, the event had grown exponentially, logging 22,646 visits to studios and bringing in \$592,811 in

⁴ Creative New Zealand is part of the Ministry for Culture and Heritage.

⁵ www.nzte.govt.nz. New Zealand Trade and Enterprise has named the Creative Industries as one of the keys to economic transformation in New Zealand.

⁶ Wanganui Inc was formed in July 2005 through the amalgamation of Enterprise Wanganui, Destination Wanganui and the Wanganui District Council's Information Centre.

economic benefit to the city⁷. Since the Artists' Open Studios event began, tours of artists' studios have started to become a feature of cultural tourism in the district, although these are intermittent.

The Council's role in the field is not only through supporting these community development initiatives, it also has a major role as a contributor of economic capital. The Council funds the field's symbolic site and curator of culture, the Sarjeant Gallery, to the tune of \$699,000 annually (Wanganui District Council, 2005: 32). It also funds community arts initiatives through its Community Contracts Scheme, including the part-time position of Coordinator of the Community Arts Centre, and administers the Creative Communities Scheme on behalf of Creative New Zealand.

THE MEDIA

The fields of the media and the arts overlap in a symbiotic way in Wanganui. The vibrant arts community, with many visiting artists participating in the Gallery's Artist-in-Residence scheme and a wide range of exhibitions available are very newsworthy if the books of news clippings kept by the Sarjeant Gallery are any indication. For the field of the arts, the media provide a direct link to the wider community. Arts events are promoted in the local newspaper, the *Wanganui Chronicle*, through its regular arts page, arts diary and 'Weekend Pass', a calendar of weekend events that is published each Friday. Increasingly *Wanganui Pride*, a quarterly periodical featuring Wanganui initiatives produced by the *Wanganui Chronicle*, is including arts initiatives. The weekly community newspapers *Rivercity Press* and the *Midweek* are also receptive to featuring arts events and achievements by local artists.

4.8. CONCLUSION

With two significant sites in the Sarjeant Gallery and the Quay School of Arts, the field of the arts is vibrant for such a small provincial town. The Council plays a strong supporting role in developing the economic sustainability of the field by contracting a number of organisations to support and promote arts activity. It also funds the core symbolic site of the

⁷ Destination Wanganui provided these figures on request.

field, the Sarjeant Gallery, and administers funds on behalf of the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. The dealer galleries and arts organisations play an important contributing role.

An important characteristic of the field of the arts in this town is that it primarily consists of producers rather than consumers. This contributes to the autonomy of the field from the local scene, particularly as many artists must exhibit out of town to attract audiences and achieve sales. Its autonomy is also expressed in the way it does not tend to build relationships within the social space of Wanganui, nor does it seem to acknowledge the importance of those fields that support its activities such as the media and the Council. Instead it has a history of reaching out to the national and international field of the arts for legitimization. This started in the 1920s with the Gallery's emphasis on collecting European artworks and is perpetuated today in a desire and respect for international exposure.

The early 1970s saw the arrival of the first professional director at the symbolic site of the Sarjeant Gallery. Gordon Brown not only changed the collection policy but demanded the Gallery operated by professional standards that had previously been lacking. By the late 1980s the changes at the Gallery began to affect the dynamics of the field of the arts. The art and design courses of the Wanganui Polytechnic were gathering strength by this time and the Sarjeant Gallery moved to work in partnership with these, as well as with the growing number of professional artists in the town. At the same time, the Gallery effectively severed its historical relationships with a number of community arts groups by cancelling all their annual exhibitions at the Gallery and instituting the Wanganui Arts Review.

It was during the late 1980s that work began on setting up the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board for the express purpose of governing the Gallery and solving the accommodation issues that were dogging the institution. The Trust would not only put the Gallery at arms length from the political process as it worked on solutions to its problems but also allow it to access funds from philanthropic trusts, which are generally not available for Council projects.

Although the Gallery had developed a strong relationship with the Quay School of the Arts and the professional artists of the town, it had become dislocated from some of its key stakeholders. The community arts fraction had moved off and developed its own workshop and exhibition facilities. Being removed from the ambit of local body politics may also have

had the effect of distancing the politicians from their responsibility for the problems of the symbolic site. While Bourdieu has shown that autonomy is of critical importance to the field of the arts, the sad consequence was that, just as the Sarjeant Gallery needed to find public support, it was at its most isolated from the rest of the community.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SITE OF STRUGGLE: THE SARJEANT GALLERY EXTENSION PROJECT

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Although the Sarjeant Gallery is generally held in high regard right across the social space of Wanganui, for the field of the arts in particular it plays a pivotal role as its symbolic site and curator of culture. Since the 1970s, the Gallery has gradually become removed from many community arts groups of the town and, instead, has provided support to the growing number of professional artists that have come to live in the town. This has had the effect of dislocating it from what might have been a strong base of community support just as it began to solve its long-standing issues of staff accommodation and collection storage. As solutions to these problems required a significant investment of ratepayers' funds, the Gallery's dislocation from its locale was to prove a significant vulnerability.

5.2. FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THE ISSUES OF ACCOMMODATION

There have been issues around staff accommodation and collection storage at the Sarjeant Art Gallery since the 1970s. In 1975, the Wanganui District Council asked the Gallery director, Gordon Brown, to prepare a report on future needs. His report highlighted the need for more space for public galleries, collection storage, and staff accommodation. As early as 1986, an extension to the Gallery was mooted and, in 1988, a Space Requirement Report was completed by Bruce Dickson of Dickson Elliot Lonergan Ltd – Architects. This subject was touched on again in 1992, in the Queen's Park Reserve Management Plan, which noted that the Sarjeant 'is not a large building by art gallery standards, and this has presented problems for the operation of the facility' (Wanganui District Council, 1992: 25). The findings of the Queen's Park Reserve Management Plan led to a full scale, in-depth report into the accommodation difficulties of all the cultural institutions in Queen's Park, including the Gallery, the District Library and the Whanganui Regional Museum.

The Queen's Park Accommodation Study examined a number of options for developing the Sarjeant Gallery taking into consideration its status as a nationally significant building registered as a Historic Places Trust Category One building on 24 November 1983⁸. The development of a second, off-site historic building into a contemporary art museum was put forward as a possibility but rejected because it would split the number of visitors while substantially increasing operational costs (Southcombe McClean & McGregor, 1995: 51). The report also put forward some recommendations which, as they were taken up by the Council, would come to guide the direction the development of the Gallery would take. These recommendations notably included the following:

4.151 That the Sarjeant Gallery's accommodation needs are addressed by a new addition to the northwest and rear of the Sarjeant Gallery building adjacent to and in some way linked to the proposed addition to the Davis Library and, that this addition occurs as soon as funding is available.

4.156 That a conservation plan is prepared for the existing Sarjeant Gallery building that addresses the issues of history, structure, and the effect of previous and likely additions to the external and internal Gallery fabric.

4.148 That the additions project is advanced to the next step via a high quality, professional national architectural competition (Southcombe et al, 1995: 56).

These recommendations were accepted by the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board, which then began on the track towards bringing an extension to the Gallery to fruition.

MATTERS OF CONSERVATION

In 1998, the Sarjeant Gallery took a positive step towards its proposed redevelopment with the completion of a Cultural Heritage Assessment by conservation architect, Chris Cochran. As might be expected, in his report Cochran categorised the Sarjeant as being of 'very great cultural heritage significance' (Cochran, 1998: 64) and recommended that any extension to the Gallery should undertake some restorative work, removing later alterations to the building. He also laid down guidelines for the way that an extension could proceed while still maintaining the integrity of the building, such that the extension should

⁸ www.historic.org.nz/Register

not compete with the original. The findings of Cochran's report were incorporated into the design brief for an international architectural design competition for the Gallery Extension that was launched in 1998 and sponsored by the Edith Collier Trust⁹.

MATTERS OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

The handbook for the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Design Competition, created by an Auckland company, Pepper Dixon Architects, not only provides background information and a detailed design brief but also draws attention to the physical inadequacies of the Gallery. It then goes further to point out the effect of these inadequacies on accessibility, particularly for groups that are often marginalised in the social space, such as the disabled and Maori as well as those who may not feel comfortable in an art museum:

The front entrance faces south and is exposed making it unpleasant and difficult in inclement and windy weather. Its formal design tends to be intimidating and unwelcoming. The entrance foyer ... does not accommodate well formal Maori Welcome or Ceremony. There are no adequate facilities for disabled access or use. Generally the Gallery is not readily accessible and when inside it is very internalised with no external outlooks. It is acoustically extremely lively, making many visitors very self conscious (Pepper Dixon, 1998:9).

Given that the Gallery is an icon for the city, it is not unexpected that the design brief foregrounds the need to protect the integrity of this heritage building. It also suggests the addition of features to increase social inclusion, such as a new entrance that is able to serve as a marae-atea, enhancing the opportunity for cultural ceremony. Catering for families is an area where the design brief goes beyond the legal requirements for community access, asking architects not only to consider access for pushchairs but also the inclusion of parent and child facilities (Pepper Dixon, 1998:19). Education is also a key focus, with an auditorium that can host a range of public programmes as well as two small classrooms and a reference library included in the brief.

The competition attracted 61 entries, which were assessed by a panel of seven including architects Dr Paul Walker, Michael Payne and Ted McCoy as well as conservation architect, Chris Cochran. A museum consultant, Margaret Taylor, Councillor Stephen

⁹ A Charitable Trust set up in 1993 to care for a collection of paintings by Edith Collier (1885-1964), a Wanganui modernist painter now regarded as significant by art historians.

Palmer and the Director of the Sarjeant Gallery made up the balance of the panel. The winner of the competition, Steve McCracken of the Wellington architecture firm Warren and Mahoney, was announced on 14 August 1999. The winning design provided the disabled access that has always been lacking, well-appointed offices for staff, quality education, lecture and reference facilities, and, in line with most modern cultural facilities, a café and a retail outlet. It also included specialist-designed storage, photography and exhibition preparation studios and workshops. A simple modernist design to be constructed out of Oamaru stone to match the original Gallery, one of its features was a large window facing towards Mount Ruapehu, linking the mountain to the sea through the axis of the Gallery (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 7 September 2002).

5.3. THE STRUGGLE FOR ECONOMIC CAPITAL

After the winning design to extend the Sarjeant Gallery was chosen, serious consideration was turned to how the estimated \$6.7 million could be raised. In February 2000, the Trust's fundraising programme was presented to the Council. An important source was the Ministry for Culture and Heritage's Regional Museums Capital Constructions Projects Fund, but before this could be accessed the Project had to have a good proportion of funds raised. To start the ball rolling, in March 2000, both the Director Bill Milbank and the Trust's Chair visited arts patron Dr Robin Congreve in Auckland and secured a conditional commitment from him to raise \$1 million dollars in funds from Auckland art supporters of the Sarjeant Gallery¹⁰. Dr Congreve is well-known as being very successful at raising funds for large projects, particularly arts projects for which he has a passion. This commitment from Dr Congreve, along with \$500,000 of the Trust's own resources, allowed fundraising to commence in 2001. At this stage, the Trust Board must have realised that the commitment of \$1 million from the Auckland supporters was not firm enough because, on 26 August 2001, Bill Milbank wrote to Dr Robin Congreve to secure confirmation of his pledge. He received this response:

Whilst I am not in a position to underwrite or pledge any amount from the Auckland Supporters Group, I can reaffirm my comment to you in March last year that I would vigorously support your initiative and would expect support from other art lovers in this region. I can reconfirm that, in my view, if the other parts of your plan

¹⁰ This visit is documented in the document, *Key Steps in the New Building Project's Development*, produced by the Sarjeant Gallery (5 October 2004).

get together, it should be possible to raise up to \$1million from these sources. I would certainly work very hard to achieve this result¹¹.

After almost a year, however, the Trust was no further ahead with its fundraising. The absence of working drawings as well as greater financial commitment from the Council were the key stumbling blocks at this stage. On 23 June 2003, the Chair of the Trust met with Mayor Chas Poynter, the Chief Executive Officer and the Finance Director of the Council to discuss how the Project could be advanced. From this meeting it was agreed that an Establishment Group should be set up to identify and resolve all the issues surrounding the proposed Extension, and that information about the Project should be publicised. The Establishment Group was set up by 4 November 2002 and included four elected members, several Council officers, the Sarjeant Gallery Director, Bill Milbank, and the Trust Board Chair, David Cairncross (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 5 November 2002).

By February 2003, the financial implications of the Gallery Extension Project were well documented and were being communicated to the Wanganui ratepayer through the local paper, the *Wanganui Chronicle*. The total cost of the Project was expected to reach \$6,614,000, with the Council committing \$1.7 million which, with interest, would amount to \$262,000 for 10 years. It was suggested that the balance of the funding would be contributed as follows: \$2 million from the government, \$500,000 from the Sarjeant Art Gallery Trust Fund, \$1,114,000 from fundraising, \$200,000 from the Lotteries Commission and \$400,000 already committed by the Council for landscaping and site development (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 12 February 2003).

At this time the Trust Board was asking the Council to give a firm financial commitment to the Project so that an application could go forward to the Ministry for Culture and Heritage Capital Construction Projects Fund. The Council was also asked to consider the possibility of selling artworks to underwrite the Trust's \$1 million fundraising campaign. While some Councillors complained that this request for financial support had been dropped rather unexpectedly in front of them, others were very aware that the Council would be required to contribute significant financial backing if Government funding of \$2 million was to be secured (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 25 February, 2003). In March 2003, the Council approved funding of \$1,700,000 for the project, although this would need to be ratified at the

¹¹ Letter from Doctor R.L Congreve to Mr. W. Milbank (28 September 2001)

Council's Annual Plan funding round on 30 June 2003. As soon as Council confirmed its financial commitment, the local Powerco Trust granted \$125,000 to the Project.

As the Extension Project began to go through Council process in the early months of June 2003, there was a sprinkling of letters about it in the local paper, some supportive and others not. The main concerns were fiscal. The town has a high proportion of older people, whose primary income is National Superannuation and who are acutely aware of the debt that the district carries as it funds its stormwater separation scheme. Several letters to the *Wanganui Chronicle* suggested that the Council had more important priorities including the repayment of debt, projected to peak at \$42 million in 2007. The importance, or unimportance, of the arts and the call they should have on public funding formed some part of this debate:

At a staggering cost of \$7 million the gallery's empire builders must be halted; likewise all these in this town who wish to build empires with public money. (H de W. Tate in *Wanganui Chronicle*, 3 June 2003)

The late modernist style of the Extension and its apparent disjuncture with the original building was also called into question by some correspondents. Former politician turned publisher and Radio Pacific¹² talk show host, Michael Laws¹³, who had recently returned to reside in Wanganui, often discussed the Sarjeant Art Gallery in his new weekly column in the *Wanganui Chronicle*. A well-educated man with a Masters degree in Creative Writing, his wit and skill with words had led him to become a columnist for *Sunday Star Times*, *North and South*, and *New Zealand Rugby World*, as well as the local newspaper. As early as January 2003, Laws began to critique the arts and the Extension Project. An early comment about the architectural style of the Sarjeant Extension, made at a business meeting, was that it was a 'shithouse' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 30 May 2003). His openly stated opinion of the acclaimed, winning design was that it ruined the 'architectural joy' of the Sarjeant Gallery. This criticism was not well received by Councillor Stephen Palmer, who had been part of the judging panel that chose the design and was also a member of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board. He responded to these remarks by Michael Laws by exhorting him to 'stay away from architectural criticism'. He also outlined the rationale

¹² Radio Pacific is a New Zealand talkback radio station, owned by RadioWorks, which became a subsidiary of the CanWest Global Group in May 2000 (www.mediaworks.co.nz).

¹³ Appendix One contains a biography of Michael Laws.

behind the simple but 'carefully considered' design (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 20 February 2003).

On 22 May 2003, just weeks before the Council's annual planning session that would see funding confirmed for the Extension Project, the Associate Minister for Arts and Heritage, Judith Tizard, announced that it was unacceptable for artworks to be sold to finance the Project (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 19 June 2003). As the funding commitment from the Auckland art supporters had not been realised to date, the Minister also asked that this be reconfirmed. Despite being unable to sell artworks to raise funds if necessary, on 25 June 2003, the Wanganui District Council agreed to set aside \$1.7 million for the Project. This confirmed Council support allowed an application for funding to go forward to the Ministry of Culture and Heritage.

If willingness to contribute to fundraising events can be construed as support, then it appears that the Project was well supported by the arts community from the start: 110 artists, working locally, nationally and internationally, contributed 123 artworks to the first fundraising art auction (*Midweek*, 25 June 2003). The artists included such luminaries as Gretchen Albrecht, Richard Killeen, Peter Peryer, Jane Zusters, Liz Coats, Peter Reynolds and Nigel Brown. The auction raised \$160,000 for the Project.

Once the Council had agreed to support the Extension Project, the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Chair, David Cairncross, came out publicly in the *Wanganui Chronicle* to expound his vision for Wanganui as a centre of excellence for the arts. He remarked that many cities around the world were expanding their museum facilities, which were beneficial to the tourism sector. The new Extension would provide the necessary environmental conditions and security required by travelling international exhibitions, which could attract thousands of visitors. This had been the experience of Dunedin city and Wanganui, too, could reap the benefits of cultural tourism (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 29 July 2003).

Just as the Council committed funds to the Project, the updated quantity survey of the Project came in from Wellington quantity surveyors, Rider Hunt (2003). The cost of the Extension had increased by \$1.6million, from \$6.7 million to \$8.3 million. This had come about in part because of inflation but also because the Gallery's basement was in worse

condition than originally thought and could only be used for plant storage¹⁴. At the same time, ironically given that the Project was so far down the track, some residents felt they needed to put forward their ideas for extending the Sarjeant. Many of these letters to the *Wanganui Chronicle* focused on upgrading an existing heritage building in the main street of the city, an option that had been discarded as impractical in the Queen's Park Accommodation Study, but was seen to bring art down from its lofty hilltop position to where the people were in the street:

Imagine the DIC¹⁵ as an art gallery, a pivotal link between all our wonderful cultural assets, Opera House, Cooks Gardens, museum etc...What we can have is more than many newer cities can ever dream of, but we need to bring it to the ordinary Joe walking up the Avenue (Christine Gavin in *Wanganui Chronicle*, 27 October 2004).

This letter seems to recognise that the Gallery had become isolated within the social space, albeit through its position on the hill above the town, and suggests social inclusion as a way to reintegrate it.

5.4. POLITICAL SUPPORT WANES WITH ANOTHER FUNDING HURDLE

In February 2004, a blow came to the Project in the form of a declined funding application to the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. As time had elapsed, and the cost of the Project had increased, the Government was looking for a greater funding commitment from the Council that would help to offset these increases and match its own commitment. At that time the then Mayor of Wanganui, Chas Poynter, said: 'The Sarjeant Gallery Board had done a good job, but there was division and some resentment in the community about the project and exactly what was the opinion of the people was needed to be known' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 5 February 2004). Despite this warning from a very experienced politician and Mayor of the town for 18 years, the funding application was tweaked and presented again. At the meeting of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board on 10 February¹⁶ the need to 'sell' the Project to the community was discussed, as were the problems of the

¹⁴ Minutes of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board, 9 September 2003.

¹⁵ This correspondent is referring to the DIC Department Store, Wanganui's first department store, which was demolished in 2004.

¹⁶ Minutes of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board, 10 February 2004.

Trust's fundraising not reaching 'wider communities' and the lack of drive from the Council to resolve the Gallery's issues. On a more positive note, a grant of \$400,000 from the Lotteries Commission was confirmed and fundraising continued with a silent auction¹⁷ of local artworks raising another \$23,500.

The mood of many of the Council's elected members, however, had changed, perhaps because of the ongoing commentary through the newspapers by members of the public concerned about the financial implications of the Project on ratepayers. This change of mood became evident when the Council was asked to increase its funding contribution to the Extension Project, as requested by the Minister for Arts and Heritage: the Community Services Committee that considered the decision was evenly split and the Project was unable to move ahead (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 18 March 2004). When the decision went further to Council, again the vote was evenly split (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 30 March 2004). At this meeting, it was suggested by Councillor Sue Westwood that public consultation should be undertaken because granting funds to the Sarjeant Gallery was a significant decision according to the Local Government Act (2002). This was a further signal by another experienced politician that the public needed to be able to develop and put forward its views on the Project before public funds should be committed.

In spite of these warnings from Mayor Chas Poynter and Councillor Sue Westwood, and without the requisite increase in funding from the Council, the funding application was again sent to the Ministry for Culture and Heritage by its deadline of 31 March 2004. In lieu of increased Council funding, the Trust had tagged a \$500,000 loan to be raised by the Trust Board as further commitment from the Council, raising its total commitment to \$2,200,000 (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 31 March 2004). The local newspaper's editorial on the same day is generally supportive of the Extension Project but notes that it had failed to capture the imagination of the general public and this had affected the Council's ability to offer support. The writer concluded that there needed to be a change in public perception about the importance of the Gallery (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 31 March 2004). The irrelevance of the Gallery within the social space was demonstrated in May 2004 when public forums to discuss its issues of accommodation were poorly attended.

¹⁷ The silent auction allowed bids on artworks to be placed anonymously over a period of three weeks.

In late May 2004, Government funding for the Extension Project was approved to the tune of \$2.2 million. It came with provisos that the Council would increase its funding to \$2.2 million and also underwrite the fundraising efforts of the Trust Board. In addition, the Council had to agree to these new conditions by 31 August 2004. The response by Mayor Chas Poynter was to suggest that the city could look at other ways to raise revenue apart from raising loans or using rates. Michael Laws, who by this time had announced his intention to stand for Mayor at the upcoming local body elections, denounced the Government provisos as 'blackmail'. He also expressed the view that 'the directive, conveyed by Prime Minister Helen Clark, was designed to get around any change in council leadership this election' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 28 May 2004).

While the conditions set by the Government may have been designed to bring about swift decision-making before the imminent local body elections, they also had the effect of making the proposal dependent on Council funding. This meant that the Gallery's fundraising team could not reach out to its national and international networks and by-pass asking for support from its own community, as was its natural inclination¹⁸. Instead the fundraisers needed to persuade local people that the Project was worthy of their rates money which, as the *Wanganui Chronicle* and the incumbent Mayor had already pointed out, would not be an easy task – and time was running out.

During the Annual Plan funding round in June 2004, the Sarjeant Extension Project received 54 submissions, the bulk of which (39) were supportive (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 7 July 2004). The fifteen submissions opposing the Project cited the design, the capital cost, loss of trees and potential traffic problems as issues (*Dominion Post*, 23 June 2005). In late June, Keith Hindson¹⁹ was asked by Councillors to provide a comprehensive report on the Sarjeant with estimates for all possible solutions, including an option with minimal response to staff accommodation and compliance issues. The question of funding was to be resolved at the July round of meetings and this report would help to inform the decision-making of the Council (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 25 June 2004). In the local newspaper, there were 44 letters over the submission period, some supporting the Project as visionary and others decrying it.

¹⁸ A memo from the Trust Board's Funding Action Team to Bill Milbank (11 August 2004) lists one of the group's key functions as 'seeking major amounts from potentially large donors c.f. naming rights – international campaigning'.

¹⁹ Keith Hindson is the Council's Recreation and Culture Manager.

At the Council's Community Services meeting on 21 July 2004, three hours of discussion about the Project led to the recommendation that the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project should proceed and that Council would provide the required funds so long as this did not result in an increase in rates. During discussions, the Committee had been assured by the Council Finance Director, David Foster that funds could be found from the sale of surplus land and special dividends from Wanganui Gas. Recreation and Culture Manager, Keith Hindson, told the Committee that six other options had been investigated and, with the Government funding taken into consideration, the Extension Project was the most cost-effective solution (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 22 July 2004). The immediate response to the Community Services Committee's decision, in the letters to the *Wanganui Chronicle*, was entirely negative. The Trust Board, however, taking heart from this change in the situation, announced its plans to raise the final funds.

Despite the negative response in the local media, the full Council confirmed an increase in its contribution to the proposed Extension by \$500,000 to \$2,200,000 and also agreed to underwrite the fundraising efforts of the Trust Board (*Dominion Post*, 3 August 2004). Even as these decisions were made, however, a warning was sounded by the Wanganui District Council's Chief Executive Officer, Colin Whitlock, that an incoming Council had every right to re-examine the decision made by the current Council (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 3 August 2004). This seemed likely with the city now poised for local body elections and a large number of new candidates standing. Despite this political uncertainty, things were looking better on the fundraising front, with a grant of \$250,000 from the Whanganui Community Foundation confirmed.

5.5. THE EXTENSION PROJECT BECOMES AN ELECTION ISSUE

Just as the Council finally decided to fund the Extension Project, this decision began to be debated in the political field amongst the candidates for the upcoming local body elections in October that year. As early as July 2004, the Whanganui Artists' Guild had canvassed all the known Mayoral candidates about their commitment to the Project and published the comments in their broadsheet, *Frisky*. The incumbent Mayor, Chas Poynter, and one other candidate, John Martin, both said they supported the Project. Michael Laws replied that he thought the debate about the Extension had been dishonest and the design was 'aesthetically ugly (it looks like a toilet block)' (*Frisky*, Issue 8, 2004). He suggested other

ways to support the arts like public art works, a permanent shop front for the arts in the main street, promoting artists nationally and sponsoring regional arts festivals.

Later in his campaign, in a letter to the local paper, Michael Laws made it very clear that the Sarjeant Gallery Extension decision would be reviewed if he were elected: 'I will certainly revisit the Sarjeant Gallery Extension decision if elected Mayor' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 17 August 2004). Two candidates from the Ratepayer's Association also signalled their opposition to the decision to support the Extension, spelling out the costs to the ratepayers in increased operational as well as capital expenses (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 19 August 2004).

At this time the debate, through the letters to the *Wanganui Chronicle*, became quite vigorous, with some correspondents pointing out the possible economic benefits to the town and others expressing their concern about expenditure on a non-essential item. It is in this atmosphere of intense scrutiny of the Project that some senior Council officers stepped in and began to publish information about the issues surrounding the Project in the Council's weekly information page, Community Link²⁰. The first article explained the current occupational safety and health issues for staff and the storage problems for the collection. It also discussed the costs of upgrading the existing building, estimated at around \$6 million (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 4 September 2004). The second article talked specifically about the Warren and Mahoney design, why it was chosen and the impact the Extension Project would have on Queen's Park. The third article discussed the financial implications of the Project. It is in this final article that Dr Robin Congreve's undertaking to raise \$1 million from Auckland art supporters is expressed as 'a remarkable fact is that an Auckland art lover has contributed \$1 million to the project' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 18 September, 2004) giving the impression that the funds had already been raised.

During the election campaign, all the Mayoral candidates were asked by the *Wanganui Chronicle* how they would feel if the decision to fund the Sarjeant Gallery were to be reversed by an incoming Council (24 September 2004). Of the six candidates, only two unequivocally supported the project – the incumbent Mayor Chas Poynter and John Martin. In addition, of the two candidates that were incumbent Councillors, Barbara Bullock

²⁰ Community Link was published every Saturday in the *Wanganui Chronicle*.

and Ray Stevens, one stated that he would see such a decision as 'democracy working' while the other said that she had opposed the Extension Project, so nothing would change for her. Another said that the Gallery needed to become more relevant and diversify what it offered and Michael Laws said that he thought the Project lacked public support and the decision should be taken to the ratepayers.

It is ironic, and yet another indication of the lack of political will to support the arts, that, of all the groups and individuals standing for election, only one directly addressed the field of the arts and produced a policy to support that field. Michael Laws had put together a team of candidates standing under the Vision Wanganui banner. They had developed a Creative Arts Policy, presumably in deference to the strength of the field of the arts in the town. The Policy included the provision of a purpose-built community art space and a full-time Arts Developer, even though such an art space was already in existence and the current Council already contracted in arts development services. It also promised to 'review the Sarjeant Art Gallery Extension decision and allow all Wanganui people to have a direct input into the final decision'²¹, an approach that was criticised by two correspondents to the *Wanganui Chronicle* (6 and 8 October 2004).

In this climate of anticipated change in local government, with all its possible consequences for the Gallery Extension, the Project Team, led by the Council's Chief Executive Officer, met on Friday 8 October 2004. He advised that work would continue on the Project until such time as the incoming Council made a decision not to proceed. The Project Team also discussed how it could move the Project through its next stages as recommended by consultants Management by Mills²².

5.6. CONCLUSION

While the process for designing the Extension Project had been relatively straightforward, raising the \$6.7 million necessary to complete the Project had not been easy for the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board. The unexpected escalation in cost to \$8.3 million had given the politicians cause to re-examine their commitment so that, for some months, it was touch and go whether Council support for the Project would be forthcoming. Now, on the

²¹ Vision Wanganui Creative Arts Policy (2004)

²² Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board minutes, 12 October 2004.

eve of the 2004 local body elections, with funding committed to the tune of \$7 million²³, the most dominant contender for the Mayoralty, Michael Laws, was vowing to review the Council decision to fund the Extension Project if he was elected.

²³ From *Sarjeant Gallery New Building Project*, 5 November 2004.

CHAPTER SIX

'THE COLLISION'

6.1. SWEEPING CHANGES TO THE FIELD OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Polling for local body elections closed on 9 October 2004 and the results were announced later that Saturday night. Vision Wanganui, led by Michael Laws, swept into power, winning seven of the thirteen seats around the Council table, including the Mayoralty. On the Wednesday morning following the announcement of the election results, a headline on page three of the *Wanganui Chronicle* read 'Shadow cast over gallery project' (13 October 2004). Readers were reminded that Vision had promised to review the Council decision to fund the Extension Project, and that a public referendum was their preferred method of doing this. On the same day, a letter from former Councillor and Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board member, Stephen Palmer, was published exhorting the new Council not to abandon the Project. However, by Friday 15 October 2004, the new Mayor, Michael Laws, was already promising an immediate review (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 15 October 2004).

6.2. A MEETING WITH THE NEW MAYOR

In the first week after the election, at their monthly meeting, the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board decided to take a proactive approach to the uncomfortable situation they now found themselves in. They decided to arrange to meet with Michael Laws and to present him with a comprehensive information package about the Extension Project. At this same meeting, David Cairncross indicated that he was reviewing his future as Trust Chair because he did not feel he was 'the right person to lead the Board through this pending fundraising and building project achievement phase of the Board's evolution.'²⁴

²⁴ Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board Minutes, 12 October 2004,

The presentation that was made to the new Mayor at 10.00am on 8 November 2004 outlined the Project and the fundraising efforts to date. Fortunately one of the Trustees took notes during this meeting and has made them available for this research on the condition that their identity is kept confidential. The conversation that ensued between the two parties not only gives portent of events to come but also the vein in which proceedings would be conducted. It could be said that 'the collision' between the field of the arts and local government began here, although it would be another week before it would become enacted in the public domain.

At the start of this meeting, Mayor Michael Laws told the Trustees that he had no good news for them. He had campaigned on reviewing the Sarjeant Extension and would be doing just that. The Mayor began his discussions by downgrading the worth of the field of the arts to the town. He stated that Wanganui was not known for its art scene and then went on to question the success of the Artists Open Studios weekend. He also stated that he would like a better polytechnic. The Sarjeant Gallery, in his eyes, was elitist and did not communicate with its community. In response, members of the Trust Board pointed out that the Gallery and the Polytechnic worked well in partnership, sharing visiting artists and resources.

The Mayor then introduced the possibility of re-structuring the field of the arts by combining the management of all the town's cultural institutions. He also said that he thought the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board was unnecessary and the Gallery could be considered as a business unit. The Trustees explained to the Mayor that the Trust was set up to secure funding and sponsorship as well as to keep the Gallery at arm's length from elected members who may have little knowledge of the nature and function of an art gallery. When the Trustees asked whether they should take steps to increase their numbers, they were told that the Mayor would not be appointing any Council representatives to the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board because their conflict of interest would be too great, giving portent of the possibility of extensive changes planned for the institution.

The Mayor then asked why the cost of the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project had increased and was told that this had come about because of inflation and due to the poor condition of the basement such that it could not be used as planned. The Mayor claimed that the Council did not have the funds to underwrite the Project without using rates money. He also queried the validity of the funds from the Auckland supporters, expressing scepticism as to whether they would ever materialise. When the Mayor was told that the Project had been going for years, he responded that the Trust Board was never supposed to have got as far as it did. When told that the annual Arts Review opening attracted in excess of 300 people, the Mayor responded that there had been 3000 people attending the fireworks display in Cooks Gardens the previous Saturday evening, again downgrading the importance of the arts to the city and trying to impress on the Trustees that his concern was with the larger population rather than with what he perceived to be a small sector of the community. The Trust Board had prepared a comprehensive pack of documents about the Sarjeant Gallery Extension for the Mayor's information, which they then left with him.

6.3 ASSEMBLING AMMUNITION

From this meeting with the Trust Board on 8 November 2004, the Mayor began to systematically gather information together. The following day he sent a confidential letter to the Chief Executive Officer of Wanganui District Council, Colin Whitlock, asking that he attend an urgent meeting in the Mayoral Office at 3.00pm that day²⁵. The letter also asks Mr. Whitlock to gather together the following information:

1. All reports to the Council, council committees or council officers by the Sarjeant Art Gallery Trust Board (SAGTB) with regard to the Extension Project;
2. All correspondence from David Cairncross, Bill Milbank and/or the SAGTB to Dr Robin Congreve – in specific the correspondence that prompted Dr Congreve's letters to Bill Milbank of 28 September 2001 and 14 November 2003;
3. All file notes/emails (if any) between Messrs Cairncross/Milbank and Dr Robin Congreve with regard to the Sarjeant Extension Project;
4. All minutes of SAGTB from 2002 to current;
5. All correspondence from SAGTB to the Minister of the Arts Judith Tizard and Prime Minister Helen Clark;

²⁵ This letter was later made available to all Trust Board members and subsequently passed on to me.

6. All applications for funding from SAGTB to the Lotteries Commission, Powerco Community Trust and Wanganui Community Foundation;
7. The membership of the SAGTB from 2002-present;
8. Any newspaper clippings from 2003-04 inclusive in which either Cr Stephen Palmer and/or Cr Ross Mitchell-Anyon put the case for the Sarjeant Gallery Extension.

These documents would have provided the new Mayor, an experienced political strategist, with all the information he needed to challenge the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project. He would have gleaned that the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board was in a weakened position, with one Trustee having just resigned and the Chair signalling his intention to stand down. The Trust Board was also without any Council representatives because both Councillor Ross Mitchell-Anyon and Councillor Stephen Palmer had not been re-elected. It can also be speculated that what was of considerable interest to the new Mayor, was the appearance of an old adversary, from when he was involved in national politics, Dr Robin Congreve. Michael Laws had been involved with the political party, New Zealand First, after its leader, Winston Peters, revealed that the Cook Islands had been acting as a tax haven for New Zealand companies. These allegations led to the 'Winebox Enquiry', as the subsequent Government enquiry came to be known. In 1995, Dr Congreve had appeared before the Winebox Tax Enquiry to explain his role as a director of both the Bank of New Zealand and Fay Richwhite & Company²⁶.

6.4 AN ASSAULT ON SYMBOLIC CAPITAL

Two days later the entire town was aware that something was amiss with the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project. In a front page article in the *Wanganui Chronicle* on the morning of 11 November 2004, Mayor Michael Laws informed readers that an extraordinary meeting of the Wanganui District Council would be held that day to discuss the future of the Project. Both the public and the media were excluded because 'sensitive information would be discussed... [and] people's reputations are at stake' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 11 November 2004). Instead, a media briefing would be given when the meeting was finished. He further commented that he had completed significant research into the Project and would be 'sweeping away the back-door intrigues and decisions made by old boys' networks, and letting the antiseptic of light onto the decisions that have been made'. The

²⁶ Fay Richwhite and Company Limited and its subsidiaries operate as merchant bankers and also offer other related investment banking services (<http://www.business.com/directory>)

accusations of misdemeanour so serious that people's reputations would be at stake, through the media, constituted a major attack on the symbolic capital of the Trust Board by the new Mayor.

The attack on the reputations of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board continued the following morning, when the headlines in the *Wanganui Chronicle* read 'Art gallery meeting remains shrouded in mystery'. Despite the Mayor's assertion that all would be made clear, readers were told little except that two resolutions had been passed: to ask the Sarjeant Art Gallery Trust Board to explain issues relating to the funding of the Extension Project and that further work was required to establish the OSH requirements for the Gallery (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 12 November 2004). The new Mayor remarked that he could appoint Trustees but not sack them and that the business of the meeting was still confidential. However, the implication that the issues at stake were financial matters so serious that Trustees could expect to be dismissed added extra 'punch' to the situation, particularly given that the Chair of the Trust Board, David Cairncross, is a well-known accountant. The meeting was adjourned until the following Monday, 15 November 2004, and Gallery Trustees were sent a written request to attend.

The headlines that appeared in the *Wanganui Chronicle* in the coming week became increasingly dramatic as 'the collision' between the Council and the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board played out. On Saturday 13 November the headline was 'Front up and explain: Laws. Ultimatum for gallery trust board'. The article explained that when the Chair of the Trust Board told a Council officer that the Board would 'confirm whether or not it was in a position to meet the Council' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 13 November 2004) the Mayor's ire had been raised. His response, communicated through the local newspaper, was 'Front up or kiss your jobs good bye' and, further,

The arrogance of these people and their lack of understanding of accountability stuns me...We are not giving them an option. They have some explaining to do. And it's about time they realised that this is a different regime that demands accountability for ratepayer's money (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 13 November 2004).

The tone of the article again implied that Trust Board members had been guilty of misusing ratepayer funds, but did not give any further explanation, leaving the town to only guess at what could be the nature of the these offences.

The Mayor was making it very clear to the public, the arts community and the Trust Board, that he held the power in this situation and that the Trust Board was subservient to him. His assertions that he could sack the Trust Board were, however, incorrect and also contradict the statements he had made only the previous day (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 12 November 2004). The Deed of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust clearly states that 'a trustee may resign or be removed from office as a trustee by the other Trustees' (1993: 3). The Deed then goes on to list the reasons for which a Trustee may be removed from office. These include becoming bankrupt, being convicted of any offence punishable by imprisonment for a term of two years or more and furthermore being imprisoned for such an offence, becoming the subject of a compulsory treatment order under the Mental Health Act 1992, becoming subject to a personal order under the Protection of Personal and Property Rights Act 1988, resigning, dying or being absent without leave. In fact, the only power that the Mayor has in this Deed is to appoint Trustees, and this is to be done at the recommendation of the Board. He can also appoint the Chair if the Board finds it cannot agree on this appointment.

On Monday 15 November 2004, Michael Laws telephoned Dr Robin Congreve, the Auckland arts supporter who had undertaken to raise \$1 million for the Extension Project, to discuss his commitment to raising these funds (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 26 January 2005). That Michael Laws had entered into this discussion was not revealed until late January 2005, when the Mayor divulged that 'Dr Congreve repeated that he had offered no pledge, that "the boys had overcooked his contribution" and that no funding had been raised or even attempted to have been raised as at November 2004' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 26 January 2005). The letters between Dr Robin Congreve and the Sarjeant Gallery Director, Bill Milbank, later publicly released by Michael Laws, show that while Dr Congreve agreed to undertake to raise the funds, he had also repeatedly asserted that he was not 'in a position to underwrite or pledge' the \$1 million dollars.

On the afternoon of 15 November 2004, at 4.00pm, the extraordinary meeting of the Council that had been adjourned the previous Thursday resumed, this time with the members of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board present. A small group of artists that had come to support the Board asked to be admitted to the Council Chambers but, along with the media and the public, found themselves excluded. While all the discussions and information from that meeting may have been fully recorded by the Wanganui District Council, the Trustees of the Sarjeant Gallery were not provided with copies of the minutes until they requested them under the Official Information Act, and when they were finally forthcoming, the minutes had two pages missing for no apparent reason. The record of the resolutions passed at that meeting, however, were included: that the Chair of the Trust Board would be asked to resign; the actions of the Director of the Sarjeant Gallery relating to information provided to the Council would be referred to the Council's Chief Executive Officer; the funding bodies that had committed to the Project would all be informed of these developments; all the papers relating to the Project would be made available to the public and an immediate review of the governance of the Sarjeant Art Gallery Trust Board would be undertaken²⁷.

On the following day the front page of the *Wanganui Chronicle* read 'Resign, council tells gallery board head'. In the accompanying article, the Mayor explained that the Trust Board's use of the word 'pledged' in regard to a \$1 million donation to the Extension fundraising effort had been misleading. In fact, this money had never been pledged, and although the Auckland supporters had committed to fundraise this money, it had not yet been realised. Mayor Laws described this situation as a 'misrepresentation of funding arrangements to the Council and wider Wanganui community' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 16 November 2004). These allegations of 'misrepresentation' appeared to be a matter of interpretation or semantics and may have easily been resolved. Given the enormous level of media attention that had played upon the situation in the previous several days, however, they were still damaging in their accusations of a less than honest representation of the funding situation of the Project. More serious was the Mayor's announcement that all work on the Project would be halted, even though such a decision had not yet been made by the full Council. This public withdrawal of Council support for the Project effectively stopped it in its tracks.

²⁷ Wanganui District Council Extraordinary Meeting Minutes, 11 and 15 November 2004:4.

6.5. THE POSITION OF THE MEDIA

For four days the headlines in the *Wanganui Chronicle* had been focused on the Mayor and his perspective of the situation. It was not until Tuesday 16 November that a statement from the Trust Board was published, albeit on page three of the paper. In this, the Board asserted that it fully supported its Chair and that the Council had no power to demand his resignation. Regarding the alleged 'misrepresentation', the members of the Board said that they had 'a different view to Council on the interpretation placed on the effect of certain terminology' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 16 November 2004) and that any risks surrounding the Auckland contribution had been fully communicated to the Council. The Board was 'appalled at the way it has been treated by Council process' and had not been provided with copies of papers and correspondence before the meeting, as had been promised. This article provided another side to the front page story, although the position and views of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board have been downgraded in importance through its subservient placement within the local newspaper. By making this decision with regards to placement of what is a reply to their accusers by the Trust Board, the editorial position of the media supported the Council's position rather than that of the Trust Board.

Wednesday 17 November saw a plethora of articles in the local paper supporting the Mayor's position on the Extension Project, including an editorial piece, the Mayoral weekly column and another separate article giving an exhaustive chronological account of events and explaining the situation regarding the Extension to readers. The editorial reminded readers that it is hardly surprising that the Project was under scrutiny given that the Vision policy had been to re-examine it. It concluded that the Project 'fell short of being managed in a meticulous manner' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 17 November 2004), lending some support to the Mayor's position of mismanagement. The accompanying article provided a detailed history of the Extension Project. Ironically, given the conclusions made in the editorial that same day, it points out that it was within Council's own Community Link page, published in the *Chronicle* on 18 September 2004, that the Auckland fundraising effort was misrepresented with the statement: 'A remarkable fact is that an Auckland art lover has contributed \$1 million to the project'. This sentence, buried in the midst of a densely-written article of several hundred words, points clearly to an unnamed employee of the Council as the source of the most serious of the so-called misrepresentations about the funds to be raised by the Auckland arts supporters.

Mayor Michael Laws' column on the same day touched briefly on the subject of the Extension Project, calling it

the province or the plaything of the few...the elitist's bluewater Port of Wanganui – a passion rather than a project. A cause rather than a concept (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 18 November 2004).

He went on to say that there were more pressing priorities for the town, something that the last Council knew, which is why it resolved to use its weekly Council Community Link page in the *Wanganui Chronicle* "to educate" Wanganui on why ratepayers were being required to commit up to \$3.6 million of their money on the Sarjeant Extension'. In addition he calls the Trust Board's fundraising efforts 'lame' and the Project 'a luxury that Wanganui cannot afford'.

While Michael Laws had previously hinted at the irrelevance of the Sarjeant Gallery to the greater community, this is the first time that he had publicly called it 'elitist', although these assertions were made in his first, closed meeting with the Trust Board on 8 November 2004. Elegantly couched together, his column portrays the Extension Project as an impossible dream and the Trust Board as ineffectual dreamers. Laws has chosen to use the locally well-known bluewater port project, with its estimated cost of \$90 million and extensive re-routing of the mouth of the Whanganui River, as a simile for a project with a value of \$8.3 million, for which \$7 million had already been committed, linking them together as twin contenders for 'pie in the sky'. This column also begins an assault on the arts community as a whole, labelling them as a selfish minority with no regard for the welfare of the rest of the community.

On 18 November 2004, the Gallery Board was on the front page yet again, this time with 'Threat from Laws to dissolve gallery board' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 18 November 2004). The article included a great quantity of invective from the Mayor threatening to dissolve the Board if its Chair did not resign. Although this threat was not realistic, it does show the extent to which the Mayor was dominating the media field and defining the terms deployed in its ambit. He insisted that the Board should resign because it 'use [d] the words 'pledged' and 'secured' in respect of the \$1 million to come from Auckland art lovers for the Gallery's \$8.3 million extension' even though Dr Robin Congreve, who fronted this

fundraising effort, had written to explain that he could not pledge or underwrite those funds. The article went on to report that 'Mr Laws said there was a right and honourable course of action to follow, and the Board – either wittingly or unwittingly – had misled the people of Wanganui' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 18 November 2004). Finally came an appeal to honour, the crux of the matter in this assault on the symbolic capital of the governing body of the Sarjeant Gallery. Mayor Laws offered a solution to help the Trust regain some standing in the eyes of the public – its Chair could resign. Contrary to the assertions he had recently made in the media, the Mayor's powers within the field of the arts did not extend to dismissing the Chair of the Trust Board. As David Cairncross was well supported by his Board, the only possible way the Mayor could start to reorganise the field of the arts was to persuade him to resign.

On this occasion, the response to these threats by the Chair of the Trust Board, David Cairncross, was included in the same article. He is still ranked behind the Mayor in the hierarchy of importance but has, at least, been granted the right to reply within the same piece. Cairncross responded that he felt that he and the Board had not done anything wrong and had made the risks clear to Council. He also said that 'the Board felt it had received a lot of community support for its stance' and that the 'whole business had been very unpleasant and unprecedented'. In a telling last comment, Mr. Cairncross declared that he 'would like to wait until the Council calms down and have a reasonable discussion between Boards of equal standing'. In this statement, the social and symbolic capital of the Trust Board is asserted: it felt it had strong public support, was not guilty as charged and was a Board of equal standing to the Council. In addition, its high level of cultural capital shone through as its Chair suggested the parties should have a reasonable discussion, so they could work things out when the Council 'calms down', a polite reference to the Mayor's abusive behaviour during the previous week.

6.6. A CHANGE IN EDITORIAL POSITION BY THE WANGANUI CHRONICLE

The day after this rebuttal by the Board, the local paper ran an article that provided four Board members (Huia Kirk, Graham Hall, Beryl Warnock and Mary-Ann Dickie) with the means to respond to the attacks on their Chair. All were supportive of David Cairncross,

describing him as an honourable man. For these members of the Trust Board maintaining the honour of their Chair seemed to be foremost in their minds, although they were also aware of how continued attacks would affect the credibility of the Project they had worked so hard to advance. One commented on the damage that had already been done to the Project as a result of all the adverse publicity:

The unfortunate thing is the attack on the Board is creating an us and them attitude and is quickly getting a national profile – right at the time when we were on track to start on naming rights (a major part of the board's fundraising) (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 19 November 2004).

Into this collision between local government and the field of the arts came the Government's Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, Judith Tizard, who confirmed her confidence in the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board:

Ms Tizard said she had full confidence in the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board after dealings with them over several years as they worked towards the extension to the gallery (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 20 November 2004)

She also expressed confidence in David Cairncross along with surprise at the call for his resignation. The Minister then went on to make it clear that the Government funding earmarked for the Extension Project would be directed elsewhere if the Council would not support the Project (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 20 November 2004).

In an apparent about-turn in the editorial position of the local newspaper, Saturday's editorial questioned the methods used by Michael Laws in his discussions with the Sarjeant Art Gallery Trust Chair, asking 'but does it need a sledge hammer to crack a walnut?' and suggesting that if the Council used this approach with all voluntary boards, then there would be few lining up for such positions in the community (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 20 November 2004: 6). While these are valid points that should be a concern for the entire community, the media was very slow to show any support to the besieged Trust Board and it might be suggested that this turnaround came about only because the Trust Board had been vindicated by an agent of central Government with high levels of symbolic capital.

6.7. A CHANGE IN STRATEGY: THE PRICE IS INFLATED

A new week of media examination of the Extension Project and the actions of the Trust Board opened with a front page headline spelling out the Mayor's reaction to Judith Tizard's comments in the Saturday paper. Stating that she 'has neither right nor responsibility to tell Wanganui ratepayers how to spend their money', the Mayor continued to argue that the previous Council had been misled by the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board. He also questioned 'the anti-democratic elitism that is apparent in the Board's arguments', although the nature of these 'anti-democratic' arguments is not outlined (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 22 November 2004).

Mayor Laws then went on to inflate the financial commitment required of the Council to the Extension Project by the \$1 million dollars that was to be raised by the Auckland art supporters as well as the sum of \$1.3 million to be raised by the Trust Board, which the Council had agreed to underwrite. This raised the total to \$4.6 million, more than twice the original figure to be committed to the Project, and a sum that was never agreed to by the previous Council. Such inflation had the effect of making the Project appear completely out of reach for the town. Laws also claimed that he and his Vision team 'were elected with the mandate to revisit the Sarjeant extension issue' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 20 November 2004). This is a very interesting episode in 'the collision'. It seems that, as the Trust Board has been vindicated by an agent with greater symbolic capital than himself, the Mayor must find another way to discredit the Project. Increasing its price tag is one of way of putting it out of reach. Asserting his mandate as the newly-elected representative of the local community, the Mayor is proclaiming his relevance in the local and immediate context, rather than the distant, national context in which the Minister for Arts and Heritage operates.

A smaller article, subordinated to page three, put forward the views of a former Councillor and Trust Board member, Ross Mitchell-Anyon. He stated that the Council was never at any financial risk because it had only agreed to underwrite the \$1.3 million fundraising target for the Board, not the \$1 million from the Auckland supporters (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 22 November 2004).

6.8. ART FOR ALL

On the same day that the price of the Extension Project was inflated, a photograph of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Sarjeant Art Gallery Director, Bill Milbank was published in the *Chronicle* showing this trio looking at a series of art works from the Sarjeant Collection with a view to hanging them in the Council's administration building. The article says that these actions follow Michael Laws' intention to 'liberate the gallery's art and make it accessible to the people' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 22 November 2004). The Mayor argued that 'very few people visit the gallery, and that goes some way to explaining the general opposition to the extension project'. He went on to state that 'the Sarjeant is irrelevant to most citizens except as an architectural icon' and that most of the Sarjeant collection has been paid for by the Wanganui people. The latter is an incorrect statement; in fact, the collection consists of artworks that have been gifted, loaned or purchased with funds for this purpose from the Sarjeant bequest. While the theme of the irrelevance and elitism of the art museum had become a familiar refrain from the Mayor, this was now juxtaposed with the need for the public to be able to access their art collection. Liberating the art from the museum was another new strategy by the Mayor, possibly to make it clear to the public that his issue was not with art itself but with the museum. Given the Mayor's protestations of access for all, it is ironic that the first, and as it turns out, the only place, that the art collection is liberated to is the Council administration building. In this way, the Mayor was emulating the powerful throughout history by using art to augment his own symbolic and cultural capital.

The Mayor's column on the same day is entitled 'Bread or the Circus'. It described the responsibilities of local government in the following way: 'Our job is to properly reflect community needs and aspirations, to make ourselves accountable for ratepayer's money and generally to ensure we don't spontaneously combust' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 22 November 2004). He again criticised the comments made in the previous days by Judith Tizard, and made the point that it is the Government that had imposed difficult funding criteria on the Council by asking that it fully underwrite the fundraising. He then went on to explain that if there had been cost overruns in the Sarjeant Gallery Project or the fundraising had not materialised, then that would have been the responsibility of the Council. The Auckland contribution is described as 'bogus' and again the Council contribution is inflated to \$4.6 million.

6.9 MORE SUPPORT FOR THE TRUST BOARD

On 23 November 2004, an article in the *Chronicle* gave the views of two locally-administered funding bodies that had agreed to fund the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project. In this article, the Chairs of both the Powerco Trust and the Whanganui Community Foundation asserted that they were never misled by the Trust Board and confirm that they were aware that the contribution from the Auckland supporters had not been realised when the applications were made. Both state that their contributions would not have been put forward until all the necessary funds had been raised. This further support for the Trust Board further undermined the attempt by the Mayor to reduce the Trust Board's symbolic capital.

6.10. THE SYMBOLIC SITE IS ABANDONED

Sadly, on 24 November 2004 the front page headline of the *Whanganui Chronicle* proclaimed 'Gallery board resigns. "Impossible" position forces board's hand'. The accompanying article described how the entire Trust Board had made the decision to resign on the previous evening. In a statement issued by the Chair, David Cairncross, the Board refuted that it had been responsible for any wrongdoing and gave the following reasons for its resignation: 'The first is to bring an end to the divisive and destructive comments and the polarising of members of the community. The second is to enable a fresh group to review the whole proposal of the gallery, which has been ongoing since 1977' (*Whanganui Chronicle*, 24 November 2004). This action seems to have been enacted with a view to bringing to an end the collision between themselves as the governing body of the district's arts museum and their local government funder, which had had the effect of dividing the community into two camps: those who could see the value in supporting the arts and those who could not.

It is ironic that the decision to resign came just as the Board had been vindicated by all its funders, except the Council. The minutes of the Trust Board, however, do show that the Chair had planned to step down²⁸ and it seems that the struggle with the Mayor had completely exhausted them all, as the call for a fresh group indicates. They may also have

²⁸ 12 October, 2004: 4.

felt that they wished to stem the loss of symbolic capital from themselves, the Sarjeant Gallery and the Extension Project. Nevertheless, the strategy of the Mayor to completely undermine the credibility of the Trust Board and raise doubts that the Extension Project was feasible appears to have been effective in achieving its demise.

The statement by the Trust Board suggests that they hoped that others would take the Project further. Unfortunately, however, their resignation left the Sarjeant Gallery without protection from the Mayor who, in his first meeting with the Board on 8 November 2004, had signalled that he saw them as unnecessary and the Gallery as a business unit. Instead of appointing a new Board, as expected, the Mayor let the Trust fall into abeyance. Once management of the Gallery reverted to the Council, the way was clear for the Mayor to reorganise the field as he saw fit.

The impending reorganisation of the field was confirmed on the following day, 25 November 2004, when the Sarjeant Art Gallery made the front page of the local paper yet again, and the headlines read 'Gallery board resignation a way forward, says Laws'. In this article, the Mayor took the opportunity to promote a 'Heart of Wanganui' project, which he said had 'the potential to resolve a number of outstanding issues and all at the same time and rejuvenate the city and district' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 25 November 2004). He expounded his view that 'it might be possible for the library, museum and gallery to all come under one umbrella organisation with an overall administrator', yet again indicating his desire to reconfigure the field. He went on to reiterate that

Council was misled. That is why Council requested Mr. Cairncross's resignation.
That is a matter of record...And the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project was doomed to fail.

He explained that this was because the Government asked for too great a financial commitment from the Council and did not allow the sale of artworks from the collection to fund the Project (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 25 November 2004).

In a further article on page three of the same paper, Colin Whitlock, the CEO of the Wanganui District Council, announced that the administration of the Sarjeant Gallery

would revert to the Council and that operations would continue as usual while the 'wider implications of the resignation would be worked through' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 25 November 2004). He assured the public that any funds raised for the Extension would be held and frozen until further notice. The Mayor, however, had very definite views of what would happen now. He stated that 'the life of the board had reached its natural end' and, 'as the Sarjeant Gallery consumed significant ratepayer funds, that it was time for the Council to resume control' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 25 November 2004). He also made it clear that he would not appoint another Board in the short term and instead preferred that a Friends of the Sarjeant Gallery group was set up for the Gallery's supporters. Again the Mayor refers to the possibility of reorganising the field by amalgamating the administration of all the district's cultural institutions as well as completely redeveloping Queen's Park, the cultural precinct of the town in which the Sarjeant Gallery, Whanganui Regional Museum and Davis Library are all located. It is clear from these statements that the Mayor's proposal to reconfigure the field involves not only changes to existing management structures, as was first mooted, but also to the built infrastructure, and is likely to be a major undertaking.

It is interesting that accompanying this article were four very short interviews with readers giving their responses to the resignation of the Sarjeant Art Gallery Trust Board. While three of the four were not supporters of the Sarjeant Gallery, they were still all aware of the implications of the symbolic violence that led to the resignation of such a high profile trust board. One said that the Board will have lost a great deal of expertise, two said that it is understandable that the Board has resigned while one stated that it will be unlikely that people will put themselves forward to work on such organisations if they are likely to be 'publicly humiliated and vilified by the Mayor' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 25 November 2004).

6.11 A LAST EPISODE

It might seem that the resignation of the Trust Board would bring an end to this story but the collision between the Board and the Council was just one episode of many to come in the field of the arts. In fact this story continues even as this research project comes to a close. If there is a place to end the narrative about 'the collision' between the field of the arts and the Council that led to the resignation of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board, this

seems to be as appropriate a place as any. However, there is always the last word to be had and this must go to the Mayor, Michael Laws, whose column in the *Sunday Star Times* on 28 November expounded his views on those who inhabit the field of the arts.

Michael Laws' column started with a musing on the differences between the many groups in the social space and then went further to list those that he considered less worthy. In this latter group, the 'arts fraternity' is singled out for its attitude to others: 'But there is one group that hovers above all in the hoity-toity stakes, that regards the rest of humanity as little more than shaved monkeys – as uncivilised, unwashed plebians with neither taste nor refinement'. Michael Laws went on to slate the supporters of the arts as 'middle-class wannabes who patronise and lionise for the same reason that groupies grope rock stars'. Ironically, he then commented on the poor personal hygiene habits of artists, situating himself in the same realm as the arts elitists whose intolerance of the 'unwashed' he is so critical.

Michael Laws professed that his issue was with Government funding of the arts, particularly the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, National Radio and Opera New Zealand, which he described as 'that loathsome caterwauling known as opera. Where fat freaks warble in foreign languages before they die. Badly'. He then invoked the modernist dichotomy between high and popular art, incorrectly asserting that 'lesser' art forms such as hip hop, jazz, rock, and swing do not qualify for state subsidy, while 'the rich of Remmers soak the taxpayer' to have their tastes indulged. These are the 'culture vultures', who 'automatically assume that their tastes are worthy – that because they have chosen something so spectacularly inaccessible, then it's up to others to pay'.

Readers were told that the people of Wanganui have not had a chance to have their say on whether the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project should go ahead and that others have made this decision on their behalf, referring to the fact that there has been no public consultation process for the Project to date. Michael Laws suggested that if the decision were to be taken to the public, then the Project would be doomed. He went on to state that this 'is the problem when elitism meets reality. It freeloads. And calls it culture'. It is little wonder that this opinion piece started a storm of protest within the local and national arts

community. The implication that those who enjoy certain types of art, particularly those forms that are generally categorised as 'high art', or who might support such aspirational projects as the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project, are 'bludgers', offended many people.

Sadly on 17 December 2004, at a meeting of the Wanganui District Council, a letter from Judith Tizard was tabled that revoked the Government funding for the Extension Project on the grounds that its future was uncertain. It was certainly a prophetic day for this researcher. I was with a group of around 60 agents of the field of the arts who had been protesting outside that Council meeting. While most of the others held signs saying 'Save Our Sarjeant', I had decided that I would rather draw attention to the possibility that Government funds might be lost to our town and had created a placard proclaiming 'Loser Laws. \$2.25 million lost'. That this had come to fruition at that very meeting was quite a shock to me.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE HABITUS AND STRATEGIES OF THE FIELD OF THE ARTS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

As the narrative of the previous chapter shows, the entry of Mayor Michael Laws, as an agent of local government with all its power and influence, resulted in some very quick and dramatic changes to the field of the arts and its arrangement of capital. While the narrative has concentrated on providing a blow-by-blow account of 'the collision' it also opens up the way for further enquiry, particularly to discover how the disposition of forces came to be arranged in the way it did.

In the report of the fieldwork that follows, the habitus of the field of the arts is revealed through the responses of its agents to the quick changes made to the field by the new Mayor. These were undertaken as he combined the immense symbolic power and influence of local government and the media to enter the field and 'create an official version of the social world' (Harker, Mahar & Wilkes, 1990: 13) that is at extreme odds with the view of the field of the arts.

Struggles often develop within the social space when the value of different types of capital is called into question. The fieldwork explores how some of the agents within the field of the arts responded when their combined cultural capital was alternately renamed both 'elitist' and 'crap' by the new Mayor. This challenge to the unquestioned value of the arts resulted in an immediate emotional response as well as the development of a number of strategies by these agents as they mobilised in defence of their own interests and the autonomy of the field of the arts. These strategies are examined in order to explore the extent to which they achieved their objectives. The respondents, who are all from the field of the arts, were also asked how they perceived that forces came to be arranged in such a

way that the governance of the Sarjeant Gallery and consequently the Gallery's Extension Project, a key symbolic point in this field, both came to be dismantled.

Finally, the fieldwork looks at the consequences of 'the collision' and documents any subsequent movement that has taken place in the field of the arts, in particular, any change in the arrangement of agents and capital.

7.2. THE RESPONDENTS AND THEIR HABITUS

Habitus is the unspoken set of values and beliefs that groups and classes share and espouse, which binds them together and influences their practices (Bourdieu, 1984: 77). It provides a rationale for particular strategies undertaken by the agents of any field and, for this reason, is useful to this research. While an in-depth analysis of the habitus of the field of the arts in Wanganui, such as an ethnographic study, could have been undertaken to give a fuller account, the use of an interview instrument has given access to some useful findings. The first section of the interview instrument consisted of a few questions probing the level of cultural and social capital of the respondents, as well as one that asked why the respondents are attracted to the arts. These were initially constructed as opening, introductory questions that could provide some general information about the respondents but they also provided quite an insight into their habitus.

All of the eight respondents were chosen because they were known to have developed strategies in response to 'the collision' between the Mayor and the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board. The first thing that became apparent was their high level of education or cultural capital. The respondents are all educated to tertiary level: four have undergraduate degrees and three have Masters degrees, while one has a postgraduate diploma in education. In addition, four have majored in fine arts, one has a Bachelor of Art, two have qualifications in education and one has a business degree.

In terms of their occupations, six of the respondents called themselves artists with three working as full-time professionals. There are three who work as arts educators amongst the group, and two business owners in the mix. Of these, three respondents worked part-

time and one said they only worked so their income could subsidise their art making and other arts-related activities.

When they were asked about their roles or involvement within the field, many of the respondents felt that they held multiple roles, and for some there was an overlap with their occupation. Seven of the eight were or had been involved in arts organisations and four had been involved with several such organisations. Three respondents had been very closely involved with the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board at the time of 'the collision', two as Trustees. Two called to attention their role as art enjoyers, although no doubt this role could be attributed to all these respondents: 'Art maker, art enjoyer, and art teacher. Love to go look at exhibitions and be involved in putting exhibitions together' (Alex, art educator). Another respondent discussed how they had found themselves in the role of mentor to some of the many artists they came into contact with. This person also described themselves as a protagonist for the arts, implying a desire to be involved at a political level advocating for the field: 'I would call myself something of an arts politician, I guess in the sense that I will be vocal about arts issues if necessary. I call myself a protagonist for the arts' (Kerry, artist).

Only two of the respondents are long-term residents of Wanganui and the rest have moved to this town to become part of the field of the arts. Two have come from overseas and four have moved from within New Zealand. Of these six, four have lived here for one to five years, one has been here for between 6 and 10 years and another has lived here for more than 10 years. From this it can be seen that some of the respondents have been quickly assimilated to become key players in the field. It also gives an inkling of how transportable the cultural capital of the field of the arts can be.

According to Bourdieu, a field is 'a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions' (cited in Swartz, 1997: 117) and so, as part of this research, I wanted to discover the makeup of the respondents' social networks. All the respondents said they spent time with creative people, and six of these specifically named agents within the field of the arts as their primary social network. However, the social contacts that were named extended across a range of groups within the social field and included architects, graphic designers, 'greenies', Americans, Quakers, church people, private school people, musicians and

sportspeople, although it must be noted that one respondent was responsible for naming five of the afore-mentioned groups amongst their social contacts. When the respondents were asked whether they were involved in other areas of the community, two talked about having past civic responsibilities while another had been involved in running sports events. One expressed a strong interest in conservation of the built and natural environment and another had provided social services to the community. So, while some respondents enjoyed a range of social contacts, the majority primarily enjoyed socialising within their own field.

When respondents were asked why they were attracted to the arts, many found this quite difficult to answer. I wondered, after listening to some of their answers, whether they found the question ambiguous or, perhaps, stupid, as this response from Tracey (artist) shows: 'Well, it's like asking a fish that lives in water, what attracts them to water'. This response gives a sense of the 'naturalness' of their habitus to those within the field of the arts. Being part of the field was so much a part of them and who they were, that finding a reason to explain their long involvement was almost a nonsense – the phrase 'it is how it is' springs to mind or as Bobby (artist) puts it: 'What I'd just say is this is my life – my whole life is shaped by it'.

This sense of naturalness is also evident in other responses that indicated an immersion and almost obliviousness to the rest of the social field. One respondent indicated that they did not really think about their chosen lifestyle unless reminded: 'I don't go round thinking of myself as an artist unless someone reminds me and I keep forgetting that my outlook on life might be a bit different than people who are attuned in a more conventional way' (Bobby, artist). Another said that being amongst the arts community was where she felt comfortable and this was because 'although some (artists) are conservative, most are not very conservative and I suppose they take me for what I am – and I can do or say whatever really, not without consequence, but without negative repercussions' (Sam, arts educator). For one respondent, becoming part of the field of the arts meant they had been able to reinvent themselves. Another talked of the possibilities that came with belonging to the field: 'I met some fabulous people and my life sort of expanded – in what you could do and be... there's all sorts of possibilities that the arts give you' (Lesley, artist). Amongst the

responses there was a whisper, not fully articulated, of the importance of dialogue and the sharing of good ideas.

One respondent, however, had found it difficult to be accepted into the field of the arts in Wanganui: 'The difficulties that were there about acceptance and non-acceptance' were very evident to Bobby as a new arrival. Gaining access to the field has been fraught for this respondent: 'People have been regularly horrible to me and I think there's a pattern of it'. Kerry, on the other hand, did not have the same experience: 'People say it's cliquey but I don't find it anywhere near as constricted or constrained by academia or the intelligentsia as other places I've been, here or overseas'. These remarks by Bobby and Kerry reinforce the idea that the field of the arts can be difficult to penetrate and is generally inwardly focused to other artists rather than outwards across the social space.

Freedom of expression was cited by two respondents as one of the underpinning values of the field in Wanganui:

I think individuality and freedom of expression are the most important things. I think there is a fair amount of freedom to express yourself the way you want to, through your art – so I don't know whether people consciously think 'that's really important to me' but I think most of the artists working in Wanganui exhibit that kind of freedom and probably take it for granted – don't know any better maybe (Kerry, artist).

This ability to express oneself freely, which was also cited by Sam (arts educator), may be one of the doxa of this field that has become so much a part of the habitus that it is only visible to a newcomer to the field.

While it could be considered that valuing freedom of expression might mean that artists would find it difficult to act collectively. It seems, however, that within the field of the arts in Wanganui, respect for individuality does not preclude its agents from possessing community spirit. One respondent pointed out that a positive aspect of the field is the support that established artists give the art students:

I think a lot of the artists are quite generous towards the students , that there might be a little bit of an altruistic feeling that they want to support the students and the art school – and give the students a chance to find their feet as artists and maybe they'll even stay on after they've graduated (Kerry, artist).

This gives a sense of a field whose agents can be supportive and welcoming, even though this is at odds with Bobby's experience. It seems that while these agents value individualism and free expression, as might be expected within such an autonomous field, they also have a sense of community, gathering in newcomers and supporting the art students.

The agents within the field of the arts have high levels of cultural capital, which Crossley (2003: 46) found to be a strong indicator of propensity for activist activity. This, along with a strong sense of community, gives portent that the agents within the field of the arts in Wanganui might well have the capacity for acting collectively.

7.3. IS A SIMPLE DESIGN ACCEPTABLE FOR A SYMBOLIC SITE?

The respondents agreed that the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project was a symbolic point for the field of the arts in Wanganui, and had the effect of bringing the field together to work towards a common goal: 'I think that certainly the Extension Project galvanised something, made many people aware of each other ' (Bobby, artist). All the respondents said they were supportive of the Extension Project, but when asked what they thought of its design they were more circumspect. Only one respondent was completely happy with the Extension's modernist and very modular style: 'I liked the design. I thought it was a very clean, crisp design' (Lee, arts educator). Others were less enthusiastic: 'I didn't think it was terrible but I didn't think it was wonderfully beautiful' (Sam, arts educator) and 'I've always said that I'm not necessarily in love with the design' (Kerry, artist). Several respondents talked about the need to look more closely at the plans and understand it better before making any judgments: 'I think that things that aren't all that exciting looking in some ways take longer to digest and appreciate the significance of' (Tracey, artist).

For the respondents, the functionality of the Warren and Mahoney design was a strong point in its favour because they were aware of the poor conditions that staff worked in and that the collection was stored in:

...and not to forget the storage, which is truly awful – and the little boxes that people are in...I've had a couple of exhibitions there and they've been very helpful and supportive and they're all stuck in little cubby holes here, there and everywhere – I mean there's inevitably the sense that they're sort of working in this space or that space and they only pass each other in corridors (Bobby, artist).

The Warren and Mahoney design was seen as a good answer to these many problems that the institution still faces: 'If you really looked at the design and were taken through it by someone who understood it, you would have realised that it was a complete problem-solving exercise that they had gone through' (Lesley, artist). They also liked how it did not compete with the original building and how it responded to the wonderful site, looking out to Mount Ruapehu: 'It took the building into a space that gave it air, and a view of the river and the mountain in what was a very subtle way' (Tracey, artist).

Three respondents discussed how the new facilities could help to draw more people in, especially with a café as part of the design: 'And it would have been great – there is no art gallery I know of, not one, where you cannot get a cup of coffee. That's the only one' (Dale, arts supporter).

The consensus was that the process for choosing the design had been good and, because the design met the requirements of the brief and solved all the Sarjeant Gallery's accommodation issues, the design was good: it just took a while to digest and understand. This does raise the crucial point that if these cultural capital-rich respondents had difficulty being enthusiastic about the design, then it was very likely that the general public would be equally unenthused. As Tracey (artist) pointed out:

And in a way, its fault, for the public, was its subtlety. They couldn't quite appreciate it and, of course, the Mayor called it a shithouse. It was cynically said

and framed in that way because he knew that most people couldn't understand that sort of architecture'.

This statement hints at a doxa that is part of the habitus of the arts, which accepts that investing in education or knowledge about the arts is required to participate in the field. It is a concept underscored by Bourdieu in *The Love of Art* (1991: 37): that education is the key to decoding and thus accessing cultural works. Tracey's comments situate the majority of those in the social space as failing to understand, and the field of the arts as the educated minority. In this way a social division is installed between the field of the arts and the 'uneducated', who are excluded.

The paradox of this situation, however, is that even though the respondents could understand the design rationale of the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project they found the subtlety, or perhaps it should be called simplicity, of the design as unexciting as the non-artists. One respondent suggested that the collection would become more accessible because it would be housed in a less imposing building:

I felt it would make the collection more accessible by providing a, could we say, less threatening approach to the collection – because I think perhaps the colonial architecture maybe puts some people off. That's where perhaps Michael Laws' elitist labelling has worked because people look at the building and they think, well yeah, it does look elitist because they feel no affinity. As a society, we're a post-colonial society now and I felt the Extension addressed the values of a post-colonial society quite well (Kerry, artist).

A key part of the design brief was that the building should be accessible as well as functional and affordable, undoubtedly also good attributes for a public toilet. For the field of the arts, however, the Extension Project was more than just a building. It promised to act as a portal to open up their field and make art more accessible. For this reason the artists could accept a less than prepossessing structure, and became its defenders even though they, too, may have wished for something grander or more inspirational, as befitting their symbolic site. The irony of the situation is that Laws saw the simple design as a statement of the modernist aesthetic and attacked it as elitist.

7.4. RESPONSES TO THE SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE INFILCTED ON THE FIELD OF THE ARTS

A key focus for the fieldwork was to discover how the field of the arts responded to the symbolic violence enacted upon it by Michael Laws as he entered their field in his new role of Mayor. In this section of the interview I presented four specific events to the respondents and asked them to describe their feelings and thoughts about each. These incidents were the describing of the Sarjeant Gallery Extension as a 'shithouse', the describing of the fundraising efforts of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board as 'lame', the prolonged attack through the media on the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board that resulted in their resignation ('the collision') and the describing of the arts as elitist. In each of these events, the Mayor used the media and his new position within local government to discursively construct some aspect of the arts in ways that progressively downgraded the field's overall level of capital. The statements made by the Mayor were direct challenges to the habitus of the field and the legitimacy of the Extension Project.

DESCRIBING THE SARJEANT EXTENSION AS A 'SHITHOUSE'

The responses to Mayor's description of the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project as a 'shithouse' were disbelief, anger and distress, probably because it was beyond the respondents' comprehension to compare the symbolic site of their field with a toilet. One respondent said that they couldn't believe that the Mayor would say such a thing: 'I couldn't actually believe that he said it – someone told me he said it. [I said] He didn't say that, he didn't say that, he didn't say that – because I couldn't believe that he did' (Kerry, artist). Another said that they wondered if the Mayor actually believed what he was saying or was just aware of the resonance the phrase would have with the public who did not support the Project.

Three respondents were annoyed with the lack of consideration for all those that had been involved in the Project as well as the lack of respect for the process that had been undertaken to choose the design: 'What he was actually saying was that not only was the building shithouse but the people that were involved in the judging and the architects in it had a crap design' (Lee, arts educator). That such a deliberative process could be subordinated to personal opinion by the Mayor was put down to arrogance and ignorance.

The theme of mayoral ignorance was strong amongst the respondents, with four of them describing the naming of the Sarjeant Gallery Extension as a 'shithouse' as expressing a lack of understanding. One was quite scathing: 'He may be better educated now, but he demonstrated at the time that he really was very ignorant about art, in a number of ways' (Dale, arts supporter). As we have already heard, the key agents within the field of the arts had already invested time coming to understand the value of the Extension Project, no doubt because, as stakeholders, they had the most to gain. While informing themselves about the design of the Extension Project was natural for the agents of the field of the arts, it was perhaps unrealistic to expect that many others would be willing to make such an investment. Some politicians were able to recognise that the wider community had not been persuaded that the Extension Project was worthy of receiving ratepayers funds but only Michael Laws had been entrepreneurial enough to capitalise on it.

The language used by the Mayor to describe the Sarjeant Extension was not acceptable to two respondents:

Of course it broke my heart to hear him talk like a clod. You know what I mean. Great disappointment that he's so crass and no consideration. No listening, thinking or explaining his ideas you know – just fast judgments that are rude and vulgar. I thought it was absolutely horrible (Alex, arts educator).

This quote by Alex gives a hint of how the arts are about communicating ideas. It suggests that if the Mayor had been able to explain why he had come to regard the Sarjeant Extension as a 'shithouse', the agents within the field may have at least been able to accept the reasoning behind this statement.

One respondent was more circumspect about the Mayor's use of language, ascribing it to his primary occupation as a radio host, and drawing attention to a difference in values between the fields of the arts and the media: 'He's got a loose mouth and he's a radio jock' (Bobby, artist). His success as a radio host suggests that Michael Laws was well able to communicate across the whole social space, and in this regard was better positioned and had greater resources than the field of the arts.

DESCRIBING THE FUNDRAISING EFFORTS OF THE SARJEANT TRUST BOARD AS 'LAME'

All the respondents indicated that they were supportive of and committed to the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project. Their responses to the question of the efficacy of the fundraising effort, however, had a more introspective tone than those for the previous question. It also illustrated that all the respondents, except one, knew quite a lot about this aspect of the Project, whatever their level of involvement. Most respondents replied that the fundraising had not started in earnest because the Project had needed Council approval before it could really get going: 'We needed a commitment [from Council] to move to the final stage of actually getting the working drawings done before we knew what the costs were and where to go' (Lee, arts educator). There was an admission that things had been somewhat slow coming together: 'I don't know about lame, just slow to get into gear, and then when the fundraising group got together, we were looking down the barrel of the election' (Kerry, artist).

One respondent, however, called attention to all the money that had already been raised for the Project when the fundraising efforts were denigrated by the new Mayor:

The fact that they had secured a grant of \$2.2 million and had an interest in a million from Auckland. I think that's pretty good to begin. They were doing pretty well, organised a funding body and tentatively started to put things in place – so there's \$185,000 already raised by artists without trying, your Powerco grant of \$125,000 and Community Trust to \$250,000 – so they were doing pretty well without trying hard (Lesley, artist).

It is undeniable that the majority of the funds had already been committed when this attack on the abilities of the Trust Board to bring this Project to fruition came about. Sadly their success in this regard proved to be inadequate insulation against political invective and attack.

I was surprised, therefore, by the degree of soul searching by the respondents about the fundraising efforts, several of whom cited things they thought could have been done better. Community relations and involving the general public were top of the list for three respondents:

Part of the reason for fundraising is involving the community, even if it doesn't raise a lot of money, is to actually engage the community – even though it's a real pain having the arts markets and things that will maybe raise a bit of money, and maybe doesn't raise a lot of money, it's a PR exercise – so they fell down there (Kerry, artist).

Another suggested that the fundraising efforts should have been more visible and the benefits to the whole community should have been more clearly articulated. This calls into question the entire fundraising strategy of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board. They seem to have chosen to try to secure as much funding for the Project from outside sources as possible before appealing to the public for the balance, which is an understandable strategy given the size of the Project and the low socio-economic of most residents of the town. The irony of the situation was that significant levels of funding had been raised and that, considering the size of the Project, the contribution of the Council was small at 26% of the total capital required.

I was also surprised to learn that the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board's Fundraising Committee had intended to raise \$3 million so that there would be no call on the ratepayers at all:

We had a plan to raise three million over three years to raise the shortfall. Our goal was that ratepayers would not have to pay a cent towards the Sarjeant Gallery because we felt it would win more public favour if the art community was seen to come to the fore and make it happen on behalf of the whole community. So we were quite determined to do that (Kerry, artist).

This respondent said that the intention to raise all the necessary funds had been communicated to the Mayor via a letter that also requested that a meeting with him. There was never a response made to that request. Regardless of the response, or lack of it, from Michael Laws, this scenario does not take into consideration the Ministry for Culture and Heritage's requirement that the Council should match its funding, presumably so that political, and thus public, support of the Project was assured. Even if all the funds had been raised by the Trust Board, public support for the Extension Project would still have been essential to achieve any increases in the Trust's annual operational grant from the Council that would be necessary to operate an extended Gallery. The strategy to raise all

the necessary funds without calling on ratepayers might have contravened the intent of the entire Project, which was to be inclusive and accessible. Early involvement of those within the wider social space in the fundraising, moreover, would have indicated public support, and encouraged political support.

THE MEDIA ATTACK ON THE SARJEANT GALLERY TRUST BOARD

If the responses of these eight people are anything to go by, the collision between the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board and the new Mayor of Wanganui, Michael Laws, deeply affected the field of the arts. All except one expressed a great deal of agitation when this episode was raised. They were appalled, shocked and disgusted by the attacks on the integrity of the Trust Board:

Oh I thought it was the most appalling moment in local government behaviour I could think of. Unpaid, voluntary people who commit themselves to doing a community service are pilloried in the public, in the press and treated the way they were treated. The words that Michael Laws said to his Deputy, Dot McKinnon, when the Trust Board came before them were 'Shall we let them have it now, Dot?', which was just spine-chilling really, that a person could behave like that. I mean new brooms do sweep, but this wasn't a broom, this was a sickle (Tracey, artist).

The level of abuse was unforeseen by one respondent, while two described the actions of the Mayor as callous and uncaring: 'It just seems to me that Michael's attitude is one of abusing people and thinking like 'I've scored that point' as if it were an academic debate or a game he was playing' (Dale, art supporter).

Two respondents recalled how the symbolic violence of 'the collision' had made them very distressed: 'It was a blur – it felt insecure and I was wondering what's next blow' (Sam, arts educator). For one of these respondents the effects were quite severe:

To be honest I followed it for I don't know how long, maybe a month, maybe a few weeks, and then I had to just stop. I actually stopped buying the paper because I was getting so upset that I couldn't work, couldn't sleep so I thought no, I've just got to divorce myself from this (Kerry, artist).

Like the Trust Board, Kerry also felt the need to withdraw from the site of conflict, adding weight to the idea that some of the agents within the field of the arts did not have the resources to engage in this political stoush.

The field's lack of preparedness for the possibility of political conflict is also reflected in Kerry's description of the state of some of the Trust Board members and the Director of the Sarjeant Gallery, Bill Milbank after their first meeting with the Council:

I saw Bill before and after basically and he was shocked. He was in no way ready – they were in no way ready for what happened and I think I spoke to Beryl Warnock and Mary Ann Dickie afterwards and they were wrecks...I know Beryl personally – she was a mess. And she's a strong woman – but she was like no, I can't take this. I just don't need this in my life basically (Kerry, artist).

Several respondents related how they had felt deep concern for the well-being of those at the centre of the conflict, particularly for the Chair of the Trust Board, David Cairncross: 'The Chairman of the Board, he was singled out and crucified' (Lee, arts educator). They were also acutely aware that these attacks had diminished the symbolic capital of the Chair:

You've somebody like David Cairncross who is absolutely as straight as a die being accused of dishonesty – it's like saying to a doctor that they've knocked someone off or a policeman that they've been taking bribes, or a lawyer who's been colluding or taking backhanders from the wrong people – it's absolutely an appalling, appalling accusation (Dale, art supporter).

Lee (arts educator) was of the view that the Trust Board was being 'tar brushed', which seems to be an acutely accurate metaphor for the situation.

One respondent was very happy for the Project to come under scrutiny and for questions to be asked, but was not happy that unsubstantiated accusations were made: 'I had no problem with questioning but to blatantly state that they had been dishonest, and lied and manipulated, then I disagree with it' (Sam, arts educator). Another respondent regarded the attack on the honesty of the Trust Board as a way for the Mayor to raise his own

symbolic capital and dispel any doubts that the wider community may have about his integrity:

I think one of the primary issues for me there was concerning his fiscal management and his own personal character. Underlying this he is demonstrating his anxiety to prove he is an honest fiscal manager – because of the accusations and court cases that occurred in Hawkes Bay (Bobby, artist).

The role of the media as symbolic system is an important consideration in this research. The decision to take the attack on the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board directly into the public domain via the media without first discussing the issues with the Board, as might usually be the case, allowed the elevation of Michael Laws in the wider social space at the expense of the Trust Board. His election into the field of local government allowed Michael Laws to influence the field of the arts where he was already regarded as an enemy because of his stance on the Extension. This meant he had little to lose by undertaking a strategy of subversion, challenging the legitimacy of those who were dominant within the field and ultimately rupturing the field of the arts. The Mayor's political and media experience meant that he knew that challenging such a dominant and autonomous field would be likely to be popular within the wider social space, especially when it came to questions of financial backing.

The local newspaper, the *Wanganui Chronicle*, was criticised by respondents for the way it dramatised the situation: 'The language that was used was very strong – and a lot of exaggeration going on' (Alex, arts educator). The respondents were also acutely aware that the 'facts' presented by the Mayor were not always completely accurate, as Lee (arts educator) relates: 'We were being vilified in the press, with a lot of information that was not true but half true. The whole attack was built on summation, on someone's interpretation'. Lesley (artist) was critical of how the status of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board members was never represented correctly:

Well it wasn't a job – that's what he threatened in the paper, again manipulating people, lying that these people had done something dodgy and could lose their jobs. They were all volunteers. It was never described properly.

The power of the media was recognised by three respondents as a very effective means to reconstruct and misrepresent the situation: 'You see, what Michael Laws was doing was swaying the population to turn against the Sarjeant – and what you read in the paper is right, even if it's wrong, it's right' (Lee, arts educator).

The respondents make it clear that the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board was unprepared for such a fierce attack, even though there were definite warning signs throughout the election campaign that the feasibility of the Extension Project would be challenged. The Trust Board, for its part, did not have enough political or media experience to deal with the situation at hand, much less respond in kind to the Mayor's attack. The consequences of this political inexperience were amplified by the fact that Wanganui had not seen the like of Michael Laws in local government politics before, with his ability to develop long-term political strategies and 'bend the facts' for political gain. In this situation, all the combined cultural capital of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board, which had so much currency in their own field, stood for little. Their habitus took it for granted that art is of value and so, they were ill-prepared for having to articulate a defence in public and for dealing with conflict in this regard. Against such inexperience, Michael Laws' long experience in the media and politics gave him a huge advantage.

NAMING THE ARTS AS ELITIST

There was a wide range of responses to the assertions by Michael Laws, through the national media, that the arts were elitist. One respondent remarked that the Mayor had his own elitist tendencies and then listed them: 'Well, so is debating, so is living on Saint John's Hill. His stepchildren go to Saint George's, that's living the life. He's got fancy degrees, fancy Bill Manhire pieces of paper to show he's done the course' (Dale, arts supporter). The implication was that such assertions were hypocritical, considering the Mayor's own lifestyle and aspirations.

Some respondents saw these assertions about the arts as a deliberate tactic to divide the community, which has been a useful device for those in positions of power throughout history:

That's how you appeal to people that don't understand the arts and the importance of them. It's a simple divide and rule tactic used by plenty of figures in our history. You single out a group and ridicule them as thinking they're above the rest and I hate to say that artists, they want to be not elitist but they want to do the very best they can (Tracey, artist).

Another brought up a specific example from history: 'When he described us as an elitist group I thought of the fifteenth century, you know, the book burnings, destroying images because they weren't of a certain genre and a certain style' (Lee, arts educator).

One respondent suggested that the Mayor's own deficit in cultural capital when it came to the arts led to the attack: 'He was saying, well I've never been able to understand art, so it must be an elitist group' (Lee, arts educator). Another suggested that ignorance about the arts was widespread and that is why it can become a political target:

It's really easy to ride the bandwagon and say that it's all crap because this has always been the case with modern art and art that's out on the edge. It takes a long time for society to assimilate it and understand it and actually put it into context – so it's a no-brainer to ride that and say its elitist – that's easy (Kerry, artist).

Raising the concept of understanding or not understanding art does bring with it the spectre of social exclusion and elitism that the Mayor is so critical of. This is where the field of the arts exhibits so well the doxa that one must invest the capital to become educated about art and understand it. This is where they separate themselves off from the wider social space, and from whence accusations of elitism are born.

One respondent suggested that the Mayor's accusations of elitism were aimed at arts patrons and were ironic given that most of agents within the field in Wanganui were art makers:

The people who have fought the hardest are the workers and I don't know any elite artists in Wanganui. I suppose he's aiming at the fact that the people that are likely to have their hands in their pockets are wealthy people (Lesley, artist).

It seems that the artists of the town have been inadvertently swept into the fray because they occupy the same field, albeit at a different level as far as capital is concerned.

Certainly, Dr Robin Congreve, the Auckland arts patron portrayed as reneging on his promise to raise \$1 million for the Extension Project, had come in for criticism from Laws. In addition, the accusations of elitism in Laws' *Sunday Star Times* column (28 November 2004) were directed at arts patrons rather than art producers. Rolling the artists together with their patrons and supporters and reconstructing the field of the arts as elitist was a useful mechanism, however, for arguing against funding the Extension Project by the Council.

One respondent who decided that the Mayor was misinformed about the field of the arts in Wanganui decided to be proactive about the situation and made the decision to correct his misconceptions:

Actually the centre of my discussion with him was my concern about the treatment of the Gallery but also his suggestion that the arts community was rarefied and elitist...because he was making a mistake there and a lot of us had been working very hard, not just for ourselves but for the community (Bobby, artist).

For most respondents the assertions by the Mayor were nonsense given that the term elite is used in so many contexts, and is widely associated with being the best at any chosen activity, especially in the field of sports. One respondent saw Laws' comments as an attack on minority, special interest groups within the community, which all contribute to the richness of society:

I think that's what makes things interesting, that there's all these subcultures going on, these pockets of excellence that people are involved in, that they're passionate about. It's all part of the interesting fabric and just imagine not having that, then you quickly come to grey, dull (Alex, arts educator).

For Alex, the argument was about respecting and nurturing the diversity and creativity of the whole social space. Laws' populist rhetoric, however, was designed to persuade the people of the town that the field of the arts was self-interested, exclusive and did not have the interests of the whole social space at heart. Such assertions of social exclusion prepared the ground for withdrawing Council support for the Extension Project.

7.5. STRATEGIES OF DEFENCE WITHIN THE FIELD

As an agent in the field of the arts I was aware, even as 'the collision' played out, that other agents were mobilising to defend the field and its interests and using a number of deliberate strategies to do so. There are only eight respondents in this part of the research but from this small number of agents came several strategies. Two respondents, however, felt that they could not or should not become personally involved in some strategies although they were very happy to support the efforts of others by selling merchandise and giving emotional support. It also needs to be mentioned that some initiatives that featured in the media were undertaken with such stealth that the perpetrators are not well known, even within this politically active section of the field of the arts.

The strategies can be loosely divided into three sections, which I have named protest, community discussion and lobbying.

PROTEST

All the respondents, except one, supported the pressure group, SOS (Save Our Sarjeant), which formed in response to 'the collision', and five of the respondents could be described as being actively involved in its strategies. SOS began with 70 members, who were mostly artists along with a smattering of arts supporters. It announced its arrival onto the political stage by stating its intention to 'support the staff of the Sarjeant and fight back against Laws' claims' in the media (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 29 November, 2004). In this single initiative a good proportion of the field of the arts united to challenge the attack on its symbolic site. One of the first strategies that the group undertook was to protest at Council meetings. One respondent, who was integrally involved in setting up the initial SOS meeting at the time of 'the collision', described the rationale behind the protests:

My reaction was one of anger and you do what you do in situations like that, you protest...protest is as important part of the community's functioning as the arts are actually. It's vital that people express themselves, even if they don't win (Tracey, artist).

Protesting seemed to have two main functions: it allowed the artists to express their frustration but it was also a quick way to bring media attention to the issues they had with the Mayor's debunking of the Project. The protests that took place outside or in Council meetings were well supported by artists and did gain local media coverage. Within a few weeks the SOS mailing list grew to include 90 members (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 10 December 2004) and then to 130 by 3 February 2005, 30 of whom came from outside Wanganui (*Wanganui Chronicle*).

SOS began by holding large public meetings of 40 to 70 people. Some of its key members found the sheer number of participants made it difficult to organise a sustained response to the challenges to the arts, so they formed a Steering Group. This Steering Group was informal in its structure and variable in the numbers that attended, although it did have an appointed spokesperson, Emma Camden. At its fortnightly meetings the members developed elaborate strategies that included communicating with the Minister for Arts and Culture, garnering support from the wider community, developing a mission statement and gathering in research on the economic benefits of a healthy art sector. Their minutes show that they had divided up their potential supporters into target audience groupings and agreed they should develop different communication strategies for each group²⁹. These groups included Councillors, arts supporters, prominent citizens, all Wanganui citizens, the media and the national field of the arts. During this meeting the question of the wider membership was raised, with one member of the SOS Steering Group suggesting that there still needed to be meetings of the larger group so that people could 'talk through trauma'. Unfortunately there were to be no further meetings of the entire membership of SOS for some months and, instead, the Steering Group left its membership behind in favour of working autonomously.

The protests by SOS had been successful in raising issues but one respondent suggested that they had also damaged the symbolic capital of the field of the arts. This may be because the protesters were constructed in the media as a minority group of trouble-makers, rather than a group with the best interests of the whole social space at heart. This perception was assisted by the Mayor, who quickly labelled SOS as 'single issue nutters'.

²⁹ SOS Steering Group minutes: 19 December 2004. These minutes were sent out to all SOS members and were included in documents that were provided to me by one respondent.

He later leaked to the media that the group had considered black-listing businesses owned by Vision party members and made the following statement:

It [the boycott] marks a sinister turn in lobbying, and that's why I have gone public. They have stepped over the line, a line all Wanganui finds unacceptable. It's beyond lobbying...it's hysteria (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 8 February 2005).

This interpretation of events provided by the Mayor proved very difficult to rescind and was very damaging to the group.

Two respondents protested by creating T-shirts with anti-Laws slogans on them and another helped to sell them. They saw the T-shirts as an effective way to vent their feelings and to have a bit of fun. One respondent, who likes to wear a protest T-shirt whenever possible, described how the T-shirts are an ongoing reminder to the Council that the arts community is part of the town: 'So I sit there in my T-shirt just to say we'll still be around, and we'll still do what we want to do' (Lee, arts educator). Another, however, said that there had been a flipside to making the T-shirts: 'We made T-shirts but, again, you live and learn because they promoted his name, which he loved' (Lesley, artist).

Other more covert forms of protest were generated out of the field of the arts, such as the campaign of stencilled images, which subverted the Vision Wanganui logo to read Tunnel Vision Wanganui. These appeared outside a number of media outlets and footpaths throughout the town (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 26 November 2004). None of these respondents, however, admitted any knowledge of or responsibility for these initiatives.

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

For many respondents, discussing the issues in a non-confrontational way felt like a more effective way to gain public support within the social space and they devised several ways of doing this. Wearing a badge that showed support for the Sarjeant Gallery was an effective way of raising the subject of the Extension and opening up the possibility of one-to-one discussion. However, with so much ill feeling towards the arts communicated in the media at the time, it felt like an act of bravery to one respondent:

That was interesting because I wore mine a lot and it started up all kinds of conversations you know – garden centre or in the grocery store – but I remember feeling a bit frightened to wear it because there was that polarisation that happened and I thought that one of the nasty letter writers might just see me and spit on me or something as one of those horrid artist types. Actually, I didn't have any bad encounters but it was terrible to feel that bit of fear and that's what Michael had created I think, that situation (Alex, arts educator).

Letters to newspapers appealed as another way of putting forward a statement or position into the social space, although access to the public forum of the Letters to the Editor section of the *Wanganui Chronicle* was not always a *fait accompli*. Some letters were not published by the *Wanganui Chronicle* and, as no explanation was ever given, letter writers could only speculate as to why this might be:

I letter write, that's what I do, and I think I got under his [Laws'] skin fairly significantly – particularly because a lot of my letters weren't published and I know why they weren't because he phoned the editor up and threatened with legal action (Tracey, artist).

One of the strategies of SOS was to encourage all its members to write letters to both the national and local papers. A few members wrote regularly and a war of letters soon began between them and the Mayor's supporters. This was very successful in bringing public attention to the issues. The campaign drew to a close after the Mayor stepped in and suggested that 'Wanganui is sick of the Sarjeant Gallery issue. It wants to move on' (*Wanganui Chronicle*, 7 February 2005). Others within the wider social space echoed these sentiments and wrote in to the *Chronicle* to complain:

The sooner the arts buffs realise that a letter writing campaign is not helping their cause the better. The majority of the Wanganui residents are sick of the emotional fiction spewed from writers like David Murray (Martin Kraiger in *Wanganui Chronicle*, 10 February 2005)

Collusion within some groups of letter writers and ghost writing were activities that two respondents did not approve of: 'That sort of strategy can get one into all sorts of trouble in terms of clarity – there's very rhetorical language, a type of leading, an attempt to lead'

(Bobby, artist). This suggests that these respondents realised that some agents within the field were using the circumstances to change their position within the field. One respondent suggested that the Mayor, too, had participated in ghost writing.

One very innovative, albeit belated, strategy to increase community discussion about the arts and its role in the town, which came to fruition almost three months after 'the collision' had ended, was the State of the Arts Forum. The Forum, developed by Jodie Dalgleish, owner of Gallery Dalgleish, was described by one of the respondents as a way to 'involve as many people as possible and give them a forum where they felt comfortable and weren't threatened to actually intelligently and logically discuss the issues we were facing (Kerry, artist). It was successful in attracting 200 people to listen to the speakers, including photographer Anne Noble, former Director of Te Manawa Art Gallery Luit Beiringa, Whanganui Member of Parliament Jill Pettis and the Chair of the Chamber of Commerce, Warren Ruscoe. The discussion that followed brought the field of the arts and its supporters together with a resolve to not let 'the collision' discourage them. Kerry, however, felt that some people would have liked to have seen specific strategies come out of the Forum and be acted on. This respondent went on to suggest that setting up further workshops or focus groups could have been helpful in generating such strategies.

LOBBYING

During 'the collision', SOS actively lobbied the Minister for Culture and Heritage, Prime Minister Helen Clark, and her Associate Minister, Judith Tizard, to intervene in the attacks on the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board by Mayor Michael Laws. They also lobbied local Councillors and the local Member of Parliament, Jill Pettis, for support. Another long-term strategy, which was initiated by painter, Elizabeth Coats, at the time of 'the collision', has been the introduction of regular meetings between representatives of the Whanganui Artists' Guild and the Mayor to discuss issues within the field of the arts. While it was initially very difficult for members of the group to have confidence in the initiative, it has proved successful, as Bobby (artist) relates:

I really do believe for at least the last six months he's been concerned to redress the balance in terms of the arts community, even though he's not working on it directly. He saw us five times and maybe that was a sort of brief entertainment for

him after the hard arguing. I do think that through other people that space has been allocated for us to have our say.

As a result of these meetings, and submissions made by the Whanganui Artists' Guild to the Council's Annual Plan Process, an arts policy for the town is being developed by Council officers in consultation with the field of the arts.

7.6. THE FIELD'S PERCEPTION OF PUBLIC PERCEPTION

Most respondents felt that the strategies undertaken by agents of the field of the arts had badly affected the public perception of the field. It was suggested that because some agents had been doggedly committed to their strategies, this opened the way for a new kind of counterattack by the Mayor: 'When it started getting into the territory where perhaps people were acting outside the bounds of what could be considered to be normal, then that just opened another door for him to start calling artists nutters' (Kerry, artist).

Others said they thought that the arts community was seen as 'a bunch of whingers or victims' (Sam, arts educator) or as privileged bludgers. Tracey (artist), however, was not so sure: 'I think that the wider community probably have a bit more regard for it actually, because we've had a lot of publicity and a lot of it very good publicity, and some of the more outspoken members of the arts community have been seen by the public as being high achievers.'

While the respondents felt that the public was not necessarily sympathetic to the issues that the field of the arts faced, they did feel supported by artists and arts supporters from around the country. This view was put forward by three respondents who were aware that members of the wider, national field of the arts were very concerned and supportive:

From the arts, from outside Wanganui, I'd say sympathetically or empathetically. People are aware – especially the arts and the artists – and they keep in touch. They are aware and they know what's going on, especially in places where it's happened previously I think they do look at it with concern (Sam, arts educator).

I did get the sense that most of the respondents felt they lost support within their own social space, and that their strategies had served to isolate them further. This had come about, in part, because they had been so vigorous in their own defence but also because they had not been politically astute enough to recognise when they should stop being defensive and move on to more proactive strategies. Although protests were very useful for raising awareness of the issues, other strategies, such as the State of the Arts Forum, if undertaken early enough, might have helped to develop enough public discussion and constructed sufficient support within the social space to persuade the politicians to change their minds about withdrawing funds from the Extension Project.

7.7. MOVEMENT IN THE FIELD OF THE ARTS

All the respondents were aware of movement in the field of the arts that had come about with 'the collision' between the field and the Mayor. The most obvious changes occurred at the symbolic site of the Sarjeant Gallery but some respondents also reported changes in the position of some of the agents of the field.

The loss of the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project has, as Dale (arts supporter) puts it, left a 'gaping hole' in the field. The Project had become a point of focus for the field and 'there is no particular focus now' (Bobby, artist). For the field of the arts, the loss of the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project means the loss of all the economic capital that had been generated for the Project as well as the loss of a potential asset to the field. The completion of the Project would have increased the symbolic capital of the Gallery. As Sam (arts educator) pointed out: 'It could never have not been an asset'.

Of course, amongst the losses at the site of the Sarjeant Gallery is the loss of its governance structure, the Trust Board. It does seem odd that the Trustees should have even contemplated the option of resignation, considering it was suggested by the Mayor, who was clearly only interested in destroying the Extension Project and amalgamating all the cultural institutions of the town. The observations of one respondent did provide an explanation for this otherwise inexplicable abandonment of the symbolic site of the field. It seems that symbolic violence inflicted on some of the Trust Board members by the Mayor,

particularly David Cairncross, had affected them at a personal as well as a public level that they felt they could no longer participate in the field:

I know David Cairncross has been really stuffed over this. It's been a tragedy for him. It's close to ruining his career after 40 years, and the kind of things we were doing out there were just the kind of things we do for the community (Dale, arts supporter).

For some members of the Trust Board members the personal cost, in terms of symbolic capital, was too high and they were driven out. The few that were left may have felt that their mass resignation would support the actions of their fellows and besides, there were now too few left to be able to 'hold the fort'.

Both Kerry and Lesley were of the view that the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board should never have resigned because they left the symbolic site of the field unguarded and open to further attacks by the Mayor. The failure of the Trustees to anticipate this situation is a further indication of their political inexperience. Their resignation appears to have reduced their symbolic capital in the eyes of some players within the field:

When I started to realise the ramifications I started thinking oh you dumb buggers. But I don't think they understood the ramifications – I don't think they understood they were leaving the Sarjeant wide open for him so he do whatever the hell he wanted – and if they'd realised that I don't think they would have resigned (Kerry, artist).

The election of the new Council led by Michael Laws soon had further implications for the Sarjeant Gallery and the field of the arts. By July 2005, Vision's nil rates increase policy had resulted in a 5% funding cut for all departments of the Wanganui District Council. To make ends meet the Sarjeant Gallery decreased the number of exhibition openings it held each year down to four. One respondent felt that this had weakened the Gallery position within the field of the arts:

I think the Gallery as a community place, the fact that it's got less openings so there's less community arts meetings where people can congregate and talk. It's no longer happening in the frequency that it did, which can lead to a slightly

segregated situation where the Sarjeant is not as close to the artists – because they're not there and they're not interacting as frequently in a celebratory sort of way, which is important – instead of meeting in a negative way where there is frustration (Sam, arts educator).

'The collision' has also led to changes in the arrangement of the field of the arts. It seems that how people responded to 'the collision' influenced their place in the field, with some increasing their public profiles: 'I think it has allowed some people to build their public profiles, myself included' (Kerry, artist). One respondent thought that there had been a shift in leadership within the field, with some new and unexpected players stepping forward, particularly those within the Whanganui Artists' Guild that had initiated discussions with the Mayor soon after 'the collision':

I think that there has been a slight changing in the leadership within the arts community and that's been quite good from the point of view that some people have been involved and had a role to play where they otherwise might not have had a role to play. People that have these skills that perhaps lie dormant until they are needed (Kerry, artist).

Others seem to have learned from their experiences and have changed their approach to public comment in a bid to win back the symbolic capital they may have felt they had lost during the protests and media appearances after 'the collision':

These people are attaching themselves to positive outcomes and speaking well of certain things, and maybe that is an attempt to influence people – to tell people that you're not just an angry person or a one issue person but have deep and broad concerns for the wider community and you're trying to put forward more discussion (Bobby, artist).

The respondents had differing views as to whether the field had become more divided because of 'the collision'. Sam (arts educator) felt that the field had become more divided because the strong responses to 'the collision' from some agents made others uncomfortable:

I think a few people don't want to associate with parts of the arts because the subject matter is always about politics or the Gallery, and they don't want to talk about it. So I think people don't socialise as much within – or they worry because one person speaks out and is much stronger and is fighting more than others.

Others, however, said they thought the field was more united as Tracey (artist) suggests: 'I think in some ways the arts community has been drawn together in a stronger way.' Working on strategies together has led to the forging of new friendships as Dale (arts supporter) points out: 'I have to say I have some nice new friends ... you know I've been in the trenches with these people.' These oppositional views tend to suggest that some parts of the field became very involved in their strategies and this has united them, while those who did not become involved have found themselves on the outer.

7.8 CONCLUSION

One of the outcomes of the fieldwork was that quite a clear picture began to form as to how forces came to be arranged in such a way in the social space of Wanganui so that the governance of the Sarjeant Gallery and consequently the Gallery's Extension Project, a key symbolic point in this field, both came to be destroyed. The isolation of the autonomous field of the arts within the social space of Wanganui had serious consequences for the Extension Project, which were all recognised and articulated by the respondents.

A key factor in the eventual destruction of the Project was that it had always suffered from a lack of leadership, both at the political level and from within the institution of the Sarjeant Gallery itself. One respondent suggested that if the previous Mayor, Chas Poynter, or some other member of the Council had stepped forward to champion the Project, it would have had a better chance of succeeding, although they also conceded that supporting the arts would not have been politically prudent:

'Of course they all had their finger in the air, knowing full well that it wouldn't be the most wise course of action to spend community resources on an art gallery. What they failed to do, what particularly the Mayor failed to do, was to lead the Project from the front' (Tracey, artist).

The communications strategy of the Gallery, or apparent lack of one, came under fire from several respondents. One suggested that the Gallery had not laid the groundwork with the public before embarking on such an ambitious project. There could have been a range of public programmes to draw people in and engage them rather than intimidate them:

Give them something to talk about that involves everybody, not just an arts person.
Give them something that involves sport, reaches out to everyone so they can all get a little taste and gain an understanding and be willing to have their rates go towards that (Sam, arts educator).

However, not everyone was of that view and Bobby (artist) in fact suggested that the Sarjeant Gallery public programmes are very wide in their appeal:

When someone suggested that all their friends had never bothered to go into the Gallery because there was nothing there that interested them, I was thinking my goodness that Gallery has the greatest range of exhibitions that serve all interests than any other gallery in the country really. They don't have the big expensive shows, they have five or seven shows going all the time.

This divergence of views suggests that while the Gallery was fulfilling the expectations of the field of the arts, with regards to exhibitions programmes, that it may not have been so responsive to those who are not part of the field.

The Gallery's inability to include and communicate with the whole social space meant that the possible benefits that the Sarjeant Gallery Extension would have for the wider community were never really articulated: 'I don't think the Sarjeant or the Council informed Wanganui of what we would be getting and how it would benefit us. How it would benefit students, the public, tourists, the arts' (Sam, arts educator). A related and equally important factor was how the wider community had not been involved in the fundraising and so had no opportunity to buy into the Project. One respondent said that their offer of free marketing and public relations advice was never taken up by the Gallery.

It seems that even within the field of the arts there was dissension about the Project. Some agents were of the view that the Extension Project became too big and expensive: 'What at the time was a \$4 million Extension expanded into a dream of building a castle in the air'

(Dale, arts supporter). During this research, an important player that emerged at the fringes of the field was Sally Patrick, Manager of the City Library, which is the near neighbour of the Sarjeant Gallery and would have shared parking facilities with the new Extension. It was put forward that she did not like the whole concept and had not supported it:

Sally Patrick told me that when she came to Wanganui, which was just after the design competition, she said when she'd done her homework, and she's a very good librarian, she realised that the library, and the idea that the combined synchronising of people that would go up to the library, park between the two and go into them both, she could see that for that reason, the art gallery would never work. So she made up her mind there and then that the whole thing would never work – but she's a major player in this thing (Dale, arts supporter).

This indicates that even some of the sister institutions within the Queen's Park precinct, who might usually have been allies, had not been entirely convinced of the merits of the Warren and Mahoney Extension design. Tracey (artist), however, thought that, in the end, some parts of the field had, over time, become more supportive: 'And furthermore, I think we managed to start convincing a lot of the peripheral arts organisations how important it was.'

It was little wonder, then, with a distinct lack of support from the public and the field of the arts divided as to its merits that the previous Council felt the Extension Project was politically risky and were slow to support it until 'all the ducks were in a row' (Kerry, artist). This situation left the Project very vulnerable with an election on the horizon and a new group of political contenders who were also not convinced that the town needed an extension to its art gallery.

The entry of a new political agent, Mayor Michael Laws, into the field was the final factor in ensuring the demise of the Extension Project. As one of the purposes of the fieldwork was to explore how the respondents had made sense of 'the collision', I asked them what they thought had been the motivation behind the Mayor's attacks on the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board. In his election campaign, Michael Laws had promised he would make sweeping changes to the town and how it was run and some of the respondents were acutely aware

of this. They suggested that the actions of the Mayor were calculated to change the positioning within the social space:'

It went hand in hand with this notion of getting rid of the 'Old Boys' Network' and the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board was led by David Cairncross who was perceived as being part of the 'Old Boys' Network' – local accountants and businessmen that Laws portrayed as having a grip on the town and having held the town back (Tracey, artist).

Bobby (artist) was also of the view that this campaign for change was backed by a group that wished to subvert the existing order: 'I saw him as being welcomed by certain people in the town who wished to assert themselves and effect change in the community, and in some ways I really agree with that'. If this is the case then, on a symbolic level, Cairncross was an ideal 'victim' because he had also been 'guilty' of accompanying the Gallery's Director, Bill Milbank to solicit funding for the Extension Project from Dr Robin Congreve, a key member of another infinitely more powerful national 'Old Boys' Network' of corporate directors and lawyers who also support the arts.

The public vilification of David Cairncross firmly demonstrated the new Mayor's commitment to change, as Lesley (artist) pointed out:

In that he came and made a mark early on and looked strong, and I'm doing what I said I would do and also got national media attention that was obviously a big card in his favour – and we played into his hands because we played up and that made him happy.

This quote by Lesley also refers to how the Mayor had quickly realised that he could capitalise on all the national media exposure generated by the field of the arts. This all helped to raise his political and media profile. The field of the arts, for its part, failed to recognise that the Mayor had turned the situation to his advantage for some time, adding weight to the many earlier suggestions that the cultural capital of the field of the arts was of little value once it was forced to engage at a political level. All they were doing was putting out the fire with gasoline.

Some respondents were of the view that engineering the resignation of the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board and calling a halt to the Extension Project were strategies designed to secure political support for Laws across the whole social space: 'He wants to identify with Joe Public so he has figured out he can get a lot of support' (Alex, arts educator). Alex also noted that the Mayor's modus operandi was to 'divide and conquer' and attacking the Trust Board had been successful in dividing the town. The relative isolation of the field of the arts in the social space had made this a particularly successful strategy.

While the fieldwork revealed how insightful the respondents were about the forces at play in the destruction of the Extension Project, it also confirmed the centrality of their habitus as a force that came to undermine the best efforts of the field of the arts to be inclusive. Even though the Gallery Extension was designed with inclusivity in mind and the field was committed to this principle, its propensity to act autonomously and look inwards explains why the Gallery was unsuccessful in gaining wide support for the Project. 'The collision' and the consequential halting of the Extension Project were extremely destructive to the field of the arts, partly because its agents were unprepared for such violent political intervention. That the strategies of defence of the field were unsuccessful in turning the situation around only confirms that the field did not have the resources to engage in this political stoush.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

This thesis has investigated ‘the collision’ between the fields of art and politics in Wanganui, which came about just as plans to extend the town’s art museum were about to come to fruition. There is no doubt that the accommodation issues facing the Sarjeant Art Gallery were, and still are, very real. The storage conditions for the town’s extensive art collection, said to be worth around \$30 million, are inadequate. Staff are still not housed together in the same building and the cramped conditions in which they work are an indictment on their employer, the Wanganui District Council. Unlike other major galleries, the Sarjeant Gallery does not have a dedicated classroom where the thousands of schoolchildren that visit, as part of the Learning Experiences outside the Classroom programme³⁰, can construct their art works. The Council has been aware that the facilities of its Gallery needed to be upgraded, in line with other arts institutions, for around three decades now. This has been well documented in a series of Council-commissioned reports dating from the late 1970s. As well as issues of accommodation, the question of accessibility for the disabled, Maori and other groups that might feel intimidated by the institution have also needed to be considered. For this reason, in 1991 the Council decided to put the Gallery at arm’s length from the field of politics and appointed a Trust Board, with expertise in the arts along with two political representatives, to take over its governance and to develop a way forward.

Bourdieu’s conception of the social space as a dynamic place made up of jostling, overlapping fields has provided the framework to contextualise the collision between the fields of politics and arts in Wanganui. Also of importance has been his thesis of symbolic violence, where dominant agents use their position to subordinate other groups. Bourdieu’s description of the field of the arts as an autonomous field is exemplified in an expression I had heard before I started the research: ‘the art world only talks with itself’. This research project has demonstrated to me how the autonomy of the field of the arts is manifested in many ways in the practices of its agents. It has also shown how this

³⁰ Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom (LEOTC) is funded by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage.

autonomy can create great difficulties at the interface between an art museum and its public. When the Council set up an independent Trust Board to take care of the issues at the Sarjeant Gallery, it inadvertently provided the means for this public institution to act autonomously in a number of ways. The arm's length political arrangement coincided with and reinforced the tendency of the field of the arts to only talk with itself. While the slight distancing from the political process protected the Gallery from political interference it also insulated it somewhat from its social space.

Staying true to its purpose as mandated by the Wanganui District Council, the Trust Board soon developed a careful process to solve the many issues of the Gallery. Determined to do the best by this architectural icon, the Trustees began in 1998 by commissioning New Zealand's foremost conservation architect, Chris Cochran, to make recommendations about how the original building could best be considered if it were to be extended. They incorporated Chris Cochran's ideas into the brief for the architectural competition they had planned. This would have been a good time for the Trust Board to consult widely to find out what the public might like to see included in this new civic facility. Unfortunately this was not undertaken and there was no public input into the project at this early stage. Another opportunity to engage the public was lost once all the designs were submitted. Again there could have been an opportunity for the community to give an indication of its preferences as far as the design of the Extension Project was concerned. Instead, the winning design was chosen by a group of experts. It seems that even at this early stage of the Extension Project, the agents at the centre of the field of the arts were acting autonomously, albeit with good intentions of being inclusive.

The long-established inclination of the field of the arts towards autonomy was also reflected in the fundraising strategy of the Trust Board, which chose to raise as much money as possible from sources other than the Council before calling on the local ratepayers. It almost seems as though the Trustees were unhappy to ask for public support for the Extension Project and I think this is understandable, given the low socio-economic status of many residents of the town. The end result, however, was that the wider social space of Wanganui was not involved in any way, not even in fundraising, where they could have become acquainted with the rationale behind the Extension Project and through their financial support, however small, felt some sense of being included. The

foolhardiness of this approach was pointed out by some respondents interviewed in my research.

I have come to the view that dealing with the issues surrounding the Sarjeant Gallery must have always been a politically risky undertaking in the town of Wanganui. Why else would the Extension Project have taken two decades to initiate? Why else would the Gallery have been separated off from the political field if not to be distanced from the three-yearly political process? That the Extension Project was never able to find a volatile political champion is yet another indication of the possible risk it could pose to political careers. I consider that this situation is a function of the character of the town of Wanganui, with all its social problems along with an ageing infrastructure and, until recently, lack of economic resilience. In the face of such pressing and serious problems, it is politically difficult to promote the issues of accommodation and accessibility at the site of the Sarjeant Gallery. Besides, when the visitor figures for the Sarjeant Gallery are scrutinised it seems that, while numbers of local people visiting increased markedly from 10,445 in 2001 to 15,338 in 2003, visiting the Gallery does not appear to be a high priority for the 43,000 people of Wanganui³¹.

The Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board was easily able to secure Council support for the Extension Project in March 2003 when the call on ratepayers' funds was only \$1.7 million and the Council had the option to sell some items from the art collection if it found itself in a tight spot. By February 2004, however, the political risk of supporting the Extension Project dramatically increased once the Ministry for Culture and Heritage demanded that the Council match its own contribution of \$2.2 million and underwrite the \$1.3 million fundraising to be undertaken by the Trust Board. The Ministry also stipulated that funds could not be raised by selling art works from the collection, which meant that the call would be from general rates or sales of assets. Once these terms were set out by the Ministry, political commitment to the Extension Project began to waver. It was at this point that Councillor Sue Westwood observed that the magnitude of the call on ratepayer funds meant that a Special Consultative Procedure should be undertaken, as required by the Local Government Act (2002) and the Council's own decision-making policies. This would have been an ideal opportunity to gauge the mood of the wider social space and could have averted the Extension Project becoming the political football it did. Instead, the focus

³¹ Sarjeant Gallery Visitor Attendance Figures (March 2004).

of the Council was on finding a solution quickly so the Ministry's deadline for funding could be met.

At around the same time as the Council finally agreed to support the Extension Project, in July 2004, a new political actor, Michael Laws, announced his intention to contest the local body elections, which were imminent. Experienced in the field of national politics, as part of the New Zealand First Party, Laws saw the Extension Project as the opportunity he needed to break in to the political field in Wanganui. He knew that in a town like Wanganui, with its high levels of debt and ageing population, justifying expenditure on non-essential services, like the Gallery, would require considerable skill and drive from any politician willing to take up this cause. His strategy was to challenge the decisions made in regard to this planned expenditure on the arts and in doing so to develop a political profile as a prudent fiscal manager. This was an astute strategy for local body elections in Wanganui, when expenditure by the Council often comes under the spotlight.

Initially Michael Laws' Vision Team acknowledged the importance of the art sector in the town by developing a Creative Arts Policy, which was very supportive of the field. The Policy did, however, promise to review the decision to fund the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project. Once the Vision team was elected with a majority on the Council, however, their strategy quickly changed from support and review to attack. Within a few weeks of the elections, in October 2004, well aware of the Vision promise to review the funding of the Extension Project, the Trust Board met with the Mayor to discuss the future of the Project. The notes from that meeting show that the Mayor had already appraised the field of the arts as being small in comparison to the wider social space of Wanganui, and with little in the way of economic clout. He was also alive to the fact that he could claim the mandate of the majority of the social space and not be challenged, particularly from the field of the arts, which had not developed visible public support for the Extension Project. When the Mayor asserted that he had a mandate to review the Sarjeant decision and was committed to doing so, he also indicated that the Gallery would have an opportunity to put forward its case. I do not believe that anyone could have been prepared for the events that would follow so swiftly after this meeting.

By obtaining all the Trust Board's working papers Mayor Laws was able to ascertain that the Trust was in a weakened position, with only a small proportion of its possible

membership in place and committed. The time was right to make swift changes and begin his plans to reorganise the field. Laws saw an opportunity to further build his own symbolic capital by scuttling the Extension Project. Such a move would effectively and immediately remove a large call on the rates and establish himself as a watchdog of finances on behalf of the community. Such decisive action early on in his term would also help to secure him in his position - and included in the mix there was an opportunity to discredit an old political adversary as well.

Although the Trust Board was more aware than most that trouble was looming for the Extension Project, it did not have the kind of experience in the political and media fields necessary to prepare for the collision that ensued. Their Chair's carefully worded denials of wrongdoing were no match for Laws' populist rhetoric. The Trustees knew that Laws could not sack them, as he constantly suggested he might, and had every right to remain in their positions until such time as they wished to resign. It seems inexplicable, then, that the Chair of the Trust Board would enact Laws' suggestion that he could clear his name by resigning on 23 November 2004, and that the entire Trust Board would follow, effectively abandoning the symbolic site of the field of the arts to become overrun by its enemies. It seems likely that the suggestions the Chair, a prominent accountant in the town, had been involved in acts of financial impropriety were very damaging. In addition, as the attacks were primarily directed towards the Chair, he may have felt that if he resigned then the symbolic violence directed towards the Extension Project might be stemmed. This could have been a worthwhile strategy but for the fact that the rest of the Trustees resigned in support of his stance. It was at this point that the battle was lost and defeat at the symbolic site became irreversible.

The response of many of the artists within the field of the arts to Laws' attacks on the symbolic site was to attack Laws in kind. There were several protests, a storm of letter-writing, T-shirts with smart slogans and beautiful badges, all strategies that were attractive to those within the field of the arts but which failed to convince the wider social space that this sector was worthy of investment, in either a symbolic or economic sense. In general, the artists focussed on the man not the issues. Their attack was so lengthy and so virulent that any initial sympathy for their cause within the social space soon evaporated. Laws, ever the opportunist when it came to raising his public profile, goaded the artists further and was repaid with national media attention in spades. Too late the artists realised they

had been putting out the fire with gasoline. Their strategies had only intensified their sense of isolation. In hindsight, using legal mechanisms to have the Trust Board swiftly reinstated might have been a more effective use of their energy.

The strategies of defence undertaken by the artists, which included protest, lobbying and community discussion, can be analysed using Bourdieu's equation to describe social practice, [(Habitus) x (Capital)] + Field = Practice. This has been a very useful mechanism for me, as an agent in the field of the arts, to make sense of 'the collision' between art and politics at the site of Wanganui's art gallery. Using a Bourdieuan framework to set up and analyse the fieldwork provided insights into how this situation had arisen and how the practices of the agents of the field of the arts were a function of their habitus and capital. It revealed the field of the arts in Wanganui as small and tightly-knit with its agents most comfortable socialising within it. Their preference is to interact with other artists within New Zealand, or even the world, rather than their own immediate social space. This local isolation is exacerbated by the fact that, in Wanganui, most of the agents are producers of art rather than consumers, working and socialising within that field, often with little input from other fields. The outcome of this isolation within the social space is that the agents of the field of the arts are generally unable to assess and increase their relevance within the social space they inhabit.

While the post-'collision' strategies of the Wanganui artists are in line with Bourdieu's assertion that artists are not afraid to become politically active when their autonomy is threatened, his view that artists are not partial to working collectively or politically has proven to be a generalisation that does not always apply. While this research has exposed divisions within the field it has also uncovered examples of cohesion. I think that the support the artists of Wanganui give the students the Quay School of the Arts, the ability of the field to welcome and mentor new agents and the strength of the small number of arts organisations are indications of strong community spirit and capacity for considering the collective well-being. In addition, some respondents articulated a willingness to work in the political field to advance the interests of the arts in Wanganui. A good example of this is the initiation of regular meetings with the Council to discuss the issues within the field of the arts and develop an arts policy.

During the course of this research, some of the doxa that make up the habitus of the field of the arts began to be revealed to me and I could see how these had influenced practice within the field. The easiest of these to see was a unanimous view amongst the respondents that the arts are important to society and any assertions to the contrary could expect to be dismissed out of hand. A more difficult doxa for me to explain, especially as it is my own habitus I am describing, is the central importance to those within the field of being able to decode art. Bourdieu realised that decoding art was a learned skill and was pivotal to be able to access the art museum. For many people, however, taking the time to learn about art is not a priority. It seemed to me that there was a view amongst the respondents, and I can recognise this in myself, that not investing in becoming educated about the arts is an unacceptable position within the field. Sometimes art is easy to relate to and sometimes it is more difficult. The art museum will often provide artist's statements and other information to help the viewer make sense of the art but the onus is on the viewer to become informed. Those that make statements about art that show they have not taken steps to become informed can expect to be treated with caution and even disdain.

When Michael Laws made assertions about the field of the arts and the Extension Project that were at odds with the doxa of the field of the arts, he was labelled ignorant or uneducated. His argument that the arts, and the art museum, are elitist, calls up the uneasy tension between distinction and democracy that has dogged the institution since its inception. It is incongruous that Laws' remarks are made at a time in history when such extensive changes have been made to the institution that a wider range of people than ever before now frequent art museums. It is ironic that these remarks are applied to the Extension Project, which had been developed with access for all in mind. It is tragic, however, that this democratic intention was undermined by the autonomy of the field of the arts and the habitus of its agents.

The accusations of elitism and other acts of symbolic violence that were perpetuated with the specific purpose of destroying the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project left the artists of Wanganui with the perception that their position in the social space had been downgraded. Whether this perception has its grounds in reality is impossible to ascertain without exploring the views of a larger number of respondents from throughout the social space of

Wanganui on many of the issues that are at the heart of this research, particularly art and accessibility. This would certainly be useful for the agents of the field of the arts, in that it could provide some insight into how the arts are perceived within the social space. As the Wanganui District Council is continuing its plans to reorganise the field of the arts, without any real public consultation or mandate to do so, such research could also be useful to inform any initiatives that are undertaken.

To conclude, if knowledge of the arts is a necessary requirement to be included in the field of the arts, then any call that the field has on public funds will always be fraught. Deliberate strategies of inclusion are the key to breaking through this doxa of the field. In the case of the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project, I feel that an included public should have been constructed in the first instance, before the brief for the architectural competition was drawn up. This would have been provided insight into how the Gallery could become relevant and accessible to the whole social space. If the public could have given feedback on the designs submitted to the architectural competition, then it may have become apparent quite early on that the chosen Warren and Mahoney design was not going to be widely supported. Once a design was chosen, and the fundraising started, again the public should have been involved. This could have been an opportunity for the entire social space to share in the success of the Project as the large grants from outside the town augmented the local contribution.

The final paradox in this story is that the Wanganui District Council is currently developing its Heart of Wanganui Project, a development driven by Mayor Michael Laws that is mooted to solve the problems of accommodation and accessibility at the Sarjeant Gallery, the Whanganui Regional Museum and the District Library. The planning for this multi-million dollar project has been swathed in secrecy and its design is being undertaken by Auckland architect, David Mitchell. It would be nice to think that someone at Wanganui District Council might read this thesis and at some stage, hopefully very soon, start to include the public in the planning and design of the Heart of Wanganui Project. If this can happen then, in some very small way, the loss of the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project will not have been in vain and ‘what the social world has done, it can, armed with this knowledge, undo’ (Bourdieu, 1999:629).

APPENDIX ONE

BIOGRAPHY OF MICHAEL LAWS³²

Michael is aged 48 years and was raised and educated in Wanganui. Some people might remember his parents, Helen and Keith, who were both prominent members of Jaycees. Keith taught at Wanganui High School and then Wanganui Boys College before becoming Principal of Waitaki Boys High and then Scots College in Wellington. Michael has two younger sisters, Diane and Susan.

Michael attended Tawhero Primary, Wanganui Intermediate and Wanganui Boys College and was an age group representative in cricket, athletics and badminton. In between stints as a freezing worker, Michael attended Otago University graduating with a first class honours degree, and being awarded a UGC postgraduate scholarship.

He worked as a university tutor and executive director before entering politics – first as a senior parliamentary researcher and then as a Member of Parliament for Hawkes' Bay from 1990-96. He was a member of the education, electoral law and Maori Affairs select committees. It was a measure of Michael that he resigned in 1996 after taking responsibility for a joke signature. It had nothing to do with his parliamentary duties and local newspaper polls said that he need not have resigned. 'But I stuffed up', Michael said at the time. 'In my world, you need to accept and apologise but you must also atone. It's the atonement that's important. If you're in public life, you need to hold yourself accountable. More than anyone else.'

He subsequently and successfully defended himself in a \$1 million High Court defamation case with the jury finding he had been the subject of a smear campaign. He retired from politics in December 1996.

And reinvented himself. Spectacularly. As an author, award-winning columnist, a successful publisher, a nationwide broadcaster and a TV celebrity. His three books have

³² This biography was supplied by Mayor Michael Laws on request. It does not appear to be current. Michael Laws now has a young daughter, Lucy. In addition, he now works for Radio Live.

all been best sellers culminating in the number one hit *Gladiator: the Norm Hewitt Story*. The book was published by his own imprint, Darius Press, which sponsors the annual Wanganui short story competition. And he completed an MA at Victoria University in 2000 as part of the Bill Manhire Masters class.

Michael is a columnist in the *Sunday Star Times*, *North and South* magazine and the monthly *New Zealand Rugby World*. He won the Charles Southwell Prize in 2003 for his insightful commentary and writing.

He has also been on your TV screens as a host of TV1's *Intrepid Journeys*, a participant in TV2's *Celebrity Treasure Island* and as host of his own weekly rugby show *The Press Box* on SKY Sport. He has his own New Zealand-wide radio talkback show on Radio Pacific with a daily audience of 90,000 listeners.

He is happiest relaxing with fiancée Leonie and stepchildren Ella (13) and Noah (8). He is also a keen jogger and follower of sports, but enjoys the simple things in life – family, a good movie, a nice bottle of wine.

APPENDIX TWO

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

Introductory Questions

I have a few questions that I would like to ask that will help me to situate you in the context of this research:

1. Where are you from?
2. Tell me a little about your social networks.
3. Where were you educated?
4. What is your current occupation?
5. How would you describe your involvement in the field of the arts?
6. In what capacity have you been involved?
 - a. Length of time involved?
7. Which other fields are you involved in?
8. What is it about the arts that you like?
9. What do you think are the things that are most important to the field of the arts?
10. Who do you think are the most important players in the field of the arts?

On the Sarjeant Gallery

11. What has been your position in regard to the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project?
 - a. Why?
12. What did you think of the design?
13. So what did you think when Michael Laws described the extension as a shithouse?
14. There were quite a few people, Michael Laws amongst them, who felt that Wanganui could not afford the Sarjeant Extension and had more pressing issues to deal with like reducing its debt. What is your response to that argument?
15. Why do you think that the last Council was so slow to agree to contribute funds to the Sarjeant Extension Project?

The Election Campaign

16. What did you think of the Vision Party Arts Policy?

17. During the election campaign, when Michael Laws said that he thought that the Extension Project did not have public support and should be taken to the ratepayers for a decision, what did you think?
18. Do you think that the Sarjeant Extension Project had public support at that time?
 - a. Why?
19. How high on the priority list did you think reviewing the Sarjeant decision would be for the incoming Council?
20. Did you have any concerns about Vision candidates being elected?
 - a. What were they?

'The Collision' between the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board and Michael Laws

21. What did you think when the first newspaper article came out on 12 November 2004 suggesting that the Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board had been involved in secret back door intrigues?
22. As media coverage played out over the next week, and the Trust Board was repeatedly accused of misrepresenting the funding arrangements for the Sarjeant Gallery Extension and threatened with losing their jobs, how did you feel?
23. Do you think the Trust's fundraising efforts were lame as suggested?
24. What do you have to say to Michael Laws' accusations that the arts are elitist and irrelevant?
25. What do you have to say to the idea that the arts should not be reliant on the state for funding?
26. What do you think was the motivation behind the attacks on Sarjeant Gallery Trust Board?

The Response of the Field.

27. How did you, as an agent of the field of the arts, respond to the situation (between the Council and the Trust Board)?
28. Were you part of any other responses or strategies by the field of the arts?
29. Why did you decide to become involved?
30. What were those strategies trying to achieve?
31. Do you think they were successful?
32. Have there been any conditions that have limited your response?

The Consequences.

33. Now that several months have passed, since the local government elections and the Sarjeant Gallery Extension Project has been discontinued, have there been any ongoing consequences for the field of the arts?
34. How do you feel about this?
35. Have there been any personal consequences for you? What have they been?
36. How do you think the field of the arts is now perceived within this town?
37. What do you think can change the situation for the field?

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