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*“Fly by the Seat of your Pants”:
Building Resilience Through Collective
Narrative at the Christchurch Art Gallery
2006-2013*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis demonstrates a changing relationship between an art institution and artists, and an art institution and its public, at a time when institutions seek to engage their constituents through new forms. My work charts a single change narrative, that of the Christchurch Art Gallery, focusing on the period 2006–2013. My research asks, how has a change in the institution's sense of self-identity altered its relationship with artists and audience? I have drawn on organisational management literature to understand this research, framed within the conceptual foundation of Pierre Bourdieu's three major themes, habitus, field and capital (Bourdieu, 1986; 1990).

The research examines two major periods of development at the Gallery, the 2006 *Paradigm Shift* change management process and the Canterbury earthquakes (2010–2011). These periods of organisational upheaval are understood through the study of publicly available articles and documents, internal documents and interviews with selected staff. This case study concludes that Gallery staff have exposed the back room operations of the institution to the public in new ways. In doing so, they have also opened up their own lives to audiences, offering a more personalised experience. In addition, their approach to working with artists has changed significantly, creating working connections that are more informal and collaborative. Boundaries have also broken down between staff, due partly to the leveling effect of a natural disaster, and the resulting changes to workplace layouts and systems.

While both periods of change have been pivotal to the institution's change, to a significant extent the strategies and actions deployed by the institution during the later period are the result of practices developed in the first. In particular, this thesis argues that powerful collective narratives (Reissner, 2008) were developed through the leadership of key institutional entrepreneurs (Fligstein, 1997). These leaders brought individual habitus coupled with cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1990), enabling the Gallery to articulate its identity as informal, adaptive and outwardly focused.

Following the *Paradigm Shift* change process, the earthquakes have contributed to the intensification of staff culture. While these shifts in practice reflect the direct experiences of the institution, they also express a changing dynamic within museum practice around the world. Therefore, this thesis contends, the *Paradigm Shift* was an important catalyst for the institution, providing the Gallery with an internal and external narrative of resilience.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Prologue</i>	<i>v</i>

Chapter One: Introduction

Background	1
Research Objectives	1
Methodology	2
Conceptual Foundation	4
Documentation and Archives	7
Ethics	8
Limitations	9
Chapter Summary	10

Chapter Two: The Context for Change

Introduction	13
New Museology	14
New Institutionalism	18
New Zealand Museums in a State of Change	23
Conclusion	25

Chapter Three: Case Study, the Christchurch Art Gallery

Introduction	27
The Robert McDougall Art Gallery	28
A Conservative Beginning	29
Antagonism	31
An External Focus	32
A Growing Professionalism	33
The Establishment of an Off-site Gallery	35
The Drive for Expansion	36
The Christchurch Art Gallery	37
A Backlash	38
The Political Context	39
A Call for Change	41
External Change	43
Summary	44
Conclusion	46

Chapter Four. A Changing Organisation

Introduction	49
Exhibitions and Artists: Opening Up	50
A New Engagement with Audience	57
The Organisational Field	60
Diagram of Collective Narratives	64
Strategic Documentation	65
Conclusion	69

Chapter Five: A Collective Narrative

Introduction	73
Systems and Structures: Informality Encouraged	75
Audience Engagement: Reaching Out	79
Artist Engagement: Shared Endeavours	86
Conclusion	89

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Introduction	91
Organisational Resilience	92
Collective Narratives	93
A More Transparent Organisation	94
Conclusion	95
Final Speculation	97

Appendices

Interview Questions for Christchurch Art Gallery Staff	101
List of Acronyms	102

References	103
Unpublished Documents	119
Social Media	121
Theses	122
Audio Documents	123

PROLOGUE

When the Christchurch Art Gallery opened with a flourish in 2003 I, like many in the arts sector, flew to the city from my home in Wellington to attend the opening celebrations. Like many others, I also had high expectations. Initially I felt buoyed by the possibilities but, increasingly felt the institution had not lived up to the anticipation. Where was the charge, the impetus one expected? Why did the Gallery not assert itself, make predictions for the future and stake a claim for the now? I lost interest in the Gallery somewhat. A few years passed, and the Gallery started to infiltrate my consciousness again. There was momentum, people were talking. It seemed like an institution with an attitude. What had changed?

*

After the Canterbury earthquake of February 22nd 2011, I, like many people outside of the city, struggled to make sense of what had happened, what was happening. How could I possibly help? It seemed the fabric of the city was torn apart, and, as a former resident of Christchurch, I wanted, needed, to understand. The first time I went back, I was shocked. Parts of the city were intact, as though nothing had happened. Turn the corner and the city was wrecked.

*

I have experienced change management in my professional life four times, once as an employee of a restructured institution, three times as a member of a management team that undertook change. The first example saw one person lose their job in a process that felt degrading to all and ultimately unrewarding for the organisation. The second and third times someone also lost a job. Again it was tough and at times I felt compromised, but this time I understood the purpose and believed strongly in the outcome. The fourth time the gallery transformed, no one lost their job, but there was a series of fissures and jolts felt throughout the transition.

*

These tales are all about change, from this to that, from known to unknown. A desire to understand the change process has brought me to write this thesis. In writing about my professional colleagues I've sought to understand my own experiences and confront my own preconceptions. The narrative of change told to me by staff at the Christchurch Art Gallery has been a compelling one. This thesis seeks to tell their stories, but also to dig deeper. In trying to understand critically I wanted to reveal the power of storytelling in building and maintaining community within an institution.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

The Christchurch Art Gallery strode into the limelight in August 2003 when it opened to the public with great fanfare and high expectations from both staff and public. Its opening was the result of years of planning and fundraising by Gallery staff. As the public art gallery serving New Zealand's second largest city, the Christchurch Art Gallery carries a certain weight within the New Zealand cultural sector and is a leader that other galleries might look to in their own development.

The Christchurch Art Gallery has a long history as an exhibiting and collecting gallery through its descent from the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. That institution, which opened in 1932, had a significant focus on regionalism, both within its collecting and exhibition practices. Over its lifetime, the Robert McDougall Art Gallery developed a relationship with its local community that ranged from supportive to antagonistic.

Although the Christchurch Art Gallery was ostensibly a new organisation, it brought with it the staff and many of the systems of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. During its history it has had a tumultuous existence, often in the public spotlight. The Gallery has risen to significant heights in achieving record numbers in its opening year and with the *Ron Mueck* exhibition of 2010-2011. It has also experienced low points such as the *Paradigm Shift* strategic intervention of 2006, leading to members of the senior management team moving on; and the Canterbury earthquake of February 2011, following which the Gallery, at the time of writing, has still not been able to reopen to the public.

Such extremities of position make for fruitful subject matter to examine the impact of change. In researching this topic I wanted to understand the particular development of the Christchurch Art Gallery, but also to explore what lessons and experiences the Gallery might offer other art institutions.

Research Objectives

My primary research question is as follows:

How has the Christchurch Art Gallery experienced and articulated change following a series of major upheavals?

This thesis explores change at the Christchurch Art Gallery in the immediate period following a rare event, the Gallery's forced closure to the public as a result of the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010-2011. It is concerned with both internal change; that is, alterations to the organisational field (Bourdieu, 1986) of the Gallery, and external change; in the form of the Gallery's perception of its engagement with the public and exhibiting artists.

Extending my primary research question this thesis has four key research objectives:

- 1 to document the size and scope of change at the Gallery from 2006-2013
- 2 to consider the impact of this change on the organisational field of the Gallery
- 3 to consider the Gallery's perception of their relationship with audiences;
- and
- 4 to consider the Gallery's perception of their relationship with a key constituent group, artists

Methodology

This is a qualitative case study to develop an intensive study of a single institution, the Christchurch Art Gallery. Case study research allowed me to acknowledge the intricacies, processes and change of one organisation in close-up (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). This approach enabled me to explore the institution's complex relationships and communities, focusing on the how and why of a particular situation while taking into consideration the context within which the institution operates (Yin, 2004).

My research is consequently narrow but deep, seeking a richness of detail in order to understand the Christchurch Art Gallery through meaning articulated by the Gallery itself, utilising a combination of semi-structured interviews with staff, unofficial documents, photographs and official records. It is the Gallery's own subjective experience that concerns me, understanding that "evidence is not about facts *per se*, but is about an argument, a narrative that is appropriate for the purpose-at-hand." (Altheide & Johnson in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 586).

I have selected the Christchurch Art Gallery as an example of an extreme case, as an institution that has experienced an extraordinary series of events

in recent times, through the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010-2012. The Christchurch Art Gallery was selected for the apparently acute nature of its position as a public art gallery unable to open its doors to the public.

Within a case study it is important to demark clear boundaries for the research (Flyvbjerg in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This thesis examines the current moment for the institution, within the context of its own history and a broader national and international context. The timeframe I have explored spans from August 2003 to the present day, approximately a ten-year period, but focuses on a period of change between 2006 and 2013.

I undertook semi-structured interviews with relevant practitioners, including the senior management team and representatives from the curatorial and exhibitions teams, all working at the Gallery at the time I interviewed them. In addition, I have drawn extensively on policy documents and records for the organisation, covering material relevant to the time period. The material includes strategic and mission statements, internal documents such as business, marketing and audience development plans, external publications such as Gallery magazines, website and online media as well as private correspondence and meeting notes.

I conducted interviews with eight staff of the Christchurch Art Gallery; Jenny Harper, Director; Blair Jackson, Manager, Curatorial, Collections and Public Programmes, and Deputy Director; Lynley McDougall, Visitor Services and Facility Manager; Neil Semple, Projects Manager; Justin Paton, Senior Curator; Felicity Milburn, Curator; Nathan Pohio, Exhibition Designer and Chris Pole, Exhibition Designer. The list above represents the participants in the order of their staff hierarchy at the CAG.

I selected staff to interview through a combination of my preference and suggestions from management staff of the Gallery. In selecting participants I was concerned to seek a cross-section of staff across the operational hierarchy. I was also conscious of including participants who had been employed at the Gallery for the full lifecycle of the Christchurch Art Gallery as well as newer participants who were engaged as a result of the *Paradigm Shift* process.

I spent time at the Gallery talking with staff before the interview process, to establish trust with participants and the interviewing process was deep rather than broad. Interview questions are attached as Appendix One. Every participant I approached agreed to be interviewed. Most were interviewed once for 60 minutes, however I conducted second interviews with Neil Semple and Blair Jackson, to delve deeper into some of the topics referred to in the first interview. I also undertook a second interview with Felicity Milburn over email, again to explore topics raised in her previous interview.

Two weeks prior to the interview participants were provided with a list of questions to enable them to prepare. I conducted semi-structured interviews, using these questions as a starting point, but allowing the subjects to guide the interviews informally as they progressed.

Conceptual Foundation

This thesis is situated in the field of museum studies and I have drawn extensively on organisational and management literature to understand the nature of change at the Gallery. I have particularly engaged with the notion of a resilient organisation, described as the ability to absorb strain and bounce back from challenging events (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003).

Kathleen Sutcliffe, a Professor at the Stephen M. Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, has published widely in both management and health on organisational adaptability, reliability and resilience. I have drawn generally on Sutcliffe's writing on resilience (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003; 2012) but particular relevance to this thesis was provided by her analysis of the experiences of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Museum, through initial internal change management and the subsequent impact of a severe snowstorm on the museum's operations and strategic capacity (Christianson, Farkas, Sutcliffe & Weick, 2008). In this article the museum's experience can be understood as a starting point for an exploration of the link between learning and rare events, or crisis.

The concept of collective narratives has also been a useful tool, acknowledging that different areas of an organisation can be brought together by one powerful story (Shaw, 2013). The notion of sense-making, a form of interpretation that creates meaning from unfamiliar events using story-telling (Weick, 1995; Polkinghorne, 1988) has been helpful in understanding the research. Storytelling, and its role within change management, has been expanded on by Dr. Stefanie Reissner, Lecturer in Organisation Studies at Newcastle University Business School, and her writing has been especially productive in providing a conceptual framework to approach the research. She found, "new identity accounts are a testimony to change in the organisation, and are a means of recreating the organisation's philosophy and self-understanding and also of reinventing it". (Reissner, 2008, p. 25).

As discussed in the Prologue, I bring a particular set of beliefs and expectations to the subject of change management, having been involved in four professional situations of organisational change in my career to date, three of which I experienced as positive outcomes for the institution. Storytelling, and collective identity accounts, can be understood to have been deployed in each example as part of the change development process, and, in reading literature around resilience and sense-making, I recognised my own experiences as well as that of the Christchurch Art Gallery.

In considering conversion narratives I have drawn on sociologist Neil Fligstein's (1997; 2001) description of the institutional entrepreneur, a figure who has special social skills and is able to act strategically within organisations to enact change. The institutional entrepreneur is therefore an agent who has to "motivate others to cooperate. The ability to engage others in collective

action is a social skill that proves pivotal to the construction and reproduction of local social orders." (Fligstein, 2001, p. 106).

Institutional entrepreneurs can generate and harness what social theorist Pierre Bourdieu referred to as "capital", by which term Bourdieu is reaching beyond the notion of material asset to capital that is social, cultural or symbolic (Bourdieu, 1986). It is through the harnessing of capital that the institutional entrepreneur is able to gain their persuasive ability (Phillips in Clegg & Westwood, 2003).

Bourdieu's work has been particularly helpful in my understanding of the research I have undertaken. In examining a particular experience of institutional change I have had to consider a much wider sociological question, that of agency versus structure, or individual autonomy against socialisation. In this thesis I have drawn on the conceptual framework provided by Bourdieu (1986; 1990) utilising his twin concepts of habitus and field. These concepts offer a point of balance, positioning agency and structure as complementary rather than divergent locations. In utilising these two concepts I have, as suggested previously, also deployed his notion of capital, developing a Bourdieu-inspired agenda for understanding the experiences of change at the Christchurch Art Gallery.

Habitus refers to an individual's way of being and acting in the world, or the lifestyle and values that an individual or an organisation has developed through their prior activities and experiences (Maton in Greenfell, 2008). Habitus is, Bourdieu suggested, inscribed in our bodies by past experiences, as both a learned and a physical memory (Reed-Danahay, 2005).

These systems of schemes of perception, appreciation and action enable them to perform acts of practical knowledge, based on the identification and recognition of conditional, conventional stimuli to which they are predisposed to react; and without any explicit definition of ends or rational calculation of means, to generate appropriate and endlessly renewed strategies, but within the limits of the structural constraints of which they are the product and which define them. (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 138).

Habitus, therefore, acts as both an enabling device for developing new knowledge, abilities and courses of action, but simultaneously also acts as a stop to pursuing other potential pathways, thus regulating our behaviour (Brubaker in Swartz & Zolberg, 2004). However, Bourdieu argued that to understand interactions between people, or to explain a social phenomenon, one must examine not only the habitus, but the wider social structure or field, in which the interactions and events occurred (Thomson in Greenfell, 2008). As an individual agent reacts and responds to changing relationships within the field, habitus is formed and reformed.

Although Bourdieu used habitus to examine the relationship between the individual and the social, he did not specifically apply the term to organisational theory. He did, however, nominate a range of different fields that could exist (the political field, the cultural field, the fashion field, the

literary field) each of which “corresponds to a fundamental viewpoint of the world which creates its own object and finds within itself the principle of understanding and explanation suited to that object.” (Bourdieu in Halsey, Lauder, Brown & Wells, 1997, p. 97). Therefore each field is distinct and defines its own point of view, or culture, and one can understand the Christchurch Art Gallery as a particular and distinct field, that operates within other, larger fields, for example, the field of post-earthquake Christchurch, and the field of art institutions nationally or internationally. The field is a space where struggles and shifts of power can take place, and in doing so, individual habitus can also shift, “collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organising activity of a conductor.” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53.). The push-me, pull-you effect between habitus and field, building on individual capital, is where my thesis research is concentrated.

Powell and DiMaggio have written extensively on institutional analysis and new institutionalism (1991), providing a useful connector, suggesting that Bourdieu’s framework offers a “particularly balanced and multi-faceted approach to action ... [that] dovetails with, and may contribute to, a broadening and deepening of institutional tradition.” (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991, p. 26). While Bourdieu’s notion of field has been extensively applied to organisational theory, habitus and capital have been less utilised. Organisational theorists Emirbayer and Johnson (2008) argue that using the three concepts within organisational theory brings to the fore the “social conditions through which inter-and intra-organisational power relations are produced, reproduced and contested.” (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008, p. 1).

Thierry Viale (2008) has also applied the notion of habitus to institutional theory to demonstrate how changing conditions external to the field (a crisis, for example), can mean “the routine adjustments of subjective structures (habitus) and objective structures (field) are suddenly broken.” (Bourdieu in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 107). For Viale, Bourdieu’s habitus allows analysis of the interaction between the individual and the structure that is directly applicable to institutional change. Bourdieu’s statement that “to speak of habitus, is to state that the individual, and even the personal and subjective, is social and collaborative. The habitus is a socialised subjectivity” (Bourdieu in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 126) is deployed by Viale in his assertion that in the course of their socialisation individuals “come to possess something that could be regarded as a form of institutional DNA.” (Viale, 2008, p. 28).

Viale states,

The habitus provides precious support, when episodes of institutional disturbance are being considered, by allowing questions to be raised about the role of the protagonist’s personal dispositions in deinstitutionalisation and reinstitutionalisation, and thus making it possible to plunge into the heart of the institutional fabric. (Viale, 2008, p. 22).

While the analysis of both Emirbayer & Johnson and Viale remains largely in the abstract or the general, there have been small but significant moves by

researchers to incorporate the three concepts of habitus, field and capital into applied accounts of specific organisational change¹. I build on this existing research to examine the particular nature of the Christchurch Art Gallery's recent experience of change. I identify the role of institutional entrepreneurs at the Christchurch Art Gallery whose strength in building capital, and the particular combination of their habitus, allows for new collective narratives to be produced, thus transforming through their leadership the field of the Gallery. This application of Bourdieu's theories into the particular experiences of the Christchurch Art Gallery constitutes new research, building on prior work within organisational theory.

Documentation and Archives

I drew on both primary and secondary sources in my research, although my use of secondary sources was mostly for Chapters Two and Three, as background context.

For primary sources, in addition to the staff interviews, I was given access by staff at the Christchurch Art Gallery to internal documents, both current and historic. These included strategic, marketing and business plans, staffing structures and meeting timetables. Lynley McDowell, Visitor Services and Facility Manager, gave me access to an unpublished thesis produced for her Assessment for Bachelor of Applied Management, a text that took the *Paradigm Shift* as its focus.

I was also provided access to confidential documents generated during the *Paradigm Shift* period, including email correspondence and documentation of meetings. Because of their sensitive nature I viewed them under supervised conditions that included no photocopying or taking away of material. Although not directly quoted in the thesis, this material provided a context in which I could better understand the *Paradigm Shift*.

In addition, I examined a range of published documents released by the Christchurch Art Gallery as part of its publishing programme. These included the bi-monthly magazine *Bulletin*, the Gallery's blog, Facebook and Twitter pages and conference papers written by staff members. I also analysed media reports and literature on the topic to gain an external view of events over the last ten years, although the scope of my research question is concerned only with the Gallery's own perspective.

¹ For example, McDonough & Polzer (2012) have utilised the notion of habitus to discuss organisational change within unionised employees in the city of Toronto as a result of the New Public Management reforms and Leao, Gaiao, de Souza & de Mello (2013) have applied habitus to the characteristics of the Sao Francisco Valley viticulture industry.

Ethics

The research in this thesis was informed by processes established by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. The Committee deemed my Ethics application Low Risk. As I was interviewing staff about their current positions of employment I took particular care to undertake ethical research that protected participants. All participants were asked to sign consent forms using the template provided by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

I recorded each interview on my laptop and transcribed them myself. Each participant gave their written consent for any quotes attributed to them included in the thesis, as well as approving the full transcript of the interview. In their written consent form I allowed participants to select anonymity or attribution, and all taking part selected attribution, of their own accord.

My own role as a professional colleague of the institution examined must be noted in this section. This may have brought certain constraints among those I interviewed or coloured the relationship my participants brought to the interviews. Conversely, it may have assisted me, in that my position or personal connection with staff may have provided me with both greater insight and access than that an external researcher might obtain. My position here is entirely speculative, as I have not sought to document participants' perceptions of me.

My relationship to CAG staff as a professional colleague will also bring with it a particular history and perspective to my research. For three and a half years, 1999 - 2002, I was an employee of The Physics Room Trust, an art project space based in Christchurch. During that time preparations for the Christchurch Art Gallery were under way, and I considered myself part of an arts community that anticipated the opening of the Gallery with considerable expectation.

Since this time I have worked outside Christchurch in a variety of curatorial and management roles in public galleries. I have not worked directly with the Christchurch Art Gallery, although I have been involved indirectly with the Gallery, through roles such as a commissioned writer for the *Scape: Public Art Biennial*, an organisation that has frequently worked in partnership with the CAG. In 2016 The Dowse Art Museum, where I am employed, will work with the Christchurch Art Gallery on an exhibition drawn from the CAG collection.

In addition, I have personal connections with individual members of staff at the Christchurch Art Gallery, including several of those staff interviewed. Of particular note, I am a former colleague of Projects Manager Neil Semple, when we worked together at City Gallery Wellington (2002-2006). I also shared a flat briefly with Exhibitions Designer Nathan Pohio in 2000, and worked with him in my capacity as Director of The Physics Room and his role as a Trustee of The Physics Room Trust (January 2000-June 2002).

As I have suggested in the Prologue, I have been involved in change management processes in both my current employment and in my last three

positions. In the last three cases I was involved as an active agent in the change, in directorial or senior management positions. My personal experience of these events was positive, and could be understood to have provided me with a particular perspective on organisational change.

Again, as a researcher who operates within the same professional network as my participants, I acknowledge that my background carries the risk of subjectivity in assessing recent events and experiences of the Christchurch Art Gallery. However, I also note that this may provide me with a greater insight into both the culture and practices of the CAG.

Given the especially small nature of the New Zealand arts community, subjectivity is a common aspect of research into both local art and art galleries. In writing this thesis I have aimed to acknowledge and highlight subjectivity within the research, in particular by my emphasis on a research methodology that is qualitative rather than quantitative, and that highlights the individual, personal experiences of my participants as well as myself.

Limitations

This thesis is restricted by its intensive case study focus, which, although acknowledging a wider context, investigates only one institution in depth, making it difficult to make generalisations based on a single case. Within this, I attempted to utilise a wide range of information to understand differing viewpoints and perspectives. However, participants will undoubtedly have brought their own agendas to the research, as well as their own variable memories. Where individual participants gave contradictory information to each other or to written archives, and the information was objective (the date of an event, for example), I have endeavoured to track the most accurate details for this, through external published sources. Where the information is subjective but differs I have included both or all perspectives.

I chose to only interview current employees of the Christchurch Art Gallery, as I was considering the current climate at the institution, its internal workings and health. Therefore I have not interviewed former employees who may have left as a result of change at the Gallery, either through the *Paradigm Shift* or through the earthquakes. I have also not interviewed representative samples of either of the two stakeholder groups I have focused on (artists and audiences) as I am focused solely on the Gallery's own subjective experience.

The nature of the research aims is qualitative, aiming to foreground and compare both the subjective experiences of Gallery staff and the Gallery's collective voice, and understanding that "all knowledge is contextual and partial; and other conceptual schemas and perspectives are always possible" (Altheide & Johnson, 2011, p. 581-582). Because of this interpretative approach this thesis does not take significant account of external or quantitative measures such as audience numbers or surveys.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of **Chapter Two** is to provide a context in which to situate the research findings, drawing on a review of relevant literature to locate the thesis in the context of two developments in museum culture – new museology and new institutionalism. Despite their titles, these developments are not recent, new museology emerging from social changes first signaled in the 1960s and new institutionalism also resulting from initial challenges to the art institution in the 1960s, which formed into new institutionalism during the 1990s. However, both movements are useful as a wider, international context in which to view changes at the CAG during the period 2006 to the present day.

Both movements are concerned with the changing nature of the institution, new museology addressing developments within broader museum culture and audience development, and new institutionalism with art galleries and artists. Providing a wider context of institutional change, this chapter also considers the impact of these shifts onto the New Zealand cultural landscape. The effect of new museology on New Zealand's most high profile museum, the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, is examined, as is the effect of new institutionalism on smaller galleries in particular, Artspace, The Physics Room, Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts and St Paul Street Gallery. These institutions were selected because they demonstrate the most significant integration of these international models into a New Zealand gallery's management and ethos.

The role of **Chapter Three** is to provide a broader contextual understanding of the specific background of the Christchurch Art Gallery. In Chapter Three I chronicle the history of the Christchurch Art Gallery through its previous incarnation as one primary institution, the Robert McDougall Art Gallery and an ancillary wing The Annex. This chapter depicts the Gallery as an institution that has moved in and out of public acclaim over the years, at times with an antagonistic relationship with audiences and particularly to the arts sector. The chapter details the opening in August 2003 of the Christchurch Art Gallery, and how expectations around the new building, combined with difficulties of amalgamation, lead to internal and external dissatisfaction with the Gallery. Tensions between the Gallery and its core funder, the Christchurch City Council, are highlighted. This chapter introduces the *Paradigm Shift* strategic redevelopment, and the various key players who have led change at the Gallery. The chapter ends by introducing notable themes of the thesis, highlighting tension between the institution and its wider community and introducing the role of powerful individuals in shaping the organisational field of the Gallery.

In **Chapter Four** I begin to demonstrate the key aims and objectives of the research question. This chapter focuses on the *Paradigm Shift* process, describing organisational change experienced by the Christchurch Art Gallery through this mechanism. It critically examines this period, asking, what effect did the *Paradigm Shift* have on staff culture, exhibition development and audience engagement? The research reveals a shift in the organisational field

that accompanied the establishment of a new management team. This new team brought less formal methods of engagement with the rest of the staff and created greater transparency in operations. This resulted in a closer working environment with artists and the beginnings of a more personalised approach to audiences. Here I introduce the notion of storytelling as a powerful mechanism within change management, and begin to identify key individuals as institutional entrepreneurs, who operate as leaders in developing narrative. Their leadership, I suggest, arises from their ability to act as agents of symbolic and cultural capital, within the organisational field of the Gallery.

In **Chapter Five** I examine the second significant period of upheaval experienced by the Gallery, the Canterbury earthquakes, and most particularly that of February 2011. The chapter charts further changes within the institution towards both the public and a key stakeholder group, artists. This is traced to the acceleration of a staff culture through the extraordinary circumstances of a series of rare events: the Canterbury earthquakes. The research demonstrates that storytelling and collective narratives developed a sense of community for staff in difficult times, demonstrating a resilient organisation. In addition, the research further extends the notion that key members of staff play a vital role as storytellers or agents of change, generating and articulating narratives that other staff members connect to. Those changes are revealed to have increased the sense of informality and personalisation in staff engagement with both exhibiting artists and the wider public.

The final chapter provides an opportunity for discussion and analysis, bringing together the two previous chapters. **Chapter Six** concludes that the Gallery was in a stronger position to respond to the traumatic experience of the Canterbury earthquakes, including long-term closure to the public, because of its identification as an organisation that is resilient and adaptive. This conclusion is traced to a staff culture focused on key personalities, who are perceived as crucial in changing and maintaining the organisational field of the Gallery through building narrative. A focus on storytelling has led to opening up operations to its key stakeholders and to its public, allowing for relationships that are more transparent and more personalised. The process began through the *Paradigm Shift* process and was accelerated by the Canterbury earthquakes.

The research concludes that without the changes to the organisational field through the *Paradigm Shift*, the Gallery may have struggled to adapt to a fast changing environment post-Canterbury earthquakes. While offering conclusions, **Chapter Six** also offers speculation for the future of the Gallery. As well as seeking to define the current state of play for the Gallery, this chapter questions the ongoing legacy of this period.

CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

Introduction

In writing this thesis I have considered the broader context of museum practice, and art gallery practice in particular, to chart the changing position of the institution towards artists and audience. The Christchurch Art Gallery can be understood as part of a wider field, indeed of several; operating within a network of galleries locally, nationally and internationally, and beyond that, within a broader museum culture.

This chapter takes the form of a literature review. My research has explored predominantly Euro-American concerns, both because of biases in the literature and because the Christchurch Art Gallery has positioned itself within a European-American context². While a local context has been sought as well, this chapter acknowledges that a broader European-American history creates the philosophic context from which the Christchurch Art Gallery's history and development has emerged. This chapter takes a scan of the intellectual climate within which contemporary public galleries operate. It does not provide an in-depth history of museological practice, but rather traces major philosophical shifts that have impacted on current gallery culture regarding the position of both artists and audiences. Specifically, this chapter draws largely on a study of existing literature to detail developments in external engagement.

First, this chapter expands beyond the particular institutional boundaries of the art world and art galleries to consider broader changes to museum culture. These developments relate primarily to audience engagement and a refocus on the personalisation and elevation of the visitor experience (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Weil, 2002; Heumann Gurian, 2006). This can be traced to a larger critical dialogue about postmodernism and the shift from a post-war modernist perspective in museum presentation (Lyotard, 1991).

Secondly, this chapter examines the very particular impact of conceptual art practices on gallery and curatorial modes (O'Neill, 2007, 2004; Möntmann, 2006; Fraser, 2005). Again I refer to a shift from a modernist approach that prioritised and elevated the object as a discrete entity to consideration of the wider societal and institutional structures in which the artwork might operate. This aspect of museological thinking reflects postmodernism's criticism of objectivity, and in its aims to become more pluralistic, subjective and complex within a museological presentation reflects a postmodern sensibility (Lyotard, 1991). In addition to Lyotard, influential philosophers whose writings underpin much current museological theory are Habermas, for his writing on the public sphere (Habermas in Dews, 1999); Nancy for re-

² Both through the initial establishment of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, whose architecture was modeled on French neo-classicism, and on the current Directorship of the Christchurch Art Gallery by Jenny Harper, who received a Master of Philosophy (in Art History) from the Courtauld Institute, University of London, in 1982.

evaluation of the term community (Nancy, 1991); and Foucault and Bourdieu for their analysis of power structures (Foucault, 1995; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, Darbel & Schnapper, 1991).

Much of the challenge posed to the role of the museum has come through critique of the mainstream by “the other”: that is, by feminism and the questioning by African-American, indigenous and other minority groups of the gaps and omissions presented by a white, mainstream dialogue (Nochlin, 1971; Said, 1978). It is important to note that while these two strands — contemporary art curatorial practice and general museological practice — share overlapping concerns and developments, they also have distinct concerns, agendas and voices.

Finally, this chapter begins to address the specific geographic and cultural concerns of museum and gallery practice in New Zealand. While the particular back-story of the Christchurch Art Gallery is addressed in detail in Chapter Four, this chapter examines the broader context of change in a New Zealand setting through selected literature.

New Museology

The conception of what a museum’s role is could be said to have been in a constant state of flux. What has often been cast in recent years as traditional museum practice is, in effect, the modernist museum, a mode of presentation that emerged during the 19th Century. The modernist museum elevated what Steven Conn has described as an “epistemology of objects” (Conn, 1998, p. 5), or the belief that knowledge resided within objects themselves. The move away from an object-centred practice to that of an experience-centred one in the latter part of the 20th Century, often titled new museology, is the area of enquiry I will focus on.

The 1960s, an era of fervent social change across many arenas, was a time of particular soul-searching for the museum sector, and the beginnings of the development of what would later come to be phrased as new museology. New museology must be understood as a movement with several key trajectories, including most notably French, English and Latin American strands (Desvallées & Mairesse, 2010).

In a groundbreaking study published in French in 1966, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu³ with Alain Darbel surveyed visitor behaviour at 36 art museums in France and across Europe. They concluded that although public art museums are theoretically open to be visited by all citizens, in effect only a small and

³ Pierre Bourdieu (1 August 1930 - 23 January 2002) was a French sociologist, anthropologist and philosopher. His work has been highly influential across many spheres of theory, particularly linking education, class and culture. As discussed in Chapter One, he pioneered investigative frameworks such as cultural capital, and the concepts of habitus and field to demonstrate the importance of power relations (Bourdieu, 1990, Bourdieu, Darbel & Schnapper, 1991; 1986). I will discuss these concepts in further detail through the thesis.

privileged selection of the public make use of them. Bourdieu considered that the love of art was not innate within us, but rather developed through access to cultural capital or social assets (Bourdieu, Darbel, Schnapper, 1991).

Museums, Bourdieu concluded, while framing themselves within the rhetoric of democracy, in actuality serve to produce and reinforce class distinctions. Moreover, interest in a particular artwork “defines an aesthetic attitude which, in the same way as the popular experience of beauty, is socially conditioned and in any case is never independent of the social conditions which make ‘people of taste’ possible.” (Bourdieu et al., 1991, p. 94).

In 1968, the ICOM General Assembly in Munich declared a concern for the future of museums at a time of “accelerated development”. The assembly resolved that:

...[museums] should become much more open to young people, particularly by means of the following: A. By increasing the number of cultural action programmes for young people, in an atmosphere of greater participation. By making sure that the younger members of the museum's public, and in particular students in related disciplines, are involved in the preparation of such programmes, suiting the methods employed to the particular conditions prevailing in each country. (ICOM, 1968).⁴

This concern was echoed a year later by Dillon Ripley of the Smithsonian Museum, who called for a state of profound change, stating, “if museums are to weather this transition then they have to find a new series of responses.” (Ripley, 1969, p. 95). Ripley was Director of the Smithsonian for 20 years, from 1964 to 1984, a time when the Smithsonian underwent significant change. While Ripley's impact on the museum can be measured in a capital sense, expanding the museum complex from three to eight institutions and tripling visitation numbers, he was also deeply concerned with changing presentation styles.

In 1967 the Smithsonian began to experiment with developing living museum presentations, such as hosting a folk festival on the Mall to facilitate folk culture, in line with Ripley's hope that eventually, “a new kind of museum could be created, a museum of man, to study the persistence of older cultures, folk life and folkways, in the face of the pressures of increasing homogenisation of life today.” (Ripley, 1969, p. 91). This elevation of the intangible qualities of experience and heritage over the centrality of the object was innovative and influential.

Ripley's commitment to real stories and neighbourhood issues led him in 1967 to develop the Smithsonian Institution's Anacostia Neighborhood Museum in Southeast Washington and appoint John Kinard, a former pastor, as Director.

⁴ ICOM, or the International Council of Museums, is a professional advocacy organisation for the museum sector, established in 1946. It currently serves over 30,000 members from 136 different countries. <http://icom.museum>.

Kinard's aim was to integrate the museum into its local community and the exhibition programme sought to reflect local issues, such as the high level of young African-American men held in the local prison, the illegal drugs trade, and the difficulties African-American residents faced accessing adequate housing and education (Lowe & Martin-Felton, 1993). Kinard is identified as a leading proponent of new museology, along with the Canadian museum director Duncan Cameron, Georges Henri Rivière and Hugues de Varine (France) and Mario Vasquez (Mexico) (Desvallées & Mairesse, 2010).

Duncan Cameron's seminal text from 1971 *The Museum: a temple or the forum?* argued that there should be a role for both traditional museums – or, as he described them, temples – and new museums as forums for experimentation and change, but that both forms needed to be socially responsive (Cameron, 1971). Cameron's work as Director of the Brooklyn Museum (1971 to 1974) saw him invite women's groups, African-Americans and First Nations Peoples to curate their own exhibitions within the museum's community gallery. In a 1972 radio interview Cameron stated, "the community gallery, then, is a kind of special space in the Brooklyn Museum, quite different from the other spaces that house collections that are the result of value judgments, made over a period of time." (Cameron, audio interview, 1972).

This call for change can be seen to arise from examination and rethinking of the notion of the museum not as a neutral or passive zone but rather as a space for secular ritual (Duncan & Wallach, 1978; Duncan, 1995; Sherman & Rogoff, 1994). UK museologist Tony Bennett deployed a Foucaultian reading to reveal the modernist museum, like disciplinary institutions, as a site where official social behaviours and systems are performed and regulated in an environment designed to encourage self-surveillance (Bennett, 1995).

In 1989 the influential anthology *The New Museology* was published, edited by curator and academic Peter Vergo, whose foreword demanded a "radical re-examination of the role of museums." (Vergo, 1989, p. 3). The explicit term "new museology" had been ratified a few years earlier in 1985 with the establishment of the Movement for a New Museology (MINOM).⁵

A significant challenge to the museum's singular voice was work undertaken by indigenous groups to contest the authority of western ethnography and demand the management and control of their own cultural artefacts. Anthropologist Michael Ames developed the term "cultural trespassing" to describe "the theft of cultural or ethnic copyright." (Ames, 1992, p. 85). This led, in the 1990s and 2000s, to changes amongst many museums, opening up new partnerships and possibilities for co-management and co-curation (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000).

⁵ MINOM is an international organisation founded in 1985 with affiliation to the broader organisation of ICOM. MINOM is specifically dedicated to promoting new museology globally, and adopts both the Quebec Declaration and the Santiago Declaration as reference points. www.minom-icom.net

James Clifford⁶ drew on cultural theorist Mary Louise Platt's term "contact zones" (which Platt had used to describe social spaces where "cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other" (Platt, 1991, p. 33)) as a term to describe the institution's role as an active meeting point for a wide range of cultural positions, from participants to visitors to museum professionals. Clifford posited, "when museums are seen as contact zones, their organising structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship – a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull" (Clifford, 1997, p. 192).

While the former Director of the Royal Scottish Museum, Ian Finlay, had proposed in 1977 that museums must increasingly present ideas rather than static collections, emphasising the role that temporary exhibitions would play in this transformation (Finlay, 1977), it is from the 1990s onwards that one can clearly chart a shift in understanding the role of the museum from a place to show objects to "sites of experience" and encounter (Hein, 2000, p. 5). Hooper-Greenhill⁷ (2000) termed this shift a move to the post-museum, reflecting a change from a modernist museum practice to one that is interpretive, subjective and communicative.

Where the modernist museum was (and is) imagined as a building, the museum of the future may be imagined as a process or an experience. The post-museum will take, and is already beginning to take, many architectural forms. It is, however, not limited to its own walls, but moves as a set of processes into the spaces, the concerns, and the ambitions of communities. (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, pp. 152-153).

This shift in tone was not by any means universal. Susan Pearce⁸ (1992, 1994) argued that collections and objects must remain the core of museological practice. By 2000 George E. Hein, an academic in museum education,⁹ warned of the devaluation of collections as a source of "real meaning and value ... leaving behind waves of interpretation, affect and experience." (Hein, 2000, pp. 86-87).

But a move away from the object toward experience was marked. In 1990

⁶ James Clifford is a historian who was for 33 years Professor in the History of Consciousness Department at the University of California, Santa Cruz, until retiring in 2011. He has published extensively.

⁷ Eileen Hooper-Greenhill is currently Professor Emerita of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, and is a former Head of the Department from 1996 to 2002. She has played an important role in the development of museum studies through the 1990s and 2000s, academically as well as through publishing and editing. In 2002 she was named by *The Independent on Sunday* as one of the Top Ten most influential people in UK in the museum industry.

⁸ Susan Pearce is also a Professor Emerita of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester.

⁹ George E. Hein is Professor Emeritus in the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences and Senior Research Associate at the Program Evaluation and Research Group at Lesley University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

museum consultant Elaine Heumann Gurian¹⁰ stated “in the past, museums tended to act as if they collected, preserved, and studied objects and only then, to a lesser degree of importance, educated their audiences ... now, these same institutions generally affirm the coexistence of multiple missions, allowing attention to audiences and scholarship to live side-by-side.” (Heumann Gurian, 2006, p. 162). Stephen Weill¹¹ concurred, stating in 1999 that “the American museum is being substantially reshaped ... emerging instead is a more entrepreneurial institution that ... will have shifted its focus outward to concentrate on providing primarily educational services to the public.” (Weill, 2002, pp. 28-29).

While new museology grew out of the intellectual and political sphere of the museum itself, from the late 1990s it began to be co-opted by the notion of creative industries or a neo-liberal ideology advocating for art and culture as drivers to stimulate economic growth (Florida, 2002; Hartley, 2005). Creative industries seek to connect art and culture with entrepreneurialism, the marketplace and tourism. New museology’s emphasis on visitor experience alongside economic pressures on public institutions has seen museums around the world increasingly turn to the language and methodology of creative industries (Flew & Cunningham, 2010).¹²

In summary, new museology is a movement that has proved highly influential on professional museum practice globally, with particular emphasis on visitor experience and the constructed nature of the museum exhibit. New museology has many strands, but notably is concerned with individual subjectivity and personalisation of experience.

New Institutionalism

Running parallel to, and at times overlapping new museology, which concerns itself with changes to a broader museum practice, new institutionalism is a theoretical construct that concerns itself with the modes of display and dissemination specifically within contemporary art (Ekeberg, 2003). New institutionalism can be summarised as a movement as much about the development of curatorial practice as it is about artwork presentation, and

¹⁰ Elaine Heumann Gurian is a museum consultant who has published extensively and works with a range of museums internationally. She has lectured in many museum studies programmes and in 2012 was named as Osher Fellow at the Exploratorium, San Francisco, in 2011 a Salzburg Scholar and in 2007 a Fulbright Scholar for training museum professionals at Fundacion TyPA, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

¹¹ Stephen Weill was a former Scholar Emeritus at the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Education and Museum Studies and longtime Deputy Director of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. He died in 2005.

¹² In 1997 the newly elected British Labour government established a Creative Industries Task Force (CITF), as a central focus of its new Department of Culture, Media and Sport. The CITF aimed to map activity across the creative sector, measuring their economic contribution and developing policy to increase financial outcomes.

many of its key thinkers and writers are curators. This section, like the one before it, will concern itself with outlining a broad summary of the movement's major concerns, and track major developments and proponents.

This movement was first termed new institutionalism by Scandinavian writer Jonas Ekeberg¹³, who observed in 2003 that,

These institutions seemed at last to be ready to let go, not only of the limited discourse of the work of art as a mere object, but also of the whole institutional framework that went with it, a framework that the extended field of contemporary art had simply inherited from high modernism, along with its white cube, its top-down attitude of curator and directors, its link to certain (insider) audiences and so on and so forth. (Ekeberg, 2003, p. 14).

What constitutes new institutionalism? It can be characterised by an emphasis on the transformation of the art institution from within, and interest in "temporary / transient encounters, states of flux and open-endedness" (Doherty, 2004), which casts both artists and audience as active collaborators with the institution (Szeemann, 1969). New institutionalism values experimentation, hybridity and process (Lind, 2010; Hou, 2002), reinscribing the gallery in the role of a laboratory (Szeemann, 1969; Bourriaud, 2002; Obrist & Vanderlinden, 2001; Bishop, 2004). Questioning and examining the position of the artist within the institution is central to this focus (Lind, 1998, 2010; Hoffman, 2004; Doherty, 2004; Möntmann, 2006). Director of the Whitechapel Gallery, London, Iwona Blazwick has suggested "to be relevant in the twenty-first century, the gallery must be at once a permeable web, a black box, a white cube, a temple, a laboratory, a situation." (Blazwick, 2006, p. 133).

The shift in presentation again arises as a challenge to modernism and the traditional art institution through an expanded notion of art that extends beyond the discrete artefact to operate more fluidly as an event, a project or an environment (Bryn-Wilson, 2003; Doherty, 2004). Within the concept of new institutionalism is reflected the rise of the curator as an active operator in this process, with a higher profile and agency in determining the presentation and interpretation of art. This can be understood as the moment where "the ascendancy of the curatorial gesture ... began to establish curating as a potential nexus for discussion, critique and debate." (O'Neill, 2007a, p. 13).¹⁴

¹³ Jonas Ekeberg is a critic and a curator based in Oslo. He is a former Editor of the Nordic journal *Kunstkritikk*, founding Director of the Oslo Kunsthall in 2000 and was a curator at the Office for Contemporary Art Norway from 2002-2004.

¹⁴ Paul O'Neil is a curator and critic who is currently Director of the Graduate Programme for The Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, New York.

A useful starting point for this shift in display was Brian Doherty's¹⁵ series of articles in *Art Forum* (1976, 1981, 1986) disputing the modernist notion of the neutral white cube of the gallery space, which articulated an analysis of how the sociological, economic and aesthetic context within which an individual views art shapes their experience (Doherty, 1986). Within the development of the curatorial role, certain key figures can be identified as significant throughout the 20th Century, although new institutionalism was not a term coined until 2003. These significant reference points include the work of Alexander Dorner as Director of the Landesmuseum at Hanover, Germany in the 1920s; Jean Leering's work as Director at Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven in the 1960s and 1970s and Harald Szeemann's work as both an institutional and independent curator for a 40 year period since the early 1960s (Obrist, 2008; Altshuler, 2008; Rattemeyer, 2010). These figures, to varying degrees, all developed curatorial strategies that reacted away from modernism's focus on the object.

Alexander Dorner (1893-1957) largely owes his current status among younger curators to his championing by curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, who has described him as "the most visionary museum director of the first half of the 20th Century." (Obrist in Bovier, 2012, p. 8) for his emphasis on an expanded notion of art and his description of the museum as a laboratory, terminology central to new institutionalism.

Harald Szeemann's work as a curator is often cited as the first crucial development in contemporary curatorial practice (Obrist, 2008). Szeemann's breakthrough exhibition was *When Attitudes Become Form*, a 1969 group show at the Kunsthalle Bern, an exhibition that attempted to reveal the fluidity and temporal nature of art, arguing for the need to "break down the triangle in which art operates – the studio, gallery and museum." (Szeemann, 1969, unpaginated).

The discussion around how the context of the gallery as both a physical and institutional site moulds the presentation, understanding and reception of artwork was significantly shaped by the late 1960s practices of American and European artists such as Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren and Hans Haacke, whose artwork examined and made visible the organisational

¹⁵ Brian Doherty is both an artist and arts writer who has also used the artist's name of Patrick Ireland. The series of articles mentioned above are frequently cited as one of the most significant moments in the development of conceptual art.

organisational structures and apparatus of the exhibiting institution itself.¹⁶ In the 1980s this practice was further developed by artists working consciously under the term Institutional Critique (Buchloh, 1999), such as Andrea Fraser, Fred Wilson, Martha Rosler and the Guerilla Girls, whose work, again in very different ways, provided critical challenge to the unseen structures and systems of the art institution (Welchman, 2006).

In 1989 Andrea Fraser performed her most well-known work, *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk*, a series of tours by the artist operating under the fictional character of Jane Castleton. The tours led visitors through not only the gallery spaces but also to the museum store, café and the bathrooms, with Castleton's presentation giving equal weight to a discussion about the men's toilet as her description of 17th Century Dutch paintings. Much of the content for the talks was lifted verbatim from museum archives, reconfigured and recontextualised (Fraser, 2005).

In 1992 African-American artist Fred Wilson's project *Mining the Museum* served to critique the collection of the museum of the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore (Stein, 1993). Wilson acted as both artist and curator, taking the collection's historical artefacts as his material, re-presenting it, and in doing so exposing the singular curatorial lens (white, middleclass male) the collection had hitherto been framed within. When interviewed about the project, Wilson stated, "what they put on view says a lot about a museum, but what they don't put on view says even more." (Fusco, 1994, p. 148). The success of this later generation of artists was in part due to their own active blurring of different artistic roles, calling into question the once clearly demarcated boundaries between artist and curator. Fraser has stated "the institution of art is not something external to any work of art but the irreducible condition of its existence as art." (Fraser in Welchman, 2006, p. 130).

In tandem with institutional critique was the rise of socially engaged and participatory art practices in the 1990s, which also provided a challenge to the traditionally static relationship between artwork, audience and institution (Bourriaud, 2002; Kester, 2004; Bishop, 2004). A pivotal text that sought to describe a new generation of artists working socially was *Relational Aesthetics* (Bourriaud, 2002), which also provided this development with a

¹⁶ For example, Michael Asher's exhibition *73rd American Exhibition* at The Art Institute of Chicago, 1979; where the artist relocated a bronze sculpture of George Washington made in 1917 by Jean-Antoine from the front steps of the museum, where it had been placed for over 60 years, to display in an interior gallery. In 1970 Hans Haacke presented the exhibition *Information* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where the artist conducted a visitor poll asking "would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina Policy be a reason for your not voting for him in November?" Haacke's question commented directly on the activities of a major donor and board member for MOMA. Both of these works sought to open up and make visible the unseen workings of the institution, while Haacke's work also made conscious connection between a wider political and capitalist landscape and the art world (Skrebowski, 2008).

definition. First published in 1998, the following year its writer, art critic and curator, Nicolas Bourriaud, would become Co-Director and Co-Founder of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris with Jerome Sans, and the work they undertook there further developed the tenets of relational aesthetics into a curatorial mode later described as new institutionalism.¹⁷

From the 1990s curatorial practice began to adopt the mechanisms of both institutional critique and relational aesthetics, primarily within public art institutions in Europe and in particular Nordic and Scandinavian countries. This can largely be understood as the effect of individual independent curators moving into positions of management in mid-scale civic art institutions. As well as Bourriaud, there was notably Charles Esche, Maria Lind, Nicolaus Schafhausen, Vasif Kortun, Hans Ulrich Obrist and Catherine David (Farquharson, 2006).

New institutionalism was concerned with a visible shift in power from the institution to the artist, and one of its first and most tangible attempts was to reach outside of the traditional exhibiting realm of the gallery to invite artists to shape other areas of the institution (Ekeberg, 2003). An influential example was *Sputnik*, a programme Maria Lind set up during her time as Director of the Kunstverein Munich between 2002 and 2004. Lind invited a group of 14 artists, critics and curators to develop an ongoing relationship with the gallery over a three year period – an open-ended proposition that led to such outcomes as artist Apolonija Sustersic's redesign of the gallery's foyer into a lounge space and Carey Young designing a loyalty card to replace the Kunstverein Munich's traditional Members' card. *Sputnik* aimed to break down traditional divisions between front of house and back of house, between gallery staff and audience, staff and artist, the artist and the public (Gillick & Lind, 2005).

Hans Ulrich Obrist has become perhaps the most significant public figure for new institutionalism. A curator whose career serves to define the contemporary art figure – globally networked and highly itinerant, shifting from exhibition to biennale across the world – Obrist has curated numerous influential exhibitions, often in collaboration with artists. *Utopia Station* at the Venice Biennale in 2003 was curated by Obrist with art historian Molly Nesbit and relational artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, and defined itself as a series of platforms rather than a static exhibition (Jürgensen, 2003).

New institutionalism has received criticism, notably for a sense of exclusiveness and its co-option of institutional critique into the institutional mainstream. In 1996 critic Hal Foster warned, "the institution may overshadow the work that it otherwise highlights: it becomes the spectacle, it collects the cultural capital, and the Director-Curator becomes the star." (Foster, 1996, p. 198). While institutional critique served to make visible the structures of the institution through an external attack, under new institutionalism the division of labour between artist and curator can be seen

¹⁷ The artists Bourriaud wrote about in *Relational Aesthetics* would come to define the movement throughout the 1990s: Liam Gillick, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Pierre Huyghe, Jorge Pardo, Philippe Parreno and Rirkrit Tiravanija.

to have collapsed and the role of artist as external commentator thus subsumed within the institution itself.

In addition, it can be argued that the structural impact of new institutionalism has remained largely within the small to medium-sized institution. While the rhetoric of new institutionalism is sometimes reflected in the practice of biennales and other individual events presented by larger institutions, the corporatisation of scale continues to “mitigate against self-reflexivity and experiment.” (Doherty, 2006, unpaginated). While new institutionalism can be understood to have significant implications for curatorial practice worldwide, it is less in the adoption of new institutionalism as organisation-wide practice and more in the expansion of traditional ideas of exhibition-making and a foregrounding of both artistic practice and the wider social and political context of the exhibition.

New Zealand Museums in a State of Change

Neither new museology nor new institutionalism are terms that have been readily taken up by New Zealand cultural institutions, although these practices have had some impact on art gallery practice (new institutionalism) and museum practice (new museology) over the last 20 years.

New museology was initially apparent within New Zealand less visibly within smaller, more flexible institutions, such as the work David Mealing carried out as Director of the Petone Settlers Museum (1983 to 2003). In this role, he engaged in co-curation with a number of cultural groups within the community to tell their stories, in exhibitions such as a collaboration with the Polish community, *Between Two Worlds*, and *Alla Fine del Mondo (To the Ends of the Earth)* a collaboration with the Italian community.¹⁸ This model was subsequently picked up and adopted on a much larger scale by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, upon its opening in 1998, presenting a series of cultural community exhibitions such as *Qui Tutto Bene*, a focus on the Italian community in New Zealand.¹⁹

Te Papa, established from the skeletons of two prior institutions, the Dominion Museum and the National Art Gallery, was very consciously shaped around the model of new museology, arguably in somewhat crude form. Between 1994 and 2002, Elaine Heumann Gurian was an advisor to the museum, and was an early and vocal advocate for its activities, although she

¹⁸ Writing of the exhibition *Between Two Worlds*, David Mealing has said, “the project was based on a community access model: access in the broadest sense requires a shift in the power base from the institution towards the community. This approach allows the institution to respond to initiatives from the community as partners.” (Retrieved from <http://www.ccd.net/pdf/projectprofile4.pdf>).

¹⁹ From the Te Papa website: “*Qui Tutto Bene* is a collaboration between Te Papa and the New Zealand Italian community, whose members have shared their expertise and a rich collection of stories, photographs, and objects.” (Retrieved from <http://www.tepapa.govt.nz/WhatsOn/exhibitions/Pages/QuiTutto.aspx>).

has, in recent years, distanced herself from it.²⁰ Te Papa has most clearly brought the practice of new museology to prominence in New Zealand, and has provided a nexus for debate within this country around this topic.

The changing role of the curator in relation to Te Papa was discussed in 1999 by curator and writer Damian Skinner, who posited that the previous model of the curator as specialist, in which one person assumed overall responsibility and leadership of an exhibition, was under threat. In his article he asserted that the most visible transformation of the curatorial role in New Zealand has emerged from the opening of Te Papa, as a result of the institution "radically pursuing new responsibilities to audiences and generating new models of how its exhibitions are put together." (Skinner, 1999, p. 69).

Te Papa's impact on institutional practice has been a major feature of museological debate in New Zealand in the last 15 years, with questions around Te Papa's emphasis on audience development, blockbuster-scale exhibitions and cross-disciplinary models of presentation (Dutton, 1998; Keith, 2008). Paul Williams wrote "one of the risks for a museum formed as a specific response to, firstly, the perceived crisis of the museum as an institution, and secondly, national concerns such as its cultural tourism industry and ethnic and national consolidation, is that these anxieties may not form an adequate basis for longstanding authority." (Williams, 2003, p. 22).

Expanding on the notion that museums must work in a new era of audience engagement, Jenny Harper, current Director of the Christchurch Art Gallery but at that time an academic, wrote; "the popularisation of museums is a laudable trend in general and one which, in certain respects, returns museums to one of their former roles as places of public 'spectacle' – brings with it certain pressures, increasingly complex and difficult to balance." (Harper, 2003b, pp. 65-66).

Central to the discussion around the changing nature of the institution in this country has been the challenge posed to the Euro-centric construction of the institution by indigenous curators and artists. New Zealand museum practice cannot be understood by a reading of Western museology alone but Māori customary practice must be brought to bear in order to understand the complex significance posed by a post-colonial heritage (Butts, 2003; Mané-Wheeki in Turner, 2005; White, 2006).

In addition, a repositioning of both Australia and New Zealand in recent years, away from the traditional poles of Europe and America, towards the geopolitical and cultural traditions of the Asia-Pacific region, has seen a similar acknowledgement of the complexity for museums of negotiating a multi-cultural landscape that may contradict traditional European notions of appropriate museum practice (Vercoe, 2001; Butler, 2003; Kosasa, 2004; Turner, 2005; Mey, 2010).

²⁰ Gurian wrote in 2010, "Both the National Museum of Australia and Te Papa, the National Museum of New Zealand, opened to critical inclusionist success only to have the prevailing government organise a removal of their directors and a replacement of their more adventurous exhibitions by more traditional ones". (Heumann Gurian, 2010, unpaginated).

Within art institutions, new institutionalism in New Zealand has had its most profound impact on smaller galleries and project spaces, rather than the major metropolitan galleries. This concentration of scale echoes the international experience detailed above in New Institutionalism. Both Artspace and The Physics Room, small to mid-scale contemporary galleries set up for the commissioning and display of new work, have frequently used the term laboratory to describe their activities – an aspiration clearly outlined by The Physics Room’s nomenclature.²¹ St Paul St Gallery, the gallery for AUT University, and of a similar scale, has also taken a strong position for new institutionalism.²² Within the public galleries, smaller regional institutions such as Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts and The Dowse Art Museum have undertaken regular projects outside of traditional exhibitions, which seek to engage artists and audiences in new collaborations.²³

Recently critic and patron Sue Gardiner signaled institutional change within the art museum, declaring, “there is something in the curatorial air – an intense shifting of positions and a diversification of curatorial responsibilities.” (Gardiner, 2009, pp. 84-85). Andrew Clifford, then curator at Auckland’s Gus Fisher Gallery, acknowledged the impact of new institutionalism when he described contemporary curating as a pluralistic endeavour that encompassed “curator as caretaker, curator as researcher, curator as manager, curator as collaborator, curator as author, curator as auteur, curator as artist, curator as mid-wife ... and then there is the artist as curator variation.” (Clifford in Gardiner, 2009, p. 85).

Conclusion

This chapter brings together two major movements in museum practice: that of new museology and new institutionalism, providing a broad introduction to each within an international, literature-based context, and within a local, New Zealand context. As suggested, I have not comprehensively detailed either practice, but provide a context for understanding a challenge to the art gallery that brings new focus to artists and audiences.

²¹ In a presentation at the 21st Century Arts Conference, presented by Creative New Zealand at the Christchurch Town Hall, then Director of The Physics Room, Kate Montgomery, gave a paper titled *This is not an art gallery it's a treehouse*, which described the institution as a fluid organisation that was public in a sense, but essentially operated as a laboratory or treehouse – able to pull up its ladder and become private when required. (Retrieved from http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/assets/paperclip/publication_documents/documents/63/original/this-is-not-a-gallery.pdf?1322079825).

²² St Paul St Gallery’s mission statement calls for the gallery to “accept a role as critic and conscience of society. Through our programmes we also interrogate the proposition that the arts have a particular capacity to speak critically about society.” (Retrieved from <http://www.stpaulst.aut.ac.nz/gallery-information>).

²³ It is important to note here that I have a professional history of involvement with both The Dowse Art Museum and Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts, as well as with Artspace and The Physics Room. In my time at all of these institutions we actively sought to find new models of working with both artists and audiences. This aspect of my personal involvement is acknowledged in Chapter One and the Prologue.

Most notably, the key elements of both movements with relevance to my research topic are a changing relationship to exhibition practice that shifts away from a notion of the discrete object to considering the wider political, social, cultural and physical context the artwork is displayed within. The role of the institution in framing the artwork comes to the fore, as does the role of the artist as an active partner or collaborator with an institution. In discussing these ideas in relation to a New Zealand context I have focused on institutions other than the Christchurch Art Gallery, as this will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

CHAPTER THREE: CASE STUDY, THE CHRISTCHURCH ART GALLERY

Introduction

The Christchurch Art Gallery opened to sizable attention and considerable expectation from the arts sector. Although it was ostensibly a new institution, it carried with it baggage, having evolved from the amalgamation of two separate organisations, the Robert McDougall Art Gallery and the Annex.²⁴

This chapter is not intended to provide a comprehensive history of either the Robert McDougall Art Gallery or the Annex. Rather, it is designed as an introduction to these institutions, tracing significant events and developments that contributed to the evolution of the Christchurch Art Gallery. In addition, this chapter provides a very brief overview of the Christchurch Art Gallery to date, noting key points that are developed in more detail within this thesis. The aim is to track the Gallery's changing relationship with artists and audiences as well as internal staff culture, notably the shift from a more amateur operation to a professionalised structure (Feeney, 2011).

The areas of the Gallery's history I focus on here are times of change for the institution, as well as historical conflict between the Gallery and artists, and the Gallery and audiences. Of particular significance is the tension between a regional focus and a national or international focus, friction that can be seen to have continued into the opening of the Christchurch Art Gallery (Crighton, 2012).

The history of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery reveals an institution that shifted and changed over time, moving in and out of public acclaim, at times developing an antagonistic relationship with the wider arts sector, at other times embraced closely by the sector. As a general observation, these different states were driven by individual personalities rather than planned strategic motivations. As a result, the history of the Gallery can be described as an alternation between sets of binary motivations - that is, looking inward and outward, regional versus national, conservative versus contemporary.

In 1988, responding to the need for more space, the Robert McDougall Art Gallery opened an additional gallery, the Annex. The Annex evolved quite different systems and approaches from its parent institution, creating two very different organisational fields (Bourdieu, 1997). While its programming was deliberately presented as separate from the RMAG, more intangible qualities of culture and operation were also different. The Annex ran on more informal grounds, with closer connections to the local art scene. This distinct difference in fields later impacted on the establishment of the Christchurch Art Gallery, with its struggle to integrate the two organisations, and two

²⁴ There is considerable confusion around this organisation's official name, with the Annex, the McDougall Annex and the Contemporary Art Annex all being deployed in different texts by the Gallery itself. I have taken the decision to refer to the organisation as the Annex within this thesis.

fields, into one, and little formal distinction made between the two. This discussion is further expanded in Chapters Four and Six.

In producing this chapter I have drawn largely on a range of secondary sources. I have particularly drawn on books published by the Robert McDougall Art Gallery depicting its own history (Roberts & Bercusson, 1982; Roberts & Milburn, 2000) as well as several external sources, including the recent doctoral thesis *The Selection and Presentation Culture of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand, 1932 - 2002* (Crighton, 2012). It is important to note here that Crighton is also a former staff member of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. Primary sources used include Gallery publications *Survey* and *Bulletin*.

The Robert McDougall Art Gallery

The Robert McDougall Art Gallery opened in Christchurch on the 16th June 1932. The opening took place after seven years of fundraising, with the call for a public art gallery first articulated publicly in the 1890s. The Gallery's name acknowledged a local businessman who was the initiator of a public fundraising campaign for a gallery, and, when fundraising was unsuccessful, donated £31,000, the entire cost of the building's construction (Roberts & Bercusson, 1982).²⁵

Funding was provided on the condition that the Christchurch City Council would provide the building site, which resulted in a "rather obscure location at the rear of the Canterbury Museum" (Roberts & Bercusson, 1982, p. 5) in the Botanic Gardens. Once funding was secured, a competition was launched to establish a design, and Edward Armstrong, a London-based architect originally from Gisborne, was awarded the contract. His winning design drew heavily on French neo-classicism, a popular aesthetic for civic institutions in Britain at that time, and featured a central sculptural hall with pillars and a marble floor, with a series of smaller gallery wings to the sides (Thomson, 1981).

By 1932 there were already four public art galleries in New Zealand, the Auckland City Art Gallery; the Dunedin Public Art Gallery; the Bishop Suter Art Gallery, Nelson and the Sarjeant Gallery, Whanganui. Shortly after, in 1936, the National Art Gallery and the Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum both opened (Thomson, 1981).

²⁵ The initial payment from McDougall was in 1928 for £25,000 and then, when the budget overran, he eventually supplemented this donation to the final amount of £31,000 (Roberts & Bercusson, 1982: unpaginated).

With a population of 127,300²⁶ Christchurch had an established arts community, including the Canterbury College School of Art,²⁷ and an active artist scene led by the Canterbury Society of Arts. In addition to the Society of Arts, the more radical The Group had established themselves in 1927. The art scene greeted the Robert McDougall Art Gallery's opening with anticipation, as having "realised the long-held ambitions of both the CSA and the Canterbury College School of Art for the region's cultural development" (Feeney, 2011, p. 45).

A Conservative Beginning

The new Gallery's collection was established primarily through a gift by the Canterbury Society of Arts of 110 works, mainly paintings, many of which were acquired through the assistance of Christchurch City Council funding (Roberts & Bercusson, 1982). A further founding bequest had been received from local businessman James Jamieson, who throughout his life was an active art collector as well as a patron to emerging artists (Crighton, 2012).

Until 1948 the exhibition programme was largely based on works from the permanent collection, while temporary exhibitions continued to be the focus of the CSA's gallery. The CSA would maintain a role as content gatekeeper towards the collection over the coming years, through representation on a specialist committee for artwork acquisition (Feeney, 2011).

While strategically led by a combination of the Christchurch City Council and the Canterbury Society of Arts, operations were managed by a Custodian, initially Harold Cowell, assisted by his wife, Raukura Faith. This wide-ranging role encompassed that of "registrar, conservator, cleaner, exhibitions assistant and administration officer" (Crighton, 2012, p. 50). The lack of "overall plan, policy or direction and the choices made reflected the idiosyncrasies of non-professional de facto 'gallery curators'" (Crighton, 2012, p. 58).²⁸ In 1949 William Baverstock, who was also Secretary of the CSA from 1943, was appointed Curator in a largely honorary capacity and a greater range of exhibitions began to be generated. In 1960 Baverstock was appointed the Gallery's inaugural Director, a position that gave him a greater mandate to develop both the programme and the collection (Thomson, 1981).

A defining event in this early history was the inflammatory process around the acquisition of a Frances Hodgkins painting, *Pleasure Garden* (1932). Hodgkins, now firmly established as a pivotal figure in the development of a New

²⁶ This statistic is drawn from the New Zealand Official Yearbook. (1932). Retrieved from www3.stats.govt.nz.

²⁷ Now known as the School of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury.

²⁸ As indicated in the introduction, this state of affairs was not unusual in New Zealand at this time. Athol McCredie's M.A. thesis *Going Public* (McCredie, 1999) states that "in provincial towns, art societies were still commonly operating public galleries in the post-war to 1970 period".

Zealand art history, died in 1947, critically acclaimed in England and Europe, but largely ignored in her birth country (Drayton, 2005).

Following her death, in 1948, six paintings by Hodgkins were sent from England to the CSA for consideration for purchase, at the initiative of Margaret Frankel, a founding member of The Group and long-serving member of the CSA (Feeney, 2011). The paintings created vigorous debate within the CSA, who voted that none were appropriate for purchase (Feeney, 2011). Frankel independently mobilised a subscription to enable the purchase of *Pleasure Garden*, which was then offered to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, but was declined by the Acquisition Sub Committee (Frankel, 1949). The Mayor of Christchurch, Sir Ernest Andrews, stated at the time it was rejected because it was “unacceptable on its merits.” (Roberts & Bercusson, 1982, 16).

The Committee incited a round of controversy that divided the Canterbury artistic community including public petitions and a sustained letter writing campaign to *The Press*. Eventually in 1951, when the Auckland Art Gallery offered to purchase the work, it was again offered to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, and on the 3rd of September, after renewed debate, the Christchurch City Council finally agreed to accept *Pleasure Garden* into the RMAG’s collection (Roberts & Milburn, 2000).

The controversy had generated a public debate around a single issue that highlighted a much broader divide between advocates for traditional and modern art, a conceptual gulf that would continue to define the history of the Robert McDougall Gallery for years to come. William Baverstock’s role as a gatekeeper for both the RMAG and the CSA, and the staunchly conservative position he was perceived to maintain, was signalled as an issue by more activist members of the Christchurch art community.

The *Pleasure Garden* affair was a battle over power, not over painting. A battle over who had the authority to decide what the gallery should show. Here the public largely just observed what was in effect an internecine war between two art world factions. (Barr & Barr, 1987, p. 14).

Recent depictions of Baverstock tend to judge him for his conservatism and refusal to adapt to a changing art world (Barr & Barr, 1987; Feeney, 2011; Crighton, 2012). In her analysis of Baverstock Anna Crighton describes him as “an enigma owing to the disjunction between his belief that he was ‘innovative’ in his own art and his indubitable conservatism in selecting and presenting public art.” (Crighton, 2012, p. 83). In Warren Feeney’s study, Baverstock’s initial acceptance within the arts community was as a respected leader in the establishment of The Group, but this position was compromised at the RMAG where, from the late 1940s onward, “he was depised more and more for his deep conservatism. Although diligent and hardworking, he regularly frustrated important sections of the art community, and their condemnation continued following his McDougall appointment.” (Feeney, 2011, p. 91).

Antagonism

Controversy continued to shape the perception of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery throughout Baverstock's tenure as Director, with growing antagonism between Baverstock and much of the local arts community. In 1960, in an echo of the *Pleasure Garden* furore, a painting by Colin McCahon was awarded first equal place in the inaugural Hay's Ltd Art Competition. Hay's offered one of the three winning paintings as a gift to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. The Art Gallery Committee's recommendation was to acquire the McCahon, a suggestion refused by the Christchurch City Council, with Baverstock agreeing with their position. This caused such a division that the CSA and the Canterbury College School of Art withdrew their representatives from the Art Gallery Committee (Roberts & Milburn, 2000)²⁹.

In protest, Canterbury artist Quentin MacFarlane organised an exhibition of McCahon's work at Cashmere High School and fundraised to purchase a painting from that show, *Tomorrow will be the same but not as this is...* for the RMAG collection. Once purchased, the painting was accepted into the collection, despite stated reservations by City Councillors and Baverstock (Barr & Barr, 1987).

The Gallery courted further debate in 1967 when a touring exhibition of the work of Marcel Duchamp from the Mary Sisler Collection was exhibited. Baverstock withdrew two works from the exhibition prior to its opening, including *Fountain*, arguably Duchamp's most iconic and influential work, on the grounds that they were offensive. This decision was a catalyst for protests, including 200 students marching in Cathedral Square (Roberts & Milburn, 2000).

By 1968 a flyer criticising Baverstock's leadership of the Gallery was circulated publicly and submitted formally to the CCC. Titled *A Desirable Public Gallery for Christchurch*, it was signed by a range of the Canterbury arts sector including artists Leo Bensemman, Tom Taylor and John Coley (Roberts & Milburn, 2000). While this missive was not acted on in any way by the City Council, it is an indication of the growing rift between the Gallery and the wider arts community.

In 1969 Baverstock retired at the age of 75. While he positioned the Robert McDougall as a conservative gallery, and in doing so was not afraid to antagonise the local arts community, he operated within constrained financial and operational limits. Anna Crighton finds that "in the eyes of the public, the media and the art world, he and the Gallery were one and the same. But on many occasions, he was actually the meat in the sandwich between the CCC and an uncomprehending and ungrateful art world." (Crighton, 2012, p. 133).

²⁹ Underlining the persistence of this issue, earlier, in 1943 (Roberts & Milburn, 2000; note that Crighton, 2012 states this to be 1944) Canterbury artist Evelyn Page's 1929 painting *Summer Morn* had been removed from display at the RMAG, following a complaint from an unnamed patron (later revealed to be in fact, the subject of the painting) (Crighton, 2012).

In 1969 Director of the National Gallery of Victoria Eric Westbrook³⁰ was commissioned by the Christchurch City Council to prepare a report on the state of the facilities, calling the RMAG cramped, aging and inadequate for the city's collections. He also played a role in recruiting and appointing the new Director, Brian Muir.

An External Focus

Brian Muir was dramatically younger than Baverstock when he was appointed at 26, and already an art professional, with a tertiary qualification and experience in the role of Director of the Palmerston North Art Gallery (Crighton, 2012). Muir provided the Gallery with an opportunity to reconsider its function and processes, launching "a brisk programme to promote the Gallery, including a series of exhibitions featuring Canterbury artists. He began building the permanent collection, acquiring paintings by Ralph Hotere, Bill Sutton, Tony Fomison and others" (Roberts & Milburn, 2000, p. 82) He also expanded the acquisitions policy to include European, North American, Japanese and Australian art (Crighton, 2012).

This was the first moment that the Robert McDougall Art Gallery can be understood to have reached outside of a regional emphasis into an ambitious focus on Western canon formation. This tension between a local and national/international focus would become a defining element at the Gallery, and one that would shape the eventual development of the Christchurch Art Gallery (Crighton, 2012). Crighton identifies a gap in Muir's purchasing however, despite the "genuine, even breathtaking, breadth of buying in other areas" (Crighton, 2012, p. 168) — a lack of focus on Māori practitioners that would not be rectified until the appointment of John Coley as Director. In Crighton's analysis Muir was also both "determined and naïve in his aspirations to acquire good representational works" by internationally renowned Impressionists and Fauvists (Crighton, 2012, p. 151), but was unable to fully realise his ambitions due to restriction of budgets and other resources.

Muir developed a less contentious relationship between the Gallery and the art world, perhaps partly because his opinion of modernism was less entrenched, certainly less vocal, and perhaps partly because the CSA "became preoccupied with the construction of its new building, a rival gallery, at 66 Gloucester Street." (Feeney, 2011, p. 114). Further signs of a more outward looking institution were indicated in 1971 when the Society of Friends³¹ was launched, bringing the public closer to the workings of the gallery, and in 1972 a significant change was implemented when the CCC allocated the Director of the RMAG more responsibility in purchasing art works, without the

³⁰ Westbrook was Director of the National Gallery of Victoria from 1955 - 1976 and appointed Director Ministry for the Arts, Victoria, from 1975 - 1980. Previously he had been based in New Zealand between 1952 - 1955 as the inaugural Director of the Auckland Art Gallery (then Auckland City Art Gallery) (Jones, 2005).

³¹ Now known as the Friends of the Christchurch Art Gallery.

requirement for purchases to be evaluated and decided by councillors. To provide a wider context, in 1975 the New Zealand Art Gallery Director's Council was established, indicating a broader, national development of sector professionalism (Thomson, 1981).

A Growing Professionalism

In 1978 Brian Muir resigned and was replaced by Dr. Rodney Wilson, whose brief tenure brought a further professionalism to the Gallery, "all aspects of operations were reviewed and upgraded, bringing the Robert McDougall Art Gallery to internationally recognised gallery and museum standards." (Roberts & Bercussion, 1982, p.31). Wilson took a blunter approach when he told *The Press* in 1978 that the existing conditions of the Gallery "would be regarded, without doubt, as quite unacceptable and among the worst in New Zealand." (Wilson quoted in Crighton, 2012, p. 188). Even more than Muir, Wilson was a trained arts professional when appointed, with a fine arts qualification from the University of Canterbury, and a Doctorate in Art History from The Netherlands. Previously a Director of the Wairarapa Arts Centre in Masterton, Wilson came to the Gallery from a lectureship at the new art history department at the University of Canterbury (Auckland Museum, 2013).

Significantly, Wilson created five new positions, appointing Ann Betts as Education Officer and Neil Roberts as Curator, both of whom subsequently remained in their positions for considerable time.³² "There can be no doubt that the quality and variety of our programme and the accompanying educative programmes, together with the routine maintenance, research and security afforded the collection will improve as a result of the new impetus provided by these appointments." (Wilson, 1979, unpaginated).

The first *Bulletin* was launched in January 1979. The bi-monthly Gallery newsletter declared it would cover "activities, acquisitions, exhibitions and other programmes at the McDougall Art Gallery and will include other important visual arts news from Christchurch. It coincides with a strenuous membership drive aimed at increasing public awareness of activities and services at this our public art gallery and seeking support from an expanding membership." (Wilson, 1979, unpaginated). This publication replaced *The Survey*, a Gallery newsletter that ran from 1971 - 1978 under Muir's directorship, and was in many ways a reworking of *The Survey's* format.

Wilson and Roberts placed a focus on addressing the lack of contemporary New Zealand art in the collection, undertaking purchases which included significant works by Ralph Hotere, Milan Mrkusich, Philip Clairmont, and, pointedly, several works by Frances Hodgkins. Under Wilson a new focus was given to regionalism, including developing a stronger relationship with the

³² Neil Roberts remained at the Gallery until he retired in 2006, a total of 27 years in the role.

Canterbury College School of Art, demonstrated by an exhibition of student work, *New Canterbury Contemporaries* in 1979 (Roberts & Milburn, 2000).

The focus on local artists brought a new focus on exhibition display, with Wilson introducing a generally more contemporary aesthetic to the exhibition installations, including replacing the original picture-hanging system. Crucially, Wilson also handed over some measure of input to exhibiting artists, Crighton posits that “now the artist, not the Art Gallery staff, modified the Gallery space and determined the presentation, with the staff’s cooperation.” (Crighton, 2012, p. 203).

This reworking of the artist’s role can be understood as a significant shift for the Gallery, and represents a more outward looking period of the Gallery’s history. The exhibition programme showed a response to the changing nature of art making, where “frequently the ‘new’ art was transitory and ephemeral.” (Roberts & Bercusson, 1982, p. 89). A new series of artist commissions were launched, where artists were invited to develop more project-based work, “non-commercial in nature allowing the artists to exhibit works, or prepare installations which might not readily find a suitable place in an art dealer’s programme.” (RMAG, 1979, unpaginated).

A further shift in the programming was indicated by *The Street*, a multi-disciplinary exhibition where invited artists responded to the thematic title with new commissions. It was a major departure for the Gallery, and one that Wilson signaled would establish a new approach: “this exhibition is a new and we hope, an exciting innovation in an art gallery exhibition policy; we trust that it will stimulate thinking about such aspects of the street environment we create for ourselves. Part aesthetic, part sociological, it is a pot pourri of reactions by artists and others in a wide variety of media.” (Wilson, 1980, unpaginated).

In keeping with broader museological trends, the Gallery began to present more ambitious and populist exhibitions throughout the 1980s, as “international shows became a feature of the 1980s, highlighting the need for a new public gallery” (Roberts & Bercusson, 1982, p. 89). A notable blockbuster was *America and Europe: A Century of Modern Masters, the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection* in 1980, which achieved a total of 34,199 visitors over 26 days. The exhibiting culture of the Gallery had significantly evolved from Baverstock’s reign, with greater standardisation and professionalism.

Rodney Wilson was appointed Director of the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1981 and John Coley was appointed Director of the RMAG. Coley largely continued Wilson’s direction, asserting at the outset that it was his intention “to maintain and, where possible, carry forward the policies of the previous administration” (Coley, 1981). Unlike previous directors, he did not take an active role in collection acquisitions, instead empowering Neil Roberts to develop a policy that placed a greater priority on Canterbury art and artists.

There was also for the first time a concerted effort from the Gallery to engage with indigenous culture, notably in hosting the touring exhibition *Te*

Māori Te Hokinga Mai in 1986, curated originally for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. *Te Māori* challenged a (Western) professional museum approach to exhibits as objects, offering a more holistic context that looked both forward and backwards simultaneously (McCarthy, 2007; Hanham, 2001). Its return to New Zealand, at not just ethnographic museums but also two art galleries (Auckland City Art Gallery and the Robert McDougall Art Gallery) reinforced the message that traditional Māori art could be understood as art, not just history (Pound, 2009). Pivotal to the presentation of *Te Māori* at both venues was the role of Dr. Rodney Wilson (Director of the ACAG and former Director of the RMAG) as Convenor of *Te Māori* Exhibition Management Team (McCarthy, 2007).

The Establishment of an Off-site Gallery

With continuing concerns around the lack of both adequate exhibiting and conservation space at the gallery, space was rented in the nearby Arts Centre to establish an offsite contemporary wing, situated amongst a cluster of other public and private galleries and studios. The Annex opened in October 1988 with *Here and Now*; an exhibition of work by twelve emerging Canterbury artists.³³

From the beginning the Annex claimed an individual identity, with a faster-paced, contemporary emphasis in the exhibition programme. While the RMAG continued to focus on larger, blockbuster exhibitions, along with work by more established artists, the series of younger curators based at the Annex brought a new generation of artists with them. In addition, the Annex gave them the opportunity to develop a more personal, project-based style of working with artists. It was a significant shift, and the Annex's institutional culture must be understood as very different to the RMAG. In addition, the Annex provided a vehicle for the Gallery to build on the initiative begun by presenting *Te Māori* at the RMAG, with a determined focus on showing contemporary Māori artists as well as New Zealand artists of Asian descent (Crighton, 2012)³⁴. The Annex occupied a very different role within the arts community of Christchurch, and was perceived as different by artists.

Former Curator Elizabeth Caldwell described the Annex as:

A twilight zone that was separate from the main building yet part of a civic art space ... it wasn't a dealer gallery and it wasn't an artist run

³³ Two new positions were initially established to manage the Annex, with Martin Young appointed as the Custodian / Exhibition Technician, and Laurence Hall as the Curatorial Assistant. In 1990 Lara Strongman replaced Laurence Hall in the new position of first Assistant Curator and then Annex Curator. Elizabeth Caldwell, in the remodeled position of Curator of Contemporary Art, replaced her in 1993. Felicity Milburn, who had begun working with Caldwell in 1996 as a Curatorial Assistant, in 1998 replaced her as the final Annex curator.

³⁴ Māori art historian and scholar Jonathan Mané-Wheoki played a pivotal role here as Kaitiaki for the Gallery (Crighton, 2012) a volunteer position where he gave advice and input, and at times directly curated exhibitions, such as *Hiko! New Energies in Māori Art*, curated by Mané-Wheoki and Deirdre Brown for the Annex in 1999.

project space. It occupied something a little different – a very grand project space in that respect ... it was important on artists' CVs but it also had that freedom – it was a little bit removed. (Caldwell in Crighton, 2012, p. 355).

Although the establishment of the Annex addressed the relationship between the institution and one of its core constituencies, the arts community, it did not provide a long-term solution to the problems of displaying and storing artwork of the RMAG and John Coley's Directorship was marked by a series of protracted endeavours to secure funding for a new Gallery. In 1988 impetus for change was received in the form of a bequest by arts patron Monica Richards, specifically tagged for the building of a new Gallery. However, despite ongoing public discussion in the media, and much internal discussion within the Council, the project did not gain significant traction at that stage. Five years before Coley's retirement he wrote plaintively, "one day the city of Christchurch will have the art museum it deserves." (Coley, 1990, unpaginated).

The Drive for Expansion

In 1995 Coley retired and Tony Preston, former Chief Education Officer and Public Programmes Manager of the National Gallery of Victoria was appointed as Director. He has stated his primary reason for taking up the position was the "rare opportunity of being the Director to take an old institution into a completely new, award-winning facility." (Preston in Crighton, 2012, p. 264). In May 1996 the CCC announced it was to pay \$9.6 million for a site on Worcester Boulevard to become the new Gallery, with \$3.8 million to come from Trust Bank Canterbury.

To provide a broader context, in 1995 the Auckland Art Gallery opened its contemporary art annex the New Gallery; in 1996 the Dunedin Public Art Gallery opened in new premises in the city's Octagon; in 1997 New Plymouth's Govett-Brewster Art Gallery developed a major extension to its existing building, and Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, opened in 1998. These building projects launched a New Zealand-wide redevelopment of public art galleries, with The Dowse Art Museum opening an extension in 2007 (known as TheNewDowse), City Gallery Wellington an extension in 2009, Auckland Art Gallery extension opening in 2011, and the new Hawkes Bay Museum and Art Gallery in 2013.³⁵

³⁵ The opening of Te Papa had arguably the greatest impact on exhibition presentation in New Zealand, both applauded for its remarkable visitation numbers and criticised for its focus on entertainment over scholarship. Critic Theodore Dalrymple cautioned, "Te Papa is the institutional exemplar of the lowest common denominator turned into official cultural policy, and stands as a terrible warning to the rest of the world" (Dalrymple, 1999). But like it or hate it, Te Papa had created new expectations for the impact of museums and galleries in New Zealand.

A competition was held in 1998 to select the design for the new Christchurch Art Gallery, and The Buchan Group was selected as the winning architect. A special funding package of \$6.474 million was allocated to the building project from the government, and by 2000 the Gallery had achieved \$12.5 million towards a fundraising target of \$13.05 million. In 2001 the Annex was closed in preparation for the new gallery, and the Annex's staff were amalgamated back into the RMAG's core staffing structure. While they had, on paper, always been RMAG staff, they did not perceive themselves as so, having worked only for the Annex (Milburn, interview with the author, 18 December, 2013). This perspective would contribute to later difficulties in the management of the Christchurch Art Gallery, discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

The Robert McDougall Art Gallery closed to the public in June 2002.

The Christchurch Art Gallery

The new Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu opened on Saturday 10th May, 2003, with an opening event which included performances by the Christchurch Symphony, Dame Malvina Major and Gareth Farr, speeches by the Mayor of Christchurch, Garry Moore, Gallery Director Tony Preston and Guest of Honour, the Right Honourable Prime Minister Helen Clark, followed by the release of 3,500 balloons into the sky. The opening day received approximately 18,000 visitors, and the institution opened in a city of 332,100 people with an annual target audience of 400,000.

Writing about the building in anticipation, the Gallery wrote,

The building will have four internal exhibition areas on two levels totaling nearly 3,000 square metres, plus a 4,000 square metre exterior sculpture court. Internal exhibition areas are divided into 12 galleries ranging in size from 24 to 482 square metres, and ceiling heights are 5.5 metres for the ground floor temporary exhibition spaces, and 5.25 metres for the Level 1 permanent collections galleries. (Klaassens, 2003, p. 5).

The opening exhibitions included an international show—*The Allure of Light: Turner to Cezanne - European Masterpieces from the National Gallery of Victoria*; a survey of iconic regional painter William Sutton; *Te Puāwai o Ngāi Tahu*, a group exhibition of contemporary Ngāi Tahu artists; a touring artist's project and several collection-based exhibitions.

Both *Te Puāwai* and the Gallery's new bilingual name were signifiers of a more formal attempt to integrate Māori contemporary art and culture into the institution. As such, they were the continuation of a process begun with the presentation of *Te Māori*, and developed with the integration of multiple exhibition projects by Māori artists in the Annex's programme. Writing in *Art New Zealand* at the time, Gina Irish called *Te Puawai* "a benchmark exhibition and a dynamic expression of Ngāi Tahu creativity ... importantly, the exhibition

marks the beginning of a fruitful partnership between Te Runanga o Ngāi Tahu and Te Puna o Waiwhetu" (Irish, 2003, p. 55).

However, apart from this development, the exhibition programme looked remarkably similar to former programming at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, with an emphasis on regional artists and art historical movements. Discussion of the exhibition programme will be continued in Chapter Four.

The new Gallery opened to a generally positive reception from both critics and audiences, with Denis Dutton writing "it is friendly without trying to ingratiate itself. It has attained immediate popularity in the city before it has even tried to popularize itself." (Harper, Dutton, Brown & King, 2003c, p. 5). In the 2003/2004 financial year visitor was 551,943, far exceeding the target figure. Lois Watson wrote in *The Press*, "Christchurch's new multimillion dollar art Gallery is proving a hit with seasoned art patrons and with those who have never set foot in a Gallery before." (Watson, 2003, p. A4). Also writing in *The Press* Christopher Moore declared the opening of the Gallery "undoubtedly The Event of 2003 ... months later, the Gallery continues to be our culturally bright young thing." (Moore, 2003, p. C3).³⁶

A Backlash

However, this initial enthusiasm was not sustained, and in the following 2004-2005 financial year there were 289,097 visitors, only about 40,000 more than the Robert McDougall Art Gallery had received in its final year. Questions began to be asked, both within the Christchurch City Council and the media. At a meeting on the 23rd June 2005 the CCC resolved to, "support a stronger management focus on increasing visitor numbers, increasing revenue achievements and cost effective service delivery, measured through new KPI." (CCC, 2005). The three KPI resolved were to increase the number of visitors to 400,000 in 2009/2010, to reduce the cost per visit from \$23 to \$16 per person, and to increase revenue.

By November 2005 *The Press* asserted, "Christchurch's main cultural centre is failing. Its shows are not attracting a significant number of people; it lacks direction; it is poorly managed; staff are unhappy." (*The Press*, 2005, p. A21). Stephen McArthur, General Manager, Community Services for the Christchurch City Council, commissioned an independent internal report in October 2005 from museum management consultants Ken Gorbey and Tim Walker. The report described the Gallery as "polite, low-paced and not rebellious enough", calling for "a fundamental change within the Gallery administration from project to operational mode" and that staff still would have to be upgraded, especially in the area of management." (Gorbey & Walker, 2005).

In January 2006 the Council appointed Kristen Cooper as an external project manager to steer a cross-functional, multi-disciplinary staff taskforce to

³⁶ Of particular interest to historians, a note of caution was struck by now Director Jenny Harper, then writing in the role of art historian and academic (Harper, 2003a; Harper et al., 2003c). This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

“work with Gallery management and key stakeholders to produce a plan for the *Paradigm Shift - the Five-year Strategic Plan*.” (CCC, 2006). A team of Gallery staff were tasked with examining “how we operated in teams, how we communicated to our audiences, how we selected the programme, how we were collecting, all of those things. We also looked at what was wrong, and ideas for fixing it and we did canvass the staff - a big part of that was getting the staff’s ideas.” (Milburn, interview with the author, 18 December 2012). Key Stakeholder Visioning Workshops were also held by the *Paradigm Shift* Taskforce in early 2006 to consult with a range of sector representatives, artists, gallerists and patrons.

On the 11th April 2006, Director Tony Preston announced his retirement from the gallery, effective from the 8th May. Public Programmes Manager Hubert Klaassens was appointed Acting Director. The official reason was “his decision to retire early has been influenced by concern for his parents’ health, and his wish to spend more time with them in Australia” (McTurk, 2006). However, rumours circulated in print and social media, with *The Press* declaring,

Sources have, however, told *The Press* that Preston wanted to stay on in his job to address some of the concerns about the gallery’s performance instead of leaving on the sour note struck by the recent *Paradigm Shift* review of the gallery. Preston’s resistance to suggestions he was the wrong person to lead the Gallery in its next phase resulted in a taxing mediation in which a final settlement was negotiated (van Beynen, 2006, p. D3).

The Political Context

Both the political context of Christchurch and the wider ramifications of capital development must be considered to fully understand the reasons and meaning of this backlash. It is not uncommon for a reaction after capital expansion by a cultural institution. The fundraising process can lead to ambitious and sometimes unachievable claims and promises regarding economic returns and visitor generation. “The ‘Bilbao Effect’ is not the silver bullet so fervently hoped for by those museums and their consultants in search of painless renewal.” (Janes, 2009, unpaginated).³⁷ The expectations of both Christchurch City Council and the people of Christchurch had been raised, after years of fundraising and a spectacular launch.

Iwona Blazwick, Director of the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London, who oversaw a major £13.5 million expansion of the institution’s building as incoming Director in 2001, has written,

Signature architecture has developed hand in hand with rampant expansionism in the museum sector. Museum buildings have become

³⁷ The often-cited example internationally is of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, the art museum designed by Frank Gehry for the city of Bilbao, opened in 1997. The museum’s contribution to urban generation for the wider city of Bilbao has become a benchmark adopted in many countries internationally.

icons, brands, even franchises, deployed in urban regeneration schemes, adopted to enhance private property developments and or hired out to aspirational developing economies ... They must justify themselves with ever increasing audience figures and ever-higher revenues. (Blazwick, 2009, p. 15-16).

In addition, the CCC must be understood as operating with a larger context or organisational field, that of local body governance nationally. In 2002 the Labour Government passed the *Local Government Act 2002* that gave local government responsibility for four "well-beings" – "to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future." (New Zealand Government, 2002, 10(b)). This was an explicit positioning of the arts as a focus and responsibility for local government, and can be seen as part of a wider international climate where the arts, in the form of creative industries, were being more closely aligned with urban development, as discussed in Chapter Two.³⁸

Following this, the Christchurch City Council Arts Policy and Strategy (2002) adopted an 'arts for all' goal, "to ensure an increased opportunity for people to participate in the arts" and in 2003 the CCC undertook a survey of arts participation in the city, *The Arts Scene in Christchurch: A Survey of Arts Participation*, which found that "77% of its survey respondents agreed that "arts and cultural activities helped define who they are." (Christchurch City Council, 2003, unpaginated).

While this might provide the Gallery with a strong position as an arts leader, the more immediate political climate of Christchurch was primed for change, following a major council restructure upon the appointment by of Lesley McTurk as Chief Executive in 2003. A new organisational structure was announced in September 2003, affecting the top two tiers of management at the Christchurch City Council, with seven resulting redundancies. McTurk was a high profile and controversial leader, described by *The Press* journalist Charlie Gates in 2009 as "characterised by hard-nosed restructuring, redundancies and morale troubles." (Gates, 2009). More recent analysis of McTurk by *The Press* has positioned her as a "change manager" who "swiftly created a more hierarchical organisation with a smaller team of line-managers at the top. The emphasis went from the collective to the individual." (McCrone, 2012, unpaginated).

Following the 2003 restructure, one of the new appointments made by McTurk was Stephen McArthur as Community Services General Manager, and it was McArthur who led the *Paradigm Shift* change management process. McArthur came to Christchurch from the position of Community Services General Manager for the Hutt City Council, where he was the Manager of Tim Walker, then Director of TheNewDowse, and subsequently a leading consultant on

³⁸ In 2012 the National Government amended section 10(b) of the Local Government Act 2002, replacing it with the following: [the purpose of local government is]"to meet the current and future needs of communities for good quality local infrastructure, local public services, and the performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses."

Paradigm Shift. In 2004 a local body election was held, with Garry Moore being re-elected with a significant majority, confirming the direction that Moore, McTurk and the council were taking. This can be characterised as strongly managerialist with an emphasis on individual business units meeting Key Performance Indicators, where “McTurk believed in clearly defined responsibilities and performance targets.” (McCrone, 2012, unpaginated).

In July 2004 the Christchurch City Council commissioned a report on the possible introduction of admission charges at both the Canterbury Museum and the Christchurch Art Gallery. The CAG argued strongly against this with support from the arts community. As a result a Community Services Group review team was established to report to the CCC. A report on charging prepared by the CAG and presented to the CCC in June 2005 argued that charging would have an “adverse impact on international/national reputation, visitor perception and experience” and the “long term viability of the Gallery [would be] threatened.” (McDonald, 2005, unpaginated). On the 23rd June 2005 the CCC voted against the introduction of admission charges but resolved to “Support a stronger management focus on increasing visitor numbers, increasing revenue achievements and cost effective service delivery, measured through a new KPI (Christchurch City Council, 2005). While the Christchurch Art Gallery might have won the immediate battle, it signaled an increasing tension between the CAG and the wider CCC that would have far reaching implications.

A Call for Change

Paradigm Shift Five Year Strategic Plan 2005 - 2010, a document to signal the future direction of the Gallery, was released in July 2006, along with a secondary document, *Paradigm Shift Five Year Plan: Volume 2, Recommended Actions*, which set out more explicit objectives and actions. The *Paradigm Shift* actions were wide ranging, encompassing changes to the visitor experience, exhibition programmes, public and education programmes, collecting and acquisitions, the facility, communications and commercial opportunities. A “new energy and excitement” (CCC, 2006b, p. 13) was called for, and for the physical building “to become the stage and not the performer” (CCC, 2006b, p. 13).

Specifically, exhibitions were to become varied in length, with a faster changing programme for some gallery spaces. In addition, art was to be brought out of the galleries and into the foyer spaces, with a new focus on younger and family audiences. Public programmes outside of those linked explicitly to exhibitions (such as artists talks) were recommended, including installing a children’s play space, food stalls and a weekend market in the forecourt. An Exhibitions Schedule Approval Group was established to monitor the proposed exhibitions schedule. “Under the Paradigm Shift, the General Manager [Stephen McArthur] fulfils the role of an Exhibitions Schedule Approval Group, but it is envisaged that in the future this role will be filled internally by the Director and selected staff.” (CCC, 2006b, p. 17).

Also in July 2006, following a three-month recruitment process by the CCC, it was announced that Jenny Harper would take up the position in October as incoming Director. Harper came to this role from the position of Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at Victoria University, and had previously held positions as Director of the National Art Gallery and then Director of Art and History when the National Art Gallery and National Museum amalgamated.

An art professional with extensive experience, Harper came to the Gallery with considerable cultural capital as a figure of national standing. She is also an outspoken critic who is not afraid to take a public stance, notably in 1998 and again in 2001 when, amidst considerable controversy, she refused to remove from display, in her office at Victoria University, a painting from her personal art collection, despite national media attention arising from student complaints. The painting, by artist Peter Robinson, and titled *Untitled (Pakeha Have Rights Too)* featured a swastika, and earned Harper a certain level of notoriety within the art world (Laird, 1998).

By the time Harper began the position, in October 2006, the position of Public Programmes Manager, held by Hubert Klaassens, had been disestablished, and in November 2006 Bronwyn Simes, Operations Manager, left to take up a new role, and in December Neil Roberts, Senior Curator, retired. This provided an opportunity to rebuild the management team, and on the 16th November the first two new members began – Projects and Team Facilitation Manager Neil Semple and Visitor Experience Manager Blair Jackson. In August 2007 Justin Paton was announced as the Gallery's new Senior Curator, and Sean Duxfeld took up a position soon after as Exhibitions and Collections Team Leader.

Changes quickly became apparent in the programme, which in 2006–2007 introduced projects by younger artists (Stella Brennan, Kelcy Taratoa, and a group exhibition focusing on emergent Canterbury artists), exhibition programming aimed at children (Art Detectives) and a shift out of the Gallery spaces to display artwork (video programming under the stairs, a Jan van der Ploeg mural for the foyer). The Gallery's external communications, such as the *Bulletin*, became more informal in tone, and began to share more behind the scenes activity and individual staff. Changes to the visitation were again dramatic – during the financial year 2006/2007 the audience visitation was 340,927, up 18% on the previous year. By the year ending 30 June 2009 the Gallery recorded 455,878 visitors and the cost per visitor was \$15.39.

It is important to note here that wider changes were experienced at the Christchurch City Council in 2007, with the departure of Lesley McTurk in May to a position at Housing New Zealand, followed later that year by the election of new Mayor Bob Parker. In addition, Stephen McArthur followed McTurk to Housing New Zealand in early 2008. These changes reflected a significant shift in the Christchurch political climate (McCrone, 2012) and assisted the relationship between the CAG and the CCC to be redefined from one of difficulty to one of encouragement (Jackson, interview with the author, 17 December 2012).

External Change

At 4.35 am on Saturday 4 September 2010, Christchurch was struck by a magnitude 7.1 earthquake. In accordance with the CCC's Emergency Management Plan, the Gallery was immediately utilised by the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management as its Christchurch headquarters. "Any available spaces were taken up with Civil Defence and also City Council staff as the new Civic building, still not officially opened, sustained interior damage requiring extensive repairs before it was habitable." (Harper, 2012, p. 1). Although the city itself had sustained damage to property and roads, particularly within the CBD and Eastern suburbs, there were no fatalities:

It was a wild ride on Saturday, for sure, and it will take some time for parts of Christchurch to clean up. However, our Gallery has emerged unscathed as a building. In fact, we're so safe that we're being used as civil defence HQ at present. (Harper, 2010).

The Gallery was closed for ten days, re-opening on the 14th September and continuing preparation for the upcoming major exhibition *Ron Mueck*, a touring show from the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. "*Ron Mueck* became by far the most successful paid exhibition in Christchurch - ever. Queues stretched out of the building, across the forecourt, and down the street. We had 135,000 visitors."³⁹ (Harper, 2012, p. 2).

A new season of exhibitions opened on the 10th February 2011, and the Gallery was conservatively anticipating 700,000 visitors for the 2010-2011 financial year. However, at just before 12.51pm, on 22 February, Christchurch was hit by another major earthquake. Although this earthquake registered 6.3 on the Richter scale, it was located close to the surface, causing more damage than the previous one. Timing of this event meant that more people were in the inner city, which, with a high proportion of older brick buildings, proved extremely vulnerable.

Round lunchtime on 22 February, seventeen days after *De-Building* opened, the room I was sitting in with ten other colleagues began to rack around violently. Elsewhere in the building, shelves lurched forward like drunks and spat out hundreds of books; gas bottles you'd need two people to lift fell and spun like skittles; and, in *De-Building* itself, Robinson's four metre high monoliths shook and toppled, like props in some end-of-the-world blockbuster. Measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale, the quake was later described as an aftershock, a 'natural consequence' of the September quake. But there was no comparison...

³⁹ In fact, the largest visitation to a single show was the exhibition *Te Māori Te Hokinga Mai* at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery in 1986, but it is significant that Harper, along with other staff at the Christchurch Art Gallery, perceive *Ron Mueck* as the most popular. The narrative of the *Ron Mueck* show demonstrating a turning point for the Gallery was reiterated by all staff interviewed.

The difference between September and February, you might say, was the difference between bent and broken. (Paton, 2011c, p. 9)

185 people died in the February Canterbury earthquake, and extensive damage occurred across the city, particularly in the central city and eastern suburbs. Significant levels of liquefaction and surface flooding were also experienced. Many houses and buildings were uninhabitable, with an estimated 10,000 houses requiring demolition and over 100,000 damaged.

Regional emergency operations command was once again established by the Civil Defence in the Christchurch Art Gallery, and on the 23rd of February the Minister of Civil Defence, John Carter, declared a State of National Emergency. This time Civil Defence occupied the Gallery for seven months, and, at the time of writing, the Gallery itself is not anticipated to reopen to the public until mid 2015. Although the building suffered no major structural damage, it is no longer sitting level, and will require an anticipated \$36.7 million to lift the building and reinforce it.

The Gallery resumed blogging on the 14th March, with a post by Librarian Tim Jones on the clean up of the library, initially posting every three to five days, and was back to posting almost daily by June 2011. In October 2011 it began to use Facebook as a further tool to communicate with audiences. In December 2011 it expanded *Outer Spaces*, which had focused on non-gallery spaces within the building, to launch a new programme beyond the Gallery building itself. The first in this new series was the display of a video, *The Creation of the World*, by Melbourne-based, Christchurch-raised artist, Ronnie van Hout, in the window of a house opposite the Gallery on Worcester Boulevard. In February 2012 the Gallery opened a temporary exhibition space in the NG building at 212 Madras Street, with the inaugural exhibition being *Meet me at the other side*, by Christchurch artist Julia Morison. The Gallery began an active programme of *Outer Spaces* and NG exhibitions, with 34 projects opening in 2012.

In May 2012 the Gallery announced that due to the prolonged closure it would disestablish 17 roles, many part-time, primarily in Visitor Services and the Gallery shop, as well as the position of Development Manager, and three Conservation positions.

Summary

The history of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery and its subsidiary organisation, the Annex, can be understood as integral to understanding the Christchurch Art Gallery and it is important to acknowledge the complexity of these prior histories when considering the motivations and actions of the Christchurch Art Gallery today. The considerable influence of strong individual personalities can be seen throughout the history of the RMAG. Over much of its history the staffing at the Gallery was limited, meaning that the story of its personalities is largely focused on successive Directors. Later the staff increased considerably, and Neil Roberts must be identified as a further

significant person, as Senior Curator for nearly three decades (and sole curator for much of that time).

Such an emphasis on personality meant that the relationship to the wider field of the local arts community was one of engagement but also at times of tension, with frequent struggles for cultural capital. This conflict was felt particularly between the Gallery and other formally organised art networks in Christchurch, initially the Canterbury Society of the Arts and The Group, and, increasingly, the Canterbury University School of Fine Arts. The establishment of the Gallery was at least partly a reflection of the already strong local arts community, but the strength of the existing community meant the Gallery was not automatically dominant. Instead, the Gallery, at least in the early years, competed for primacy and authority with other organisations in a shifting dynamic. Here it is useful to consider Bourdieu's description of the field, and to understand the particular field of the Gallery as operating within larger fields, the local and national arts communities, spaces where "each social field of practice (including society as a whole) can be understood as a competitive game or "field of struggles" in which actors strategically improvise in their quest to maximise their positions." (Grenfell, 2008, p. 53).

Two specific elements have contributed to this tension. The first is the competing desires (among those within the institution and without) for an institution of national significance and for an institution that supported and encouraged local practitioners. Here the Gallery's early connections with the CSA are especially significant, given the CSA's mandate of commitment to a local constituency. The CSA's involvement in the establishment of the Gallery led to heightened expectations of the Gallery's progress, further encouraged by the strong connections between the two organisations, such as Baverstock's professional involvement in both.

The second element is the tension arising from competing audience expectations regarding contemporary and traditional art, with some constituents wanting the Gallery to assume a role as a forward-looking supporter of contemporary art practice, with others desiring a more conservative position that upheld a historical art canon. The conflict was extended by the changing nature of art galleries, and a growing professionalism and emphasis on training within the sector. In more recent years the tension was extended by the perceived needs of a core, art audience and the desire to reach out to wider, more general audiences.

The history is particular to the specific histories and experiences of the Canterbury region, but also resonates with a wider history of the establishment and development of other arts institutions nationally, which sits outside the scope of this thesis.⁴⁰ The early history of most New Zealand public art galleries was entwined with local art societies, and many of the

⁴⁰ Of special note here are theses on the Auckland Art Gallery by Maria Brown (Brown, 1999); Courtney Johnston (Johnston, 2004) and Sophie Steff (Steff, 1999); the Dunedin Public Art Gallery by Frances Speer (Speer, 2006); and regional art galleries by Anne Harlow (Harlow, 2006) and Athol McCredie (McCredie, 1999). In addition there is a monograph on the Dunedin Public Art Gallery by Peter Entwistle (Entwistle, 1990).

struggles for position between institution and society can be understood as similar across the different regions.

Athol McCredie has written,

Art Societies made an important contribution to New Zealand art in the late 19th Century ... at this time the Societies were almost the only focus for artistic effort and venue for exhibitions ... but after WW1 the Societies gradually became a conservative, powerfully inhibiting force on New Zealand art. (McCredie, 1999, p. 60).

In 1988 the Gallery opened a subsidiary organisation, the Annex, whose establishment allowed the Gallery to split its operations in two distinct directions, with more traditional, conservative programming at the RMAG and more contemporary and project-oriented programming at the Annex. This served to acknowledge and respond to perceived limitations in both the physical gallery space and programming. However, the Annex was only a temporary solution to a long-held desire (held by both members of Gallery staff and members of the wider arts community) to expand the basic Gallery premises. The push for expansion began to build momentum, ultimately culminating in the opening of the new Christchurch Art Gallery in 2003.

Conclusion

The themes I have highlighted through this truncated history are revealed by my research to also be dominant in the history of change at the Christchurch Art Gallery. There has been recurring tension between the institution and the wider field of the Canterbury arts community, and between notions of regionalism and nationalism. Those issues reveal the role of strong, individual personalities and their impact on both the Gallery's activities and its public reception, attesting to Wegerich's assertion that "powerful stakeholders are the key to understanding the dynamics within society." (Wegerich, 2001, p. 18).

The cultural and symbolic capital each successive Director brought to the institution, working with the specific nature of their individual habitus (derived from previous experiences, both personal and professional) acted as either an enabler or impediment to their ability to connect the work of the Gallery to audiences, particularly the local arts community. Demonstrating the fluid nature of power within both the habitus and capital, where "organisational intervention might result when dissonances between the conditions under which the habitus was acquired or subsequently shaped and the current organisational setting" (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008, p. 30), such a state was not static.

Individual Directors experienced periods of authority followed by periods where their authority was attacked, engaging in a continual struggle for dominance over the organisational field. For example, Baverstock began his career at the Gallery in a position of considerable respect among the local

arts community yet ended it with a reputation as conservative and inflexible. Similarly, Tony Preston was able to generate cultural capital to such an extent it produced remarkable economic capital, enabling the building of the new Christchurch Art Gallery, a considerable achievement of fundraising and community engagement. However, within a few years his standing had fallen to such a degree his position was publicly scrutinised in the *Paradigm Shift* report and he left his position as Director not long afterwards.

Another critical element to consider in the history of the RMAG is the relationship between the Gallery and its principal funding body, the Christchurch City Council. This relationship can be understood as constituting another field, a continuous yet changing space of struggle for dominance. Longstanding tensions over purchasing policies for artworks appeared to have been resolved in 1972 when the CCC awarded the Director of the RMAG agency over artwork acquisition, but new conflict emerged over the development of a new building and competing expectations for its outcome. The increasingly managerial role of the CCC under the leadership of Mayor Garry Moore and Chief Executive Lesley McTurk during the early period of the CAG's history can be seen to have produced an increasingly fraught relationship between the Gallery and the wider Council.

An institution is society in the micro, revealed as a continual series of battles between individual agents and a wider social structure, where "the generative, unifying principle of this system is the struggle, with all the contradictions it engenders" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 34). To understand this push-pull effect I have sought to bring "together an inter-dependent and constructed trio - the field, capital and habitus - with none of them primary, dominant or causal." (Thomson in Grenfell, 2008, p. 67). In this way we can understand that the nature of the relationship between habitus, capital and field is never resolved, but rather, constantly and variously negotiated. Whatever power structure is established within a field at the moment of examination must be understood to be inherently unstable and thus able to be disestablished through subsequent change in the individual habitus.

CHAPTER FOUR: A CHANGING ORGANISATION

These small changes in the doing of things were in themselves a feat. And they do herald more to come. Because the making of these small changes changed us and these changes inside us were not small; we were profoundly different now than we had been before. (Griffin in Lacey, 2010, p. 99).

Introduction

Change, as indicated in the epigram by Susan Griffin, above, is often an accumulative process. Following the narrative of the history of the Christchurch Art Gallery within the context of its two predecessors, The Robert McDougall Art Gallery and the Annex, Chapter Four details internal and external changes experienced by the Christchurch Art Gallery. In addressing my primary research question: *How has the Christchurch Art Gallery experienced and articulated change following a series of major upheavals?* I argue that significant organisational change developed as a result of two rare events – the *Paradigm Shift* review and the Canterbury earthquakes.

In this chapter I explore the initial change period of the *Paradigm Shift* and the subsequent reshaping of Gallery culture through specific reconfigurations of operations, strategic direction and relationships. In doing so, I draw on Bourdieu's notion of field (Bourdieu, 1993; 1997) to understand the particular social and institutional structure of the Gallery. Through a variety of primary sources I have set out to describe the unique field of the Gallery and the particular nature of the power relations percolating within the organisation.

I begin by demonstrating a shift in exhibition programming through the period 2003–2010. Examination of the changes suggests that this can be understood as an expansion of exhibition methods rather than an entirely new change in direction. This chapter also explores the recent changes in programming within the context of the earlier history, particularly that of the Annex, and finds that to some extent the recent approach can be viewed as a return to previous practice at that institution. The second part of this chapter explores the Gallery's changing approach to audience engagement. My research finds that the most significant changes are not in the exhibition programme, but rather within nuances of tone and flavour expressed through Gallery interpretative material.

Following this focus on the external outcomes of change, the two final sections address internal culture changes at the Gallery. Firstly, I document adjustments made to office procedures, and describe how the specifics of meeting plans and processes are perceived as less pivotal than a shift in perception around the relationship between management and staff and a new sense of shared vision. Secondly, I describe the different approaches to

strategic planning taken by the Gallery, demonstrating that, while a strictly documented change in strategic direction was a pivotal step in shifting the organisational culture of the Gallery, strategic documentation itself does not play a significant role in the Gallery's current operations or perception of self.

The chapter ends with a summary of my considerations to date, concerning the initial change period. I have drawn on current findings within organisational change literature, exploring notions of collective storytelling to allow groups to make sense of new and changing circumstances (Weick, 1995; Gabriel, 2000; Reissner, 2008). In particular, I introduce the concept of conversion narrative (Bryant & Cox, 2004), where collective storytelling is deployed to generate a positive or heroic change in the identity of the Gallery.

This chapter reveals that, although the initial *Paradigm Shift* plan was explicit in articulating specific actions and outcomes, subsequent change evolved through less detailed methods. Instead this was driven primarily by individual personalities (institutional entrepreneurs) and a change in organisational style (the restructuring of field). It establishes that the majority of staff members interviewed downplayed planned organisational management, emphasising more personality-led and intangible qualities of change, a point then explored in further detail in the following chapters. This chapter begins to demonstrate the importance of institutional entrepreneurship (Fligstein, 1997; 2001) in developing collective narratives and storytelling, strategies that have contributed to the organisation's sense of resilience.

I have applied Bourdieu's three key concepts to the organisation; that is, field, capital and habitus, as described in Chapter One. I am particularly concerned with how Bourdieu's work facilitates understanding of the process by which organisational change can emerge out of individual actions. I draw on Bourdieu's theories to help me understand and articulate the particular point of change within the organisation, and how it might be led by new personalities asserting themselves through bringing different forms of practice to extend or challenge the existing practices of the field. Organisational change, as Emirbayer and Johnson posit, "might be understood to emerge from a pattern of mismatches between members' habitus and their positions in the organisation-as-field." (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008, p. 29-30). Again, this lens to view and understand the research is further utilised in Chapters Five and Six.

Exhibitions and Artists: Opening Up

It hadn't re-thought itself very much. It had opened in a new building, but it had seemed to pick up the former Robert McDougall layout and popped it upstairs in the new collection display. I thought that the opportunity of rethinking what was being done was missed at the time of re-opening. (Harper, interview with author, 18 December 2012).

Director of the Christchurch Art Gallery, Jenny Harper's position on the exhibition programme directly echoes a review she wrote of the Gallery just months after it opened, when she declared, "while it is good to have an art gallery at ease with being a gallery ... some of the provocative and hotly-debated initial hangs of the reinstated Tate Britain would have been a welcome foil to the feeling that the cherished McDougall had simply been transferred to its new site." (Harper, 2003a, p. 3). Harper was, at the time of the initial review, writing in the role of an external critic and academic, but considered today the text assumes the mantle of a manifesto for her time as Director.

An exhibition programme for a public art gallery is conventionally composed of a series of building blocks of different types of shows, bringing together diverse elements to create a broad programme for audiences. A typical programme series includes thematic group shows, international blockbusters or more populist shows, commissioned artist projects and monographic surveys of established practitioners (Blazwick, 2009, pp. 14-23).

The inaugural exhibition programme for the Christchurch Art Gallery contained a range of exhibition types, including a retrospective of the noted regional artist W. A. Sutton, a thematic exhibition of contemporary Ngāi Tahu artists, *The Allure Of Light – Turner To Cézanne: European Masterpieces*, a major touring exhibition and a new commission by Auckland sculptor Virginia King.

Over the next 18 months, the Gallery commissioned a number of new exhibitions by contemporary artists, including Christchurch printmaker Denise Copland, Christchurch painter and printmaker Nigel Buxton, Wellington painter Margaret Elliot and Auckland artist Nancy deFreitas. However, while the Gallery was commissioning contemporary work, the artists selected were largely practitioners with regional profiles only, and exhibiting new bodies of work that extended their previous practices.

This focus on artists with a regional background stood in contrast to the programmes of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery and the Annex, which, in the two years leading up to the closure of the Annex, included work by artists such as Saskia Leek, Tony de Latour, Peter Robinson, Michael Stevenson, Ronnie van Hout and Seraphine Pick. All of these artists were beginning to establish themselves nationally with a growing profile and continued to rise in prominence over the following decade. The new focus therefore demonstrated a move back to a regional Canterbury focus, and an emphasis on less risky programming than the Annex had accommodated.⁴¹

⁴¹ While criticism of the programming during this period was expressed by staff interviewed for this thesis, at the time, the most vocal academic critic of this programming was, as indicated previously, now Director Jenny Harper. Fellow commentators Denis Dutton and Julie King were largely positive, although both were critical of aspects of the collection exhibitions (Harper, Brown, Dutton & King, 2003). Beyond this, discussion of problems within exhibition programming at the new CAG was circulated in social media, particularly the online arts discussion forum Art Bash, retrieved from www.artbash.co.nz.

Curator Felicity Milburn has a longstanding professional relationship with the Gallery. She began as a volunteer as an art history student, then in 1996 was appointed Curatorial Assistant at the Annex and then Curator at the Annex from 1998, becoming incorporated into the staff at the RMAG in 2000 and is currently employed as a Curator for the Christchurch Art Gallery. As such, she is the sole female curator at the CAG, and the longest serving, with a particular interest in the history of the Gallery. In 2000 she co-wrote, with then Senior Curator Neil Roberts, *A Concise History of Art in Canterbury 1850-2000*, a book that I found particularly useful for Chapter Three (Roberts & Milburn, 2000).

A key member of the original *Paradigm Shift* team, she is an enthusiast for the changes that have occurred at the Gallery post-*Paradigm Shift*, and reflects, "there was an expectation that the exhibitions needed to be 'bigger' than the kind done at the Annex, i.e. very big name artists, or very populist." (Milburn, interview with the author, 17 December 2012). Milburn is positive about the arrival of Jenny Harper as Director and Justin Paton as Senior Curator, and, in both interviews I conducted with her, credited the two of them as significant drivers in the post-*Paradigm Shift* change.

A belief that the Gallery programme was too homogeneous and staid during that early period was echoed by all staff interviewed for this research, including those working at the Gallery prior to the *Paradigm Shift*. Chris Pole has worked at the Gallery since 2002, starting initially as a Preparator and now employed as an Exhibition Designer. He is also a practicing artist, who studied at the local School of Fine Arts at Canterbury University, and an opinionated and lively interviewee. Pole expressed frustration at the lack of broader planning:

When the Gallery opened there was that whole thing of 'something for everyone'. But there wasn't something for everyone; it didn't quite pan out that way. There were gaps and weaknesses in the programme, and there were times when there was really poor planning, where you'd have three shows on at once and two of them are black and white photographs. You weren't offering that genuine diversity. (Pole, interview with the author, 18 December 2012).

While Pole accepts that there was a learning process with a new building, "they're vast spaces, they're quite cold and cavernous, with the stone floor and the black roof" (Pole, interview with the author, 18 December 2012), he is emphatic that the key change to the programme was the recruitment of Senior Curator Justin Paton, "I saw the change that happened with someone like him coming on board, empowering other curators, and being much more of a curatorially driven programme." (Pole, interview with the author, 18 December 2012).

Justin Paton arrived at the Gallery in late 2006, coming from a position as the sole curator at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Paton has a background as an arts journalist and writer who grew up in Christchurch. His time at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery was notable for a new emphasis on mid and senior curator artist monographs accompanied by a substantial publishing

programme. His approach at the DPAG was arguably less experimental than the programmes delivered by previous curators such as Robert Leonard, but demonstrated his curatorial practice as both highly prolific and underpinned with solid research. Paton has a high profile nationally through his authorship of the book *How To Look At A Painting* (Paton, 2005) and fronting a subsequent TV series of the same name for TVNZ. He had also begun to develop networks in Australia that extended to writing a book about Australian sculptor Ricky Swallow.⁴²

Paton can therefore be understood to have entered the Gallery with significant symbolic and cultural capital, through his experience and external endorsement in the national and international art worlds. This could have been experienced by existing staff as threatening, particularly given that outgoing Senior Curator, Neil Roberts, had come to the Gallery directly from study and had no previous professional experience as a curator. However, in Paton's favour were his strong links to Christchurch (born and raised, studied art history at Canterbury University and worked as a reviewer for *The Press*), combined with a personal charisma which earned him the description by a blog writer as "the thinking woman's crumpet" (Dann, 2013). In addition, Paton had already established a working relationship with the Gallery earlier that year when he co-curated, with CAG curator Felicity Milburn, the exhibition *Julia Morison: a loop around a loop* (a partnership exhibition between the DPAG and the CAG).

With Paton's arrival at the CAG changes were quickly discernable. The first noticeable change to programming was the expansion of the exhibitions outside of the galleries and into the public spaces, both inside and outside the building.

One of the things we tried to get up and running reasonably soon was some kind of programme that would pull out from the galleries and into the wider spaces. So we called that Outer Spaces and we put the billboard on the side of the building, we started to have regular installations in the foyer, we had video art under the stairs, we commissioned things for the top of the stairs, we painted over the bunker⁴³. (Paton, interview with the author, 17 December 2012).

Increasing the presence of art around the building was a key recommendation of the *Paradigm Shift*, in an attempt to address a perception that the building's entrance, while architecturally impressive, was cold and unwelcoming.

Art will spill out of the galleries into the Gallery foyer, forecourt and garden, bringing new life to the building and surrounding environment,

⁴² Paton, J. (2004). *Ricky Swallow: Field Recordings*. Melbourne, Australia: Thames and Hudson.

⁴³ "The Bunker" is a colloquial term used by the Gallery to describe the service entry to the underground carpark, in the Gallery forecourt. Extending this theme, the Gallery's blog is titled *Bunker Notes*.

creating a heightened interest in what is happening at the Gallery. (Christchurch City Council, 2006a).

The tension between the differing needs of architecture and exhibition within a newly developed gallery often produces “a question of a conflict relationship, where both parties are on trial concerning a difference.” (Kimmelman, 2001, unpaginated). The Bilbao Effect, raised earlier in Chapter Three, applies starchitecture – punning on the terms “star” and “architecture” – to a cultural destination in an attempt to stimulate urban regeneration. This correlation between museums and architecture is complex, as Michael Kimmelman writes, “museums wanted architects ... partly because just about the only aspect of the museum over which institutional authority had not yet totally eroded was the outside of the building.” (Kimmelman, 2001, unpaginated).

There is precedent, then, for new architecture to both boost but also overwhelm its new institution. Two years after the Christchurch Art Gallery’s opening, management were widely perceived by other staff as being captured by the architects, so that the building was held as sacrosanct, with limited possibilities to intervene within the space beyond conventional hangs within those spaces clearly designated as galleries.

There was this idea that you couldn’t do certain things. There was a preciousness about the building ... And it possibly took that change, for someone [else] to come in and say, well, why not? Why can’t we mount something on the greystone wall? I don’t care what the architect said – we paid them to build the thing. We’ve got it, and this is what we’re going to do. It’s for us, and it’s for the people. (Pole, interview with the author, 18 December 2012).

The new Christchurch Art Gallery continued to build relationships with Australian galleries to provide partnerships for international exhibitions. Both *The Allure Of Light – Turner To Cézanne: European Masterpieces* (2003) and *Ron Mueck* (2010) were National Gallery of Victoria touring exhibitions, in exclusive New Zealand showings. But, while *The Allure Of Light* conjured up the past, *Ron Mueck* spoke to a contemporary age, connecting outside the art world to current interests in special effects and filmic props. Programming for children also became a priority, with the Monica Richards Gallery becoming a dedicated space for family-friendly exhibitions. Exhibitions became more varied in length, with shorter contemporary projects programmed alongside longer-term projects in *Outer Spaces*.

The *Paradigm Shift* called for “a balanced selection of the following exhibition types: blockbuster, international, children’s, cutting edge, contemporary, historical, Māori, Pacific and niche (special interest)” (CCC, 2006b). Initially GANTT⁴⁴ charts used by the Gallery in the planning process coded each show by genre, in contrasting colours, to ensure appropriate representation of each type of show was being tracked. This practice was

⁴⁴ GANTT Charts are a form of bar charts used to illustrate a project schedule, developed initially by Henry Gantt in the 1910s.

gradually discontinued over time, as staff became more confident with programming and moved further away from the *Paradigm Shift* time. The curatorial staff interviewed emphasised that programming now is driven by an intuitive and creative process, rather than responding to external targets.

What I hope is that the quite formulaic or programmatic thinking that drove that colour coding, and this top-down idea of how you divvy up the schedule, is no longer necessary because we're thinking differently in all we do. It's almost like we've internalised that sense of, well, if there's not a kid's show on the horizon we're doing something wrong. Moreover, having done those kids shows, we began thinking more and more about having something within every show that might just be good for kids. A good show should be good for kids anyway – if our normal shows aren't appealing right across the bandwidth of ages then we're probably doing something wrong. (Paton, interview with the author, 17 December, 2012).

While the perception of all staff interviewed was that changes to the exhibition programme were driven and enabled by the incoming management and, crucially, the appointment of Justin Paton, for Felicity Milburn the post-*Paradigm Shift* programme recalls an earlier mode of exhibition practice, when the two prior institutions, the Robert McDougall Art Gallery and the Annex, operated in tandem.

Milburn recalls the Annex as a largely autonomous organisation, running its own exhibition programme, which was more contemporary and activated than the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. The Annex also operated its own mailing list, branding and logo, and, located quite separately from the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, was perceived by many visitors as an independent space.

There was definitely the sense it was a world under its own steam and, although in terms of the lines of authority it was under the governance of the McDougall and the people who worked there were responsible to the Director and so forth, it had a much more independent feel, because it was independently programmed to a large extent. (Milburn, interview with the author, 18 December 2012).

For Milburn, the exhibition programme and culture of the Christchurch Art Gallery has shifted to reflect the mode of exhibition making practiced earlier at the Annex. She describes the achievements as accumulative:

The positive feature of the Gallery is that it's really confident. And when you're confident you know that a single show doesn't make or break things. If it's good and if you believe in it, it's worth doing and you just make it happen. That's a huge shift. (Milburn, interview with the author, 18 December 2012).

The internal perception of the exhibition programme, therefore, is marked by a sense of progression, with staff feeling that significant change has been achieved. Milburn is alone in identifying the new approach to programming to

that undertaken by the Annex, however, it's important to note that Milburn is also the only staff member interviewed with direct experience of working at the Annex.

In tandem with changes to the exhibition programme a new relationship was developed with artists, identified by all staff interviewed apart from Lynley McDougall, Visitor Services and Facilities Manager (a role, it should be noted, that does not specifically come into contact with exhibiting artists). This was defined by all staff as a closer working relationship with artists included in the programme, but also a wider awareness of artists as a larger community or sector, outside of direct working roles.

Blair Jackson, Deputy Director and Visitor Experience Manager, was appointed by Jenny Harper in 2006, and started at the Gallery on the same day as Neil Semple. Previously the Public Programmes Manager at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Blair had worked closely in this role with Justin Paton, a tight working relationship continued in their current positions. Although Jackson has worked for many years as an art gallery professional he originally trained at the Canterbury University School of Fine Arts, and still identifies himself strongly with the artist community.

Blair Jackson states,

A very simple example is that artists are now invited to opening whereas before they weren't. Artists are an integral part of the programme for us, working with artists is what drives us, whereas I would suggest that, pre-Paradigm Shift, artists were slightly a nuisance. We'd like to think that we were artist-friendly, whereas I'm not certain the Gallery was perceived as artist-friendly before. (Jackson, interview with the author, 17 December 2012).

Nathan Pohio is an Exhibition Designer who began working at the Gallery in 2002 in the role of technician. He is involved in the arts community in a number of roles beyond this, as an artist whose work was included in the Gallery's opening exhibition *Te Puawai*, and represented commercially by Christchurch Gallerist Jonathan Smart, and as a long-serving Trustee of the Physics Room, an art project space for emergent and experimental practices. Pohio identified a heightened sense of expectation among local artists in the lead up to the Gallery opening, an excitement that he suggests then translated into disappointment as the Gallery's programme unfolded during that first year of opening. While Pohio asserts that the one-on-one working relationships with artists during exhibition installation was largely positive, he remarked that after the *Paradigm Shift*,

There was instantly a shift toward discussions about the artist, their practice, and what their ideas meant for any potential project. It seemed to me that the culture of the institution was being revised, because now the artist's intent was supported throughout the entire Gallery, top to bottom. The artist's intent became the defining part of

our purpose and I must say with a focus I hadn't seen previously. This approach sometimes means a big increase in workload and expense but it also provides a more satisfying process and outcome. (Pohio, interview with the author, 5 April 2013).

All staff that identified a significant change in working with artists perceived this as resulting from intangible shifts in approach rather than a more formal change in tactics. Jackson states, "I haven't seen the way I work with artists change since the day I left Art School, it's just what we do, or what I do." (Jackson, interview with the author, 17 December 2012). Paton agrees, "I think there's a much stronger sense now of artists being allies of the organisation, and just being trusted. They're not seen as strange visitors within our systems." (Paton, interview with the author, 17 December 2012).

While staff gave individual anecdotes to indicate a particular change in relationship with artists, when questioned further, they identified the major change as one of perception and mood. While Felicity Milburn traced this as a return to the mode of practice used at the Annex, and other staff (such as Harper, Jackson and Paton) traced this to professional practices they brought with them to the Gallery, the wider context of an institutional shift towards artists, detailed in Chapter Two in the section New Institutionalism, is also relevant.

More tangible changes in working with artists, in terms of shifts in project management or process, were identified as emerging later, post-earthquakes, to accommodate a markedly different operating environment. This will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

A New Engagement with Audiences

This section examines the Gallery's public communications, and asks, to what extent their approach changed as a result of the *Paradigm Shift* process. Museums and galleries have traditionally utilised communications as a tool to establish an authorial voice, entrenching the museum's scholarly credentials. Lynn Zelavansky, Director of the Carnegie Museum of Art, suggests the common perception of the museum is of that of a distant, powerful, and monolithic entity that "speaks with a single voice" (Zelavansky in Welchman, 2006, p. 172). Zelavansky's proposition is for museums to engage a range of different voices, a method deployed at the Carnegie largely through social media, such as the staff blog, where various members blog under their own names and with individual styles and voices.⁴⁵

The shift in pitch from an anonymous and universal voice to one that is more individuated and personalised can be understood within the context of an international move towards what curator Nina Möntmann asserts is "now the central task of the museum: to relate to new publics." (Möntmann, 2006, p.

⁴⁵ <http://blog.cmoa.org>.

33).⁴⁶ This shift, discussed in detail in Chapter Two, reflects a move away from modernist museum practices which privilege distance and objectivity, to what Eileen Hooper-Greenhill (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000) termed the post-museum, highly communicative, interpretive and subjective.

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, galleries and museums internationally have increasingly been challenged to personalise audience communication. In a study commissioned by Arts Council England in 2006, John Knell suggested that arts organisations are coming under growing pressure to become responsive, customer focused organisations, which seek to engage customers in more dialogue and collaboration (Knell, 2006). By early 2014 the Gallery utilises a range of standard public gallery mechanisms to communicate with audiences; interpretative exhibition text, media releases, Gallery website, social media (Facebook, blog, and Twitter) and the longstanding quarterly magazine, the *Bulletin*. There is a distinctively informal tone to the current communications.

However, the early days of the Christchurch Art Gallery adopted a more formal approach in its public messaging. There was a sense of authority in the delivery, and a certain reserve in tone. Introducing and launching the inaugural exhibition programme for the new Christchurch Art Gallery in 2003, Public Programmes Manager Hubert Klaassens represented the exhibition planning as a measured and logical process. He emphasised the use of formal procedures, and created a sense of distance by writing in the third person and making extensive use of the passive voice.

The opening exhibitions were selected and programmed to reflect key messages about the new Gallery – that it is for everyone, and that it will present a high quality, diverse programme of stimulating exhibitions. To get there, the planning team tested individual exhibition proposals against various criteria, including uniqueness, quality, relevance (to the Gallery's mission), and cost. Approved proposals were then compared, selected, and programmed to achieve variety and balance in content and appeal.

... The schedule will continue to feature themes of interest to different audience types, including younger and generalist audiences, and our Māori, Pacific and Asian communities. As to meeting visitor's expectations, this question will be addressed by way of in-depth market research and programme evaluation. (Klaassens, 2003, p. 5, 7).

In contrast, writing in the same publication in 2012, Director Jenny Harper took a more personalised and less formal approach to similar terrain, that is, introducing the broad shape of Gallery activities. Unlike Klaassens, Harper made frequent use of more inclusive terms such as "we" "our" and "us", and utilised active phrases.

⁴⁶ Dr. Nina Möntmann is Professor and Head of the Department of Art Theory and the History of Ideas at the Royal University College of Fine Arts in Stockholm. She has been a strong influence on new institutionalism as a curator and critic, particularly in her time as curator at the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art (NIFCA) between 2003 - 2006.

While we've been closed we have been very busy behind the scenes. Enforced closure has also made us look hard at the way we present art and try to find ways for a Gallery with no exhibition spaces to stay relevant. The term we've been using among ourselves is the 'Gallery without walls'.

For us, this means continuing our *Outer Spaces* programme to bring works out to our forecourt. It means looking hard at our website, finding new ways to interact with viewers, as well as working harder at existing means. And *Bunker Notes*, the gallery's blog, is running full throttle with our curators and other staff sharing what's happening behind the scenes and in our storerooms with you. (Harper, 2011, p. 4)

Harper's text demonstrates ownership over the activities presented, with the writer placing herself at the heart of the action. While Klaasson's text frequently draws on measures of performance to express value ("quality", "approved") Harper's text steers away from this to talk of "relevant" – positioning the Gallery as contemporary rather than hierarchical.

Paton emphasises the significance of a change in tenor with Gallery interpretation, identifying informality as a key shift for the institution. In my interview with him he stated,

I think what made them want to come was just the sum of many small shifts in tone and shifts in feeling. The individual artworks have a lot to do with it, but then it's also the way those artworks are put alongside each other, and it's the way you sign those artworks, and then it's what kind of space they have within the building, and it's the way you speak about the artwork. At its best, I think all this adds up to an institutional character or personality that I hope has come through more and more strongly.

And:

It's through those super subtle, sometimes almost unnoticeable hints and cues and clues that you're giving off about how you're feeling about the things you're showing, and therefore the permission that you give your viewers in front of those objects. It can be as simple as using "it's" instead of "it is" on a wall label. You know, if it's just a smidge more informal and casual sounding, people are disarmed that little, crucial amount, and might be just that bit more willing to step up and have an ordinary conversation with the work. (Paton, interview with the author, 17 December 2012).

Immediately prior to the opening of the Christchurch Art Gallery, the *Bulletin* was updated, in an issue launching the new Gallery brand. This version was renamed the *B.* and presented a more stylised corporate look, featuring fashion photography of Director Tony Preston and members of the senior management team in dramatic full-page individual portraits. For example, on page 22 Preston poses, facing side on to camera, dressed in suit and tie, against a background of traditional painting frames. The tone is formal and

staged. Large pull quotes were set against backdrops of the new building ("this superb new facility represents the most remarkable value for the cultural dollar in New Zealand" (Preston, 2002)) and the general look and feel was slick and highly produced.

The *Bulletin* underwent a further visual change in issue 154 (2008), expanding to a larger, square format and a looser, magazine aesthetic. While many of the regular features remained, new features were introduced, such as *The Year in Review*, an annual one page document providing official data for the year; on audience visitation, purchases, loans, exhibitions and publications. *The Year in Review* expands beyond the usual remit of gallery reporting by listing external projects staff are involved in, including publications, lectures, workshops and professional advice.

The Year In Review is one of a series of initiatives that aimed for greater transparency, opening up both backroom operations and individual personalities. A further new feature debuted in issue 156 (2009), a one-page article and photograph profiling a different team at the Gallery each issue, introducing who is in the team, and providing a brief overview of the team's role.

And the best moment of the job? Blair is in no doubt: "the first time I walked into Daniel Crooks's exhibition *Everywhere Instantly* once it was up and running. I was totally mesmerised by the sheer scale and sound of the show!" (Christchurch Art Gallery, 2009, p. 50).

This shift to informality and personalisation in communication therefore began post-*Paradigm Shift*, as a direct result of the changes. However this informality and personalisation greatly increased following the Canterbury earthquakes, with a more individual take. I will discuss this later development in Chapter Five.

The Organisational Field

Staff culture is a colloquial term that suggests an invisible internal dynamic, the collective pulse of the organisation. Bourdieu's field is a more nuanced term for this, describing the sense of values, expectations and lifestyle of a social group, a collective way of being that is constantly (re)produced through everyday activities and experiences. Drawing on Bourdieu I understand power relations as not static, but rather, culturally and symbolically created and in the process of being constantly reaffirmed through the interplay of individual agency and social structure, or habitus and field (Bourdieu, 1990).

The initial period of institutional change, after a structure or field has been dismantled and the new field is yet to be developed, has been termed the neutral zone in organisational change literature, "the time and place when the old habits that are no longer adaptive to the situation are extinguished and new, better-adapted patterns of habits begin to take shape." (Bridges, 2009, p. 6).

With the replacement of the CAG's Gallery Executive and Management Team in 2006 following the *Paradigm Shift* process, organisational design had been stripped back. Upon his appointment, Projects and Facilitation Manager Neil Semple took advantage of this time to interview each of the staff, asking them what changes would make their job easier, and "pretty much everyone had a problem with other people's delivery time." (Semple, interview with the author, 17 December 2012). The systems he set up in response were to streamline the process from exhibition concept to exhibition delivery, but also to enable greater understanding between teams of the pressures and obstacles of each specific role.

Maybe the curator's delaying the works list because they're just holding out for the better work or they're just waiting to hear back from a particular lender – they don't do it on purpose. They do it for the good of the exhibition. (Semple, interview with the author, 17 December 2012).

Neil Semple's position was a new one, created post-*Paradigm Shift* in acknowledgement of the need to establish and nurture staff bonds, particularly between management and staff. Semple describes the role as responding to "the thought that the culture inside the Gallery wasn't working properly, there was this kind of silo effect." (Semple, interview with the author, 17 December 2012). The position can be understood as straddling the traditional roles of project management and human resources. Semple came to the Gallery from the position of Exhibitions Manager at City Gallery Wellington, a role that he had held for nine years. He is also the husband of art historian Lara Strongman, a former Curator of the Annex, and former Senior Curator at City Gallery Wellington. While his position continues to contain an element of strategic facilitation, his role has been redefined with the shorter title Projects Manager, acknowledging the reduction of the facilitation element in his work. Semple is a quietly spoken man with a dry sense of humour.

Following on from the initial interview phase, regular meetings were established by Semple to follow the development of an exhibition, bringing together relevant members from the Curatorial, Exhibitions, Conservation and Visitor Services Teams. These meetings include one held a month prior to an exhibition opening to undertake a risk analysis, and on the Monday following the opening a meeting is held to evaluate the opening weekend. Representatives from each team are also now present at programming meetings, although Semple stresses that they are there largely in a listening and advisory capacity, with programming still driven by the Curatorial team.

Everyone's only one person away from decision making, I mean, their manager is invariably involved in the decisions that are being made, and so, you're never too far away from the action. (Semple, interview with the author, p. 17 December 2012).

Meetings for all staff are now held every three to six months, where Curatorial staff present and discuss the upcoming exhibition programme. In addition, the exhibition's programme schedule on the staff intranet has been

unlocked for viewing by all CAG staff, rather than just management and curatorial.

Previously, there was a far greater separation between management and the rest of the staff, and a reality that most of the major decisions happened behind closed doors. Perhaps there was a concern that if everyone was present for those decisions then there would be a free-for-all. But actually it was more about people understanding the reasons why things were happening: people are very reasonable when they understand the thinking behind decisions that are made. (Semple, interview with the author, p. 17 December 2012).

More physical gestures were undertaken, such as Harper rearranging the Director's office, positioning her desk closer to the doorway and leaving her door open, so she was visible to staff, "I like people going past ... you're much more in the midst of it. It's a significant thing" (Harper, interview with the author, 18 December 2012), she points out. This was a literal response to the *Paradigm Shift's* criticism of a staff culture that was perceived as "not welcoming" and with an "autocratic, hierarchical management" which did not share information and maintained a "culture of blame" (Gorbey & Walker, 2005, unpaginated).

Neil Semple recalls:

There was the thought that the culture inside the gallery wasn't working properly, there was this kind of silo effect – that Exhibitions weren't talking to Curators and Curators weren't talking to Front of House, and other people felt that they were just the sweepings in front of the broom – all that sort of thing. So the idea was that my role was created at the side of this work diagram ... and we would work across the organisation, pulling people out of whatever teams and giving them a voice in order to effect good outcomes for the Gallery. (Semple, interview with the author, 17 December 2012).

While Semple depicts himself as highly aware of the role of new structures in developing a new staff culture, all other staff members interviewed downplayed the role of structured procedures in improving staff culture, while emphasising the value of action. Director Jenny Harper is particularly dismissive of the importance of structured change, emphasising instead more organic and personality-led change, stating, "I suppose instinctively, we did things differently. We had meetings, we recorded these, we were more open." (Harper, interview with the author, 18 December 2012).

Curator Felicity Milburn, who was a key member of the *Paradigm Shift* team, also stressed the importance of the more intangible changes,

For me the changes that were made about where people sat and the particular teams and the kinds of processes you used were not as important as the feeling that we were heading in the right direction. (Milburn, interview with the author, 18 December 2012).

Exhibition Designer Chris Pole, who first started at the Gallery in 2002, echoed these statements in his interview, identifying that a sense of transparency was the most important change for him.

There's an environment when you can just knock and ask and you can find out what you need to know ... I feel like the institution empowers me. Part of it is me growing into the role more, but it's also about the people involved, and previously, there wasn't a fear of management, but it was much more of an Us and Them. Now, you don't feel that, I pop into Jenny's office, I pop into Blair's office constantly, I'm always in Justin's office, and it's just a much different feeling. (Pole, interview with the author, 18 December 2012).

Staff often echoed each other in detailing changes to the organisational field, as demonstrated in the diagram on the following page. A series of word clouds anonymously collates quotes from the CAG staff interviewed, emphasising connections and similarities in the opinions expressed and distilling them into key messages. The diagram reveals a strong connection in the stories told by staff, from the *Paradigm Shift* process to new attitudes towards artists and audiences. The importance of individual personalities is emphasised, as is the belief that the Gallery is flexible and nimble in its operations.

Diagram of Collective Narratives

THE INSTITUTION EMPOWERS ARTISTS MORE THAN IT USED TO

We're there to assist the artist, ultimately, to achieve their goals. The much closer relationship with artists. There's a much stronger sense now of artists being allies of the organisation, and just being trusted. A phrase that people here use a lot is that of dealing with artists as an active collaborator with artists. *There was instantly a shift towards what artists are doing. Working with artists is what drives us. We try to maintain good contact with artists.*

(expressed by seven staff)

WHEN IT OPENED THE CAG WAS VERY SIMILAR TO THE RMAG

The programme didn't change, it wasn't very dynamic, it was actually like picking up the McDougall and plonking it into a new building. It hadn't rethought itself very much, it had opened in a new building, but it had kind of picked up the McDougall and popped it upstairs.

(expressed by two staff)

ART IS AT THE FOREFRONT OF WHAT THE INSTITUTION DOES

It's about an attitude of putting the art first. Art is at the forefront of what we do. The surest sign an exhibition programme is going to succeed is that a decent number of people really really care and give a damn about it. *Art is the driving factor. It's all for the betterment of the artwork.*

(expressed by five staff)

THE GALLERY IS MORE TRANSPARENT TO AUDIENCES

No one's going to buy the press release version any longer. It has become much more personal. It was quite hard not to be honest and open about it, because it was so raw. There's a transparency. You get a sense of an individual and distinctive set of voices.

(expressed by five staff)

WHEN IT OPENED THERE WAS TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON THE BUILDING RATHER THAN THE STAFF

The new building effect. Part of that was a learning process with a new building. A quite unhealthy weighting of importance on the building. A lot of people call it the edifice complex, you build a new building and it's all about the new building, it's all about the hardware, and it takes awhile for the software to matter as much. *Now the art gallery is not the building. [As a result of the Paradigm Shift] every inch of the building got completely rethought in some way.*

(expressed by six staff)

THE GALLERY IS NOW MORE FLEXIBLE IN ITS OPERATIONS

We're a lot more nimble than we used to be. It's about being really flexible in how we operate and light footed. I'm kind of undercutting the value of planning. Because it's fluid I think its better. *It's quite fly by the seat of your pants.* You can set up processes and flow charts and event management processes until the cows come home. But if you haven't got the right people with the right personalities...

(expressed by five staff)

THE CHANGES ARE THE RESULT OF INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITIES

It's having Jenny in charge. Justin as a driving force, I think people really buy his vision. The nature of the changes is very much about people and I do think that its absolutely key to have a Director that is leading very positively. *A lot of that had to do with the new Director coming in. The new drivers for the new art gallery are really Jenny, Blair and Justin. Once Jenny and Blair and Justin and Neil and co came on board, there was a huge jump, and a big sort of ramp up.* We just walked in and started doing things differently. *We were able to attract Justin.*

(expressed by seven staff)

Strategic Documentation

The organisational audit that resulted in the *Paradigm Shift* strategic plan began in October 2005 with a peer review report commissioned by the Christchurch City Council. The report was commissioned following a significant drop in the Gallery visitation that was identified as a major concern to Council, along with anecdotal reports of a difficult staff culture. This initial report proved critical of both the organisational culture and exhibition programming, "there is little sense of theatre in the Gallery. The programme lacks vigour; it is not rebellious enough, nor does it contain high-paced, energy-generating offerings." (Gorbey & Walker, 2005, unpaginated).

The processes developed to work through change were twofold: an internal staff taskforce established to workshop ideas with all staff and external public consultation through Key Stakeholder Visioning Workshops. The staff consultation was, by several accounts, extensive and felt meaningful to its participants. Felicity Milburn, as Curator and a member of the taskforce, comments, "it was an acknowledgement that we weren't heading in the direction that we wanted to be heading in. For me it was a kind of laying down of the corpse, in terms of what had become a quite unhealthy weighting of importance on the building rather than the programme." (Milburn, interview with the author, 18 December 2012).

The Key Stakeholder Visioning Workshops were attended by a selection of the arts community, including commercial gallerists (Jonathan Smart), artists (Neil Dawson, Joanna Langford), other arts professionals (Anthony Wright, Director, Canterbury Museum; Warren Feeny, Director, COCA; Chris Moore, Arts Editor, *The Press*) and Friends of the Christchurch Art Gallery (Marianne Hargreaves and Margaret Duncan). This consultation process was followed by the publication of the *Paradigm Shift* in July 2006. A five-year plan, it was intended to plot the strategic development for the Gallery, as well as serve as a public declaration of change.

The *Paradigm Shift* described itself as a "framework to guide the Christchurch Art Gallery to achieve its new Council-approved Key Performance-Indicators" (CCC, 2006a, p. 2) and identified key issues with the visitor experience at the Gallery. These included a varied visitor experience, an unwelcoming foyer that was "a void in which they feel disoriented" (CCC, 2006a, p. 10) and the need for better education programmes. In addition, the *Paradigm Shift* identified family/whanau as a new key audience for the Gallery, which would require new facilities and services.

The launch of the *Paradigm Shift* and the subsequent change in management personnel began a significant strategic move for the organisation, leading to reinvention across institutional priorities, management strategies and communication style. However, while all of the staff interviewed identified the *Paradigm Shift* as highly significant in leading to the change, none of them felt that the *Paradigm Shift* document had been followed closely as an operational tool.

The *Paradigm Shift* was perceived by staff interviewed as somewhat prescriptive in its details, providing tight structures for scheduling exhibitions, and placing unwanted emphasis on programmes which sat outside core business, such as, “an exhibition of Italian art could be the catalyst for promoting such associated “art forms as Italian cars, fashion, food and wine.” (CCC, 2006a, p. 8).

However, the *Paradigm Shift* was welcomed by staff for its ability to provide a distinct external and internal marker for change. The plan was positioned, by all staff talked to, as a process that articulated a new direction, described by Blair Jackson as “a document that allowed a change in thinking and allowed a freer approach” (Jackson, interview with the author, 17 December 2012) beyond the mechanics of the plan itself.

Paton echoes Jackson on the *Paradigm Shift* document, describing the process as a necessary internal shake up, but not a plan to be followed slavishly.

For myself, and I suspect some of the others who came on at that time, the Paradigm Shift mattered most as an index of a mood, things aren't quite right, this great resource is not quite doing all that it could be doing for the city that it's part of. (Paton, interview with the author, 17 December 2012).

Staff members appointed post-*Paradigm Shift*, and therefore not involved in the consultation process, might be anticipated to not feel committed to the plan as a structured way forward. However, staff members who were closely involved with the process also agreed the Gallery had not followed the *Paradigm Shift* as a strict template, and expressed positivity about the changes.

The Paradigm Shift was an indication that things were going to change and that was probably one reason why someone like Jenny Harper was interested in coming along ... I think the Paradigm Shift was key, but it didn't make those positive changes, it was more that it was symptomatic of the situation and it was also a line in the sand that focused people's attention on what had to change. (Milburn, interview with the author, 18 December 2012).

The significance of the *Paradigm Shift* as a template for action was felt most clearly by Neil Semple, whose position of Project and Team Facilitation Manager placed an emphasis on reconfiguring the structures and systems of Gallery management, rather than directly delivering exhibition content.

Initially it was great because it did give you a mandate to do a lot of stuff. To make a number of necessary changes. It wasn't like we just lived and breathed it, but you did kind of look at it, and especially in my role – part of the thing was, people hadn't felt like they were consulted. A lot of the systems that we put in place were because of the Paradigm Shift report, and it gave us a license to move things forward. (Semple, interview with the author, 17 December 2012).

The rest of the eight staff I interviewed felt that strategic documents or systems generally did not guide the Gallery. Instead, they pointed to the personalities of the new personnel – “it’s quite a dramatic turnaround, and that’s about the people who were put in.” (Pole, interview with the author, 18 December 2012). The contrast between Semple’s account and the other staff interviews was marked, and unexpected. One conclusion is that the success of Semple’s role is in its very invisibility, that the systems he implemented have become embedded and thus unremarked on by the other staff. It must also be noted that the cultural capital of a curatorial role has the potential to be greater than other roles, despite their management status, in an institution that privileges cultural knowledge.

Lynley McDougall started at the Gallery in 2002 in the role of Visitors Services Supervisor and is now Visitor Services and Facility Manager. Prior to working at the Gallery she was employed by the Christchurch City Council at the Action Works Youth Employment Service. McDougall is the only member of staff interviewed that had worked for another section of the CCC previous to her employment by the Gallery. As a result, she can be understood to constitute a different type of employee to the other interviewees, representing herself as situated outside the arts community, working at the Gallery because of its location within Christchurch. She has a keen interest in the strategic development of the Gallery, and used the *Paradigm Shift* change process as subject matter for a Bachelor of Applied Management. While McDougall articulates ongoing issues between the Front of House staff and the rest of the CAG staff (“upstairs and downstairs”) she is adamant of the positive effect of the *Paradigm Shift* and is a fervent cheerleader for the incoming staff.

The new drivers for the art Gallery are really Jenny, Blair and Justin. They are the people that keep developing and driving ideas and we do look to them a lot, because they are able to bring it all together.
(McDougall, interview with the author, 5 April 2013).

The *Paradigm Shift* was formally concluded in April 2009 when Ken Gorbey, one of the independent consultants who had lead the original review, was commissioned by Jenny Harper to return to the Gallery to undertake an audit of the Plan’s progress.⁴⁷ Following the mandate of the original review, Gorbey interviewed staff of the Christchurch Art Gallery, along with key stakeholders in the arts and general community. This review was positive, declaring “the critical *Paradigm Shift* KPIs have been achieved.” (Gorbey, 2009, unpaginated).

He found that the Gallery,

... has regained a position within its community that it had lost following the opening of the new building ... In all interviews conducted stakeholders expressed their delight that in some way their Gallery had

⁴⁷ Jenny Harper and Ken Gorbey are former colleagues, having both worked on the transition from the National Art Gallery and National Museum to the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

been 'returned' to them. All people talked of the extraordinary and fundamental transformation of the Gallery from an isolated and somewhat cold place into a cultural facility that is alive and welcoming. (Gorbey, 2009, unpaginated).

While this may have been a largely symbolic process, Harper saw it as a crucial element in moving the Gallery beyond the *Paradigm Shift*.

There was a process of quietly signing off the Paradigm Shift, and saying, well it's done, people are flocking to the gallery – but by then it was publically acknowledged, and Councillors certainly acknowledged that the [visitor] numbers had just gone through the roof. By whatever measure, the Gallery had shifted. (Harper, interview with the author, 18 December 2012).

Post-*Paradigm Shift*, the Gallery does not maintain a formal strategic plan, although it operates an activity management plan, which is reported against annually to Council. This document is benchmarked against other galleries, and against the Gallery's KPIs. Jenny Harper says, "It is our plan, but it conforms to others within Council and is not what I'd call a Gallery-specific vision and plan. So it doesn't say anything about how many artists you buy or show; I've certainly avoided any talk of how many local shows there are in our programme, or any interference with the specifics of what we do – I'm fiercely independent in that regard." (Harper, interview with the author, 18 December 2012).

The formal document most often referred to by staff is a manifesto, devised collectively in 2010 during the *Move On Up* strategic change coaching programme through brand consultants Morris Hargreaves McIntyre.⁴⁸ The *Move On Up* course was interrupted part way through by the earthquakes, and is yet to be resumed, leaving the Gallery without a strategic plan, which is the final stage of the programme. Again, the formality of *Move On Up* leaves some of the staff ambivalent and unsure. Blair Jackson makes the point that paperwork is not a focus for the Gallery:

We worked through the Move On Up process with Andrew⁴⁹ but to be honest we became quite frustrated with that system, because it seemed to want to make everyone's charts and diagrams exactly the same, and you insert your word here, and we've never really been about those kinds of processes.

And so, we felt really kind of frustrated – excited by the brainstorming and the kinds of ideas that were coming out – and words like 'in art we trust' and all these nice kinds of things came out of that, but we've never been very good at the whole documentation

⁴⁸ *Move On Up* has been utilised by eleven New Zealand arts organisations over the last five years, with financial investment by government agency Creative New Zealand. Other New Zealand art galleries to undertake *Move On Up* are The Physics Room (Christchurch), Govett-Brewster Art Gallery (New Plymouth) and Artspace (Auckland).

⁴⁹ Andrew McIntyre, Co-Director of Morris Hargreaves McIntyre.

of that I guess. (Jackson, interview with the author, 17 December 2012).

However, as an initial result of *Move On Up* the Gallery generated a manifesto, which plays a role similar to an institutional vision statement. Unlike a vision statement, its importance at the Gallery is largely internal, with the manifesto not included on the organisation's website or in print documentation. But individual staff members cite it as a guiding principle for the Gallery, albeit one that is not ever-present in document form.

Jenny Harper identifies the manifesto as a crucial manifestation of the Gallery's ethos. Harper recalls revisiting the manifesto again, two years after its creation immediately prior to the earthquakes, and thinking "Actually, we've been able to stay on brand!" (Harper, interview with the author, 18 December 2012). Like Blair Jackson, she downplays the need for regular documentation consultation, stating, "once you've got people thinking and agreeing, this is how we want to be, you don't need to keep saying it, you just do it." (Harper, interview with the author, 18 December 2012).

The difference in tone and approach between the vision statement of 2006 and the manifesto are marked. The earlier vision statement appears tentative and hopeful, positioning achievements as aspirational rather than actual, "We want to grow the public's perception of art ... the Gallery strives to connect people with art ... we want to be recognized." (CCC, 2006a, unpaginated). In contrast, the manifesto is bold, staking a position of authority with an attitude of confidence.

We're here because good art really matters. We connect people with art, ideas about art and with artists. Their creativity inspires ours. We are crucial to the heart of the city. People identify Christchurch as important because of us and what we do. We set standards others aspire to. We do great things that are recognised and celebrated (and we're not afraid to break the rules – even our own). (Christchurch Art Gallery, 2010, unpaginated).

Conclusion

The research demonstrates a perception amongst staff interviewed that a new sense of identity for the institution was created through the *Paradigm Shift* period of change. Staff detailed a sense of pride in the changes, and a belief in the Gallery's role as a new leader in both local and national communities. However, post-*Paradigm Shift*, the perception among the majority of staff interviewed is that the current strategic vision for the Gallery is produced through a shared belief in a common purpose rather than formal documentation or structures. This sense of identity has been significantly generated through a collective narrative of institutional transformation. Narratives detailed by individual staff in interviews to demonstrate the positivity of change were similar across all staff interviewed, with several

staff interviewed relating strikingly similar versions of the same event to illustrate key points.⁵⁰

Organisational theory refers to the construction of collective narratives as conversion stories, which consider change as a turning point in which individuals move from “one viewpoint to another” (Snow & Machalek, 1983, p. 169) to embrace a post-change organisation (Reissner, 2008). Conversion stories can be notable for the dramatic quality of their retelling, reliance on rhetoric, and a tendency to reinterpret the prior history as entirely negative (Bryant & Cox, 2004). This can take the form of collectively exaggerating the negativity of the experience prior to change and dramatising the effects of the change.

Melanie Bryant and Julie Wolfram Cox have argued that beneath the positive exterior of the conversion narratives can lie a theme of silence, which may be related to career advancement (Bryant & Cox, 2004). Thus employees may join management in articulating the positive story of a conversion narrative in order to aid their personal development within the organisation. But conversion narratives also provide opportunities for employers and employees to create shared meaning out of shared historical events, as a source for genuine pride, and as inspiration for future development (Brown, 2006; Reissner, 2008).

In the case of the Christchurch Art Gallery, the research suggests conversion narratives provide a powerful storytelling mechanism for staff to understand themselves through a unifying purpose. Within this narrative the pre-*Paradigm Shift* period, particularly the period 2003-2006 once the Gallery had opened in its present form, is depicted harshly, with prominence given to negative aspects of management and operations. New developments in exhibition programming, audience engagement and staff culture are framed in high contrast, both by staff working at the Gallery during the earlier timeframe (Lynley McDougall, Felicity Milburn, Nathan Pohio and Chris Pole) and staff who arrived post-*Paradigm Shift* (Jenny Harper, Blair Jackson, Justin Paton and Neil Semple).

As indicated in Chapter One, my research confines itself to the experiences of current staff at the Christchurch Art Gallery, and therefore does not seek to examine the extent of fact within this narrative through external measures. I have purposely not interviewed previous staff members of the Gallery, who might be anticipated to offer opposing views to the current staff, particularly staff whose positions were disestablished or who left as a result of the *Paradigm Shift* process. Instead I am interested in charting the Gallery at this point in time, late 2013, its current institutional field, and how this might be generated from individual and collective experiences. Using qualitative methodology, my research acknowledges the socially constructed character of lived realities (Holstein & Gubrium, 2008) and asserts that there is no single truth, but that all truths are partial and incomplete (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

⁵⁰ For further elaboration on this, see the diagram on p. 61.

This research is concerned with charting how the shared narrative of change and transformation binds together Gallery staff, uniting what could be two factions – pre-*Paradigm Shift* staff and post-*Paradigm Shift* staff – into a cohesive and functional team. The findings, as this chapter demonstrates, confirm that the *Paradigm Shift* process continues to fuel the Gallery's spirit, constructing a particular field at the current moment of writing. However, while the initial effect of the *Paradigm Shift* may have been to open up possibilities for change in programming, audience development and operations, its primary role now as is an accepted narrative of transformation. This transformation tracks from negative to positive, producing a form of storytelling by which staff explain current practices and motivate themselves in their roles.

This aspect will be further developed in Chapters Five and Six, exploring the role of the institutional entrepreneur (Fligstein, 2001) in generating and fostering conversion narratives. Chapter Five positions key individuals at the Gallery who are identified by the rest of the staff as leaders. In assuming these leadership roles I suggest they act as institutional entrepreneurs who utilise their social skills to mobilise staff. While the individuals (Director Jenny Harper, Senior Curator Justin Paton and, to a lesser extent, Deputy Director Blair Jackson) hold positions of authority within the organisational hierarchy, institutional entrepreneurship cannot be understood to automatically result from such positions. Rather, it is through the building of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1990) that social standing is acquired, providing buy-in from other staff members that enables these leaders to drive institutional change.

Emirbayer & Johnson state,

A member's power to enforce her position-taking on others and therefore on the organisation as a whole depends in large part on the volume, composition, and relative value of her capital – in other words, her position in the organisation-as-field – at a given moment. The species of capital and the habitus imported by each member into her organisation have been constituted in large part through her experiences, both past and present, in other fields. (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008, P. 28).

Through the power of their collective and individual capital – cultural and symbolic – Harper, Paton, and Jackson led the Gallery through the initial *Paradigm Shift* period of 2006-2011, developing a particular organisational field built around the notion of transformation. This field placed high recognition on informality and personalisation over systems and structures, often beyond what appears to be realistic to an outside observer. The following chapters examine the extent to which generating this commonly held narrative of change supported the Gallery at a new time of need, that of the Canterbury earthquakes.

CHAPTER FIVE: A COLLECTIVE NARRATIVE

Disaster sometimes knocks down institutions and structures and suspends private life, leaving a broader view of what lies ahead. The task before us is to recognise the possibilities visible through that gateway and endeavour to bring them into the realm of the everyday. (Rebecca Solnit, 2009, p. 313).

Culture is an integral part of emergency relief and post-disaster reconstruction processes. Emphasising and rescuing culture is essential for the mental survival of people in emergency situations and can contribute to their overall resilience and empowerment when overcoming catastrophe. (Deborah Stolk, 2010, p. 83).

Introduction

This chapter considers an extraordinary event, the 2010–2011 Canterbury earthquakes, examining how the Christchurch Art Gallery has responded to a radically transformed operating environment. As the Rebecca Solnit epigram above suggests, with difficulty sometimes comes opportunity, and this chapter explores the opportunities that have arisen for the Gallery through this event. What's more, as the epigram by Deborah Stolk asserts, even in moments of great difficulty culture has an important place, both in healing emotional trauma and in assisting with rebuilding lives after the fact.

The key elements of professional practice this chapter considers are operational systems, audience engagement and engagement with a key constituency – artists. Following the approach of Chapter Four this chapter is again concerned with internal perceptions, asking how staff interviewed regard current Gallery practices. How do they make sense of their situation, and how do they articulate this unusual time in their history? This chapter asserts that the Gallery's effective response to the earthquakes was enabled by its established culture of resilience arising from the earlier *Paradigm Shift* process.

I have applied the notion of organisational resilience (Walker & Salt, 2006) as a critical lens through which to view the research in this chapter. The concept of psychological resilience was first used in 1959 by psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, in response to his experience in concentration camps during the Second World War.⁵¹ Resilience as a term has been further developed within ecological

⁵¹ In attempting to understand why some prisoners survived while others, in apparently comparable situations, did not, Frankl identified the importance of a defined sense of purpose in assisting prisoners to maintain resilience and thus surviving (Frankl, 2006).

discourse, used to explain unusual and complex adaptive systems and gaining particular resonance through the work of ecologist C. S. Hollings. Hollings (1996) distinguished two types of resilience: engineering and ecological.

Engineering resilience is defined as the rate or speed of recovery of a system following a shock. Ecological resilience, on the other hand, assumes multiple states (or regimes) and is defined as the magnitude of a disturbance that triggers between alternative states. (Allen, Gunderson, & Holling, 2009, pp. 15-16).

Shifting beyond the ecological domain, management theory has co-opted the notion of resilience to explain human group behaviour. Walker & Salt (2006) have used the term resilience thinking to talk about the non-linear and unstable states that characterise complex system behaviours. The concept of resilience in this context can describe the ability of an organisation to return to a stable state after a disruption – either an external disaster or internal change.

What makes an organisation resilient? Sutcliffe & Vogus (2003) have suggested that an organisation's ability to positively cope and adjust to disruption relies on their cognitive, emotional, relational and structural resources. Hatum & Pettigrew (2006) emphasise the need for flexibility, which is achieved by the following elements:

- decentralisation in decision making
- low levels of formalisation⁵²
- high degree of permeability between organisational boundaries
- low degree of embeddedness in a firm's macro culture
- collaborative partnerships (Hatum et al., 2006, p. 116)

Such elements are naturally easier for smaller organisations to achieve than larger ones, where formalisation arises through a greater emphasis on paperwork and structure. In addition, boundaries between staff roles are more likely to be generated in a larger staffing structure with higher levels of specialisation (Burnard & Bhamra, 2011).

Robert Janes, a former curator and director of museums, and currently Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship*, has drawn extensively on the notion of organisational resilience within a museum context in his writing. Janes uses the term "the resilient museum" to describe innovative organisations that are not bound by routine or traditional practices. Janes states, "becoming resilient allows systems and organisations to absorb large disturbances without changing their fundamental nature." (Janes, 2009, p. 141).

In this chapter I explore resilience in relation to the Christchurch Art Gallery,

⁵² In this context formalisation means the extent that organisational roles are structured and governed by procedures.

and suggest that changes the Gallery undertook through the *Paradigm Shift* created a culture of resilience that helped prepare the organisation for a natural disaster. This culture can be understood as both internal, reflected in staff culture and planning systems, and external, reflected in audience and key stakeholder engagement. While some of these changes were documented and systematised, in principle, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, much of the Gallery's actions were highly responsive and intuitive. Further to this, the majority of Gallery staff interviewed emphasised the role of the individual and personal response, highlighting the emotional and downplaying strategic or operational change.

In examining the extent to which Christchurch Art Gallery can be understood as a resilient institution I have again drawn on the notion of building organisational narratives, or engaging in sense-making (Weick, 1995) expanding on analysis undertaken in Chapter Four. Taking these narratives, I apply Bourdieu's use of the terms habitus, capital and field, to understand the particular nature of how individuals at the Gallery have led change.

Systems and Structure: Informality Encouraged

After the February earthquakes there were employment related issues. Staff were displaced as buildings were closed. Some were very stressed and unable to cope so we made sure they had support people to help them. In the first week I contacted staff daily and kept in touch with updates. I provided details on resources for support such as accommodation and food assistance. (McDougall, 2012).

This quote from Lynley McDougall, Visitor Services and Facilities Manager at the Gallery, demonstrates the extent of the changed situation the management team found themselves in immediately following the Canterbury earthquakes, particularly the major one in February 2011. With the Gallery closed for visitors, and normal business suspended, the post-earthquake environment tested Gallery operations. In the initial days and weeks after the February 2011 earthquake many staff members were unable to even come into work, caught up in their own personal situations. Because of this, a more fluid system of working evolved, a new state of operating that continued even once all staff were again working full time.

Director Jenny Harper explains,

There's an inevitable cycle that each of us goes through at a differing pace during such events: grief, the hopelessness of severely damaged local neighbourhoods; loss of life and possessions; the need to dig liquefaction from homes, inside and out, and the need to attend to unplanned time consuming matters (moves, repairs). (Harper, 2012, p. 68).

Initially Gallery staff were unable to use their building at all due to its occupation by first Civil Defence and then CERA. Between February and August 2011 staff were based across the road in a rented apartment building.

For several months after the move back to the Gallery all staff were still situated together in one open plan space, which Blair Jackson believes assisted in strengthening the team culture, “breaking down the architectural boundaries that this building has, has been quite good, [in future] we will rethink the model a bit.” (Jackson, interview with author, 17 December 2012).

Jackson continues:

The earthquake's given us the opportunity to reflect on the ways we share our messages with staff and through the last couple of years we've even got better at sharing our way of thinking with staff and our communication, just because we've had to keep staff together, keep them motivated and on track, and keep them informed about what's going on. We've had to rethink that communication strategy a little bit because there's just not that motivating factor in terms of success anymore – success has got to be measured in a different way. So – regular emails through Jenny, better staff meetings, more regular staff meetings. (Jackson, interview with author, 17 December 2012).

Having no Gallery-based exhibition programme has led to most staff undertaking a change in the scope of their positions. Immediately after the February 2011 earthquake, staff were deployed to secure damaged and vulnerable works of art and clear Gallery spaces to make room for Civil Defence teams. Some staff were seconded to work for recovery teams.

In the longer term, for some, such as the curatorial team, this process has occurred organically, shifting their working method to respond to a much less structured external environment, reflected in Senior Curator Justin Paton's comment,

You've got a good idea, great, just go do it. You want to talk to that artist and stick those posters up all around town? Just go do it. It may be that we look back on, say, the half decade after the quake as quite an interesting, wild west moment when the general feeling of goodwill and a wish to see something, anything, happen fostered a lot of permission and possibility. (Paton, interview with author: 17 December 2012).

With other roles there was a concerted effort from the Management Team to justify the retention of staff by diverting them to other activities. The Visitor Services team, formerly focused at the public end of the institution's activities, was redirected to undertake back of house duties such as sewing protective elements for the collection, and geotagging the online collection⁵³. This enabled the Gallery to retain staff initially, although in May 2012 the

⁵³ Geotagging describes a method of adding geographical metadata to various media, such as a photograph, video, website or QR code. In this instance the Christchurch Art Gallery have added Google Earth geotags to works in the collection that depict real places.

positions of nine part-time visitor services staff were disestablished in a restructure that saw 17 staff in total lose their jobs.

As discussed previously, the term organisational resilience is used within management literature to describe the ability to return and adjust from disruption. In this sense, resilience does not talk about the degree to which an institution might have established an emergency response plan, but rather an approach to implementing a plan. Under those terms, resilience determines the extent to which an institution can intuitively apply the procedures of a management plan during a crisis period (Burnard & Bhamra, 2011).

The Christchurch Art Gallery had an *Evacuation and Emergency Response Plan* in place prior to the earthquakes. The EER was primarily concerned with an immediate response to a situation, covering evacuation of the gallery, management of staff and visitors, and liaising with appropriate emergency services. The plan did not discuss the aftermath of an event, or how the Gallery would respond to a situation in an ongoing way.

Jenny Harper writes ruefully,

We laughed somewhat hollowly when we saw what was written for in the event of an earthquake ... it was not at all like our experience. (Harper, 2012c, p. 7).

The plan assigned particular roles to particular staff, based on their individual skills and experience. In actuality, some staff were unable or unwilling to come into work during the early days of the earthquake, as individuals found themselves in very different personal circumstances. The Gallery's new plan now specifies roles and responsibilities to be assumed by those staff available and willing, rather than one based on people's job relevance and organisational hierarchies.

Jenny Harper has written,

A given staff member's personal circumstances and emotional state will dictate their ability to respond. You can't make assumptions based on family circumstances, proximity to the Gallery or your prior assessment of their strength of character (nor the degree of responsibility held within the organisation or designated tasks in the salvage team). (Harper, 2012c, p. 7).

Harper herself was away on holiday in Thailand during the February 2011 earthquake, and, with Deputy Director Blair Jackson also unavailable, Projects Manager Neil Semple found himself in charge of the initial response, and had to make quick decisions, responding immediately to the situation he found himself in.

Gallery management was at that time, and remains, especially concerned with addressing and managing the reactions of key stakeholders to the Gallery's sudden vulnerability, particularly in regard to loans from fellow institutions and private collectors. Of immediate concern was liaising formally with the National Gallery of Victoria and the National Gallery of Australia

regarding the Ron Mueck touring exhibition that was scheduled to open at Christchurch Art Gallery on the 2nd of October 2010. In a paper delivered to the NSLA Disaster Preparedness Seminar Jenny Harper wrote, "I worked incredibly hard in the first two weeks to turn around perceptions that we might be an unsafe place to send art to". (Harper, 2012c, p. 2).

Central to the Gallery's post-earthquake response was communication, internally to other staff and externally to key stakeholders. The management team had to create systems flexible enough to respond to a changing situation and limited staff availability. Felicity Milburn believes that the significant changes already undertaken by the Gallery meant that they had developed a positive staff culture going into the earthquakes that helped them to cope.

If we didn't know who we were before the earthquakes, God knows what we would have been after them. With all of the stress and the change that goes on, it's amazing to have that certainty – I don't think we've wavered on who we want to be and the direction we want to head in. I think if you were questioning any of that you'd just be overwhelmed by the circumstances. (Milburn, interview with author, 18 December 2012).

As detailed in Chapter Four, although the Gallery had continued a conventional management structure post-*Paradigm Shift*, all staff interviewed identified a reduction in hierarchy as a result of the new management team. All stressed no matter where they were on the staffing structure, that they were able to have a direct line of contact with Gallery Director Jenny Harper. As Neil Semple identified, "everyone's only one person away from decision making, I mean, their manager is invariably involved in the decisions that are being made, and so, you're never too far away from the action." (Semple, interview with author, 17 December 2012).

Semple's role, to establish and maintain more effective communication systems, can be understood as crucial to developing an environment in which staff were already functioning across different teams and they had an active culture of problem solving. Thus the Gallery was already operating with a certain degree of permeability between organisational boundaries, as suggested by Hatem et al. (2006). As described earlier, the new structures were mapped as face-to-face meetings rather than paperwork, with significant work undertaken to dismantle a culture of silos and to get each team communicating with each other. This can be understood as an emphasis on low levels of formalisation (Hatem et al., 2006).

In addition, the Gallery has developed a strong sense of self-identity as an institution that stresses its informality. All staff interviewed except Neil Semple emphasised the importance of informal communication over systems or procedures. This deeply entrenched belief that the Gallery emphasises talking and doing rather than operating to tightly established paper systems creates a self-narrative that rewards flexibility and informality.

As discussed previously in Chapter Four, an organisation's reality can be

understood as defined and reflected in the stories that circulate within the organisation, told by the organisation (Reissner, 2008). Change at its most basic level has been said to consist of unfreezing, moving and freezing (Isabella, 1990), and, at the final freezing stage, organisations begin to develop new ways to describe their own history, these new stories placing great symbolism on certain actions, gestures and decisions. Stories generated by organisations have a wide range of functions, which include: communication; managing change; sense-making; building and maintaining culture, and sharing knowledge and learning. Storytelling combines facts with emotions, idea, values and norms (Weick & Browning, 1986).

A conversion narrative (Bryant & Cox, 2004) testifies to change in the organisation, and is a means of recreating and re-establishing an organisation's self-understanding (Reissner, 2008). Conversion narratives typically detail an ascending storyline that is defined by heroic characteristics to display a positive identity transformation.

The narrative told to me by each member of the Gallery I interviewed was remarkably consistent, describing a belief that the Gallery had transformed in the years 2006-2007 from a staff culture that was bleak and divisive to a culture that was open and inclusive. Staff interviewed described a culture of informality between management structures and a personality-driven leadership environment.

Change was largely attributed to individuals bringing a more informal and collaborative approach to their working practice, although, as has been demonstrated earlier, significant adjustments were also made to the administrative systems utilised by the Gallery. Having developed an organisational narrative that placed emphasis on adaptation and flexibility enabled Gallery staff to believe they were more able to adjust to a crisis situation quickly and intuitively (Burnard & Bhamra, 2011).

Audience Engagement: Reaching Out

Since February 2012, when the Gallery has been closed to the public, the existing exhibition programme has been stalled. With no visitor access, the Gallery's core purpose has been interrupted, causing staff considerable stress and questioning of their role. Members of staff express a sense of loss and grief, and frustration at the disruption to their activities. In addition, staff members are coping with the greater loss of a changed city and individual cases of personal difficulty. Director Jenny Harper has written and spoken extensively about the hardship of working for an institution without a public. In an issue of Australian magazine *Artlink* she wrote, "Being closed for a long period goes against the grain of all we stand for; we are profoundly tested." (Harper, 2012, p. 68).

Initially, the Gallery believed they would reopen quickly and a series of opening dates were planned and subsequently canceled. Because of this, they did not immediately embark on an alternative exhibition programme, but

focused on developing a series of local artist projects to be launched when the Gallery reopened.

Justin Paton describes the process of realising the Gallery's exhibition programme was not going to be possible.

We had a really cool programme lined up, and then the news came through that we couldn't reopen. You remember in Back to the Future when Michael J Fox was disappearing from the family photograph? It's a glib comparison, but there was a sense of "Oh my God, we're not present, we're evaporating" – and at that moment we thought, we've got to do something, we can't do it inside the gallery, and we started to cast about for other spaces in public. (Paton, interview with author: 17 December 2012).

The *Outer Spaces* programme had located artworks outside of the Gallery spaces since 2007, and this provided a way forward, with the Gallery launching a series of art projects located both around the building itself and further afield in what remained of the central city. In addition to *Outer Spaces*, the Gallery rented temporary space in the NG building, directly alongside the Red Zone,⁵⁴ and presented *Rolling Maul*, a series of exhibitions starting in February 2012 with Julia Morrison's *Meet Me on the Other Side*.

Paton continues,

The Outer Spaces programme, which was a supplement to the building, has turned into the only thing we can do. That's unfolded in a very opportunistic and seat-of-your-pants way. I think everyone is mildly surprised at how much we've been able to make happen. So that was a case of what happened before getting us ready, unknowingly, for what was to come. (Paton, interview with author: 17 December 2012).

Outer Spaces and *Rolling Maul* have allowed the Gallery to continue to engage with audiences through exhibition presentation, albeit in truncated and less conventional forms. The traditional layers of exhibition interpretation have not been possible to reproduce in these circumstances, and the Gallery has increasingly drawn on other mediums to communicate. Blair Jackson considers the Gallery has had "to completely rethink how we talk to our audiences or how we maintain a relationship with them." (Jackson, interview with author, 17 December 2012).

Notably, the *Bulletin* has taken a larger role in the Gallery's outputs, and altered further its tone and scope. Without a Gallery programme to reflect

⁵⁴ The Red Zone is the commonly used term for a public exclusion zone established in the Christchurch central business district after the 22 February 2011 Christchurch Earthquake. In February 2013 it was officially renamed the CBD Rebuild Zone but has continued to be known colloquially as the Red Zone. As demolition work occurred, it gradually reduced in size and the final cordon was removed on 30 June 2013.

and promote, the *Bulletin* has become more discursive, bringing in external topics and writers, with a particular focus on the impact and implications of the changing urbanscape of Christchurch.

Jenny Harper acknowledged this in her Director's Forward to a recent issue,

To an extent our *Bulletin* has become freer and more journal-like without the previously full range of programmes and events we needed to document. (Harper, 2012a, p. 4).

The city itself has become a stand-in for the exhibition programme, the starting point for drawing in new contributors, from interviews with Dan Cameron, Director of the exhibition *Prospect New Orleans* (an initiative in response to the effects of Hurricane Katrina on the city of New Orleans) (Paton, 2011a) to artist Antony Gormley writing on the role of figurative art in assisting with urban renewal (Harper, 2012d) and cultural theorist Rebecca Solnit writing on cities recovering from disaster (Solnit, 2012).

The changing urbanscape is charted by a variety of different articles, documenting the city's collapse, demolition and rebuild. Justin Paton channeled psychogeography to document a day spent walking the perimeter fence of the city's Red Zone, in a text which is highly personally charged, declaring, "if I'm completely honest, I need to admit that art may have nothing to do with it – that I'm heading back to the edge of the so-called "Red Zone" to simply and dumbfoundedly stare." (Paton, 2012, p. 17).

Since June 2011 the Gallery has also maintained an almost daily blog, written by a variety of staff contributors, most regularly by members of the Curatorial, Management, Shop, Exhibitions and Library and Archives teams. The blog was begun with a post by David Simpson on the 20th November 2009, and initially focused on the new collection hang, *Brought to Light*. Blogging was undertaken sporadically from then on, with between one and two posts a month, focusing on works in the collection and external visits made by staff to other institutions.

Following the September 4 2010 earthquake, Jenny Harper posted an update about the state of the Gallery on September 6, and Gallery staff continued to post more regularly (on average once a week) with updates initially about the earthquakes, and then about exhibition installations. After the February 22 2011 earthquake, the Gallery's first blog was on March 14, showing the state of the Gallery's library post-quake. The Gallery continued to blog approximately once a week, and from June 2011 has uploaded a blog post almost every day.

As with the *Bulletin*, without a Gallery programme to document, the blog has become lateral in its focus. A major point of enquiry has been documenting the effects of the earthquakes on the Gallery, but also on the wider state of the city. Tim Jones, the Gallery's Librarian, who manages the blog and has played a key role in championing writing for the blog to other staff, insists that there are no rules as to what are worthy writing subjects.

Predictably the earthquake and its effects on the city is a common

theme, from the observations of odd signs, to grander speculations on ruins as an art historical theme. Another purpose of the blog was to show the public, who, after all pay our salaries, that we were still doing some useful work even though our doors were closed. (Jones, 2013).

The blog posts were always signed with the writer's name, but after the February earthquake the tone of posts developed more individual sensibilities. A greater sense of informality can be observed in the language and style used by many of the staff, and distinct differences in interests can be discerned amongst various staff. Felicity Milburn suggests that the stronger sense of a shared vision has empowered staff to express themselves more freely, "because we're all on the same page there's a much greater confidence about speaking on behalf of the institution in a much less scripted, prescribed way." (Milburn, interview with author, 18 December 2012).

Some staff began to take a more personal stance, revealing details of their private lives. Returning to the Gallery after several months away at a residency in Sydney, Senior Curator Justin Paton posted a blog that was the first to allude to his own personal circumstances,

This was about three months after the quake, and we'd just come back from a stay in Sydney. I think we were secretly hoping to discover that the whole city had been cleaned up, or indeed that the quake never happened. But the twenty tonnes of bricks that the quake shook off our house were lying exactly where we'd left them, and the rooms still looked freshly shredded. You could have seen our Sydney afterglow fading. (Paton, 2012).

Humour and play comes to the forefront in many posts, with staff frequently responding jokingly to each other's posts in the comments sections. Unusually, for City Council employees, staff members have been given freedom to express their own opinions about the rebuild of Christchurch, in posts that are at times passionate and even angry. Curator Peter Vangioni,⁵⁵ in particular, has used the blog as a forum to reveal his deep concern at the extent of building removal in the inner city. He writes,

Every few days, a new piece appears in The Press that quietly deals out another major crippling blow. I'm talking about the demolition of this city; the loss of significant architectural heritage; the disappearance of all the good bits that physically defined this place. (Vangioni, 2011).

Programmes Manager Blair Jackson describes social media as offering the Gallery a "less corporate voice" and identifies that the existing blog "just seemed a natural place to go, quite quickly" (Jackson, interview with author, 17 December 2012) once the Gallery was closed to the public. The traumatic experience of the earthquakes is acknowledged as a contributing factor in personalising the Gallery's voice in audience engagement.

⁵⁵ Peter Vangioni has been a curator at the CAG since 2003, focusing largely on exhibitions and research into the historical painting and works on paper collections.

Justin Paton notes,

I think the website and the blog and, in a weird way, the earthquakes, they've helped us to limber up tonally. Particularly in the wake of an event like an earthquake, you can't help but talk personally about things ... you've got to find ways to articulate how it matters in a convincing and real way. Because, in a situation like that, no ones going to buy the press release version any longer. (Paton, interview with author, 17 December 2012).

While most of the staff identified the earthquakes as a defining shift in opening up the communications to a more personal tone, Jenny Harper believes that the Gallery had begun to develop a more informal approach prior to this. She credits a significant learning experience as June 2007, when *Living Large 6*, a privately owned Bill Hammond painting, fell off the wall while in storage at the Gallery. The damage sustained by the painting was followed by subsequent damage to the Gallery's reputation through media publicity about the incident. Harper describes that period as a very hard professional time with public criticism of the Gallery's methods of care, and resulting difficulties procuring further loans from cautious collectors.

Harper is proud of the Gallery's response to the crisis, with the Director fronting to the media and acknowledging the problem, and in the long term, establishing a rolling peer review process for all sections of Gallery procedures, beginning with the conservation department. She also spoke publicly and in great detail about the incident in a paper presented at the Australasian Registrars Committee conference in February 2010.

I don't want to blow it out of proportion, but it was one of the worst incidents in my professional career; that's what I said on television, it was really difficult. I don't know whether I'm just naturally prepared to be honest, or it's because I'm at the other end of my career now, so it's not as if I'm 'making it' through the system – I have absolute confidence in my position. I'm possibly also affected by having been an academic for twelve years. In that environment, you are more critical and discuss things more openly. (Harper, interview with author, 18 December 2012)

For Harper, the experience of publically acknowledging failure in the instance of the Bill Hammond painting later provided a blueprint for greater transparency for the Gallery in times of trouble. Crucially, the highly public nature of the *Paradigm Shift* process was the beginning of a more exposed role for the Christchurch Art Gallery, an opening up of behind-the-scenes practice for public examination that can be understood to have fundamentally changed their relationship with the public.

When considering the impact of rare events, or unusual one-off occurrences outside the everyday experience of institutions, management theorists Christianson, Farkas, Sutcliffe, & Weick (2009) have suggested that is useful to consider rare events not as anomalies, but instead as exaggerations of the type of stimulus that organisations routinely encounter on a smaller scale.

They argue that while rare events can trigger learning that can redirect organisational identity, these “acts of organising – acts such as interpreting, relating, restructuring and reworking identify – become stronger and more flexible across a series of rare events.” (Christianson et al., 2009, p. 850).

The effect of undergoing earlier, highly public, problems gave the Gallery a context for managing the earthquakes, both through improved systems for internal communication but, significantly, the development of a more transparent relationship to the public and to key stakeholders.

It is helpful here to refer back to the notion of organisational narratives. The conversion narrative that describes first the *Paradigm Shift* and now the new, post-disaster period of the Gallery is an internal dialogue, used by staff to articulate and reinforce a sense of belief. But it is also an external dialogue, actively utilised by individual staff and the Gallery as an organisation to describe themselves to key stakeholders (funders, collectors, collegial institutions and artists) and to the public. Blair Jackson says, “We’re probably a little more focused about how we stand out now ... we’ve been actively seeking any opportunity to have a voice at Council.” (Jackson, interview with author, 5 April 2013).

Both Deputy Director Blair Jackson and Senior Curator Justin Paton identified in their interviews that social media played a vital role for the CAG to facilitate storytelling devices crucial in maintaining relationships with stakeholders.

Jackson states,

The reality is we’re really keen to retain our cultural capital, and we are kind of competitive with other galleries, in a good way, you know, we want to maintain the profile of this institution, as vital, and we really need to keep our profile going so that when we reopen we can secure good shows again and get that confidence back in lenders and all those people. (Jackson, interview with author, 17 December 2012).

Justin Paton acknowledges the drama of the Gallery’s post-earthquake story has a certain power that the Gallery has knowingly harnessed in its approach to those outside the city.

When the city’s been shaken up, people do sit up and listen a little more. You can write to someone and say; “hey, would you like to be in a show”, or you can write to them and say; “hey, we had an earthquake, would you like to be in my show”. Well, you’re more likely to get a yes in response to the second answer. And you could use that in quite a cynical or grasping way, but I actually think that will become part of the history, that artists will rise to the challenge of showing here in a different way than they might somewhere else. (Paton, interview with author, 17 December 2012).

Gallery staff are consciously articulating their narrative to a wider public, through both formal and informal means, demonstrating the dramatic curve of its own experience – the event, the aftermath and the response. This is not

to say that the elements of the narrative aren't firmly grounded in real events, but rather, that the process of retelling has become significant and apparent. Curator Anselm Franke has described the act of an institution defining itself publically as performing a series of gestures, vehicles to create difference and place an organisation within a taxonomy.

Franke writes,

An institution has to perform itself, has to act out its own script until the script can be rewritten. Thus, consequently, it speaks about nothing else than about institutional performativity itself whether consciously or not ... It is not about the content of the story as such, but about the act of telling it, and about its possibility and the options and practises it authorises and enables. (Franke in Möntmann, 2006, p. 40).

The process of opening up the personal details and characters of individual staff as well as the journey of the whole institution has shifted the relationship of the institution to its publics. While the relationship to a local public focuses on supporting and developing local art and artists, the relationship to publics broader afield (national and international) has told a wider story of living and working in a post-earthquake Christchurch.

However, while staff seek to position the Gallery nationally and internationally, both Blair Jackson and Neil Semple articulate a sense of frustration, suggesting that the wider narrative of a post-earthquake Christchurch has lost its interest to a national audience.

I think people nationally are sick of the story actually. I think a whole lot of people have switched off and wish it would all go away.
(Jackson, interview with author, 5 April 2013).

To date, the most successful national campaign the Gallery has mounted while closed, is *Back the Bull*, their second attempt at crowd-funding a project. This was successful financially, raising \$206,050 for the purchase of an artwork for the Gallery's collection, Michael Parekowhai's *Chapman's Homer*, commissioned for presentation at the 2011 Venice Biennale. *Back the Bull* was especially successful in generating large-scale community support, receiving considerable local and national attention and generating 874 individual pledges of financial support. Major funding came in the form of matching funds from the Christchurch Art Gallery Trust and Westpac, with support in-kind from a range of companies.⁵⁶

Back the Bull followed the Christchurch Art Gallery's involvement in the original Venice Biennale presentation, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, with Director Jenny Harper serving as Commissioner and Justin Paton as Curator. The exhibition was then presented by the CAG in Christchurch at the NG space in July 2012. The original Venice Biennale project demonstrates

⁵⁶ The most recent equivalent for the Gallery was the major fundraising conducted by the RMAG to assist in the building of CAG. Without the benefit of social media, that campaign was conducted over a much longer period of time.

the CAG's desire to position themselves in an international arena as an institution of gravitas, separate from an earthquake narrative. In contrast, *Back the Bull* wholeheartedly drew on the earthquake to generate a heightened use of drama and emotion in storytelling aimed at a local and national audience.

An evocative image of the bull located in front of building debris on Madras Street (taken during the showing in July 2012) was deployed to emphasize the work's powerful symbolism, conjuring the resilience and rebirth of the city. But, crucially, the campaign was highly focused around Jenny Harper, who fronted many of the media and events with a very personal plea for support. Of the many images generated for the project, for social and other forms of media, a particularly resonant one was Harper staffing the till at the Bangers, Burgers and Beer BBQ fundraiser. Dressed down in a red *Back the Bull* t-shirt and grinning, with her right hand extended in a Thumbs-Up sign, Harper is a long way from the persona of an erudite and untouchable arts professional. *Back the Bull* situated the Christchurch Art Gallery in a powerfully emotional role, stressing art's capacity to provide a symbolic marker, and locating the Gallery as an emotional and cultural flagship for the city's rebuild.

Artist Engagement: Shared Endeavours

Since February 2011, the Gallery has developed new ways of working with artists, both visibly in the form of public art projects and less visibly in advocacy and support for local artists affected by the earthquakes.

In the days following the earthquake, the staff were primarily focused on their own personal circumstances. At first many staff were not even able to make it into the office. However, about three or four weeks after the initial event, a decision was made to reach out to local artists to understand and document their situations.

The Gallery's curators divided up the institution's database of Christchurch artists, and rang each artist on it, asking how they were and how the earthquake had affected them. As Neil Semple, who led this approach noted, "it was important for us to reconnect with our community." (Semple, interview with the author, 17 December 2012). This action acknowledged that artists do not tend to be members of a formal structured network, and often already live in precarious or informal situations, in rented houses or studios in cheaper, and thus more vulnerable parts of town.

Using the information documented as a result of these conversations, and an online database initiated by Auckland commentator Hamish Keith⁵⁷ the Gallery began to work with artists to assist them in relocating from damaged studios, utilising Gallery equipment and staff to undertake art handling. In addition,

⁵⁷ lostartchch.org.nz

staff often took a management role in liaising with the authorities to secure access to buildings within the Red Zone on behalf of artists. Blair Jackson says, “because Council and the Earthquake Commission were working out of this building, we had a slight ‘in’; on who to talk to and who to call to coordinate things. Nobody knew the process about doing that, but we had a little more information that helped a number of them.” (Jackson, interview with author, 17 December 2012).

The decision to undertake such work was led primarily by Blair Jackson and Neil Semple from the management team. The decision was not documented formally, but instead was the result of quickly made decisions by the management team, with support from the curatorial and exhibitions teams.

Blair Jackson recalls,

I don't know where it came from, but everybody agreed we should be doing it. And a lot of it was about personal relationships we had with those artists; they're our friends, as well, or various other staff member's friends. Half the staff here are artists, or have been, or hang out with artists all the time, I mean its just part of what you'd do for anybody, I think. (Jackson, interview with author, 17 December 2012).

Neil Semple agreed that the decision was “driven top down”, and describes an animated verbal process leading up to the decision, with not all staff initially supporting it.

We had big discussions about it – are we putting our staff's lives at risk doing this? ... but in the end it was like, well, we should do this, because it's right, because there's a community out there – our community – that needs our help and our support, and we're in a position to offer that. And therefore we should do it because they need it and we think it's the right thing to do. We worked with engineers to reduce the risk. It wasn't always easy, but we did it. (Semple, interview with author, 17 December 2012).

Staff from the exhibitions team who took part volunteered to undertake the work, with Jackson and Semple carrying out some of the more difficult jobs themselves, such as helping artists Marie Le Lievre and Tony DeLatour to move out of the Government Life building in the Christchurch Square. As well as moving artists from their studios (and in some cases, where artists lived in their studios, their homes too), the Gallery also assisted smaller galleries such as The Physics Room with construction and Brooke Gifford Gallery in relocating works.⁵⁸

All staff interviewed emphasised that the role of the Christchurch Art Gallery was valued by them, despite the rescue of artworks falling outside the Gallery's mandate. Felicity Milburn stressed that, although such undertakings

⁵⁸ The Brook Gifford Gallery was a long established (1975) commercial gallery in Manchester Street, whose building was demolished as a result of the earthquake.

were unusual, they were in keeping with the Gallery's larger ethos to support the arts community, stating,

Helping out was very much part of who the Gallery is now ... we work closely with artists, we're partners with them, if something happens to them of course we're going to help. And it was really great to have that feeling but then know that the institution was also going to back that up – and when I say institution, I guess I mean the management of the Gallery – to know they were also going to say, of course, lets do all we can. (Milburn, interview with author, 18 December 2012).

Exhibition Designer Chris Pole agreed,

I think that's a really valid role to play, even if it doesn't fall directly into a Christchurch Art Gallery branded outcome. It's just supporting the network, and again, I think that's part of the way that we're working with and engaging with artists now. (Pole, interview with author, 18 December 2012).

Chapter Four described how the Gallery's relationship with artists had undergone a prior shift in the years 2006-2007, moving to a more inclusive and collaborative way of working. As outlined previously, the shift can be understood as a consequence of a change in management. While specific to the circumstances of the CAG's experience, it can also be understood as a reflection of a broader international change in the way art galleries position themselves to artists, as demonstrated in Chapter Two.

As discussed in Chapter Two, this movement was first termed new institutionalism by critic and curator Jonas Ekeberg (2003) who described a degree of permeability where art "institutions seemed at last to be ready to let go, not only of the limited discourse of the work of art as a mere object, but also of the whole institutional framework that went with it, a framework that the 'extended' field of contemporary art had simply inherited from high modernism, along with its white cube, its top-down attitude of curator and directors, its link to certain (insider) audience and so on and so forth." (Ekeberg, 2003, p.14).

New institutionalism is characterised by an emphasis on the transformation of the art institution from within, and interest in "temporary / transient encounters, states of flux and open-endedness" (Doherty, 2004) which casts both artists and audience as active collaborators with the institution (Szeemann, 1969). Notably, none of the staff interviewed used the phrase New Institutionalism when talking about a changing relationship with artists, although several used other terms deployed by New Institutionalism, such as the idea of working in collaboration with artists and being artist centred. Felicity Milburn stated, "a phrase that people here use a lot now is dealing with artists as an active collaborator." (Milburn, interview with author, 18 December 2012).

The sense of working in partnership with artists had already been articulated by the Gallery prior to the earthquakes but has been more clearly delineated

since then. The Gallery's programme has profiled the work of local artists in a far more prominent way post-earthquake, and the personal nature of those relationships was emphasised by Justin Paton, who stated,

You're working with artists who you know are troupers, where a friendship exists already between them and the Gallery, and it is as simple as getting in touch and saying, you want to do something for this venue? - let's just do it as fast as we can. So there's not a lot of preciousness, we're not briefing people aggressively about what they must do or anything, it's seat-of-your-pants stuff. (Paton, interview with author: 17 December 2012).

The emphasis on a partnership role with artists acknowledges that the Gallery needs and will need the arts community in the future, as the Gallery and wider city rebuilds the cultural landscape. Anecdotal evidence suggests large numbers of artists having left the city, either temporarily or permanently, and Gallery staff are clearly attuned to the changing nature of the community. Felicity Milburn identifies a concern that a rebuild of the city's cultural landscape will be difficult without the wider arts infrastructure of commercial galleries, artist run spaces, studios and informal artist networks. Milburn insists that a partnership with artists goes both ways,

We're asking artists to stick with us too, because there are artists who're working here, we're asking them to have faith in a future here for art, so it goes both ways. (Milburn, interview with author, 18 December 2012).

The question of what a shift in modes of working with artists will signal for the future of the Gallery, particularly when the institution reopens and can again work in conventional ways, with presumably a wider pool of national and international artists, will be addressed in detail in the following chapter.

Conclusion

The period from February 2011 to the present day represents a highly charged period of the Christchurch Art Gallery's history, with the Gallery forced to react to a significant and rare external event, a major earthquake. This period of upheaval represents a severe challenge to the Gallery's operations, with the physical gallery space closed to the public, and staff unable to carry their jobs as previously understood.

The different strategies the Gallery has deployed to maintain staff morale and to continue to actively engage with stakeholders and the public have emerged from and build on an existing culture of organisational resilience under the terms posited by Hatum (2006). Resilience can be understood here as describing a culture in which flexibility, collaboration and informality are encouraged among staff with the result a greater ability to respond and adapt to change.

In addition, drawing on Weick and Browning's notion of sense-making or storytelling (1986), resilience is understood as a perceptual narrative that

helps, in turn, to build actual resilience. The Christchurch Art Gallery staff interviewed identify themselves as part of an organisation with a high degree of personalisation and informality, at times representing the institution as more fluid, less hidebound by structure than outsiders might perceive. In identifying themselves this way, they become more flexible in fact, through the articulation and affirmation of this stance. Symbiotic relationships between story and fact, narrative and reality, provide a strengthened and yet flexible position that has enabled the Christchurch Art Gallery to respond actively and outwardly to a crisis that could have paralysed a different organisation.

Storytelling has been important, not just internally to generate and maintain staff morale, but externally to communicate with the public and a wide range of stakeholders. A sense of dramatic flair has been used to shape the storytelling, emphasising the unique nature of the Gallery's experience, particularly to audiences and stakeholders outside Christchurch. This drama emerges from real and personal experiences but has been consciously shaped by the Gallery in their communications. Storytelling plays various roles for the Gallery, including generating and developing connections with stakeholders (from patrons to artists and a wider audience) that create a sense of relevance for the Gallery while closed and will provide them with the networks they will require once they are reopened once more.

Leadership in storytelling is crucial, and Director Jenny Harper and Senior Curator Justin Paton, and to a lesser extent Blair Jackson, are identified as key personalities that articulate a position that other staff identify with. It is through their descriptions of the Gallery's condition that other staff recognise themselves and their experiences. And it is through their role as cheerleaders or institutional entrepreneurs that other staff are brought together, to feel included in the organisation's direction.

The individual habitus generated by Harper, Paton and Jackson, combined with the considerable cultural and symbolic capital each brought to the institution, was informed by their previous experiences working with artists and the arts sector. Through this significant and simultaneous influx of new staff, and Jackson and Paton's prior experience of working closely together, they were in a strong position to disrupt old structures and behaviours at the Gallery. This rupture of the existing field allowed for the injection of new approaches into both internal and external communications.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

You can't leave behind what you've been doing. It all becomes part of your voice. (Harper, interview with author, 18 December, 2012).

I hope it changes us permanently... (Paton, interview with author, 18 December, 2012).

Introduction

At time of writing, the Christchurch Art Gallery is preparing for another year of closure to the public, with an anticipated opening date in mid-2015. Written in the midst of an unprecedented time in the Gallery's history, this thesis sets out to determine the degree of change within its history, focusing on the period 2006–2013. In this analysis of the Christchurch Art Gallery's particular experience through two extraordinary events, I set out to understand developments in both the philosophy and practice of the Gallery during significant change, through documenting and interpreting the perceptions of staff.

The final chapter examines the research material presented in previous chapters, distilling and drawing conclusions from the information gathered. Change, this thesis finds, has indeed been significant at the Gallery during the last eight years. My research sought to understand the size and scope of organisational change and chart the perception of that change internally, and further, the impact of change on the gallery's external engagement with two key stakeholder groups – audiences and artists.

Organisational change has had a significant impact on staff engagement at the Christchurch Art Gallery, both internally and externally. My research found that it was the *Paradigm Shift* that caused the most significant changes to organisational culture at the gallery, bringing in a new management team, but also involving existing staff in the change process, and allowing the Gallery to redefine itself. However, the research revealed that, contrary to my preconception and a wider view within the sector, change did not occur through strict adherence to the *Paradigm Shift's* recommendations. While the *Paradigm Shift* opened up conceptual space for the organisational field to change, it was the influx of new individuals, who brought with them considerable symbolic capital, allowing them to act as powerful agents of persuasion and change.

This chapter examines and summarises three key themes that have emerged through the research. The first two, Organisational Resilience and Collective Narratives, have been uncovered as the most significant contributors to the Christchurch Art Gallery's ability to navigate change and to maintain a sense of collectivism at a time of institutional difficulty. The final theme, Transparency, has been found to provide a compelling tool for communication by the Gallery, internally, to key stakeholders and to audiences.

The research demonstrated that these three themes are crucial to the Gallery's recent development and provide an important benchmark for understanding the institution at the current moment. Organisational and change literature provided a conceptual framework to understand the notions of resilience and collective narratives. Finally, this chapter makes use of the research to undertake some last speculations on how the current state of practice at the Gallery might evolve in the future. In particular, Chapter Six examines what a shift in working publicly within the city has brought to the programme, given that artists have begun to take the city itself as a site of production, using the history and architecture of the location as subject and object. How does this translate back to the supposed neutrality of the white cube, and what challenges will be faced in curating against the backdrop of a changed city?

Organisational Resilience

The narrative of resilience was critical to my understanding of the Christchurch Art Gallery. In using the term resilience I drew on an organisational management use of this term to describe the ability to absorb strain and recover from challenging events (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003). My understanding of resilience was also informed by the specific notion of the resilient museum (Suchy, 2004; Janes, 1995, 2009), an organisation whose resilience "allows systems and organisations to absorb large disturbances without changing their fundamental natures." (Janes, 2009, p. 141).

Research conducted to capture the mood of Christchurch Art Gallery staff, through semi-structured interviews and analysis of public and internal communications, revealed an institution that identifies as highly adaptive, able to respond quickly to changing situations. Chapter Five demonstrated that a perception by staff of the organisation as fluid and responsive has been an important contributor to ongoing staff morale in difficult times, and, in perceiving themselves as resilient, have become more so.

All the staff stressed they were operating in an environment of adaptability, although not all used the direct terminology of resilience. For example, the Business Operations Manager, Lynley McDougall, stated, "We are still evolving and transforming. ... I know nothing is constant, it's all unpredictable and I must be flexible and guide staff through this, keeping communications open with a high level of empathy, as each individual has their own concerns." (McDougall, 2012). A sense of pride in their individual and collective adaptability was expressed by each member of staff interviewed across the hierarchical spectrum.

In addition, Chapter Five found that a shared notion of resilience was important in developing the Gallery's connection with audiences and with artists, allowing staff to work with artists in new ways and as direct collaborators. As detailed in Chapter Five, the enforced closure of the Christchurch Art Gallery to the public has compelled it to alter core operations, shifting focus from inside the building to outside and further

afield. For many of the staff, this has required entirely new ways of working with art, outside of previous professional experience. During that time, as demonstrated, the Gallery has learnt to work in different ways, working faster and more intimately with artists and with less emphasis on process, responding to an ever-changing environment.

In Chapter Four I referred to Lewin's (1947) seminal description of change as a three-part process, consisting of unfreezing, moving and freezing again (Isabella, 1990). It can be argued that the earthquakes occurred just at the point that the Gallery was on the brink of freezing again. Therefore, the post-*Paradigm Shift* transformation can be understood as becoming more defined and entrenched as a story as a result of the subsequent upheaval.

Collective Narratives

Chapter Four reveals that staff developed a series of shared narratives that describe their experiences of change and serve to define their collective sense of self. From the outset, I had an expectation that individual accounts of the organisational change experience would differ, creating a multiplicity of divergent voices (Buchanan & Dawson, 2005). However, as detailed in Chapter Four, the responses from the interviews were overwhelmingly unified, with staff often relating the same stories and anecdotes, as demonstrated in Appendix Two.

This was particularly notable when staff referred to a pre-*Paradigm Shift* state, and the subsequent changes to the Gallery. All staff detailed a narrative of positive change, where the Gallery had undergone significant alteration from a dysfunctional organisation with strict hierarchies, to one that was more open, flexible and consultative. For example, a single narrative was found when examining the notion that the new Christchurch Art Gallery had not re-established and redefined itself with the new building, but instead had continued with the existing programme and ethos of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, relocated into new surroundings.

What did this parallel group of reports signify? In evaluating the stories told to me I tried to be mindful of the potential for individual voices to be silenced by the weight of the dominant or official account of the organisation. In interviewing I created opportunities for participants to contradict the dominant narrative, particularly providing the opportunity to tell me anonymous or unquotable information. No participants took up the offer of anonymity, and although several participants did provide me with unquotable information, this took the form of reinforcing their original stories in more informal and anecdotal ways.

Within those parameters the unified quality of the stories told to me reinforced the realisation that different areas of an organisation can be brought together by one powerful story (Shaw, 2013). Reissner argues it is important to bear in mind that "despite their potential bias, mythical character and nostalgic qualities these accounts are real and credible in their original context." (Reissner, 2008, p. 83). It is the nature of conversion

narratives to compare the negativity of the previous situation with the optimism of the new. But stories of conversion can exaggerate the contrast between the past and present, casting the past in a worse light, to highlight the success of the current state (Ballis & Richardson, 1997).

Although it is possible to speculate that there were competing narratives of change among staff during the early stages of the change process, since the earthquakes a meta-narrative has developed that has become accepted as the definitive story of change. In this version the *pre-Paradigm Shift* period is perceived with a severe negativity that is shared by staff working at the time and subsequent appointments. The stories told of prior experiences of change serve to define them as being part of an organisation prepared for change, accustomed to responding to the unknown.

The research demonstrated that such storytelling was led by particular individuals – primarily Director Jenny Harper and Senior Curator Justin Paton, and, to a lesser extent, Deputy Director Blair Jackson – who were identified as offering an inspirational leadership style. Their capacity to bring significant symbolic capital to the organisation, through their experiences within the national arts community outside of Christchurch, and through their own personal style, allowed them to assume influential roles as institutional entrepreneurs.

Although they were established as the leaders and initiators of the storytelling, their narratives were adopted by the rest of the interviewed staff. The complexity of views about the Gallery's problems in its early years have been streamlined retrospectively into a more simplified analysis which binds the current staff to a unified narrative. While staff identified an inspirational leadership style as critical to their success, they acknowledged the essential role of structural change, such as that undertaken by Neil Semple and his team, much less frequently.

These stories are useful as a mechanism by which staff generate positive morale, but also as a means for communicating with the public. Storytelling has become a highly attuned method for reaching out to audiences in new and more personalised ways. That emphasis on personalisation has also given rise to new methods of communicating with exhibiting artists. Museum contact zones (Platt, 1991) are charged with a series of narratives, stories that staff tell themselves and others. The Gallery's stories are aspirational in intent and reinforce a strong sense of family, providing a powerful mechanism to generate cohesion. While the earthquakes contributed to the intensification of staff culture, the impact of earlier organisational change was a significant factor. In some respects, the staff of the Christchurch Art Gallery had already had their earthquake.

A More Transparent Organisation

My research has shown the Christchurch Art Gallery developed significantly different methods of communicating – with audiences, artists and each other

— during the first two years of public closure. The Gallery has undergone a process of opening up to the external world. In Chapter Four I mapped the beginnings of this change through the *Paradigm Shift*, noting the introduction of more informality and personalisation. In Chapter Five I demonstrated how the experience of the February 2011 earthquake accelerated the process, creating a climate where, as Senior Curator Justin Paton said, “no one’s going to buy the press release version any longer.” (Paton, interview with the author, 17 December 2012).

From a vastly different operating climate, Gallery staff have exposed the back room operations of the institution to the public in new ways. In doing so, they have also opened up their own lives to audiences, offering an experience more personalised, raw and specific. Chapter Four demonstrated that their approach to working with artists had already begun to change, post-*Paradigm Shift*, but Chapter Five finds further development since the earthquakes, creating direct connections with artists that are informal and collaborative. Boundaries have broken down between staff, due partly to the leveling effect of a natural disaster, and the resulting changes to workplace layouts and systems.

While these shifts in practice reflect the experiences of the institution over the last ten years, they also express a changing dynamic within museum practice around the world, detailed in the section on New Museology in Chapter Two. Here it is useful to reflect on the CAG’s position operating within a much broader field, that of the international art world and its changing trends and flows of practice. While the changed relationship between the CAG and its audience was not articulated by any staff interviewed within the framework of New Museology, Chapter Five has shown that the changes at the Christchurch Art Gallery echo Hooper Greenhill’s call for the post-museum (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000); for a practice that is subjective, communicative and personal to replace modernism’s cool distance.

The important role played by storytelling within the staff has provided them with a template for storytelling externally. A power structure that encourages and rewards personalisation and informality among staff has established an organisational field in which communication is central. Given this, one can speculate that the Gallery’s shift towards a more open engagement might have occurred anyway, but perhaps not to such an extent. Such analysis can only be speculative, as the research does not provide conclusions in this area.

Conclusion

The primary question this thesis sought to determine was: “*How has the Gallery experienced and articulated change following a series of major upheavals?*” The key finding is that the Gallery has come to define itself positively through change. The story of transformation emerges as the dominant motif for the Gallery over the last eight years.

The two events that have resulted in major change — the *Paradigm Shift* and

the earthquake upheaval – are symbiotically linked to each other in the Gallery's response. It is difficult to separate the two and indeed the Gallery's response to the earthquakes is defined by its post-*Paradigm Shift* philosophy and practices. Although I had anticipated that the *Paradigm Shift* would prove to have provided concrete strategic and operational direction for the Gallery, the research revealed that in fact the *Paradigm Shift* process merely created a gap or a marker, through which change could emerge.

Through the mechanism of the *Paradigm Shift* the CCC recruited a Director, and other staff within management, who established a culture that valued intuition over unwieldy planning, reduced the hierarchical distance between management and staff and emphasised the positive benefits of change. In many ways the subsequent evolution of the Gallery can be seen as a reaction against the prescriptive nature of the *Paradigm Shift*, whilst simultaneously the *Paradigm Shift* is trumpeted as a transformative period of the Gallery's history. Personality, rather than strategy, is the defining theme of the Gallery self-identity. A high degree of social and cultural capital within the organisation is awarded to specific curatorial leaders, giving prominence to storytelling over operational structures.

Thus the Gallery was in an optimum state to adapt to, and make the most of, a new and challenging terrain. The February 2011 earthquake hit at the very moment that the Gallery found itself on a spectacular high, having achieved record numbers with the *Ron Mueck* show. Its success had reinforced for Gallery staff that the changes made through the *Paradigm Shift* were not only called for but demonstrably effective, thereby reinforcing the relevance of such methodology.

Without the *Paradigm Shift* how would the Gallery have responded to a post-earthquake environment, of closure and altered states of engagement? I would argue that the pre-*Paradigm Shift* the Christchurch Art Gallery, with its emphasis on hierarchy and immaculate presentation, would have struggled greatly. While it is possible that the shared experience of such trauma could have served to unify the staff, it is more likely that the earthquake would have placed intensified pressure on existing fissures within the institution.

Since the earthquakes the Christchurch Art Gallery has moved to greater communication and engagement with audiences and artists. The Gallery has entered into new partnerships and found new methods of working that are both more reactive and more personal. Its voice has expanded and pluralised, opening up as a collection of individual personalities who each shape and contribute to the institution in different ways. Some of those voices are humorous, passionate, erudite; while others are opinionated, even angry. It is inconceivable that the pre-*Paradigm Shift* Gallery could have accommodated this range of emotions within its limited public range.

My research clarifies that these changes are both particular and representative. The Gallery's changes are a direct response to the specific events experienced by the institution over the last ten years, but can also be understood in the wider context of international moves by galleries and museums, demonstrated in Chapter Two. While the unique experience of

change undergone by the Gallery propelled it to move at a fast pace into a new era of engagement, the precedents for undertaking such a change can be found in a wider shift in both art gallery (New Institutionalism) and wider museum culture (New Museology). As detailed in Chapter Two, galleries have adapted their modes of engagement to develop a more personalised, less formal engagement with audiences, and a changing relationship between artists and institutions, with artists taking a more elevated and open-ended role.

The Gallery's change, therefore, is not a unique one, although it is significant within the context of New Zealand art galleries and through the acceleration and sheer pace of its change. As such, it provides the wider field of other galleries and cultural institutions in this country with a useful, if extreme, test case.

Final speculation

I suspect we'll look back on this period with (very qualified) nostalgia, as a time when the rules for public art in the new city weren't yet fully worked out. A wild west moment, when official productions were contending for space with unlicensed forms of creation and also with things that are not art but look a hell of a lot like it. (Paton, 2013, p. 17).

Two final questions remain to be asked; what relevance do these findings have for other galleries? And what will happen when the Christchurch Art Gallery finally reopens to the public and business as normal can resume?

The Christchurch Art Gallery experience provides other galleries with insight into a pressure cooker scenario. Here is transformation sped up. Here is public and artist engagement amplified through tragedy. While it shouldn't take a natural disaster to motivate a public institution to reach out to its various constituents, the Christchurch Art Gallery does provide an extreme model of that shift in motion.

The expectations around the role of a gallery in its community were already different in Christchurch from those prevailing in Auckland, Wellington or Dunedin. The earthquakes have served to radically amplify that difference. Even allowing for specificity of location, however, the Christchurch Art Gallery offers its peers the chance to observe a more personalised and informal approach to artists and audiences from a larger institution. The rise in national (museum and business) awards presented to the CAG and the increase in the requests for CAG staff to give public talks and workshops to their professional peers, gives an anecdotal indication that the wider profession is already paying attention. The CAG, after all, is the public art gallery for New Zealand's second largest city, and as such, commands attention from the wider sector.

But what does the future hold for the Gallery? With the shift back into the repaired building new challenges will emerge for the institution. The new

commitment to Canterbury artists will be harder to maintain in a shift from the project-based exhibiting environment to a more standard exhibition programme, where institutional loans and touring exhibitions are once more part of the menu. When the Gallery reopens, visitor numbers will presumably become once again a standard measure of success, requiring the Gallery to re-engage in the pursuit of “blockbusters”. Will local artists be fellow-travellers on this journey, or will there be another backlash?

In addition, how will the Gallery’s more free and easy approach to exhibition making, developed through the unique circumstances of project work in the dysfunctional CBD, translate back to the more regulated Gallery environment? Senior Curator Justin Paton acknowledges the transition, describing the current approach as a “quick and greedy approach to exhibition making that I hope will carry on.” (Paton, interview with author, 17 December, 2012). Yet Director Jenny Harper warns that their current activities will not be viable when the programme moves back inside unless funding levels rise significantly, stating “I’ve had to remind [Christchurch City Council] that we’re not currently funded for that.” (Harper, interview with the author, 18 December 2012).

The *Back The Bull* campaign, outlined in Chapter Five, provides a tangible measure for how the Gallery might integrate the unique possibilities of this moment in time into their ongoing practice. The project is the first example of a New Zealand gallery or museum using crowd sourcing to generate funding for a collection item purchase. *Back The Bull* plays to the Gallery’s strengths – personalisation and storytelling. It also allows the Gallery to directly connect audiences (local and national/international) to the Gallery itself, as well as to an artist and an artwork. The campaign capitalises on the story of the earthquakes in a highly concrete way, while anticipating the next stage in the Gallery’s history – the reopening of the building. The bull as an artifact has become a symbol for the Gallery and the city itself, surviving and flourishing in unlikely circumstances, and, as such, becomes a palpable visual for an unknowable future.

The other potential future threat is the Gallery’s strong identification with the role of individual personalities rather than strategic planning. Such a highly personalised approach to management runs the risk of destabilising operations by significant personnel leaving the institution. At the time of writing Senior Curator Justin Paton has just taken up the position of Head of International Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. With Paton singled out as a pivotal leader in the building of narrative and a primary force in the development of the current organisational field, this shift could open up a substantial gap.

Will Paton’s successor bring a similar level of habitus and capital (both cultural and symbolic) to the role? And will this person develop a similarly close connection to Harper, Jackson and the rest of the staff? While the Gallery is currently in a very strong position, it is one that must be acknowledged as containing the seeds of future vulnerability.

In previous chapters I drew on two images that graphically illustrate the

subtle shift that has been achieved during the last ten years. The first image, detailed in Chapter Three, was that of then Director Tony Preston in 2003, posed in front of a heavy gilt frame, wearing a suit and tie and with his hands tucked into his pockets, looking at us sideways. In the second image, detailed in Chapter Five, Director Jenny Harper stands directly facing us, beaming, wearing a red Christchurch Art Gallery t-shirt and giving the thumbs up, posed in front of the Gallery and a giant Hellers billboard, staffing a *Bring Back The Bull* fundraising BBQ.

Each, of course, performs within the conventions of their own particular genre. As heavily posed as one picture is in contrast to the informality of the other, both are deliberately positioned to generate a particular symbolic story. The first story is one of power, status and accomplishment, while the second is about approachability and togetherness. The Gallery has always used storytelling to communicate, but over time the methods of communicating and the stories themselves have become substantially different. The storytellers themselves are revealed to be highly influential as champions of change and as generators of the Gallery field.

This thesis has established that the Christchurch Art Gallery operates as a particular and bounded field. As such, it can be understood as an unstable structure that generates the continual struggle for power and dominance. The current state of operations at the Gallery reveals itself as tightly knitted together, a set of individuals united by both extraordinary circumstances and the unique social skills of a team of institutional entrepreneurs. This moment shows a position of significant calm. However, understanding field as a state that is constantly unfolding and renegotiating, this position is always uneasy, poised to shift and change.

APPENDIX ONE: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CHRISTCHURCH ART GALLERY STAFF

1. Could you start by telling me how long you've been working at the CAG, and a little about your previous professional experience?
2. Do you think the audience for the Christchurch Art Gallery has changed over the last ten years?
3. If so, who led these changes? Why?
4. What about the relationship between the Gallery and artists? (specific examples)
5. Do you think the CCC's 2006 Paradigm Shift document played a role in these changes? If so, how?
6. Is the way the Gallery works with artists detailed in a specific written plan? If so, can you tell me how you might draw on this plan in your own work?
7. Since the earthquake, obviously your approach to audiences has had to change. Can you talk about these changes?
8. And what about working with artists, has that changed?
9. Why did the Gallery undertake this work?

APPENDIX TWO: LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAG	Christchurch Art Gallery
CBD	Central Business District
CCC	Christchurch City Council
CERA	Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority
CSA	Canterbury Society of the Arts
DPAG	Dunedin Public Art Gallery
EER	Evacuation and Emergency Response Plan
HCM	Hutt City Museums
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
RMAG	Robert McDougall Art Gallery

Note: while I have used either the Robert McDougall Art Gallery or RMAG, it is also variously described in quoted interviews as the “Robert McDougall” and the “McDougall” .

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