

Friday 24 May, 2024

For immediate release

Major public artwork for Rolleston now in production

SCAPE Public Art is delighted to announce that fundraising is complete for the planned public sculpture in Rolleston Town Centre.

Toro Atua, by Ngāi Tahu artist and Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi Laureate Dr Areta Wilkinson, is now being fabricated. It will be the largest public artwork in Rolleston. *Toro Atua* will be installed in Rolleston Town Centre's newly developed reserve, surrounded by Te Ara Ātea, the sensory garden, and youth recreation space. *Toro Atua* will be officially opened at a public celebration on 6 July.

SCAPE Public Art project consultant Deborah McCormick thanked all the local businesses and individuals who have contributed to the project, which has a design life of at least 50 years, saying "you are creating a legacy of ambition, inspiration and beauty for future generations."

Toro Atua is set to become a taonga for the community and an iconic landmark for Rolleston's rapidly-growing centre. It was commissioned through a competitive selection process by a panel comprising the Rolleston Residents' Association, Selwyn District Council, SCAPE Public Art, and Ngāi Te Ruahikihiki ki Taumutu. The Rolleston Residents' Association committed \$220,000 towards the total project budget of \$450,000. The residents' association contribution came from historic council funds associated with the Rolleston area. The council delegated the authority to the Rolleston Residents' Association for decision-making for a public art project for the new Rolleston Town Centre.

It was then up to SCAPE Public Art to secure the remaining funds. Contributions to the total value of \$230,000 have now been received from: Creative New Zealand & Tawera Studios, CORDE, ENI Engineering, the Rolleston family, Rātā Foundation, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, Ngāi Te Ruahikihiki ki Taumutu, Cooper Developments, Hughes Construction, Isaac Group, IPort Business Park, and TM Consultants. "Everyone involved in the project is excited to see the finished work live in the landscape for decades to come," says Ms McCormick.

Selwyn District Mayor, Sam Broughton thanked all those involved in the project. He says this public art complements the other work in the town centre and the vision to create a welcoming place for families of all ages to enjoy.

"*Toro Atua* will not only enhance our public spaces but also celebrates the unique stories and heritage of Waikirikiri Selwyn."

Dr Wilkinson's distinctive and meaningful new artwork, *Toro Atua*, takes inspiration from ancestral rock art of Te Waipounamu. The work comprises 20 light-reflecting stainless-steel figures, mounted on tall, slender poles to vibrate with life, shimmering slightly in the air far above our heads. The tallest of these poles will be 4 metres high. The 20 figures will be arranged in groups throughout the reserve, leading people through the landscape and indicating areas of importance.

Fabrication is being done by Christchurch firm, ENI Engineering.

ENDS.

To arrange interviews, contact:

Michele Hollis, SCAPE Public Art: 021 289 0919 / michele@scapepublicart.org.nz

High resolution images and captions available for [download from this link](#):

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/mbwsczn5ningz4m9gh4sx/AGdg0dtXS966THnvfbqtSlw?rlkey=h6ogobc2noyow2jm0cmz1r8rs&dl=0>

Notes to Editors:

1. What happens next?

Pieces will be brought to site in early June. Once they are in place, CORDE will install specially commissioned lighting. Wayfinding and information about the artwork will also be installed.

A full media pack about the artwork will be issued in coming weeks.

2. Public opening

Saturday 6 July, 5.30pm, on site. For detailed media arrangements, please contact:

Neisha Livermore, Selwyn District Council: 027 273 7911 / neisha.livermore@selwyn.govt.nz

3. About the artist

Dr Areta Wilkinson is a contemporary artist whose creative practice moves freely on and off the body as site, and into the field of installation. Her exquisite works explore art as a form of knowledge and practice with Māori philosophies—especially whakapapa and a worldview informed by Ngāi Tahu perspectives. She quietly crosses disciplines and boundaries with immense skill and perception. Areta is inspired by place and sees her work as a continuous exploration of the narratives that have shaped both her identity and her practice.

Alongside her creative works, Areta has a strong collaborative ethos and supports a community of artists in her orbit. She has worked collectively with artist groups like Oxford Gallery toi o Waimakariri and Paemanu: Ngāi Tahu Contemporary Visual Arts, and worked on partnership projects with iwi agencies and cultural organisations such as The Arts Centre Te Matatiki Toi Ora. Areta is an active member of the Māori Womens Welfare League Rāpaki Branch as modelled by her Taua (grandmother).

Her work is well represented in New Zealand collections including Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum, and Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, Wellington. Areta currently lives and works in Oxford, New Zealand near the foothills of the Southern Alps. In 2022, she became an Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi Laureate receiving the Jillian Friedlander Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa Award.

4. About SCAPE Public Art

SCAPE Public Art is the largest producer of contemporary public art in Aotearoa New Zealand, delivered through deep, enduring partnerships with industry. SCAPE has three interdependent workstreams: permanent free-to-view public artworks as a legacy to the communities that host them; an annual, curated season of public art in Ōtautahi Christchurch; and a year-round education and engagement programme with a focus on delivery to disadvantaged communities.

www.scapepublicart.org.nz