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Pick and mix

Earthquake hampers Ferns donations

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The recent earthquakes have taken their toll on efforts to raise funds for the return of Civic Square's fern globe sculpture.

The Wellington Sculpture Trust has signed a contract with artist Neil Dawson to make a near replica of the iconic *Ferns* sculpture and has been fundraising in earnest, with an aim to having the new sculpture erected in early 2017.

The trust is running a campaign on the Arts Foundations online fundraising platform Boosted, but the donations have been few and far between in the last two weeks.

Trust chairwoman Sue Elliott says the quakes have rightfully occupied peoples minds and donating has slowed.

The campaign ends on December 6, and if the necessary money is not raised it will delay the installation.

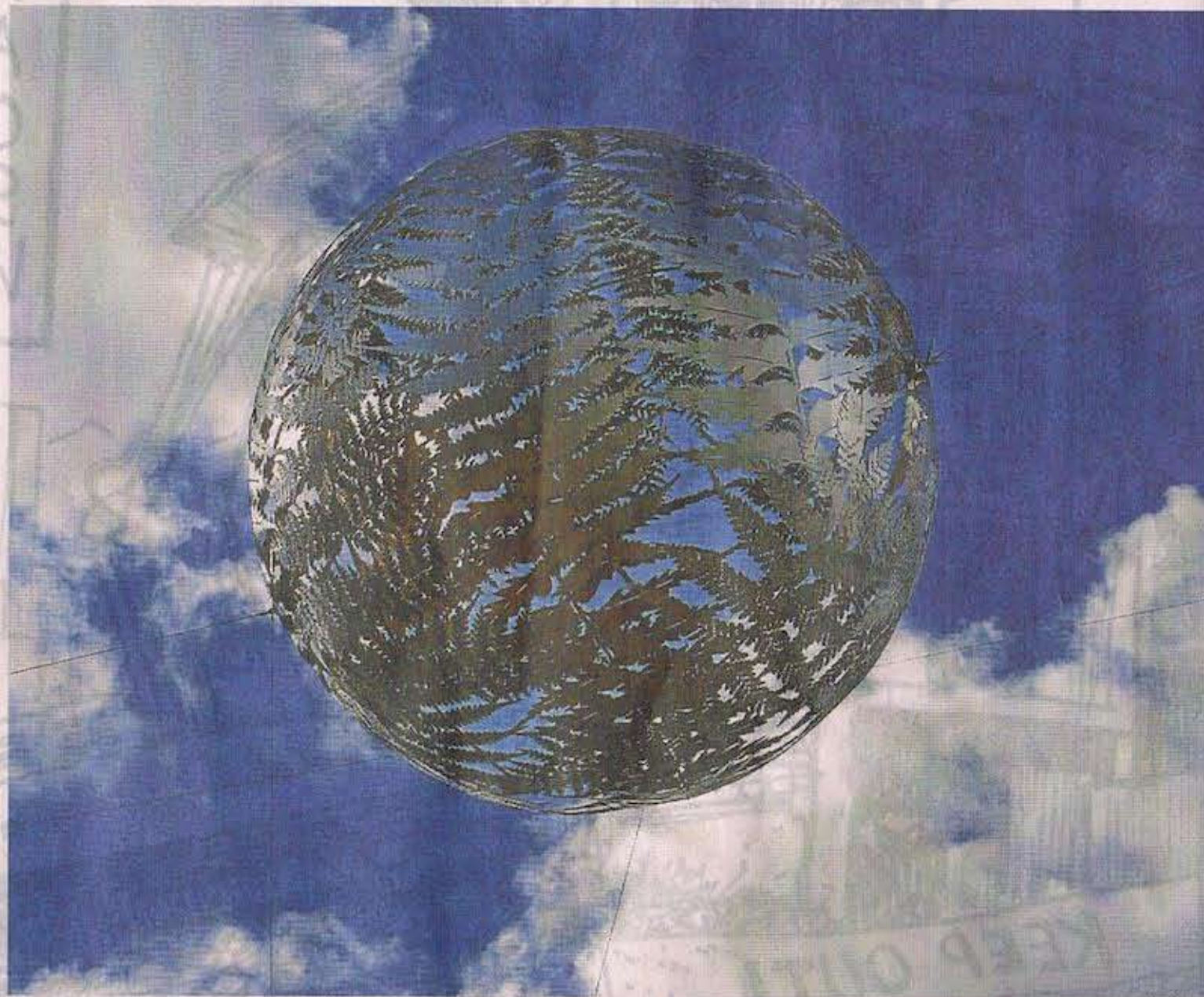
It was the first time the trust had tried an online fundraising campaign, and it would continue to push ahead with its plans regardless of the outcome as it was determined to get the sculpture back above Civic Square.

"I am confident we'll get there in the end," Elliott says.

"It is so part of the fabric of Wellington.

"We thought the Wellington community would probably be keen to see it back up and if everybody gave a little we could make it happen."

Ferns was taken down in June



The earthquakes have hampered efforts to get Ferns back above Civic Square.

PHOTO: JOHN NICHOLSON/FAIRFAX NZ

2015 because of structural weaknesses that had been exacerbated by the Wellington wind.

Although it was fixed several times during its 17 years, the

council received professional advice that it was no longer safe to be suspended and could not be permanently repaired.

Elliott says Civic Square has not been the same since and the

trust was looking for a solution from the moment it came down.

"When it first came down there was a huge outcry that it absolutely had to go back up," she says.

"If everybody gave a little we could make it happen."

Wellington Sculpture Trust chairwoman Sue Elliott

"There was never a question ... that it had to go back up.

"The square is a large space, and I think the globe hanging there suspended above it helps make it a more intimate space."

The new *Ferns* will cost \$215,000, but Elliott says this is a worthwhile investment as it enables the sculpture to be made a lot safer.

"I think the events of recent days have shown us that you can't be too careful with the engineering of works that are in the public space."

It will be as close as possible to the original, but have a stronger internal structure and be cut from stainless steel, which is more robust than the original aluminium.

The trust has erected sculptures all over the city, but *Ferns* seems to resonate the most, Elliott says.

"I think it would have been the most loved in Wellington.

"That was the one that has come to represent Wellington the most."

The trust has raised \$70,000 through ANZ, which was an original sponsor for the first *Ferns*, the Wellington Community Trust, the Nikau Foundation and a number of Wellingtonians.

This has enabled Dawson to begin working on the replica.