

The Wellington Sculpture Trust

The Wellington Sculpture Trust was established in 1982 to enrich Wellington through sculpture and public art. The Trust commissions quality, contemporary public sculptures, supports the creative arts in New Zealand and gives artists the opportunity to make large scale public works. It makes contemporary sculptures accessible to as large an audience as possible, to increase knowledge of New Zealand contemporary artists working in this art form.

The 28 sculptures the Trust has placed around the City and the Botanic Garden over the past 34 years have become an outdoor gallery of many of the most distinguished sculptors in New Zealand, and together showcase the country's contemporary sculptural practice.

The Trust is an independent voluntary organisation, with an established expertise in commissioning public art. It works in partnership with the Wellington City Council and other parties and raises funds from trusts, Wellington businesses, and individuals through donations and sponsorship arrangements.

Wellington Sculpture Trust Trustees:

Sue Elliott (Chair), Ray Ahipene-Mercer Nick Barratt-Boyes, Jane Black, Ruth Harley, Helen Kedgley, Julian Ludbrook, Neil Plimmer, Ross Steele

For more information please visit: sculpture.org.nz

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The Work

The artwork, titled Other Worlds, is the sixth in the 4 Plinths series and was opened on 21 February 2018 and is expected to remain on the site until January 2020. It comprises four globes each approximately 2 metres diameter, made of polystyrene with steel interiors. The surfaces are painted over a cement and fibreglass mixed shell.

What can a globe mean in an era of globalisation? Other Worlds conveys enigmatic and unfamiliar views of Earth or Mars. Each globe is based on an existing model from the world of science or map history. These are gravitational fields, carbon emissions, a 17th-century vision of the world without water, or a utopian fantasy about Mars' canals. The artist aims to show us the world anew, encouraging fresh thinking about an image we take for granted.

The Artist

Ruth Watson has exhibited extensively in New Zealand, Australia, Europe and the USA. She has used a wide variety of materials in her work, from road safety glass to chocolate wrapping paper, video and photography. Ruth is a Senior Lecturer at the Elam School of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland and also writes occasionally about histories of cartography, as well as mapping and contemporary art. For more information please visit: www.ruthwatson.net

The Project

The 4 Plinths Sculpture Award is an undertaking of the Wellington Sculpture Trust.

The 4 Plinths are the massive bollards situated on the waterfront between Te Papa and Circa Theatre. It is here the Trust has made a departure from permanent to temporary public art,

and showcases New Zealand sculptural practice with biennial temporary sculpture installations. The project forms part of the New Zealand International Arts Festival's visual arts programme.

The aim of the project is to foster art, artists and audience interactions, and to provide an opportunity for established and emerging artists to work in the area of large-scale public sculpture.

It is a great opportunity to enable artists, through temporary sculpture, to realise a public artwork with all the challenges of scale, robustness and rigour that come with working in a tough environment and in a highly visible space.

The Trust acknowledges with warm appreciation its major sponsors, Wellington City Council Public Art Fund and City Shaper, as well as the support of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and Seresin Wines.



Other Worlds: Ruth Watson's 4 Plinths

1. I'm on top of the world, the seagull thought. Beak turned toward the ocean, flanked by the museum, the seagull had little cause to wonder but which world?
2. The globes were running a bit behind, Ruth Watson told me over Skype. The people who put the polystyrene on said it could take 4-5 weeks but now it was looking closer to 5 weeks.
3. The seagull squawked. It perched on top of the globe on the first plinth.
4. "I do worry about the context next to Te Papa, people have an expectation of education..."
5. The seagull stood on a 3D model of a 17th Century etching by the Dutch engraver Jan Goeree depicting an ancient view of the world without water. Sea air sluiced through the seagull's feathers and it shuffled back and forth, oblivious to the paint job and polystyrene, beneath its neat webbed feet.
6. What excites a bird's eye view?
7. Other worlds. The world you were born into and the world you leave, the world balanced on an egg on a spoon, still running. The world entered through The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe, the workshop of Weta, Middle Earth mapped on a double page inside Tolkien, the gigantic queue to get into Gallipoli, or the arrival of Maui, premature, wrapped in a tress of his Mother's tikitiki and thrown into the...
8. "There's always been the mapping," Ruth told me. She's an artist who has written essays on cartography. Her work re-orientates maps and mapping processes. In 1988 she made a black and white photocopy of Another Map of the World on rice paper. In 1991 she varnished The Known

World, her double-take on the Italian cartographer, Fra Mauro's medieval map of 1453. In 1997 she exhibited The Real World in a Perspex box; a globe of meat, spun from animal tissues, made under supervision in a medical pathology specimen laboratory at the University of South Wales. When it comes to maps Ruth is an expert, a nerd. "I've actually avoided making globes," she said. "I've always been more 2D."

9. See?

10. "Jerusalem is indeed the centre of the inhabited world latitudinally, though longitudinally it is somewhat to the West but since the western portion is more thickly populated by reason of Europe, therefore Jerusalem is also the centre longitudinally if we regard not empty space but the density of the population," Fra Mauro, wrote on his map in 1453. He was a monk, the Americas still off the -

11. The seagull strutted back and forth on the Goeree globe, lifted a wing, tucked its head back in. Blinked. Another settled on the black globe on the second plinth. "Here we present a global, spatially explicit and observation-based assessment of whole-ecosystem carbon turnover times that combines new estimates of vegetation and soil organic carbon stocks and fluxes." Ruth corresponded with a scientist named Nuno, using his carbon sequestration data to create this globe. Her jazzy patches of paint might be countries or carbon stocks in flux. "Our findings suggest that future climate/carbon-cycle feedbacks may depend more strongly on changes in the hydrological cycle than is expected at present," Nuno explained. The seagull on the black globe caught a current of air and zig zagged up-up!

12. Mars, the red planet, on plinth three, has not been painted

red. Instead, it is decorated with the Latin names for channels and canals. For a while in the nineteenth century people (mostly men) believed that there were canals on Mars. Percival Lowell, a Boston born American Business man and astronomer, studied Mars for fifteen years staring down the end of a Telescope. He drew beautiful pictures of the canals, which he believed Martians had irrigated into the planet's surface, so they could tap into the polar ice caps. PS. The actual colour of Mars is closer to Butterscotch.

13. In 1992 Dr. John Gray published his bestseller Men are from Mars, Women are from...

14. "Oh my god, the Geoid," Ruth said. The Geoid is on the fourth plinth, right next to Te Papa. It looks dented, like a globe with its side kicked in.

15. The world isn't right. The world doesn't look like that.

16. Ruth has a lecture she gives on maps and men. The lecture is handsomely illustrated with photographs of famous men in front of maps. The same is not true of women who tend to be photographed off the map (or at least not in front of the map or beside it.) However, Ruth does have a great image of Jane Fonda dressed as Barbarella and shot from the crotch, a planet spinning in the background behind her. Barbarella is out of this world, even though Jane Fonda is from it.

17. "Do you think man's been to the moon?" I asked over Skype. Ruth laughed. "Excellent question."

18. The most magnificent globe in existence is the Jewelled Globe, a treasure of the Iranian Empire, studded with over 51 thousand gemstones. The oceans and seas are emeralds. The land masses rubies. (I can see Australia on the jpeg of

the Jewelled Globe online, but Aotearoa?) According to legend Nasseridin Shah Qajar, a 19th Century King of Persia, ordered the construction of the globe to keep track of loose gemstones in the treasury. (Ruth wanted to make her own version but alas there were not enough loose gemstones in the treasury.) The globe now sits in the Tehran National Jewels Museum. According to the online travel journal of the 'Wandering Scot' the museum is not signposted. It is in a bank vault underneath Melli Bank on Ferdossi Street. To reach the museum you need to enter via the Central Bank building just to the North. The staff store your bag (and camera), run you through a metal detector and then send you South across a courtyard to the vault. The hours are 2-4.30pm Saturday to Tuesday. It is definitely worth trying to visit if you are in Tehran.

19. Four heterogeneous globes sit on the fourth plinths outside the Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa. Open to the elements and seagulls, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

20. "I don't know how they are going to weather," Ruth said.

By Megan Dunn



OTHER WORLDS

RUTH WATSON

4 PLINTHS SCULPTURE AWARD

