



New Mirrors

Strengthening
arts and
culture media
for Aotearoa
New Zealand

Rosabel Tan and Dr James Wenley



The stories? They're everywhere. A leading curator resigns on the eve of a landmark show. Behind closed doors, we hear the reasons why. Against the roar of a West Coast beach, a musician shares for the first time how a devastating year for the city has shaped their latest album. Backstage at one of the biggest theatres in the country, more than 400 rangatahi nervously wait to take the stage for a sold-out haka theatre show. We're in a writers' room across town, and it's the exact moment that the ending for the country's longest-running TV show is decided upon. The silence that follows. It's enveloping. Two hours later, in a tense fluorescent office, a board debates how to deal with an uncomfortable revelation. Nobody can agree. The next morning, it's a warm and windless day. At the edge of a forest, three artists begin the harvest for a work that has been commissioned by the largest biennale in the world.

These are stories of power, of heartbreak, of love, of immense awe; seedlings of hope we didn't know could exist. These are stories that uncover new ways to imagine and to understand one another. These stories come fast. But who gets to hear them?

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Arts, culture and creativity, in all forms, have the remarkable ability to inspire, challenge and unite us. They enrich our lives, stimulate our imaginations and contribute to our national identity.

Our artists have incredible stories to tell, and research shows that audiences want to hear them.

We want to see a stronger and more visible arts and culture sector, where artists' voices are reflected across our media landscape.

There is a clear relationship between strong arts and culture media coverage and a thriving creative sector. The media acts as a crucial bridge between artists and the public — giving artists a platform to amplify their stories.

This report is the second recent piece of research looking at arts and culture media in Aotearoa New Zealand. The first report, *Visibility Matters — Kia kitea ngā toi e te marea*, mapped the current media ecosystem to show us what type of coverage currently exists. Mapping the landscape allows us to see where the gaps are, and where more work is needed to strengthen coverage.

This report, *New Mirrors*, bridges the gap between *what* exists and *why* the arts and culture media landscape is in its current state. It also presents recommendations that would have a significant impact in strengthening coverage. We're committed to

advancing this kaupapa. We'll explore the role we can play in strengthening coverage both independently and in partnership with others, so that New Zealanders can read, see and hear more of the diverse arts and culture experiences we have in Aotearoa, and celebrate our artists' success.

Ngā mihi nui to Rosabel Tan and Dr James Wenley, their advisory group, and the many artists, publicists, editors, writers, commissioners and journalists that contributed to this crucial piece of work.

Kia kitea ngā toi e te marea — let the arts be seen by the masses.

Caren Rangi
Chair of the Arts Council of
New Zealand Toi Aotearoa

November 2023

Executive Summary



We need arts and culture coverage: it shapes our nation's identity, contributes to our collective wellbeing, and fosters a healthy democracy

Artists are storytellers and dreamers. Their work grapples with big questions and ideas. Collectively, they enable us to reflect on our histories, understand different ways of being in the world and imagine alternative futures. Artists provide solace and delight. They make us feel more connected to one another.

Media coverage of arts and culture is a critical ingredient to having these experiences and conversations as a nation. This is especially vital for a country that is as young and multicultural as Aotearoa New Zealand. It's through this that we build social cohesion and a collective national identity; it's how we tell the story of who we are, and who we want to be.

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It is also critical to the health of our arts and cultural sector

There is a significant audience for arts and culture — and, by implication, an audience for the stories that link them to those experiences — with 96% of adults in Aotearoa participating in arts and cultural events. Without coverage, we lose a potential audience.

This, in turn, impacts the sustainability of artists' careers. Coverage builds an audience, but it also supports future career opportunities and ensures that work is remembered in history.

It's also how we hold power to account. Without dedicated arts and culture coverage, we risk a sector going unchecked.



But our media and cultural sectors are under-resourced and under strain

Over the past two decades, our media sector has been impacted by rapid technological transformations that have upturned traditional business models, posing significant and ongoing challenges to sustainability. Because many of our media outlets are built on a more Western worldview where arts and culture are seen as a 'nice to have' pathway to pleasure and entertainment — rather than something that makes us more compassionate, connected and critically engaged public citizens — we often see the first cuts taking place here — alongside a backdrop in which our cultural sectors have been impacted by ongoing funding instability and under-resourcing.

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**This has created a national deficit
 in arts and culture coverage**

As a result, we are seeing a loss of specialist arts reporting and reviewing roles, as well as a reduction in capacity and confidence among other journalists to focus on this type of coverage. At the same time, many artists are unable to afford publicists or communications specialists, and this is leading to dwindling, shallow coverage — which is contributing, in turn, to a breakdown of trust between arts and media practitioners and a reduction in the perceived value of arts and culture coverage.

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**Addressing this national deficit
 involves focusing on three key areas:**

→ **Telling stronger stories**

This requires an investment in both media and in publicity and communications roles within our cultural sectors.

→ **Building a media landscape that reflects Aotearoa New Zealand**

This requires an investment in developing culturally supportive media organisations that can confidently report on a range of different worldviews and lived experiences — with a particular focus on our regions, where media needs the greatest growth.

→ **Deepening understanding between our media and cultural ecologies**

This involves investing in more informed and collaborative working relationships across these two sectors, rebuilding the trust that has been eroded over the years — which in turn has contributed to the erosion of our arts and culture coverage.

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We propose two key investment pathways to strategically address this national deficit:

1. Create a dedicated fund for arts and culture media projects

This will increase our ability to tell stronger stories and build a media landscape that reflects Aotearoa.

The current funding models are not working for arts media due to the tensions created when publications are competing against the artists they seek to cover, and because funding itself tends to be short term and precarious. To address this, we are proposing the creation of a dedicated fund that targets arts and culture media projects. This fund is a natural fit for co-investment across multiple agencies due to the positive outcomes involved in strengthening our arts and culture media.

The proposed focus areas include:

- Strengthening our coverage of ngā toi Māori
- Strengthening our coverage in te reo Māori
- Strengthening our coverage of Pacific arts
- Strengthening our criticism and reviewing culture
- Strengthening our coverage of arts and culture in the regions
- Enhancing access and inclusion in the arts and cultural coverage we are producing
- Long-form and investigative journalism
- Experimentation with form

2. Create an independent body — an Arts Media Centre — that connects our media and creative sectors

This will deepen understanding between our media and cultural ecologies, as well as increasing our ability to tell stronger stories.

Modelled on the Science Media Centre, the mandate of this independent body would be to enable high-quality arts and culture journalism through training, advocacy and relationship-building, in turn fostering the long-term sustainability and growth of arts and culture media.

The proposed focus areas include:

- Connecting journalists to spokespeople for different topics
- Targeted briefings to journalists around 'big-picture' stories
- A calendar of events taking place across the cultural and creative sectors
- An up-to-date list of key spokespeople media could contact
- An up-to-date media database, including what different editors are looking for in a pitch for their particular publication
- Training and advice for journalists and critics
- Media training for artists
- Supporting media partnerships and collaborations
- Facilitating events that bring together those working across the cultural media ecology (artists, arts organisations and the media)
- Advocating for arts and culture coverage



An introduction to this research

Kia ora. We're Rosabel Tan and James Wenley, researchers who work across the arts and media sectors. We've been looking at the current state of arts and culture media in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the impact this has on our broader cultural ecology.

The title

We've titled this report *New Mirrors*. One of the roles that artists play is to hold a mirror to society. Media plays a crucial role, too, in holding a mirror to the arts, reflecting the creativity and conversations explored by our artists. Through this research, we've found the need for more of these mirrors: for a stronger and more visible arts and culture sector, and a better reflection of the stories of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The whakapapa

This report has its seeds in 2020, when Mark Amery started conversations with Tracey Monastra at Creative New Zealand about the need for data to support what we already anecdotally knew about the crisis facing arts and culture coverage in the media. It's a privilege to be tasked with this research, and to bring together so many voices across the sector that we deeply admire and respect.

We mihi to everybody who contributed to this report, and in particular to our advisory group. They are a formidable group of artists, arts workers, publicists, writers, editors and decision makers.

Ngā mihi nui Matariki Williams, Lana Lopesi, Tama Waipara, Karl Chitham, Vanessa Immink, Siobhan Waterhouse, Mark Amery, Rebecca Fox, Amie Mills and Frances Morton.

The focus

Going in, we knew that the arts and culture media landscape was in bad shape. Isentia's quantitative snapshot of the state of arts coverage in Aotearoa between July 2021 to June 2022, *Visibility Matters: Kia kitea ngā toi e te marea*, paints an alarming portrait, with 13% of media coverage focused on arts and culture, but only 3.25% on art forms outside film, music and TV. Within this small slice, minoritised communities are significantly under-represented. Despite some bright spots of in-depth and illuminating coverage, arts and culture stories are often deprioritised in general media, while specialist arts media platforms (physical and online) do a lot but with very little resourcing.

This lack of coverage is a problem: strong media is a crucial pou in a thriving arts and culture ecology, creating a country where people can see themselves represented, where conversations have nuance and depth, and where we have greater empathy and compassion for those we live alongside. To better understand the current challenges, we spoke with 52 artists, arts organisations, publicists, editors, journalists and decision makers.

We wanted to know:

- Where could investment in the arts media sector have the most significant impact?
- How do people working within our different arts communities feel about media coverage: is it still valued and desired? Are reviews still important?
- What about the media's view of arts and culture? Is it an area that they want to give more attention to?

What we heard is that arts media is under critical pressure, and significant challenges limit its growth: stretched budgets, reduced staff, production pressures and low pay. But we also found huge appetite to strengthen this landscape: to tell more and better stories.

So we issue a challenge to the Government and our funding bodies, our media platforms and publishers, our artists and the organisations that support them. The value and contribution that arts media can make is being held back by the absence of any strategic focus on this area.

In this report, we offer two pathways to addressing this issue, informed by the conversations we've had: the establishment of a dedicated arts and culture media fund, and the development of an independent body — an Arts Media Centre — that strengthens the way our arts and media sectors work together.

The research team

Kia ora koutou. Ko Rosabel Tan tōku ingoa. I'm a researcher and creative producer of Peranakan Chinese descent, and I moved to Aotearoa when I was eight years old. My parents weren't big arts-goers in the Western sense, but I grew up surrounded by imagination and creativity. My mum sent me to after-school drama class when I started intermediate school because I was so shy and having trouble making friends, and while I can't speak to the making friends part (bad probably), it introduced me to a new mode of creative expression that I fell in love with. I've always believed in the power of writing and talking about a work. I believe in providing pathways to more deeply appreciate what an artist has created, to uncover new conversations you hadn't considered, and to rewire your brain into new ways of understanding and seeing the world. I think that's important. Artists unlock new possibilities. They create hope. They challenge us. And in many ways, they care for us. It's art that raised me — it taught me about this new culture we had migrated to and made me feel less lonely in the world. In my career, I've been a critic and editor (I was the founding Editor of *The Pantograph Punch*, as well as Contributing Editor at *Paperboy*), and for the past decade have been a producer and artist, working primarily with Asian diaspora artists in Tāmaki Makaurau.

Ko James Wenley ahau. I'm a Pākehā academic, educator, theatremaker and critic. I grew up in Tāmaki Makaurau and live in Pōneke, where I'm currently a lecturer in the theatre programme at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University. When I was five, my mum enrolled me in drama class to improve my confidence, setting me up for a lifelong passion for the performing arts. I fell into reviewing as a university undergrad in 2008

when Rosabel Tan — then Arts Editor at *Craccum* — gave me tickets to a comedy show. In 2011 I founded the review website *Theatre Scenes*. For a golden window, I was a professional theatre reviewer with *Metro* (a role that no longer exists). The fee, though small, was an affirmation that the work had value. I know this deeply as an academic and theatre historian, relying on reviews to understand what past productions were like and how they have contributed to our cultural history. As a maker, I know the dance of trying to achieve media publicity and the rush when your show makes the paper. I've also had the privilege of being called on to offer commentary on arts issues and stories in the media. It has been an honour to reforge an old collaboration and embark on this research journey with Rosabel.



Words matter. Here are ours: Definitions used in this report

What we mean when we talk about ‘arts and culture’

When we use the term ‘arts and culture’ in this report, we are referring to a broad and inclusive range of cultural and creative activities in Aotearoa. It is a definition that seeks to embody culture as it is conceived through the many different worldviews in our country.

At the centre is ngā toi Māori. Through a te ao Māori lens, ngā toi Māori is intrinsic to life and essential to mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing. It is a way of sharing mātauranga and cultural knowledge, whakapapa and histories across generations and, for many, it involves a reclamation of practice that has been lost or suppressed through colonial violence.

Ngā toi Māori centres the holistic value of arts and culture in health, wellbeing and healing: contributing to our sense of identity, strengthening community, and providing education and knowledge — in other words, recognising the power of arts and cultural experiences to positively shape and transform people’s lives. [We see similar conceptualisations across our many Indigenous Moana Oceania worldviews.](#) While there are deep nuances across the more than 17 island nations, each fundamentally views culture (and its creative expressions) as being entangled within everyday life and inseparable from identity and wellbeing. We see similarities yet again across the many other Asian, African and

Middle Eastern countries that shape our diaspora communities, though much less research has been conducted focusing on exploring art and culture through the lens of these worldviews in Aotearoa.

In many Western worldviews, contemporary ‘art’ is often seen as distinct from everyday life, conceived as a leisure activity or a decorative element (increasingly, though, the wellbeing impacts of creativity are being introduced into these conceptualisations). Art is also more often defined and complicated through the lens of capitalism, with a focus on how work can be commodified.

In this report, we use art and culture as complementary and inseparable terms. More broadly, we consider culture as the ever-fluid beliefs, values, customs and knowledge of a group or region — the different ways of knowing and doing and their associated expression. Culture is not fixed but a constant act of negotiation; art, in this sense, could be seen as an expression of, or a response to, culture. Because this report focuses on Aotearoa New Zealand, our interest here is art and culture that expresses, challenges and continually shapes and reshapes our notion of Aotearoatanga, [“our unique cultural identity”](#).

This encompasses expressions that include storytelling, ritual, movement, or some combination of visual, aural or tactile elements that engage our senses — evoking emotions, insights and new perspectives. Within a Western

framework, this includes art-form categories used by Creative New Zealand like ngā toi Māori, Pacific arts, community arts, craft and object art, visual arts, multidisciplinary arts, dance, literature, music, and theatre. It also includes other art forms like architecture, culinary arts, design, fashion, film, television, screen media, games, and physical expressions that might through a Western framework be considered ‘sport’ (for example, Tokelauan traditional wrestling).

What we mean when we refer to ‘media’

Throughout this document, we refer to ‘media’, which we recognise can be quite a slippery term. For the purposes of this research, when we refer to ‘media’, we are referring to print publications (including newspapers and magazines), online platforms (which might encompass text, audio and video content), radio, podcasts and television platforms that feature content made in Aotearoa. This includes both platforms that seek to (or are mandated to) reach as broad an audience as possible in Aotearoa, and those that have a narrower focus with the intent of reaching specific communities. In this report, due to our research constraints, we have focused on Māori and English-language media only. We recognise that this is a non-comprehensive definition of ‘media’ and that this report is only a starting point for discussion.

What we mean when we refer to ‘artist’ or ‘practitioner’

Sometimes we use terms like ‘artist’ and ‘practitioner’. We want to emphasise that under our definition, *everybody* engages with and participates in cultural and creative practice as part of life. However, in this report, we use ‘artist’ and ‘practitioner’ to focus principally on those who rely on their expression of culture as a path towards sustainability (whether this relates to individual or collective financial sustainability, or the sustainability of cultural practices in Aotearoa), and primarily where media coverage plays an important role in supporting and advancing those pathways. We recognise that many artists do not sit within this definition, but we see this narrower focus as a starting point to be built upon in the future.

What we mean when we refer to ‘arts media’ or ‘arts coverage’

In this report, when we talk about ‘arts media’ or ‘arts coverage’ we are referring to situations where the media (as defined above) are covering an issue that relates to ‘arts and culture’ (see above). This includes reporting on an event, investigative journalism, interviews, conversations or profiles, features, in-depth documentaries or storytelling, opinion pieces or columns, personal essays, photo-, video- or image-led storytelling, and reviews.

A tale of two undervalued ecologies: The current state of our cultural and media sectors



Our media landscape has undergone a drastic transformation over the past two decades.

While there have been upsides, including a greater democratisation of production, it has also posed new challenges for sustainability. With many of our media outlets underpinned by a Western worldview, arts and culture are often seen as a 'nice to have' pathway to pleasure and entertainment rather than understood as part of everyday life — something that makes us more compassionate, connected and critically engaged public citizens. As a result, we've witnessed a deterioration of arts media, with both the media and cultural sectors increasingly under-resourced and under strain. This has not only led to fewer people covering arts and culture stories, but fewer people in our cultural sectors ensuring these stories are visible.

A shifting media landscape

When the internet evolved into supporting user-generated content at the turn of the 21st century, cultural journalism both suffered and thrived as a result. The ease of publishing online unlocked the door for many more voices to be heard — in particular, voices and stories historically under-represented in mainstream media — but these online channels were (and continue to be) often under-resourced and financially unsustainable. Running parallel to this proliferation of channels was a need to reinvent traditional media business models, with increasing competition for attention and declining advertising revenue forcing established print and broadcasting platforms to explore alternative models for revenue while under significant financial pressure. Between 2006 and 2018, the number of journalists working in Aotearoa New Zealand more than halved (52%).¹

The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated many of these pressures, drastically shifting Aotearoa New Zealand's media landscape. [Advertising revenue plummeted sharply](#), despite readership and viewership surging across the motu. Just a week into the first lockdown, Bauer Media — which published titles like *Metro*, *North & South*, *The Listener*, *Woman's Day*, *Next* and *Kia Ora* — announced the closure of its operations in Aotearoa. By April, NZME had made more than 200 staff redundant. In a bittersweet twist, we started to see

the growth of locally owned media outlets. In May, Stuff — a company that houses 50 different major newspapers, community newspapers and magazines — was on the verge of being shut down, but instead was sold to CEO Sinead Boucher for \$1. By November, *Metro* and *North & South* had been sold to independent local publishers and relaunched.

A range of relief packages and support was offered, most notably the government's wage subsidy and emergency media package. NZ On Air launched the one-off \$55 million Public Interest Journalism Fund in late 2020, split across three years. In establishing the fund, it was noted that the publication of public interest journalism in Aotearoa had halved in the past decade, against a backdrop of declining interest in journalism as a career. [The report informing the fund's development](#) declared that “the single most significant challenge facing the [fund] in attempting to help industry is the shortage of reporters.”

Despite this injection of support, the media landscape has continued to experience significant upheaval — a trend seen internationally but complicated in Aotearoa due to government intervention to support struggling outlets and the relatively high level of consolidation in the media market. In the first half of 2023 alone, we saw the planned merger between RNZ and TVNZ rewind



The Savage Coloniser Show — FCC (Auckland Arts Festival 2023).
Photo: Raymond Sagapolutele.

¹ The number of journalists decreased from 4,284 in the 2006 census to 2,061 in 2018. We note that the definition changed slightly across this period, with the 2006 census counting ‘reporters, editors and sub-editors’ and the 2018 census counting ‘print, radio, TV journalists’ and ‘other writers’. [Source](#).

after a three-year exploration period. A \$26 million funding boost was given to RNZ in response to this, aimed at addressing the issues the merger sought to resolve. We listened live to the closure of Today FM, which was followed by a further 45 staff cuts to MediaWorks' operations. Sky TV cut 170 jobs. *North & South* and *Metro* were sold yet again. Stuff put *The Press* (Ōtautahi), *The Post* (Pōneke) and *The Waikato Times* behind a paywall, joining NZME's *NZ Herald* and Allied Press' *Otago Daily Times*. Stuff also began a restructure of editorial and managerial jobs, with senior editors and journalists exiting the company. The Public Interest Journalism Fund announced the results of their final round, which focused on sustaining roles they had previously funded. But what happens in a year, when that funding runs out?

Critically, while government intervention has been necessary for the continued survival of our media outlets, it has also contributed to decreasing public trust in that media — in part due to the misguided perception that those outlets receiving support are being 'bought' by the government. But this is also part of a worldwide trend that accelerated during the pandemic, a time in which heightened uncertainty, distress and helplessness led to the growth of conspiracy theories and disinformation. [In 2023, only four in ten New Zealanders reported trusting the news \(42%\), down from 53% in 2020.](#) This signals a worrying trend for the broader sustainability of the sector and highlights the need to restore that public trust.

The work itself has changed, too. Not only have entire sections and roles been lost, but journalists are increasingly tasked with producing stories across multiple beats at a speed that continues to rise. "If you look at how [*The Post*] as a print product changed over the last ten years," says former Editor Anna Fifield, describing the newspaper

she inherited, "almost everything is gone. Except the very basics — and the basics, unfortunately, tend to be court stories and cat stories."

This is against a backdrop of drastically changing audience habits. NZ On Air's biannual snapshot, [Where Are the Audiences?](#), paints a stark picture. In 2020, we saw digital media overtake traditional media in terms of audience reach for the first time. While traditional media still attracts the biggest audiences in the peak hours between 6–8.30pm, online platforms are becoming more popular outside these times — and streaming services like Netflix and podcasts are the only media demonstrating audience growth. "Linear television has passed its golden age," says one former TV commissioner. "It's moving into becoming a legacy business now."

One of the most pressing challenges for media is how to grow audiences, given the fragmentation of media channels — and this becomes particularly pronounced when we focus on digitally fluent younger audiences. "We're just looking at so much all the time everywhere," says Frances Morton, Editor of *Sunday* and *Your Weekend*. "The challenge is that you have to be doing stories that are going to get attention in order for you to have an audience."

“Having been in newsrooms, I see the other side of it, and I know they are stretched thin. There is no resourcing for any kind of arts coverage... Everyone is wearing multiple hats and having to do multiple things.”

Rosie Dawson-Hewes
Marketing Manager for Toitū —
Hawke's Bay Arts & Events Centre
and Te Whare Toi o Heretaunga
Hastings Art Gallery

When the pressure is on, media tend to deprioritise arts and culture coverage

Against this backdrop, cultural journalism has often been a canary in the coal mine. The first hits took place on our screens — where arts programming has virtually been non-existent for the last two decades — and have trickled down to print. David Rowe, Head of Journalism Planning at NZME, says that “[arts coverage] tends to suffer first, because in terms of core business, it’s not right at the absolute heart. There has been a depletion in the ranks of arts... the number of arts reviewers has dropped significantly. I think there’s no two ways about that.”

“I’d love to have been an arts reporter, but it was never even an option. Those jobs didn’t exist... [I left journalism because] I had grown tired of seeing all of my colleagues being made redundant and resources and newsrooms being cut to a point where they’re really only resourced to chase sirens now.”

Rosie Dawson-Hewes

Marketing Manager for Toitū — Hawke’s Bay Arts & Events Centre and Te Whare Toi o Heretaunga Hastings Art Gallery

“If I look back to my time at NZ On Air, it was a time when we were funding a lot of arts documentaries. And there were a number of beautiful profile pieces of artists that were commissioned at the time,

almost exclusively by TVNZ... I can remember watching, years ago, deep discussion shows about art on TV... they were really engaging and funny and intelligent and broad... We’re missing that kind of stuff now, that commentary and deep engagement.”

Former commissioner

“When I started at *The Press* in 2007, there was an arts editor, two film reviewers, two or three cultural writers, a feature writer who specialised in culture — that’s all gone now. That’s all completely gone. I sort of aspired one day to be an arts editor. That looked like the coolest job in the world. But that ladder I was climbing — they sawed the top off it, as I was climbing. It’s kind of like... oh... okay, cool.”

Charlie Gates

Former Senior Reporter for *The Press* and *Stuff*

The reduction of arts and culture coverage in legacy media and the disestablishment of arts journalist positions are international trends, reflective of upheavals in for-profit media models over multiple decades, particularly in countries that have issues of scale, such as Aotearoa.



Nightclubbing — Melanie Tangaere Baldwin. Created as the waharoa for *Te Ara i Whiti*, curated by Melanie Tangaere Baldwin as part of Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival 2021.



Pipī Paopao — Rutene Spooner, presented as part of Nelson Arts Festival. Photo: Melissa Banks.

Whereas publications in larger countries have retained arts editors, ensuring expertise on staff, many major newspapers in Aotearoa have dropped these positions in the last two decades. In Australia, arts media is “[struggling along on life support](#)”, with a steady decrease in “the number of arts journalists, the number of news pages, the number of dedicated publications, and the rates freelancers get paid for arts journalism and reviews.” In the US, the situation is acute for local community arts journalism, which experienced “[a messy, uneven digital transition, simply disappearing in many communities.](#)”

Much of this crisis can be traced back to the values and belief systems our media organisations are built upon. As outlined in “[Words Matter. Here are ours: Definitions used in this report](#)”, Western worldviews tend to see art, culture and creativity as distinct from everyday life, commodified pathways for pleasure or distraction. This is at odds with te ao Māori and many other Indigenous worldviews, in which cultural experiences are essential to life and our wellbeing.

“Toi is not just a painting that you hang on the wall or whakairo, it is inherently part of who we are. If you come from an Indigenous lens, a Māori and Pasifika lens, it’s much broader than the way that you would see in the Western world. I think that in itself means that there is a gap of what is covered by media and considered arts and culture media. Arts, music, and culture stories sit in their little silo of the media platform. I think they should be sitting in the main section. Same with Māori, Pasifika stories, they should be part of the fabric of what makes up that news organisation.”

[Mihi Blake](#)
Communications expert and
co-founder, Māia

“I don’t even remember talking about ‘arts programming’ at Māori TV, but thinking back, we did a lot of it. But it was just Māori content. I think about a series like *Whare Taonga*, for example — which in a mainstream context would be seen as an arts show with an architectural strand. It was going deep into whareniui all over the country and looking at the carving and the whakapapa of each of those whare. Beautiful series. We didn’t talk about that as an arts series, but I know if it was on Prime, it would absolutely be seen as a Māori art series.”

[Former commissioner](#)

Very few media organisations are built upon a Māori worldview, and we now only have a handful of media roles across the country dedicated to arts and culture reporting. “As young journos,” says Leigh-Marama McLachlan, Senior Reporter at *Marae*, arts stories are “portrayed to us as fluffy pieces. As puff pieces. These are what you do when you’re a junior. They’re nice stories that aren’t going to have the same social impact.”

“The arts are treated a lot more as a commodity,” observes Mark Amery, former producer of *Saturday Morning with Kim Hill*, contributing arts editor at *The Post* and co-presenter of RNZ’s *Culture 101*. “The way that the arts has been compartmentalised as another product hasn’t been good for arts journalism.”

David Rowe describes NZME’s editorial approach as audience led. “We want to provide the news and reviews coverage that our audiences want,” he says. “We don’t have the resources to put into things that aren’t going to have an audience.” Sarah Daniell, former Editor of *Canvas*, explains it’s slightly more complicated than that. “How we rate online depends a lot on what’s happening in the news cycle

“Toi is not just a painting that you hang on the wall or whakairo, it is inherently part of who we are. If you come from an Indigenous lens, a Māori and Pasifika lens, it’s much broader than the way that you would see in the Western world... Arts, music, and culture stories sit in their little silo of the media platform. I think they should be sitting in the main section. Same with Māori, Pasifika stories, they should be part of the fabric of what makes up that news organisation.”

Mihi Blake
Communications expert and
co-founder, Māia

and who the homepage editor is. They may have no interest in a particular topic, or think the topic is a bit niche, and that might determine whether that story has any presence on the homepage. That’s very tricky.” Anna Fifield, former Editor at *The Dominion Post*, adds: “An art story, especially a local story, is never going to get on the Stuff homepage. But 50% of clicks come through the homepage, so art stories generally do not perform well according to online metrics.”

Anna explains that her success in establishing an arts reporter role at *The Dominion Post* — the positive impact of which has since led to the addition of a second daily arts page — came down to values. “Sinead Boucher had talked about making Aotearoa a better place, and so I was able to say, this is part of the multifaceted coverage that we need to be doing... People can’t survive on junk food alone. People also need nutritious food, whether it’s public accountability reporting, arts coverage, or opinion. I think a lot about that holistic package... you can’t just provide the royal stories and that kind of thing. It has to be the whole lot. Otherwise, you can’t be a serious news organisation.”

There are many other positive examples of arts coverage taking place across the country, demonstrating both editorial and audience interest — and the potential for growth given appropriate investment — but many of these publications continue to be held back by resourcing barriers, rather than a lack of belief in the value of this coverage. The risk here is that the smaller investments we’re making are failing to build enough momentum to propel us forward.

“There’s basically nowhere to be an arts writer that’s gonna pay you a full-time salary,” says Lana Lopesi, former Arts Editor at *Metro* and Co-Editor of *Marinade*. One editor added, “We currently do not have a dedicated

arts reporter, which, for a major media organisation with a huge reach and influence, is unfortunate when you consider the contribution in terms of revenue to the economy, and the social and community benefits, the arts provide.”

“It would be amazing if every major news organisation had an arts reporter,” adds André Chumko, Senior Reporter at *The Post*. “At Stuff, it’s just me. Other organisations have none. I mean big organisations with big audiences. I’m talking millions of New Zealanders. And that’s very concerning. Because that means there are stories that aren’t being told.” He pauses. “You can only do so much as one person.”

Our arts and culture sector is stretched just as thin

The strain bleeds beyond media organisations. Within the creative sector, we're seeing the bridges connecting artists to the media fall away. Despite many artists speaking about the importance of quality coverage, many are unable to afford publicists, and local councils are centralising the communication roles that once existed in their galleries and theatres, despite these roles requiring specialised knowledge.

“Having marketing in-house is so rare for council-run galleries and venues. It's almost unheard of. Because councils love to run marketing out of the marketing departments. But Council Marketing and Communications is so different to how we talk about the arts.”

Rosie Dawson-Hewes
Marketing Manager for Toitū —
Hawke's Bay Arts & Events Centre
and Te Whare Toi o Heretaunga
Hastings Art Gallery

“Do I always employ a publicist or somebody that can work this gig? No, because for me, for our little company, it's a luxury that's like another cast member. And I have to do the sums — I always put down a little bit for it, but essentially, I just have to give it away.”

Tanea Heke
Co-founder of Hāpai Productions

The recent [Profile of Creative Professionals](#) has found that the median income for creative professionals is \$37,000, with men getting paid 32% more than women on average. “If I calculated my hourly rate for the work I do in the arts, I'd very likely only get the living wage,” says veteran arts publicist Michelle Lafferty, “My accountant keeps saying to me, you can't keep working these hours. You've got to put your rates up. But artists... they've got no money.”

The fragmentation of media and its audiences has played a significant role in how media relations are valued more broadly, even where organisations *can* afford a publicist. “Media entities don't have as much impact as they used to,” explains publicist Siobhan Waterhouse. “In the old days, you could get an interview on Kim Hill and then sell 200 tickets on Monday. You still do sometimes, with big hitters, but the rest... you often don't see a direct impact on sales from media coverage, which means you can't as easily prove your worth.”

Much of this can be boiled down to the changing media landscape and its impact on buyer behaviour. “Path to purchase is very different these days,” says communications expert Mihi Blake. “You'll hear it on the radio, then you'll go and google it. And then you'll make your purchase a week later... You'll have multiple pieces of media and you will be doing your

social content really well and that will be engaging your existing audience... It's much less one-dimensional these days. And I think anybody that's not doing that is not doing it right.” While the immediate impact on sales can be difficult to track, gaining a range of media coverage remains crucial for many of our arts practitioners.

“There are different spheres of audiences. There's that Basement / Q crowd that you can develop for a really long time. And they're pretty responsive... And then there's that broader New Zealand audience. That's what I think we're all after. But it's a very different realm. You might be the only show they go to that year. They have a really different relationship to arts, to going to see a show. They'll want to see it multiple ways before they follow instructions to book. So they'll be like: Oh, I know that guy off Instagram. He was on *Celebrity Treasure Island*. I saw him on *Breakfast* this morning talking about his show, we should really go and see that. I'll go on the website and book.”

Chris Parker
Actor, comedian and writer

There are multiple impacts when artists are not resourced or supported to navigate the complexities of the current media environment. Ultimately, it gives more monied institutions and

individuals an advantage in attaining coverage. “It's a very inequitable situation at the moment,” says Mark Amery, contributing arts editor at *The Post*, “where the big events like the festivals get most of the pie and attention in the arts, because they've got publicists.”

Without a strong ecology of people focused on enhancing the visibility of — and engagement with — the full breadth of work in Aotearoa, coverage deteriorates more generally. The stories being pitched aren't as strong, and only a select few voices are heard. With this, the perceived lack of an ‘audience’ for cultural coverage is only heightened.

The result? Coverage on the edge of collapse

It's a perfect storm: a media landscape undergoing drastic transformation and fragmentation, organisations struggling to adapt at the same pace, and low remuneration across both our media and arts ecologies creating high-churn sectors perpetually at risk of losing talented people.

“The starting salary for a junior reporter at Stuff is \$55,000,” says Anna Fifield, former Editor at *The Dominion Post*. “It's pretty hard to live on that. People who could be great journalists go and double their salaries to be press secretaries.” For freelance writers, it's virtually impossible to make a living — and even more so if you're a critic, a role that is in danger of being lost. The *Otago Daily Times* pays \$60 for a review. *The Post*, \$100. Other places pay slightly more, but still not enough. “I'm writing a 1,200-word piece at the moment,” says freelance journalist Tulia Thompson. “It's a review of three books. And I'm being paid \$250 for it, which makes it more like a hobby.”

Not only do we have very few writers covering arts and culture stories, there are very few people working to make those stories visible. Yet there's no shortage of PR and comms roles across other sectors, giving them an advantage when it comes to attaining media coverage. “They greatly outnumber the number of journalists now,” says André Chumko,

Senior Reporter at *The Post* — with recent estimates indicating the ratio is [approximately four to one](#).

Arts and culture coverage is at risk in this landscape, and the cost of losing it is severe. “Arts, culture and creativity are saving lives,” says artist Elyssia Wilson-Heti. “I don't say that in a frivolous way. I really believe that because I've seen that, from the community in which I'm embedded. When people get to see themselves being celebrated, or when stories offer an interrogation of an idea or an identity? It *changes* stuff... if we start to break the function down of arts and culture for our wider community, we're doing social work, that has social good.”



Te Wheke (2021) — Atamira Dance Company. Photo: Jinki Cambroner.

Why address the national deficit in arts and culture coverage?



We're now facing a national deficit in arts and culture coverage, and this has impacts on social cohesion, wellbeing, and our sense of who we are as a nation.

For the media, the arts are a vital way to represent the diversity of Aotearoa — increasing empathy, challenging dominant narratives, and inspiring debate and discussion. Journalism's role is also to hold power to account, and with less investment in arts and culture coverage, we risk a sector going unchecked.

For artists, coverage can build a career: it helps people reach audiences, builds pathways to further career opportunities, and ensures their work is remembered in history. Despite 96% of the country taking part in arts and cultural experiences, we continue to see a systematic divestment in telling arts stories. Over time, we've witnessed not only the erosion of readership and viewership, but the degree to which coverage is achieving these potential positive impacts.

Because of these parallel challenges across our media and arts ecologies, we're now facing a national deficit in our ability to produce high-quality arts and culture coverage. Without this, we lose a powerful touchpoint that connects our artists to the world.

"I think it goes to that question of identity. The way humans operate in the world is ultimately down to the stories we tell ourselves and the stories that we know about others. And that's our way of confronting us and each other. And for a young country with multiple cultures and ethnicities, stories are more important than ever... There's certainly no shortage of stories. Cultures are grounded on them. But we're still at the stage of recognising them, knowing them, understanding them, sharing them, and listening to each other through them. The arts are that area in which they can be investigated and shared and talked about and seen."

Frances Morton
Editor of *Sunday* and
Your Weekend

Many artists are grappling with big questions and ideas, and media has the potential to amplify and democratise these perspectives and deepen our public conversations. "Arts is where you can find a much broader range of people and experiences to write about and present more of New Zealand to readers," says *The Spinoff* Editor Madeleine Chapman. "It's a way to write about more diverse perspectives." Claire Mabey, *The Spinoff's* Books Editor, adds, "I do think that [having stronger cultural coverage] would result in a less polarised and reactive media world and social media world, just from the benefits of being able to appreciate different perspectives and artistic interpretations."

This becomes especially critical when biases lead to certain types of stories being erased or perpetuated over time. "It's all about how we can counteract dominant narratives," says Leigh-Marama McLachlan, Senior Reporter at *Marae*. "I didn't use to like doing positive stories... Now I realise how important they are, because those are the only ways we're going to challenge the status quo. We need to show our culture and our communities for all that they are, not just the bad bits." It's not just about the positive stories, either. "The tautohetohe, right?" says Tanea Heke, co-founder of Hāpai Productions. "When we have controversial issues that, for instance, are discussed in the plays or the productions or the art that we do, that is again the role of the media to be able to discuss this in a balanced way so that everybody can join in on that discussion."

The lack of dedicated coverage also raises the risk of the sector going unchecked. "There's serious news in the art world which is not being explored enough at all," says André Chumko, Senior Reporter at *The Post*. "There are real issues, important media issues, which are being 'onced' over because there's not enough resource. We hold all other sectors up to a mirror. Why not the same with arts?... No one is above scrutiny. Especially if you're paid by the government."

"I think it goes to that question of identity. The way humans operate in the world is ultimately down to the stories we tell ourselves and the stories that we know about others... And for a young country with multiple cultures and ethnicities, stories are more important than ever... The arts are that area in which they can be investigated"

Frances Morton
Editor of *Sunday* and *Your Weekend*

The audience for arts and culture stories is being underserved

Arts and cultural experiences are in no way niche in Aotearoa: [96% of adults in the country — 3.9 million people — participate in arts and culture](#). But when you don't have consistent arts media coverage, audiences miss out on connecting with a broader range of experiences and conversations. There is an audience for arts stories, but it is being seriously underserved.

While commercial media might point to low readership or viewership as a reason not to invest in arts coverage, this only entrenches a self-fulfilling cycle: if you're not investing in high-quality arts content, why would people engage? Because so many organisations have divested from arts reporting, rebuilding the audience will take time. But this is a critical juncture, and re-engaging that audience will take far less investment now than further down the road.

We are already seeing the impact of what happens when outlets are able to prioritise art stories — and, in particular, local stories. “A couple of years ago, Joanna Wane did a story with [then Auckland Art Gallery curator] Nigel Borell,” offers former *Canvas* Editor Sarah Daniell as an example. “And in the course of the interview, he revealed that he was quitting.

“Now, that story came out in early January. It was our first issue back. Traditionally that is a very slow news time. People are on holiday.

They're not picking up the paper as much. And so we don't expect to do that well, in terms of numbers online either. But it was an astonishing story. I don't know if I can talk specific numbers with you, but that remains our highest in terms of performance online and conversion to premium subscriptions... I didn't have much pushback about a so-called niche arts story from senior editors who normally would prefer someone 'well-known' or mainstream because it was a slow time of the year. Ordinarily, they might have questioned that being on the cover.”

One former commissioner says the view that arts programming is not going to bring a financial return is “a really hard narrative to shift”, and often this means that arts content is relegated to off-peak hours as it's not expected to attract high audience numbers. At Prime, however, they recently screened the Topp Twins tribute show, *Topp Class*. The producers had come to them as a last resort after other broadcasters had declined the show. “I couldn't understand why the other broadcasters had turned it down, but they just didn't see the commercial value in it.” *Topp Class* “rated through the roof... we repeated it on Christmas Day, huge numbers, and repeated it again on their birthday in May. That's three prime-time plays in six months, which is really unusual. You'd never see that happening on any of the other bigger commercial broadcasters.

So there's an example that completely turns the common thinking around arts on its head.”

Anecdotes like this point towards the deeply entrenched view within many media organisations that there is no audience for arts stories, despite the significant majority of the country engaging in arts experiences. Over time, this has led to a systematic divestment in telling these stories, and telling them well — with the potentially vast audience for arts media being lost along the way.



Homecoming Poems (2022) — Nathan Joe, dir. Nahyeon Lee.

For artists, coverage can make a career

For artists, coverage has the potential to significantly shape a career. Kura Te Ua, Artistic Director of Hawaiki TŪ, puts it simply: “It’s how we reach people.” Nelson Arts Festival Executive and Artistic Director Lydia Zanetti says it’s essential for “building new audiences and reaching people on the fence... media has this opportunity to amplify the voice of the festival and artist into spaces that they just wouldn’t be able to reach otherwise.” Artist Elyssia Wilson-Heti adds, “It informs opinion. It informs the psyche of our society.” Getting coverage isn’t just an avenue for artists to make their work visible. It’s how they make a living.

“I definitely felt like there was a trajectory for reviews and interviews that didn’t happen to me at all. I was actually extremely stressed out because I knew I needed to sell 1,300 books to make my advance back. And I really didn’t want to not earn it out.”

Rebecca K Reilly
Writer

“Certainly, for me as a marketer, reviews are really helpful. We roll them into our marketing campaign because it’s all part of ‘This is why you should come and see the show, these other people thought it was great’. And when that’s missing, it makes it harder to do that part.”

Rosie Dawson-Hewes
Marketing Manager for Toitō —
Hawke’s Bay Arts & Events Centre
and Te Whare Toi o Heretaunga
Hastings Art Gallery

Arts organisations know it’s harder to get coverage for people without an established media profile. This influences creative decisions, making it harder for early-career artists to break through. “There’s a lack of wanting to take a chance on people who aren’t well known or famous,” observes one senior practitioner who has worked across the arts sector. “It can affect casting. Sometimes you will cast knowing that people are more likely to get publicity, which will equal ticket sales. So from an artistic standpoint, it can infiltrate that kind of thing as well.”

Reviews serve a particular function, too. They deepen understanding of a work, and consider the ideas that artists are exploring. But it’s more than that. Artists use them to get funding. Venues use them to attract an audience. Galleries and museums use them to present a case to purchase an artwork. Not only do they contribute to the historical record of a work having existed, they provide important feedback, placing a work in context and offering insight that prevents stagnation in our creative communities. Reviews are also key to being programmed or cast overseas, and thus succeeding on an international stage.

“[Media coverage] is really important... there needs to be high-quality writing about this work so that when the institution or the curator goes to the wider acquisitions meeting, they can cite this well-written article that shows the value of what we’re doing...”

Mainstream media coverage also serves the art world as well... it feeds into broader knowledge and people knowing that this work exists... it has the ability to translate those stories and what you’re doing to a broader audience. Those are the times when we’ve received a lot of love from our families, because, then, they get it.”

Bridget Reweti
Artist

We've heard stories of international festival directors second-guessing their decision to programme a work from Aotearoa when they discover the work has no existing reviews. For artists who tour on their own dime — as many do when they present work at festivals like the Edinburgh Fringe — the lack of reviews makes it much harder to get an audience. “Even though there are problems with the star [rating] system,” says Zanetti Productions producer, Lydia Zanetti, “not having stars and going to Edinburgh? People are like, ‘I don't know how to understand whether your show is good or not.’”

Despite the potential for arts journalism to offer a form of depth, critique and contextualisation not achievable through marketing and social media channels, the continual deterioration of media coverage has resulted in artists placing less value on it. “It's not a priority, honestly,” says artist and curator Melanie Tangaere Baldwin. “What's important to me is slow and genuine relationship building. I think that's more sustainable and authentic and valuable longer-term than the type of media coverage that's happening right now.” She adds, “I value documentation. I really think it's necessary. But I don't find that our current media landscape is doing anything valuable in that space for what I think we need it for.”

Artist Chris Parker is up-front: “I would rather do a good piece, like an RNZ interview, than the *Herald's* ‘my favourite holiday destinations’, which will sell no tickets.” Elyssia Wilson-Heti says, “Having other Queer BIPOC people write to FAFSWAG's work has been incredibly important. Because often the people who have been writing about us, they have no idea what our lived experiences are, they don't have the cultural competency to understand there is no monolith of queerness, no monolith of what it means to be a person from Moana Oceania... where we've had

people write about us that has felt accurate and meaningful, it's usually because they're other Queer brown bodies who understand the context of the work in a more meaningful way.”

This need for our artists to be represented in ways that are genuine, thoughtful and culturally informed is clear. Our arts and culture coverage ultimately shapes history: and the perspectives and voices doing the remembering are equally important. If the role of our artists is to hold up a mirror to society, we need this mirror held up to the arts, not only for the health of our nation today, but for its future.



New Zealand Symphony Orchestra's *The Soldier's Tale* (2021), presented in association with the Royal New Zealand Ballet and led by Principal Conductor-in-Residence Hamish McKeich. Photo: Stephen A'Court.

The national deficit: Three areas to address



In responding to the national deficit in arts and culture coverage, there are three key areas we need to address:

→ We need to be telling stronger stories

This requires an investment in both our media and arts sectors, particularly in terms of publicity and communications.

→ We need a media landscape that reflects Aotearoa New Zealand

This requires an investment in culturally supportive organisations that can hold a range of different worldviews, with a particular focus on our regions.

→ We need to create opportunities for understanding between the arts and media ecologies

We need people working across these sectors to work in a more informed and collaborative manner — rebuilding the trust that has been eroded over the years, which in turn has contributed to the erosion of our arts coverage.

We need to be telling stronger stories

Countless potential arts stories are being lost, but the biggest loss is in-depth arts reporting. We're experiencing a dearth of 'big-picture' stories as newsrooms become increasingly threadbare, with cuts to features, investigative long-form journalism and reviews.

In *Visibility Matters*, we see that the majority of work being published is focused around events (like the opening of an exhibition), averaging 760 words per piece and focusing on 'information sharing' — despite the fact that this type of coverage has the lowest reach compared to profiles, reviews, and more in-depth features. "I see very little journalism," says Hugh Sundae, Supervising Producer for TVNZ's *Breakfast*. "I just see a lot of publicity. There's fuck-all critical thinking or interesting discussion around an artist."

"I think there's something that's got to be more hōhonu, or a bit deeper, in terms of the exchange that goes on," adds Tanea Heke, co-founder of Hāpai Productions. Editor Matariki Williams agrees. "I think we're probably craving something less superficial. The amount of depth you can get is limited." As novelist Rebecca K Reilly notes, there are very few places where artists can have in-depth conversations about their work. "It's a bit 'square peg in a round hole' for all publicity about my writing."

There are multiple challenges in reinvigorating quality long-form arts journalism. Journalists spoke to the blinkered approach artists often take when pitching, treating media coverage as a marketing tool and missing the bigger or more enticing angles related to their work. They also reported being too time-poor to go looking for stories, while those not on specific art beats mentioned not having the connections and knowledge to know where to start.

"You get bombarded with the lovely stuff, right?" says André Chumko. "Everyone wants to talk about their successes. No one wants to talk about the hard stuff. But it's the hard stuff that are the most important stories. What are you doing to improve diversity? What are you doing about bullying? What are you doing about the burnout of artists? What are you doing about wages for artists? There needs to be much more of that."

"We'd love to do more long-form deep-dive investigative journalism, but we don't always have the budget. You'll see that budgets shape the kind of storytelling we can do," says Frances Morton, Editor of *Sunday* and *Your Weekend*. Or as Charlie Gates, former Senior Reporter at *The Press*, puts it: "The story is as good as you can make it with the time allowable."

Addressing the resourcing issue has to be long term: it isn't simply about more budget and time, but also the networks and knowledge that need to be built up.

In situations where journalists *do* have the knowledge, it's often because they are part of the community as a creative themselves, but this comes with a different set of considerations. A fear of repercussion has been echoed by a number of writers. "If you strap yourself to a structural critique," says freelance journalist Emil Scheffmann, "there might be some reputational gains. But there's also a lot of hazards. Because if you're doing it properly, if you're engaging in questions of accountability, you're going to piss off some people. And some of those people might be people that can withhold opportunities or access to spaces or funding."

It's imperative that we are investing in an ecology where journalists are able to tell strong art stories. Telling stories about art is, in itself, an art. It requires time, knowledge and skill. "The best arts journalism is not a who, what, where story," says Frances Morton. "It's being able to go deep into the why and how and bring that to an audience in a way they can relate to."

“We know that [writing the article ourselves] is the only way that we can really get any coverage... they will literally run it like an editorial news story with no byline... they don't even frame it as having come from us.”

Rosie Dawson-Hewes
Marketing Manager for Toitōi —
Hawke's Bay Arts & Events Centre
and Te Whare Toi o Heretaunga
Hastings Art Gallery

“I've seen coverage where if someone had the knowledge and time, and if they did a bit more digging, they would have a whole new deeper story about the arts. I've seen stories where they've completely missed where that story could go.

Reporters just haven't been covering the arts long enough to have those skills and knowledge to look more deeply. And because, as a reporter, they're covering an arts story that day, and then onto something else, they haven't got the time to do it.”

Tom Cardy
Publicist at New Zealand Symphony
Orchestra and former Arts Editor at
The Dominion Post

Supplying content and paying for coverage is becoming normalised. Who benefits? Those with more resources

Many publicists spoke about the challenges of the changing mediascape and the flow-on impact of both journalists and artists being under-resourced. When *The Post* announced earlier this year it would be adding a second page of arts and culture, it reached out to arts organisations to supply content to fill the new page. Tom Cardy, former Arts Editor at *The Dominion Post* and publicist for the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, says, “I have to confess my heart slightly sank when it was him saying, ‘We haven’t got the resources to produce the content.’” While it’s great that arts practitioners are being given the opportunity to tell stories in their own voices, this is also a symptom of the lack of media resources to support arts coverage, despite growing audience appetite.

While press releases used to form the basis of stories, many are now reprinted wholesale by publications or rewritten through AI programmes like ChatGPT. Many publicists are ghostwriting articles for publication on behalf of their clients, particularly in smaller regions where newsrooms have less capacity.

Publicists were sympathetic to the demands of the newsroom, while noting that this practice has its pitfalls. “Half of me thinks, ‘This is fantastic,’” says Tom Cardy. “We’re getting exactly what we’ve written published in a newspaper and online. But the other half is kind of [groans]. I wish they could [still be in a position to] ask for an interview and create something for themselves.” After all, there’s a joy to seeing something from another person’s eyes; a perspective that is lost when publicists are writing our coverage.

The lack of resourcing means avoidable mistakes are made, too. “Sometimes we will submit a story, as a media outlet

may be short-staffed, and kupu will be changed,” says Mihi Blake, co-founder of kaupapa-driven communications studio Māia. “Or ingoa will be spelled wrong, or context taken out that means that the kaupapa actually isn’t represented accurately.”

Several publicists also mentioned the common practice of having to buy advertising in order to be guaranteed coverage. Lydia Zanetti, Executive and Artistic Director at Nelson Arts Festival, explains, “Essentially we buy a certain amount of advertising space, and then that enables us access to a certain amount of editorial space. [The] pragmatic part of me goes, this is the way the system works and is the way we’re going to ensure coverage for our artists and festival. But it feels problematic. In an ideal world, critical coverage wouldn’t be tied to advertising spend but rather to investment in the importance of art being thought and written about.”

For artists, the demands made by the media can be detrimental to their practice. “I haven’t written another book,” says Rebecca K Reilly, “in part due to the media for the first book being totally unrelenting.” In addition to interviews, she’s often asked to write for ‘exposure’, sometimes on topics completely unrelated to her work, and prior to getting an agent this year, she was left on her own to field multiple media requests. “You’re making less money than the people who are interviewing you, but you’re also making less money than even part-time booksellers. So when they’re asking you to do a Q&A for the website, or whatever, you really want to help them but there’s a limit to how much you can do before you’re like, I’m doing this all essentially for free, or with the hope that a few people will buy my book.” Editing also became an issue. “Every time I was honest about how [financially] difficult it was for me, being a writer, they would cut it out... There’s so much income inequality in literature. But at this point, it has led people to assume that everyone who does write a book has all this financial backing.”



Alex King and Theo Keane performing in Silo Theatre’s *The Wolves* (2019). Photo: Andi Crown Photography.

The show is not the story

Many journalists and editors spoke about the potential cost–benefit analysis they conduct when deciding whether to pitch or commission a story. If a work that’s being pitched has the potential to reach a maximum of 200 audience members, for example, that will often be deprioritised against a work that could reach thousands. Yet so much of that calculation is based on the pitching itself. “In a way, the art sector needs to forget about the art,” comments Mark Amery, “and think about the ideas and the expression, be that the person’s story, and what that inspires in us, or the ideas that the artist is carrying. I’m a very big believer in art being an important conduit in a society of ideas and thinking.”

“People are just looking for a story,” agrees artist Chris Parker. “Putting on a show is never enough of a story. You need something a bit more to talk to.” Artists are often the ones pitching their own work, due to an overall lack of resourcing — and they aren’t necessarily trained in doing so. This is a challenge: it means people are often not pitching the most compelling story, and so those stories get missed.

“When we talk about scientists, everything is pitched around the idea of what the scientist has actually discovered. With the arts? I don’t think we necessarily see it like that, the one-liner isn’t necessarily really pushing: why does this matter? Why is it vital? Our artists are constantly exploring new ways of thinking and being, and important issues, and opening them out in a very human way. And I don’t think that’s being pitched clearly enough. And obviously art can fall under that umbrella of entertainment. Or the idea of just spiritual nourishment. When I think of music, sometimes it’s very difficult, it shouldn’t necessarily

have to have an idea attached. It can be incredibly abstract, and be incredibly powerful and life-changing. That’s why reviews are still really important — they are ways to express, through the media, the beauty of things that are very hard to express.”

Mark Amery

Former producer of *Saturday Morning with Kim Hill*, contributing arts editor for *The Post*, and co-presenter of RNZ’s *Culture 101*

There are also many common mistakes that new publicists make because they’re learning on the job, and thinking more like a producer or a marketer than a journalist. “It’s very easy to piss media off, and it can be a relationship they need to approach carefully,” says publicist Siobhan Waterhouse. “Either by not knowing a media outlet’s audience, being too demanding or not polite enough, engaging media too late, not giving them a decent story idea, pitching stories that have been pitched somewhere else, over-promising what’s possible... all of these things can affect your relationship for a long time.” Artists will often not have images, either, or headshots, and sometimes will send emails that are long but without detail. “You easily get 200 emails a day coming in,” says Hugh Sundae, Supervising Producer for TVNZ’s *Breakfast*. “So is this a pitch for tomorrow morning? Or is it two weeks from now?” He shakes his head. “I think pitches need work. I think being able to understand the needs of shows and outlets needs work.”

“Some of the press releases we get are so jargon-y,” explains André Chumko, Senior Reporter at *The Post*. “If you put that to a New Zealander who doesn’t even feel art is part of their life anyway, that just entrenches that disconnect more. So we need to find somewhere where we bridge that gap — and I think it’s in accessible reporting on the arts, which is not exclusive. Art is for everyone, and it should be treated as such when it’s written about for others.”

This perceived inaccessibility is an important consideration. “A lot of people are scared to write about arts and culture as it can seem really inaccessible,” says *The Spinoff* staff feature writer Sam Brooks. “People don’t want to be seen as being wrong, or to unfairly step into a role of authority.” Mark Amery agrees. “I think in the newsrooms and our media organisations, people are scared of touching the arts because it’s seen as a specialist topic.” This makes opportunities for experience and training a necessary intervention, in order to demystify art forms that have perpetuated a veneer of elitism and provide opportunities to learn how to talk about art. It’s only through this do we get to the deeper, crunchier — and ultimately transformative — conversations.

“Art writing does come across as quite elitist or classist. If you can’t understand what someone’s saying, you are immediately ostracised from the conversation... you feel it’s not for you if you don’t understand it. But, actually, a lot of the things that [artists] discuss are relevant to every single person in this country, everyone who’s grown up in Aotearoa, who has, like, a pulse.”

Leigh-Marama McLachlan
Senior Reporter at *Marae*

“The stories that get told through our media in Aotearoa are what shapes the psyche of the nation. If those stories are coming from a homogenous viewpoint, then they don’t accurately shape that psyche, and that in turn can impact the most vulnerable people in our community.”

Mihi Blake
Communications expert and
co-founder, Māia

We need a media landscape that reflects Aotearoa New Zealand

One of the major challenges we continue to see is a media ecology that does not reflect the full diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand, especially when it comes to lived experience and regional representation.

It's worth acknowledging that this is changing, but the change is slow. The recent [Worlds of Journalism Study](#) (October 2022) reported a slight increase in Māori journalists (from 7.9% in 2015 to 9.7% in 2022). During this same period, the proportion of Pacific journalists remained unchanged (1.8%), while journalists of Asian descent increased from 1.6% to 4.5%.

Within arts and culture reporting, however, we do still see in [Visibility Matters](#) that the leading individual voices in our coverage are Pākehā, and that coverage of Māori art (10%), Pacific art (3%) and Asian art (2.1%) remains low. Disabled artists are also severely underrepresented, accounting for only 2% of coverage. Critically, this is an issue that extends through the pipeline, from our media organisations to our publicists.

“[The pay] is the least of your concerns when you're stepping into these Pākehā newsrooms as a Māori journo. Like, I left RNZ after giving them almost ten solid years and a lot of hard work as a single mother with two kids going above and beyond. And I left with my tail between my legs. I felt

undervalued... they're so tokenistic in the way they treat our voice. It was demoralising.”

[Leigh-Marama McLachlan](#)
Senior Reporter at *Marae*

“Well, you know, bubby, where's my Māori publicists? No disrespect. I like even working with [Auckland Theatre Company] at the moment... But I just — you know — this is a Māori work. I need the Māori lens. And luckily, our Māori media are very interested in being involved in it. But I need [a publicist] to represent in a language that I am still learning. I need them to be able to speak Māori. That would be my only thing. There's great people out there and I love working with them. But I've yet to find a Māori publicist.”

[Tanea Heke](#)
Co-founder of Hāpai Productions

“What tends to make the process a lot easier and smoother is if the PR company that I'm dealing with are Māori... there's a real easy way of weaving and communicating, and half of the work is already done before the person shows up in front of me.”

[Kura Te Ua](#)
Artistic Director, Hawaiki TŪ

Event during *Fafetu: Lakiloko Keakea*, 30 September – 11 November 2018 at Objectspace, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Photo: David St George.



“Well, you know, bubby, where’s my Māori publicists?”

Tanea Heke
Co-founder of Hāpai Productions

“Journalists and media producers need to understand the nuance of the space they’re working in, and realise that the way they talk about Disabled people can perpetuate unhelpful stereotypes or further stigmatise people. They also need to take care with disability language and respect the language the interviewee wishes to use”

Stace Robertson
Lead Accessibility Advisor
Kaiārahi a Toi Ōritetanga at
Arts Access Aotearoa

Addressing representation across our media isn’t as simple as hiring individual people, but ensuring the whole organisation is capable of holding that person in a safe and supportive way, as well as the people outside the organisation they want to work with.

“Some people understand it as cultural capability, cultural decoding, treaty partners, understanding te ao Māori. I think there has to be a lot of work done there. I’m only speaking from a Māori organisation, but if I know you’ve done the work, or you’re committed to understanding te ao Māori, the connection and understanding will flow better.”

Kura Te Ua
Artistic Director, Hawaiki TŪ

“Lots of agencies and large corporates are not safe spaces for more diverse people.”

Mihi Blake
Communications expert and
co-founder, Māia

This is a large shift, and it’s one that’s already taking place with a number of initiatives already in place, many recently supported by the Public Interest Journalism Fund. Continuing to support this work in an arts media context is vital to ensuring we have a media landscape where different worldviews and stories can be presented with integrity.

Reviews and the challenge of creating a safe space for representation

But are the writers and journalists there? The answer’s not so easy. A number of smaller arts publications have emerged over the past two decades to address the gap in coverage, and in particular to cover communities that have been historically underserved. But many editors are still struggling to find writers, particularly for reviews. “I’m trying to commission people, and no one will say yes,” says Lana Lopesi, former Arts Editor at *Metro* and Co-Editor of *Marinade*. “There’s a real fear about what it means to be publicly critical of your peers when you’re also working with them in other capacities.” This issue is exacerbated by how few reviews are being written about a work. Being the only person to cover a work places an unfair burden on that writer, and creates a pressure to be positive, not only to be a champion of your community but for arts and culture more broadly — despite the fact that this can have the opposite effect. “More is always better,” she says.

“I guess one of the problems is, we’re not really that critical of the arts. We don’t carry criticism of the arts, which a Palagi organisation might. They might say, actually, this isn’t worth you spending your money on... I don’t think we have room. We don’t have enough volume, and we don’t have enough resilience to be critical of the small amount that we do... I think we need navigators rather than critics, navigators and people who help us to understand. I think that might be a better way of thinking about it.”

Taualeo’o Stephen Stehlin
Executive Producer of
Tagata Pasifika



Chris Parker at the NZ International Comedy Festival 2021 Comedy Gala.
Photo: Jinki Cambroner.

Maintaining our critical culture is essential. “There’s been a real loss of reviewers in New Zealand media,” observes Charlie Gates, former Senior Reporter at *The Press* and *Stuff*. “And that’s a great shame. Often a review is the only record that is left of a piece of theatre, and I think it’s a really important piece of culture that should still exist, and it doesn’t, really... I think if we’re talking about any kind of public interest fund or state subsidy of arts journalism, theatre reviews would be it.”

Our regions have been affected disproportionately. Addressing this is vital

When we talk about how arts and culture coverage has diminished, it’s important to note that regional coverage has been the hardest hit. Many local publications have disappeared, and there are very few local journalists to cover stories. “There’s not much arts coverage of the South Island,” says artist Bridget Reweti. “Our smaller places are doing really cool community-based and often Māori-based programmes and exhibitions that don’t get any coverage.” As a result, “Artists and writers and curators from those places aren’t acknowledged as being significant.”

“The number of toi Māori exhibitions that happen within Gisborne statistically must be astronomical, comparatively,” adds artist and curator Melanie Tangaere Baldwin. “If the last ten years had been documented, it would be kind of mind-blowing, the types of things that happen here. And if there was documentation, I don’t think that there’d be as much room for people to expect less of us.”

The way the media is stretched means providing cultural coverage may not even be possible. “Resourcing is completely different,” says Rosie Dawson-Hewes, marketing manager at Toitōi. “Regional daily newspaper newsrooms sometimes will only have two people in them.” “I believe there’s only one TV coverage

person in the Whakatū region,” says Nelson Arts Festival Executive and Artistic Director Lydia Zanetti. There was one day when the Festival had staged a giant iceberg installation on a public holiday. “They weren’t working that day so we got no coverage.”

And international success? We barely see it

Despite the fact that eight in ten New Zealanders feel pride when our artists succeed internationally (*New Zealanders and the Arts, 2020*), it’s rare that the international successes of our artists are covered locally, often due to the breakdown in networks and knowledge between artists and media. Last year, for example, FAFSWAG were invited to be part of *documenta fifteen*, the prestigious contemporary art exhibition held every five years in Kassel, Germany. “I was quite surprised that none of that got picked up by the local New Zealand media,” says FAFSWAG member Elyssia Wilson-Heti, “or any of our institutions here — and we were funded by CNZ to go on that trip.”

Historically, journalists have occasionally been funded to attend large-scale events like the Venice Biennale to cover artists from Aotearoa who are succeeding on an international stage — but funding for journalists to make the journey to attend events like these is getting harder to come by. As a result, it’s rare we ever get to see the successes our artists are experiencing internationally.

One of the flow-on effects of under-resourcing and under-representation within media is compromised trust. Certain types of stories are told with less depth, due to lack of time, or because writers don't have immediate access to the worldview an artist is coming from: whether this relates to knowledge of the arts sector, or a certain lived experience. Stories end up with inaccuracies, and in some cases, stop being told entirely. "A lot of my authors, particularly Māori authors, say 'I do not feel safe being in kōrero with [certain journalists], and I wholly support them in that,'" says publicist Penny Hartill. "I don't even pitch them."

"There's a desire and need for the work that is made to be covered by people who have a shared experience with or an understanding of the artists making that work," says Tim Blake, who has worked in marketing across the Comedy Festival, Basement Theatre and Silo Theatre. "And that can be really tough. Because if there aren't enough journalists or writers to represent everybody, then the artist may not want the story."

"As a collective, we've made a more conscious decision around who we want to tell our story because our story is important, and the narrative should be held with some integrity, and some care, especially in the climate of what we're seeing globally around how trans bodies specifically are

being spoken about and spoken to... it is important to have control over what is actually being written about you, and being able to say, 'I want to review that before you publish it?'"

Elyssia Wilson-Heti
Artist

"I think it's often a challenge not to oversimplify Māori works of art. So whether it's the collective or my individual practice, or even some of the curatorial work I do — often, there's a lot of terms using weaving or being more in one with nature... harking back to these romanticised ideas of Māori where that's often not the focus of any of the works... But it's just things that come to mind when people are discussing Māori artworks. In that respect, it just comes down to having the time to be able to research and then sit down and talk and be able to develop something from there."

Bridget Reweti
Artist

Increasingly, artists are reluctant to engage with media, or are putting additional safety measures in place, particularly where artists feel the journalists they are engaging with might not understand their cultural context. This is the case for FAFSWAG, who now ask to sign off on copy.

"It is always a worry, you know, it's a risky business, what we do. We write something and publish it that day. Someone's taken a lot of time, a lot of thought to work on a piece of art. And then I talk to them for half an hour, an hour, and write 400 words... People feeling misrepresented, it will happen from time to time. That worries me. Because I respect their work and their art."

Charlie Gates
Former Senior Reporter at
The Press and *Stuff*

“I could critique another Sāmoan work, and it might be really negative, it might be justified, but it might also be called out as lateral violence. It’s just a hard murky space. And it’s easier for people to say it’s not worth the, you know, nominal writer’s fee, or the potential fallout, is not worth it... and so we have really one-sided art commentary, which is only celebratory, which is great, in some respects, but it doesn’t help us get better.”

Lana Lopesi
Former Arts Editor at *Metro* and
Co-Editor of *Marinade*

“There have been instances of Disabled people being interviewed in the media and saying beforehand, ‘I don’t want to talk about my disability because it’s not relevant to this’ — and then being ignored and asked all these intrusive questions about their disability and feeling obliged to answer.”

Stace Robertson
Lead Accessibility Advisor
Kaiārahi a Toi Ōritetanga at
Arts Access Aotearoa

But this isn't always possible for journalists, either, with newsroom policies often discouraging copy approval for ethical reasons. "One of the other things that we sometimes have to educate the people we work with about is the value of editorial," adds communications expert Mihi Blake. "It's not a promotion. There has to be that balance of telling the story in a way that's not biased."

One editor we spoke to observes that some of the previous checks and balances a journalist could lean on — a team of sub-editors, institutional knowledge — have "definitely been diminished". "Given the nature of the changes, I always feel really comfortable, in fact, more comfortable [if the artist checks the copy], because we don't have those same checks and balances. We have a higher volume of stuff churning out more frequently, and to have that person read and know that we haven't messed up is, to me, really reassuring."

There's an opportunity here for training, both for the media and for artists. "Talking to the media can be really scary and intimidating," says Matariki Williams, co-founder of [ATE Journal of Māori Art](#). And often, if the potential risks haven't been considered and addressed ahead of time, it can be hard to ensure the safety of artists in the moment. "Because once you're in an interview," says Zanetti Productions producer, Lydia Zanetti, "especially something like radio and TV, there's no way out. It can be quite an unsafe space in that way."

"I think media coverage often expects a lot from people whose capabilities aren't necessarily in that space," says artist and curator Melanie Tangaere Baldwin. "I hate being filmed, I hate having my photo taken, I get really anxious and nervous before I speak. So I don't necessarily want to be taken off-guard with a whole lot of questions, because then I'll be anxious for the next five days about what I might have said."

"I've seen people get caught revealing personal stuff about themselves," adds actor Jennifer Ward-Lealand, "and that becomes the whole focus and they've really regretted it. So I think that would be a good thing to teach actors: what is some stuff that is private and must stay private?"

It's not just individual artists, but organisations who are putting walls up — sometimes pre-emptively, and often at the cost of accountability journalism. "I've done big investigations on organisations for behaviour that should not have been happening, or oversights with their processes," says André Chumko, Senior Reporter at *The Post*. "They don't like it, and you get blacklisted."

"I discovered with the whole Shakespeare debacle that our arts reporter had never been into the Creative New Zealand office," adds Anna Fifield, former Editor at *The Dominion Post*. "He had never met the media people in real life. That whole situation was pretty weird, and it would have been really helpful from the get-go for Creative New Zealand to call him — instead of just shutting down — to call him and say: listen, on background, that money was for an Executive Assistant. It's not funding the programme. It would have provided really crucial context, and we would absolutely have adhered to those ground rules that it was on background."

"Building strong relationships is really fundamental to (a) soberly reporting those stories when the scandals do arise, but also having the foundation for the good stories. For coming in and saying, 'Hey, come and tell the story of this funding decision that enables these young people from Cromwell to do blah blah whatever.' There's not any effort into building a constructive, respectful, working relationship. It's just like [fake gasp] no comment."

...And trust is built, in part, by deepening understanding across our culture media ecology

With two under-resourced sectors, time becomes a challenge, and often the focus on building and strengthening relationships falls by the wayside. This leads to a general lack of understanding between people working in the media and cultural sectors — both within and across the industry. "I don't think there's been enough opportunities for people to nurture or nourish or even establish those relationships," observes artist Elyssia Wilson-Heti. "[We need] opportunities to be in space with different parts of the media machine so that they know us and we know them."

"There's such a barrier between us [and the media] that you're just guessing what they want," adds Tim Blake, who has built a career working in marketing across the arts. "I recently have been wanting to know what the media are looking for from the arts because I think we work at cross purposes sometimes. Do they want us to keep pitching? Do they have any kind of advice for us on what they truly want? I'd love to bring media into industry hui like the PANNZ Arts Market... It's wild, how little we know about them."

"Mataaho has worked with maybe two publicists or communication managers through galleries," says artist Bridget Reweti. "It's a world that is not often explained and you feel a bit out of your depth."

"There is maybe a lack of understanding about what communication can bring to the table," says communications expert Mihi Blake. "A lot of people think it's writing a press release and sending it out... and, of course, that exists within the work that we do, but it's not everything."

So many of the barriers can be boiled down to this lack of understanding. "[We need to] create spaces where that exchange of mātauranga and kōrero can happen."

"I think sometimes it's a bit tricky to have those conversations with publicists, explaining you have other things on the go," adds André Chumko. "I'm not just working on one story at any given time. I have about 30 to 40 work-in-progress stories, stories that I'm keeping tabs on."

There are also missed opportunities for collaboration both within and across the sector, that would make everybody's work more streamlined and ultimately more efficient. "The arts don't seem to talk to each other," adds publicist Penny Hartill. "There doesn't seem to be one single entity [for] kōrero about some of the burning issues of the day and how we can work collaboratively and collectively to push."

Two key pathways to strengthening our landscape



Our media and cultural sectors are stretched thin.

Our media and cultural sectors are stretched thin, and both are contributing — however inadvertently — to the erosion of the value of arts and culture in society. We are seeing fewer dedicated arts reporters in mainstream media, specialist publications that are chronically under-resourced, and very few artists supported to navigate the rapidly changing mediascape.

Yet we know that arts coverage is in the public interest, contributing to better wellbeing outcomes and social cohesion across Aotearoa, as well as supporting artists to develop more sustainable careers. It helps us tell the story of our country, at a time when our country is changing rapidly.

There is already good work taking place, but it could be better if we invest in telling stronger stories,

continue developing a media landscape that reflects Aotearoa New Zealand, and create opportunities for the arts media ecology to work in a more collaborative and informed manner.

In exploring how we might best address this national deficit, we looked at initiatives that have been successfully trialled overseas or have been used to address media challenges in other sectors. With each interviewee, in addition to asking where they saw the gaps and where intervention could have the most impact, we tested these initiatives. From these conversations, two pathways emerged that were seen to have the most potential impact.

1. Create a dedicated fund for arts and culture media projects

This addresses the under-resourcing of arts and culture media, supporting stronger stories, and developing an arts media landscape that reflects Aotearoa New Zealand.

The current funding models don't work for arts media. Creative New Zealand funding structures create tensions for publications that are competing in the same rounds as the artists they seek to cover, and the funding itself tends to be short-term and precarious — while NZ On Air's Public Interest Journalism Fund tended to prioritise other forms of storytelling, with only a handful of projects funded in the area of arts and culture within the \$55 million spent over three years.

A dedicated fund will increase our ability to tell stronger stories and to develop a media landscape that reflects Aotearoa. It's an investment in both the media and artists: enabling both specialist art platforms and general media to grow coverage, shining a spotlight on more artist voices, building capacity in the regions, and, most importantly, recognising arts and culture as a public good.

"I don't see any other quick way of addressing the market failure," says one commissioner. Irene Gardiner, SPADA President and former TVNZ Head of Commissioning, adds there is a compelling case for it, since the whole reason governments deliver public media funding is to enrich

New Zealand's cultural life. "To help the wellbeing of New Zealanders, and to help with our national identity and even democracy, because it's about social unity. And as we move into the era that we're in, of bad actors on social media wilfully creating social disharmony, those things that bring us together become very important."

Because of the multiple positive outcomes involved in strengthening our arts media, it's also a natural fit for collaboration and co-investment across agencies like Manatū Taonga, Creative New Zealand, NZ On Air and Te Māngai Pāho.

An initiative like this will need to be sector led and constantly iterative: the development and administration of this fund needs to be supported by an advisory group that includes artists, publicists (working both independently and within arts organisations), editors, commissioners and journalists. As a new fund, the structure should continually evolve in response to what is working, what isn't, and what the sectors need.

Based on our interviews, we recommend this fund is at least \$5 million per year, in order to achieve the range of core coverage needed in Aotearoa, as well as allowing opportunities to safely experiment and innovate.

"I think that could well be the circuit breaker that you need... if there's suddenly that little bit more money — NZ On Air, Creative New Zealand, joining forces — it's a new and interesting initiative. And so it sparks attention."

Irene Gardiner
SPADA President and former
TVNZ Head of Commissioning

"It's such a logical step to separate it out," says *The Spinoff's* Books Editor, Claire Mabey. "My instinct is that it would be well received by artists, and I think alleviating some pressure from those highly contested funds by creating a separate pot for media would be brilliant. I also think that would acknowledge the fact that it's doing quite a different thing in quite a different industry."

"I think it would be a game changer," adds André Chumko, Senior Reporter at *The Post*. "It would mean many more sets of eyes looking at annual reports, more mouths and people firing questions up to press secretaries and asking ministers, what are you doing about artist pay? What are you doing about these issues that artists are facing? It would mean greater scrutiny on the arts, which would improve transparency and accountability."

Focus areas for the fund

In designing this fund, there will be a need to balance both opportunities for radical experimentation, and opportunities to directly address clear gaps in the market, prioritising in particular:

- Strengthening coverage in ngā toi Māori
- Strengthening coverage in te reo Māori
- Strengthening coverage in Pacific arts
- Strengthening our criticism and reviewing culture
- Showcasing arts in the regions
- Access and inclusion — reflecting the diversity of our arts, cultural and creative communities in our media organisations and cultural coverage (this includes cultural diversity as well as representation of our Rainbow and Disabled communities)
- Investigative and long-form journalism
- Experimentation with form, including opportunities to develop work where gaps currently exist on social platforms, as well as in podcasting, video and broadcast programming

We suggest two funding tiers within this to enable a range of projects across different media, that are both broad and accessible as well as focused and deep:

Small grants (\$100K and under)

For significant ongoing publication projects, as well as long-form features and investigations, regular pan-artform reviews at liveable rates, experimental and alternative forms for cultural coverage and reviews, and for sending journalists to key events internationally to cover artists on the world stage.

“There needs to be a modernisation of arts journalism... I would love to see younger journalists covering the arts who are communicating in a way that is more for the time... we need someone to package [existing media] up and get it out to audiences in a way that we know they’re going to receive it.”

Courtney Mayhew
Managing Director at Ahi Films

Large grants (\$100K+)

For more significant structural solutions that seek to address key gaps in the arts media landscape, as well as larger projects like online video, podcasts, and broadcast programming dedicated to arts and culture stories.

“Gaps? I think, Māori arts on mainstream networks, other large communities, our Chinese and Indian communities, our Rainbow community, where are their arts? They’re invisible in mainstream spaces. Children, art for children. What I love is things like getting kids to make content and putting resources around them.”

Former Commissioner

Some of the gaps might be quite specific — the creation of a new podcast, for example, or an online video series or regular arts TV programming. Where this is the case, we recommend NZ On Air working specifically with platforms like TVNZ and RNZ to develop targeted requests for proposals. “The problem is definitely not that producers wouldn’t want to make the shows,” observes Irene Gardiner. “It’s [the] sort of programming that people love to work on. They may have stopped pitching a bit because the doors haven’t been terribly open.”

“There still isn’t a regular arts show. And I do find it quite strange that we don’t have it in New Zealand. Going into the commissioners’ heads, I would say that arts programming is still not seen as a commercial proposition. It’s seen as something that is for a niche audience. But even if that is true, why not serve that niche audience?”

Irene Gardiner
SPADA President and former
TVNZ Head of Commissioning

“New Zealand needs an arts podcast. I listen to so much Australian stuff. The ABC does incredible podcasts and there’s this great book podcast that they do. They just had Claire Mabey on it talking about *Birnam Wood* and I’m like, why am I listening to this from Australia?”

Anna Fifield
Former Editor of
The Dominion Post

“If we have this great structure in place that funds the art, why can’t we have a great structure in place that also funds the discovery of it?”

Courtney Mayhew
Managing Director at Ahi Films

“I was on the *ABC Bookshelf* podcast, which in Australia has huge listenership. And as I was doing it, I was like, God, this is so fun and awesome to have this — over an hour — book conversation. And I felt that we don’t have that. We have a lot of radio snippets. But I don’t think we have that dedicated audio space that is backed by a national platform and has that listenership.”

Claire Mabey
Books Editor at *The Spinoff*

A dedicated fund for arts media is a crucial investment in the audiences of the future — both local media consumers and arts attendees. As one former commissioner reflects, “If they’re not watching our platforms, how do we reach them? That’s the challenge, I think. And it starts really young, starts with little kids. And, to my mind, that’s really where we need to be thinking about all New Zealanders and really actively targeting those incoming communities.”

Suggested conditions

If it’s publicly funded, it should be publicly accessible. This fund would help move arts coverage out from behind paywalls — where a significant proportion currently exists due to the perception that it is ‘niche’ content that people will pay for.

Ruth: It fucks us over, and the artists, so that is a really significant problem for us.

Kate: It just zooms that audience right down, that we’re getting this story in front of.

Ruth: And, you know, I think it reinforces that idea that art and culture is an elitist thing that is only for certain people.

Ruth Harvey and Kate Schrader
Co-Directors of Dunedin Fringe

There’s also significant value in long-term investment. Coverage is constantly at risk under our current models, and allowing multi-year commitments enables not only planning, but a security that encourages experimentation and ultimately growth.

“How can you expect our people to take on these key positions as storytellers in our community, when our funding is only guaranteed for the one year?”

Leigh-Marama McLachlan
Senior Reporter at *Marae*

“We’d love to do more... If we can get funding that allows us over a longer period of time to focus on our arts coverage, that’s the ideal — decent, informed criticism of the arts landscape, insight and analysis that you’re not going to get elsewhere in terms of Māori and Pasifika kaupapa.”

Connie Buchanan
Deputy Editor at *E-Tangata*

“We could definitely still develop a critique culture, but maybe it’s more of a face-to-face thing — maybe it’s more of a replicating of what happens on the marae when people speak on the pae. Like, there’s some real harsh critiques, but everyone gets together afterwards and has a cup of tea. Maybe there’s something in that, that could be better reflected in the documentation of our arts.”

Bridget Reweti
Artist

2. Create an independent body — an Arts Media Centre — that connects our media and creative sectors

Addressing resourcing gaps for both media and arts sectors, providing support to tell stronger stories, developing a media landscape that reflects Aotearoa New Zealand, and creating opportunities for understanding across arts and media sectors, supporting the rebuilding of trust.

Building deeper understanding and trust across our media and creative sectors is critical to the long-term growth of art media. Across the interviews we conducted, there was a unanimous sense of perceived value in an independent body that addresses the cracks that have emerged across these sectors. Our proposed body is modelled on the Science Media Centre, which has played a pivotal role in strengthening science reporting since its launch in 2008.

“As someone who’s used the Science Media Centre, I’ve found it extremely useful and it allows stories to be written much faster and more easily and much more correctly, than they would be otherwise... something like that would be an amazingly helpful resource.

Sam Brooks
Staff Feature Writer at *The Spinoff*

“It’s a great idea — a central point of expertise and being able to point us in the right direction. In fact, I just did an interview this morning with somebody that I came across through the Science Media Centre, so there you go.”

Connie Buchanan
Deputy Editor at *E-Tangata*

Ngā toi Māori would need to be at the heart of the Media Centre in this context, recognising it as the foundational arts mātauranga of Aotearoa.

An Arts Media Centre is a key piece of the puzzle that is currently missing in the arts and media landscape. Its mandate would be to enable high-quality arts journalism through training, advocacy and relationship building — ultimately a hub focused on achieving our collective aspirations for a stronger and more resilient arts media ecology.

I Identify as an Imposter with (L–R) Naomii Seah, Vira Paky, Isla Huia (Te Āti Haunui-a-Pāpāurangi, Uenuku) and Ruby Macomber (Rotuma, Taveuni, Ngāpuhi; she/they) at New Zealand Young Writers Festival 2023. Photo: Blake Armstrong.





The Science Media Centre

Funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) as part of their national strategic plan for science in society ([A Nation of Curious Minds](#)), the Science Media Centre seeks to strengthen the quality, accuracy and depth of science reporting in the media.

It does this by working with both researchers and media, in both proactive and reactive streams. This includes training (media training for scientists, science literacy training for journalists); proactive briefings (including a weekly breakdown of key news in the science world); and reactive briefings (sending key facts and quotes from experts journalists can use when critical events take place).

They will work with journalists to suggest experts to interview and support fact-checking, ensuring the accuracy of science reporting. Since its launch in 2008, “tens of thousands of news stories have resulted from [the Media Centre’s] work,” says Director Dacia Herbulock. “Everything from national television news bulletins and feature-length magazine articles to data visualisations, comic strips and podcast series.

“The day-to-day work we do is really around anticipating the news cycle, and finding ways to get informed comment directly into journalists’ inboxes”, with more than 700 journalists subscribed to the service.

“The Science Media Centre is a great initiative and the amount of pickup it gets for science stories, especially on national media and television — it’s amazing. News media organisations don’t have the time or the resources to do it, so if you hand it to them, you’ve got a great chance. And you get it in front of lots of people. So I think it’s a really interesting concept for the arts that might work.”

Rebecca Fox
Lifestyle Editor at the
Otago Daily Times

The services identified through our research as most valuable were:

→ **Connecting journalists to spokespeople for different topics**

For journalists working on a story, the Media Centre would be a place to go for suggestions about who would be great to interview, or speak to on background. “It would give journalists access to a much wider range of people than are currently available to them,” says *Spinoff* writer Sam Brooks. “If you make it easier, they are more likely to do it.”

The role a media centre can play in connecting artists and journalists is especially important with so much institutional knowledge around the arts lost over the past decade. As RNZ’s Head of Content Megan Whelan puts it, “the people who did have those contact books aren’t around anymore.”

She gives the example of the recent proposed budget cuts by Auckland Council. “What will this mean for people, who are the artists to talk to? Being able to get some help around those stories would be really useful.” Or, in the case of a new piece of public art in the city that cost X amount of money, “someone who can put that knowledgeably into perspective for the reader,” says Charlie Gates, former Senior Reporter at *The Press* and *Stuff*. “So they don’t choke on their cup of tea.”

When freelance journalist Tulia Thompson was working on a story about how the New Zealand film industry handles production safety, it would have been helpful to talk with someone who was an expert in film financing. But she’d already completed four interviews, the fee

for the story was only \$250, and she didn’t have the resources to find someone. “I can imagine there’d be heaps of stories that are like this, where, as a journalist, if you’re trying to turn around a story quickly, you might make a bad call on something that actually someone will be an expert in.”

→ **Targeted briefings around ‘big-picture’ stories**

There is an opportunity here for a media centre to highlight the ‘big-picture’ stories as well as proactively packaging these stories (with prepared quotes) for media to easily use.

“As the Science Media Centre does, picking up on all those interesting projects that are happening all around the country, pulling them together and providing you with the links and the commentary. But also for news, too. Like, if there is an issue, like the Shakespeare funding, say, within a couple of hours have out an email with commentary from three experts in the field.”

Rebecca Fox
Lifestyle Editor at the
Otago Daily Times

The centre’s bird’s-eye view would make it ideally placed to identify opportunities for collaboration, finding links between different arts events or tracking trends taking place across the sector.

→ **A calendar of events taking place across the cultural and creative sectors**

Developing a calendar of arts and cultural events would be a quick win for the Media Centre, enabling media to see at a glance upcoming arts events across the country. Lana Lopesi, who edited *Metro*’s

Arts Newsletter, told us a calendar “would cut half of the workload.”

Our recommendation would be to start with a centralised calendar of Māori events. “There’s no desk that has forthcoming events Māori,” observes Radio Waatea journalist Dale Husband. “For the most part, we feel like we’re constantly scrambling... but if we know about it, I think there’ll be many requests for interviews.”

He also observes how a calendar would help in developing storytelling. “You can get more mileage when you know ahead of time what’s coming up for people. You know, ‘a prominent Māori artist’ is really looking forward to an international hui of weavers in Palau. Then, in two months’ time, you can say, ‘She’s got the last pieces ready to be packed into a container to go to Palau.’ Now? ‘She’s leaving today’, then there’s a reaction when she’s there. So you talk to her while she’s in Palau, and then when she returns. So, all of a sudden, you have five news stories across three months.”

→ **Maintaining an up-to-date list of key spokespeople to contact**

In addition to providing a pathway to easily find appropriate artists to interview, the Centre could also support a stronger artist voice in our media more generally, including their voices being sought for stories on broader social issues and debates.

“[Having a directory] leads to better stories and the right people being contacted,” says freelance journalist Tulia Thompson. “And that’s kind of missing, in terms of arts engagements.”

→ **Maintaining an up-to-date media database, including what different editors are looking for in a pitch for their particular publication**

With media platforms and roles changing so quickly, an up-to-date media contact database would be an in-demand resource. There could also be a database of freelance writers and reviewers that both artists and commissioning editors could draw upon.

→ **Training and advice for journalists and critics**

Many journalists expressed the desire for opportunities to deepen their understanding of the arts sector and of different art forms, with many also cautioning that given the current state of stretch, shorter-form courses would be especially effective, from one to two hour talks to more intensive all-day courses — with a focus on understanding arts and cultural language and contexts, and on making stories accessible. “Who to talk to, what’s important in covering arts that are different to daily news, and also what’s similar,” says Megan Whelan, Head of Content at RNZ. “The more people that have a bit of a base knowledge, the easier it might be.”

“There is a huge hole in New Zealand professional development for journalists across the board for everything,” explains Rebecca Fox. “It’s non-existent. There’s so many different areas that journalists would benefit from. So I think, yes, it would be the whole arts literacy thing across the board, for generalists as well as more specialists.”

“To give journalists an overview of the arts would be to everybody’s benefit. If reporters or media had a better understanding of the arts in Aotearoa in 2023, that would result in more and better coverage of the arts.”

Tom Cardy
Publicist at New Zealand
Symphony Orchestra

Training should include a core focus on inclusivity, cultural competence, and working with artists from marginalised communities. “I think training and awareness is always really helpful,” says Stace Robertson, Lead Accessibility Advisor Kaiārahi a Toi Ōritetanga at Arts Access Aotearoa. “Being sensitive to the different ways that people might or might not want to engage or tell their story.”

Reviewing workshops are also critical and should be a priority for the Arts Media Centre, with a focus on supporting a plurality of voices.

“There’s nothing out there if you want to learn to review. We’ve put together some sort of resources from the net, and our own experiences to give to our own reviewers, but there’s nothing, no guidelines, no ethical guidelines for that sort of thing.”

Rebecca Fox
Lifestyle Editor at the
Otago Daily Times

In addition to short workshops that deepen journalists’ understanding of different aspects of the cultural sector, the Centre could also provide independent advice to journalists working on particular stories. *The Spinoff* Editor Madeleine Chapman sees the value in being able to consult with “somebody who could just go, ‘This is how it works. And this is why such and such happened.’ Because otherwise you have to ask people who were invested in the outcome. I think a lot of times you’re sort of like, ‘Am I missing something massive?’”

→ **Media training for artists**

There is also scope to offer training for practitioners seeking to engage with the media. “Even if you just had someone lay out a map of the media landscape,” says artist Bridget Reweti, “And explain ways where you can talk about your work in different ways while still retaining the essential kaupapa or mana of that work.”

“There would be a wrong way to do it,” cautions freelance journalist Tulia Thompson. “Which would be talking to artists about what the media needs, and, therefore, making artists make their work more media savvy. It has to be in a context where the artists are the experts.” Tim Blake, who has worked in arts marketing across a number of arts organisations, agrees. “It’s also a privilege [for the journalist] to speak to this person.”

Publicity and communications training could also be offered. “There’s actually a lot of professional development required for publicists,” says freelance publicist Rachel Healy. “Training around pastoral care of artists, and around being very clear about expectations.” As part of this, simple resources could be created for publicists and artists engaging in their own PR work, including a template for how to pitch to different media, how to develop a publicity plan, how to prepare for an interview, and how to keep up to speed with how the media is changing.

→ Advice and PR crisis support for artists and arts organisations

Not everybody in the arts has ready access to a publicist. The Media Centre will be an important service for independent artists and arts organisations without a publicist on staff.

“If there was somewhere you could go to and ask questions, get advice... It might be about the best medium to pitch a particular story to or how to package a pitch to TV. I’m sure lots of people would find it useful.”

Iona McNaughton
Communications Manager at
Arts Access Aotearoa

→ Supporting media partnerships and collaborations

There are a number of specialist publications that aren’t reaching the same broad audience as mainstream outlets, and with mainstream outlets looking to fill their pages, there’s a natural fit for syndication that is worth exploring.

→ Facilitating events that bring together those working across the cultural media ecology (artists, arts organisations and the media)

Another important function would be organising events that enable relationship building across the arts and media sectors, focused on key issues across the cultural media ecology.

“I think if you got publicists in a room with the media, you would get quite an interesting conversation,” says marketing manager Rosie Dawson-Hewes. “Where publicists are like, ‘Well, we’re doing everything you want.’ And the journalist will be like, ‘Actually, you’re not.’”

“We are all doing our own separate things,” says Ngatapa Black, Head of Content at Whakaata Māori. “Nobody really knows what anyone else is doing. So definitely a whakaruruhau that brings in all of these different groups together, to discuss, to talk about things like this, to see if there’s any great kaupapa happening, as we do as Māori, kanohi ki te kanohi, sitting together discussing how we can keep growing and growing the sector.”

→ Advocating for arts coverage

Finally, a body like this could also focus on ongoing advocacy directed at strengthening our arts and cultural media ecology. This might include connecting with tertiary providers and exploring ways that arts journalism can be given more visibility in broadcasting and journalism courses, as well as more specified campaigns addressing gaps identified by the sector, like the gaps in media monitoring that were raised by Māia co-founder Mihi Blake: “Isentia, which is the largest media monitoring organisation in Aotearoa, has a way to go in monitoring Māori media. We struggle to get real data on the reach and impact of some of our Māori stories. We’ve brought this up directly and offered to help build this out with them but, as it stands, they feel the monitoring of Māori media does not often ‘make economic sense’. We need to do better in the supporting of delivering stories as well as measuring impact.”

Suggested conditions

Investment in an independent body like this would need to be a multi-year commitment, with the Centre sufficiently resourced and set up for success. We recommend a minimum of three staff upon its establishment, and between them there should be expertise in ngā toi Māori, the media landscape and the broader arts and cultural sector.

Future phases

It’s important to allow the centre to continue evolving to respond to the needs of the arts media ecology. As the landscape strengthens, so too can the activities of the Centre. There were other initiatives that were raised from international examples that might be considered following the establishment of the Centre’s core functions, including:

→ Mentorship programmes

Establishing tuakana–teina mentorship between established and emerging arts journalists, editors and publicists.

→ Internships

Working with the sector to establish internships and pathways into arts media and publicity, with a focus in particular on continuing to strengthen the development of Māori and Pacific journalists and publicists.

→ Fellowships

Grants and residencies to allow journalists to focus on a large-scale project and to deepen their practice.

→ Artist residencies within media organisations

Artist residencies could be established within media organisations as part of a creative exchange.

→ An arts newswire

In the long term, there might also be a version of the local democracy reporting initiative, in which journalists in regions throughout the country are contracted to create quality cultural coverage that would then be syndicated across participating media partners. In addition, there could also be an international arm, where coverage of our artists overseas could be syndicated to media platforms in Aotearoa.

→ Arts media awards

While introducing arts media awards into the current landscape was seen as ‘putting the cart before the horse’, a suite of arts journalism awards has the benefit of celebrating good work and giving people personal recognition for their achievements.

These two critical interventions have the potential to have an enduring and positive effect, creating the scaffolding needed for our arts media ecology to rebuild, and a place where arts and culture are valued by the fourth estate. Through this, we see a pathway to a world where people know who our artists are. Their views and voices are heard more often. Our public conversations become deeper, more nuanced, contributing in turn to a healthy and functioning democracy. Artists' lives become less precarious, more sustainable. Our worlds become richer, and every person in Aotearoa New Zealand has the opportunity to see their story reflected on our stages, our pages, our gallery walls — pathways facilitated through the media.

“I see so much potential for arts to provide that sort of projecting forward, that sort of processing the emotion of things that we are experiencing as a society; trying to imagine futures that are different from where we are now. I think that there is a lot of benefit to amplifying the work that's already happening, so it's not just going to a niche group of people who are sitting in that particular theatre audience that one day, but that it does reach broader audiences, [and] inspires people to ask questions and think about it.”

Dacia Herbulock
Director, Science Media Centre

“If we had more stories about what it is we all do, [this would lead to a] shift in people's own perceptions of other people, because then it's not scary when you're saying, so that's what Queer communities are doing, or that's what Asian arts communities are doing, and, wow, how incredible that we get to see these stories of different experiences other than our own.”

Elyssia Wilson-Heti
Artist

“The best version of it is where we are caring about artists, as an audience, as a public, and we want to write about artists because we know who they are, and we care about them.”

Chris Parker
Actor, comedian and writer

“I don't think going back to how it was is a good platform, I think this is a really awesome opportunity to recognise that the way things are now is absolutely dire. But that means we can build from scratch, and I think Aotearoa is the perfect place to do it. Because we're so networked, and we do all care, and people will really elevate that kaupapa. That's possible.”

Kelly Geater
Communications Specialist at
Sydney Opera House

“There are so so many stories, and people want to read them; people want to have their lives enriched by arts and culture and music. That is the richness of being alive. And so I think there's a demand there. I just think that there aren't the resources there to meet that demand.”

Mihi Blake
Communications expert
and co-founder, Māia

How did we do this research?

This qualitative report was commissioned by Creative New Zealand to better understand the state of media coverage of arts and culture in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the opportunities to strengthen, develop and grow. It acts as a companion piece to *Visibility Matters*, the quantitative snapshot of the state of the arts media landscape. Where *Visibility Matters* is the ‘what’, this report seeks to explore the ‘why’ and the ‘how’.

Desk research

This work draws on a literature review looking at initiatives taking place internationally that seek to address the deficit in arts media in similar contexts overseas. This foundation — coupled with the findings from *Visibility Matters*, informed the interviews that sit at the centre of this research.

Interviews

Interviews with 52 artists, arts organisation staff, publicists, editors, journalists and key decision-makers were conducted, with each interview taking place between March and June 2023. In each interview, we discussed the different pressure points affecting cultural media coverage, as well as the types of interventions that would have the most impact.

Ngā mihi nui to all who contributed their time, energy and knowledge to this kaupapa

Arts Access Aotearoa is the lead national organisation working to increase access to the arts for people who experience barriers to participation as artists, performers, audience members, readers, and gallery and museum visitors. It does this by working in the disability, mental health and Deaf communities; through a network of community arts organisations called creative spaces; and by advising the Department of Corrections on its arts programmes for people in the justice system.

Melanie Tangaere Baldwin (Ngāti Porou, Rongomaiwahine) is a mother of two, wife, artist and curator based in Tūranganui-a-Kiwa Gisborne. She is one of the founders and current Creative Director of HOEA! Gallery in Gisborne and curator of Te Ara i Whiti for Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival (2021, 2022, 2023).

Richard Benge MNZM is the Executive Director Kaiwhakahaere Matua at Arts Access Aotearoa.

Ngatapa Black (Ngāi Tūhoe, Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Ngāti Tūwharetoa) is a television producer, director and events project manager, and has produced several music albums. She is currently Head of Content at Whakaata Māori and manages the Māori music mentoring programme for youth called Pao Pao Pao.

Mihi Blake (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Awa) is co-founder of Māia, a kaupapa-driven communications studio that exists to improve social outcomes through communications. Māia is also on a mission to bring more diversity to the communications industry.

Tim Blake is the Executive Director at Silo Theatre. He was worked in marketing across the arts sector, including as Marketing & Partnerships Manager at the Comedy Festival, Marketing & Relationships Manager

at Basement Theatre, Development Manager at PANNZ (Performing Arts Network of New Zealand) and Marketing Advisor at Auckland Zoo.

Sam Brooks is a playwright, journalist and critic. He is a staff feature writer at *The Spinoff*, where he writes on arts and culture.

Connie Buchanan is Deputy Editor at *E-Tangata*, an online Sunday magazine run by the Mana Trust, which is dedicated to building a stronger Māori and Pacific presence in Aotearoa New Zealand media.

Tom Cardy is Publicist at New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, and between 2004 and 2015, was Arts Editor at *The Dominion Post*.

Madeleine Chapman is the Editor of *The Spinoff* and a former Senior Editor at *North & South*. She is the author of *Jacinda Ardern: A New Kind of Leader* and the co-author of Steven Adams' autobiography *My Life, My Fight*.

Dionne Christian has an extensive background writing about the arts, culture and books for newspapers, magazines and websites in Aotearoa. She is a former Books and Arts Editor at the *New Zealand Herald* and is now Reviews Editor for *Kete Books* and Digital Content Editor at the *NZ Listener*.

André Chumko is a Senior Reporter at *Stuff* and *The Post*, writing across arts, culture, screen, innovation and technology. In 2021 he won the Arts Access Aotearoa Media Award, and in 2022 he was a finalist at the national Voyager Media Awards for best arts and culture reporting.

Sarah Daniell edited *Canvas* magazine for six years. She has worked across a broad range of media, from magazine feature writing to radio and TV, as an actor, presenter, reporter, researcher and producer.

Rosie Dawson-Hewes is a former journalist and editor. She is currently Kaiwhakahaere Whakatairanga,

Ngā Toi me te Ahurea — Marketing Manager, Arts & Culture, at Hastings District Council, where she leads marketing, communications and PR for Toitōi — Hawke's Bay Arts & Events Centre and Te Whare Toi o Heretaunga Hastings Art Gallery.

Anna Fifield was Editor of *The Dominion Post* between 2020 and 2022. Before that, she spent 20 years at *The Washington Post* and *The Financial Times*.

Irene Gardiner is a long-time television producer and journalist. She is a former TVNZ Head of Commissioning and was the founding Content Director for the NZ On Screen website. She currently serves as President of SPADA (the producers' guild), and is a board member for Radio New Zealand, Able (the Media Access Charitable Trust), and Chamber Music NZ.

Charlie Gates is an award-winning journalist and filmmaker with 20 years' international experience specialising in arts and culture reporting and video production. He was formerly a Senior Reporter at *The Press* and *Stuff*, currently based in Christchurch.

Kelly Geater is an arts publicist with experience across theatre, music, comedy, children's entertainment, and festivals. They are currently a Communications Specialist at the Sydney Opera House, previously working for Elephant Publicity in Tāmaki Makaurau, and with Michael Cassel Group on Gadigal land as the Production Publicist for the musicals *Hamilton* and *Mary Poppins*.

Penny Hartill is an award-winning communications professional and Director of Hartill PR. Her feature writing has been published in *North & South*, *Sunday Star-Times* and *New Internationalist*.

Ruth Harvey is Co-Director at Dunedin Fringe. Ruth manages Dunedin Fringe's grant and fundraising activities, and is responsible for establishing and maintaining strategic relationships with Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust partners and stakeholders.

Rachel Healy is an experienced communications manager and publicist with a background in the arts and culture sector. She currently works with Pātaka Art + Museum and Choirs Aotearoa New Zealand, and has previously worked with City Gallery Wellington, The Dowse and Downstage Theatre.

Tanea Heke (Ngāpuhi nui tonu, Ngāti Rangī, Te Uri Taniwha, Ngāti Hineira) is a creative, arts administrator, co-founder of Hāpai Productions — a mana wāhine, kaupapa Māori theatre company she and Nancy Brunning set up in 2013 — and Tumuaki / Director and Poutūhono of Te Kura Toi Whakaari o Aotearoa: NZ Drama School.

Dacia Herbulock is Director and founding member of the NZ Science Media Centre, which links journalists with experts to support high-quality, accessible media coverage of science and research. She is Tumu Pāpāho Rau Pūtaiao on Royal Society Te Apārangi's Senior Leadership Team, and an Adjunct Research Fellow with Te Herenga Waka (VUW) in the School of Science in Society.

Dale Husband (Ngāti Maru) is a journalist and broadcaster, widely known as Radio Waatea's breakfast show host, and writer and interviewer for the online magazine *E-Tangata*.

Michelle Lafferty is a publicist and Director of Elephant Publicity.

Claire Mabey is a writer, literary programmer and festival maker. She is Books Editor at *The Spinoff* and a book critic at RNZ — as well as the founder of Verb Wellington, Litcrawl Wellington and Lōemis. She is the co-curator of the writers' programme at the Aotearoa NZ Festival of the Arts.

Courtney Mayhew is Managing Director at Ahi Films. She has previously worked in communications across the film and television industry, including in-house for Paramount and Universal Pictures, DreamWorks, Marvel and Studio Canal.

Iona McNaughton is the Communications Manager Kaiwhakahaere Whakawhitiwhiti Kōrero at Arts Access Aotearoa.

Leigh-Marama McLachlan (Te Ātihaunui-a-Pāpāangi) is a Senior Reporter at *Marae* and formerly Māori News Correspondent at RNZ.

Jessica Palalagi was born in Aotearoa New Zealand and traces her ancestry to Niue / Nukututaha in Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa and Aberdeen, Scotland. She is the Kaiwhakahaere / GM of the Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi and a founding member of Interis*land Collective.

Chris Parker is an actor, comedian, writer, TV personality and podcaster.

Megan Peacock-Coyle is Kaiwhakahaere Matua, Ngā Toi me te Ahurea — Manager, Arts & Culture at Toitōi — Hawke's Bay Arts & Events Centre.

Rebecca K Reilly (Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Rehua-Ngātiwai ki Aotea) is a novelist from Waitākere. In 2022, her first book, *Greta & Valdin*, won the Hubert Church Prize for Fiction and the Aotearoa Booksellers' Choice Award.

Bridget Reweti is a Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Te Rangi artist and curator. Her lens-based practice champions Māori histories embedded in landscapes through names, narratives and lived experiences.

Stace Robertson is the Lead Accessibility Advisor Kaiārahi a Toi Ōritetanga at Arts Access Aotearoa.

David Rowe is Head of Journalism Planning at NZME. He was previously Senior Newsroom Editor at the *New Zealand Herald*.

Emil Scheffmann is a freelance journalist who writes for *Metro* magazine.

Kate Schrader is Co-Director at Dunedin Fringe. Kate manages and schedules creative programming across all Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust activities, and helps manage Dunedin Fringe's strategic relationships.

Taualeo'o Stephen Stehlin MNZM is the Executive Producer of *Tagata Pasifika*, a programme he has worked on since its inception in 1987. Stephen was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to Pacific Island television broadcasting and the arts in 2008.

Hugh Sundae is best known for his radio work at University of Auckland campus radio 95bFM and as a television presenter. He is currently Supervising Producer for TVNZ's *Breakfast*.

Kura Te Ua (Te Rarawa, Te Aupōuri, Te Aitanga a Māhaki, Te Whakatōhea and Tūhoe) is the Artistic Director, Choreographer and Kaihaka of Hawaiki TŪ, an Auckland-based Māori performing arts company.

Tulia Thompson is a freelance journalist of Fijian, Tongan and Pākehā descent.

Jennifer Ward-Lealand CNZM is a theatre and film actor, director, teacher and intimacy coordinator. She is currently President of Equity New Zealand.

Megan Whelan is RNZ's Head of Content. She has worked in Radio New Zealand News, Sport, and Radio New Zealand International, and hosted holiday programmes.

Elyssia Wilson-Heti is an interdisciplinary artist, activist and member of FAFSWAG. She is of mixed Niuean and European heritage. Elyssia is a producer for the FAFSWAG Arts Collective, having produced live performance, community events, arts panels and activations over the past decade.

Lydia Zanetti is the Executive & Artistic Director of Nelson Arts Festival as well as running their own production company, Zanetti Productions.

We also want to mihi to those who we have interviewed who have opted to remain anonymous for this report.

Advisory group

Thanks also to our advisory rōpū who have guided us through this journey: Matariki Williams, Lana Lopesi, Tama Waipara, Karl Chitham, Vanessa Immink, Siobhan Waterhouse, Mark Amery, Rebecca Fox, Amie Mills and Frances Morton.

Mark Amery has worked extensively over the last 30 years as an arts editor, journalist, critic, broadcaster, advisor and public art curator with a stint as publicist for the NZ International Festival of the Arts and as Director of theatre organisation Playmarket.

Karl Chitham (Ngā Puhi, Te Uriroroi) is Director of the Dowse Art Museum and Head of Arts and Culture for Hutt City. He was previously a Curator and Director at Tauranga Art Gallery, and is a trustee for Wairau Māori Art Gallery, the first dedicated public Māori art gallery nationally.

Rebecca Fox is the Lifestyle Editor at the *Otago Daily Times* (Allied Press Ltd). She is the main writer and editor for the daily paper's weekly Arts pages as well as editing and writing for the Food and Travel pages. She is a journalist with 30 years' experience in news as well as feature writing.

Vanessa Immink is a wahine Māori / Pākehā independent theatre maker and producer. She has previously worked as Senior Programmer at Adelaide Fringe Festival and Senior Producer & Marketing Manager at Kia Mau Festival, as well as working on commercial productions such as *Hamilton* and *Cirque du Soleil*. In 2021 Vanessa created VOLT, a digital education arts management platform for independent producers and self-producing artists.

Lana Lopesi is an author, art critic, editor and multidisciplinary researcher. She has published extensively on Aotearoa art and culture and has been the Arts Editor at *Metro* (2022), Editor-in-Chief at *Pantograph Punch* (2017–19) and Editor at *#500words* (2012–17). She is currently Co-Editor of *Marinade: Aotearoa Journal of Moana Art*.

Amie Mills has worked in the media industry in Aotearoa and abroad, in a range of commissioning, creative and digital production roles. She is the former Digital & Children's Commissioner at TVNZ and is currently the Head of Funding at NZ On Air.

Frances Morton is an award-winning journalist and editor with 20 years' experience across print, podcast, video and digital media. Former roles include Arts Editor at *Metro*, Head of Content at *Vice NZ*, Head of *Re: News* at TVNZ. She is currently Editor of *Sunday* and *Your Weekend* magazines at Stuff.

Siobhan Waterhouse is a senior communications professional who has over 20 years' experience in leadership, consultative and contract roles in public relations and arts publicity, in both Aotearoa and Australia.

Tama Waipara (Ruapani, Rongowhakaata, Ngāti Porou) is the Chief Executive and Founding Artistic Director of Te Tairāwhiti Arts Festival. He has previously worked at Auckland Arts Festival as Senior Programme Manager, and was Programme Leader Māori at Auckland Council (Arts and Culture). Tama is an award-winning musician, composer and performer, the Co-Chair of SOUNZ — Centre for New Zealand Music and a Board member of Te Hau ki Tūranga Governance Group.

Matariki Williams (Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāti Hauti, Taranaki) is a freelance curator, writer, historian and editor with a specific interest in ngā toi Māori. She is a widely published art writer and has held multiple governance roles in the arts sector, and was previously Senior Historian Mātauranga Māori at Manatū Taonga and Curator Mātauranga Māori at Te Papa Tongarewa.

As well as this, thank you to Kate Prior and Hayden Donnell, our two external readers who provided editorial feedback on earlier drafts, and to Marie Shannon who proofread this report.

Kate Prior is an arts writer, story consultant, producer and director. She was Theatre Editor and subsequently Director at *The Pantograph Punch*, and has contributed features and reviews to *Metro*, *The Spinoff* and *Sunday* magazine. She currently works as a storyteller/copywriter at Curative, a creative agency inspiring change.

Hayden Donnell is a producer for RNZ's *Mediawatch* and a freelance writer for outlets including *Metro*, *The Spinoff*, *New Zealand Geographic* and *Webworm*.

Marie Shannon is an artist who works in photography and video, often using text. She is a copy editor and proofreader for a number of arts and culture publications.

This report was designed by the incredible team at Extended Whānau, a design studio based in Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa New Zealand.



Show Ponies feat. Atareta Bridge-Comer and Rebecca Hawkes. Photo: Roc Torio.





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