

MEDIA RELEASE

9 April 2019

New Auckland Art Gallery Director to focus on growth

Regional Facilities Auckland (RFA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Kirsten Paisley as Director of Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Most recently, Ms Paisley was Deputy Director for the National Gallery of Australia (NGA), which houses a collection of 150,000 artworks valued at AUD\$6 billion and has an annual turnover of over AUD\$54 million. Ms Paisley takes up the position at Auckland Art Gallery on 1 May, 2019.

RFA CEO Chris Brooks says Ms Paisley’s impact on the growth and success of the national art gallery across the Tasman makes her an outstanding appointment for the Gallery’s top job.

“We are delighted to welcome Kirsten to Auckland Art Gallery. Her leadership at the National Gallery of Australia and the inspirational work she has been doing sees her bring a wealth of experience to our Gallery. She is dedicated to creating powerful connections between art and people, and to growing new audiences through exciting and innovative exhibitions and programming. We are geared for growth, and Kirsten will provide the strategic insight and impetus to accelerate that growth.

“Following an extensive international search, we garnered a shortlist of exceptional candidates for the Director role. With the incumbent’s withdrawal last month, we were able with confidence to immediately secure Kirsten’s appointment.”

Ms Paisley has an extensive background in contemporary and modern art practice with over two decades of leadership and management experience in Australian art museums and contemporary art spaces.

During Ms Paisley’s three-year tenure as Deputy Director of the National Gallery of Australia, audiences grew by 10% year on year and commercial revenue significantly increased. She led successful initiatives to establish a visitor experience team, create a dedicated children’s gallery and implement a major new contemporary art commissioning programme. She supported significant inaugural commissions and exhibitions with artists such as Jess Johnson and Simon Ward, and Angelica Mesiti, whose NGA commission led to her selection as Australia’s 2019 Venice Biennale representative.

In the major exhibitions programme, Ms Paisley secured *Cartier: The Exhibition*, which showcased more than 300 spectacular items, such as royal tiaras, necklaces, brooches and

earrings, and was viewed by over 200,000 visitors. In addition, Ms Paisley led an international curatorial team to develop the major exhibition *Contemporary Worlds* chronicling the explosion of contemporary Indonesian art post the fall of the Suharto regime. This is due to open at NGA in June this year; the first of its scale in Australia.

Chris Brooks says Ms Paisley's art appreciation and unerring discernment made her the trusted steward for Australia's national collection, as well as its AUD\$10 million annual acquisition budget.

"Kirsten has personally raised several million dollars towards the realisation of indigenous Australian and international contemporary art projects at the Gallery, such as the recently unveiled infinity room, *The Spirits of the Pumpkins Descended into the Heavens*, by Yayoi Kusama and the soon to be unveiled works by artists, Entang Wiharso, Eko Nugroho and Melati Suryodarmo. Perhaps of greatest significance, over 18 months of engagement Kirsten brokered and secured a major six-year \$4 million indigenous arts partnership with Wesfarmers Arts, including an international tour of the shared collections through Asia announced in October 2018.

"I am looking forward to seeing Kirsten's impact on the vision, funding and programming for Auckland Art Gallery."

With a career spanning a number of Australian art institutions, Ms Paisley's senior roles include eight years as Director of the Shepparton Art Museum (SAM) in regional Victoria where she developed a business case and concept for a major new museum development. During her tenure at SAM, visitation grew by 200% and a successful rebrand garnered the 'Best Small Museum' award from Museums Australia.

For Ms Paisley, the Auckland Art Gallery appointment is an opportunity to further build an inclusive, dynamic Gallery that reflects Auckland's diverse communities and contributes to shaping the city's character through major international programming and exceptional New Zealand content.

"Auckland Art Gallery has forged a place in the landscape of art museums in the Asia Pacific for its curatorial experimentation, innovative programming and sound collecting. It reflects the characteristics and aspirations of the people of New Zealand, whose leadership in our region in the spheres of culture, community engagement and social governance is celebrated globally, and is incredibly compelling. I feel entirely honoured to be able to play a part in New Zealand's cultural legacy at this point in history.

"My passion is connecting this kind of capability with ambitious and daring initiatives. With an international network of supporters for the arts, I am looking forward to taking the Gallery forward into a new phase of exceptional exhibition and public programming, growing our audiences and the depth and quality of engagement, and providing even more opportunities for artists to thrive and shine.

"Together, we will create the platform for relevant, energetic, cultural and social discourse for Auckland, characterised by diversity, global connectivity and a spirit of curiosity and, importantly, good fun."

– ENDS –

IMAGE: New Auckland Art Gallery Director Kirsten Paisley

IMAGE CREDIT: Photography by Rohan Thomson. Artwork shown in background: **Colin McCahon**, *Victory over death 2*, 1970, National Gallery of Australia. Gift of the New Zealand Government 1978

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About Kirsten Paisley

With Masters degrees in Art History and Curatorship, as well as Business Administration, Kirsten has an in-depth understanding of the discourse of art theory and museology and a track record in brand development, financial management and organisational performance.

She began her career as an artist, completing her studies at Victorian College of the Arts to set up an artist-run gallery in Melbourne and working in important contemporary organisations such as Heide MoMA and Australian Centre for Contemporary Art. This has brought a unique appreciation of the skills and attributes a wide range of artists bring to a gallery, along with an understanding of the art-making, materials, processes and preoccupations of artists past and present.

Kirsten went on to the world of commercial galleries, developing first-hand experience in what she terms “the machinations of the art market” and honing her eye for great art. She has curated for the Art Gallery of Ballarat and Shepparton Art Gallery, held the Director role with Shepparton Art Museum for eight years and Deputy Director role with the National Gallery of Australia for over three years.

Kirsten has also been Vice President and Committee Member for the Public Galleries Association of Victoria and has judged several art prizes throughout her career.

About Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

Established in 1888, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki is New Zealand’s leading visual arts experience with multiple exhibition spaces spread across four levels, and a collection of more than 17,000 New Zealand and international artworks. Each year, hundreds of thousands of visitors explore the largest collection of New Zealand art in the world and discover outstanding works by Māori and Pacific Island artists, as well as international painting, sculpture and print collections dating from the 11th century to today. With an ever-changing programme of exhibitions, its thought-provoking, immersive experiences and public programmes enrich the lives of Aucklanders and visitors alike.

Situated in the heart of Auckland City next to Albert Park, the Gallery has won 22 building design awards since expansion and restoration in 2011, and was awarded 2013 World Building of the Year at the World Architecture Festival.

About RFA

Regional Facilities Auckland (RFA) enriches life in Auckland by engaging people in the arts, environment, sport and events. With our six divisions – Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland Conventions, Auckland Live, Auckland Stadiums, Auckland Zoo and New Zealand Maritime Museum – we strive to create rewarding visitor experiences and positive outcomes for Auckland. Our innovative and creative programmes delight more than four million visitors a year as we present engaging and accessible experiences across the city every single day.

As one of six Auckland Council organisations, we are a charitable trust governed by a board. Our landmark venues include Aotea Centre, Aotea Square, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Auckland Town Hall, Auckland Zoo, Bruce Mason Centre, The Civic, Mt Smart Stadium, New Zealand Maritime Museum, QBE Stadium, Queens Wharf and Western Springs Stadium.