

Hubert was born in Holland. He has been in NZ since 1974 and is married with three children. He worked three years for the NZ Forest Service, mainly in the field, studied graphic design and art history, worked four years for the Education Department creating teaching resources, eight years at the McDougall as photographer, technician, and exhibitions officer, two years at the Museum of New Zealand as exhibitions /programmes manager, five years as manager of Nelson Provincial Museum, and one year at Christchurch Art Gallery as programmes manager.



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Part 2: People in glass houses

An interview with Hubert Klaassens, Manager of Public Programmes, Te Puna o Waiwhetu.

CS News: What is your primary function as Manager of Public Programmes?

To plan and manage the public programmes (exhibitions), the education programmes and events, and the publications. I'm also responsible for the Gallery's marketing and publicity and liaising with the Friends of the Gallery.

What are some of the challenges faced during the transition to Montreal Street?

Last year's financial review would rank as significant. Financial reviews can be very useful, but the timing of this particular review was not good in that we were overloaded with work to get the new Gallery up and running. The review required major changes in the planned programmes, including extending the duration of short-term exhibitions, and cutting back on the scope of informal education programmes. We now have a fairly robust model, but it took some doing to create at such short notice.

How will public programmes be different than what was on offer before?

Here's a good case of bigger being better. The McDougall was a charming building, but it was very small. To encourage repeat visits from locals we had to sustain a ferocious exhibitions programme of up to forty shows a year. Being so much bigger, the new Gallery is able to present more art at once. If done well, it is more likely to encourage repeat visits from a broader section of the community. The second significant difference is that exhibitions are up for longer; our short-term exhibitions will on average be up for three and a half months, medium term exhibitions for one year, and long term exhibitions for up to five years. Associated education programmes and events are likely to reach a much wider audience. "Art Bites" is a good example of a new programme that is devised specifically for people who visit the Gallery.

What are your personal art interests?

I don't have a strong preference for any particular movement or medium, I'm not a purist or expert. I am probably more interested in the broader purpose of the arts in society, how this shapes our culture, and how this can be best communicated. My

experience has made me more sensitive to the challenges and risks inherent in isolating, interpreting, and presenting highly specific aspects of our cultural heritage. If this makes me more of a generalist than a specialist, then so be it.

Moods of Waiwhetu

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