

## Case Study: Creative Journeys and Te Manawa

**Andy Lowe**

**Chief Executive**

**Te Manawa Museum of Art, Science and History**

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Almost four years ago I started as the new Chief Executive at Te Manawa Museum of Art, Science and History in Palmerston North, New Zealand. The vision for Te Manawa is based on the concept of a ‘museum without walls’, where the museum actively seeks out and connects with those communities that have not traditionally been involved with, nor contributed to the fabric of the museum, while also providing broader access to our collections for all.

Creative Journeys, a group of around 30 artists with intellectual and physical disabilities, and Te Manawa staff met to discuss the idea of Creative Journeys artists working at Te Manawa. Since then the artists have been making art in the main foyer of Te Manawa, in the hub of the museum where they work two days per week. Te Manawa staff and visitors come and go, creating work with the artists – the artists themselves are the teachers. Over the years Creative Journeys and Te Manawa have worked together on a number of projects, using our collections and our spaces in surprising ways.

The artists are part of the Te Manawa family and experience. They make work that is sold in our shop share our staff room for lunch and have traditional Maori Waiata (singing) together with us in the main museum foyer. We are working on a concept for the group to relocate to Te Manawa and be based here full-time.

When we have openings and special quite politically focused days (e.g. International Women’s day with a focus on women’s rights, Waitangi day with a focus on the Treaty of Waitangi), Creative Journeys contribute to these in force. Te Manawa is committed to discussing human rights issues. For the development of these events, large numbers of others from our communities also participate; such as local iwi (Maori tribe), refugee communities and activist organisations.

Initially some museum staff were unsure about Creative Journeys being part of Te Manawa. They have now begun to enjoy their interactions with Creative Journeys artists, and feedback from the public has been extremely positive. A new energy permeates the museum.

Te Manawa is an open and inclusive place. We believe that different people working together strengthens the museum and all communities will become more valuable to each other and to society.

Creative Journeys artists produced work as part of an exhibition to accompany the *Take a Moment* exhibition that opened at Te Manawa in 2013.

<http://www.ihc.org.nz/newsevents/events/take-a-moment-exhibition/>

In 2014 Creative Journeys and Te Manawa welcomed international band *Rudely Interrupted* [rudelyinterrupted.com/about-the-band](http://rudelyinterrupted.com/about-the-band) from Australia who with the Auckland band *Mutes from Mars* played two concerts at Te Manawa.

In 2015, a collaboration between the Rangiwhia Environmental Arts Trust (REACT) and Creative Journeys saw the mixed-ability dance production of *He Ara Tae/ A Pathway of Colours* take place throughout the four semi-permanent exhibition spaces at Te Manawa using the existing exhibitions as sets for the performances. <http://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/lifestyle/66435337/Colour-me-11-ways>

An exhibition by Creative Journeys inspired by works from Te Manawa's art collection will open in 2016.







