5. Project Title: Blockbusters at the Auckland Art Gallery 1970-2020

Area: Museums and Cultural Heritage/Art History
Project Supervisor: Associate Professor Linda Tyler

Project Description:

During the latter part of the twentieth century, the Auckland Art Gallery changed its programming up a gear during the winter months to entice visitors to exhibitions with paid entry. Usually focusing on a selection of works by a European "master" painter (e.g. Vincent Van Gogh, Monet), these saw crowds of visitors queuing around the block from the Kitchener Street entrance. Garnering kudos for Director Rodney Wilson, this approach to gallery programming lost favour after 9/11 (2001) when exhibition insurances required government indemnity, as high value assets were deemed to be at most risk when airborne. However, 2022 will see a return to the blockbuster at AAG with exhibitions by Frida Kahlo, Mary Quant and Monet planned for roll out in the early part of the year. Attendance numbers will be closely monitored, not least by the RFA which has provided extra seed funding of $2 million for these ventures.

Researcher's Work

Research the impact of "blockbuster" exhibitions at AAG over the past fifty years, using newspaper clippings, TV and Radio archives, photographic resources, exhibition visitors' books and exhibition files. This will require emailing the library at AAG to ask staff to access exhibition files and using other online resources to research how exhibitions were marketed and promoted through journals and magazines such as *Art New Zealand*, and also radio, TV and newspapers. Students will learn to use online resources to research historical events and also to understand the relationship of economic boom periods to exhibition histories in major art museums.

Required Skills/Pre-requisites

Expertise in using documentary heritage resources in research. Ability to correspond with art gallery colleagues in a professional environment (Auckland Art Gallery Research Library) and take notes in an orderly and systematic fashion.

This project is suitable for two students.