



Te Taumata  
Toi-a-Iwi

# Hōhā and Hauora

## Learning about Arts Advocacy

**Whāia te toi huarewa o te auahatanga, hei kete toitoi manawa mō Tāmaki Makaurau.**

*Seek the pathway of creativity as a kete of inspiration for Auckland.*

# HŌHĀ AND HAUORA

## LEARNING ABOUT ARTS ADVOCACY

Since 2019 Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi has been on a steep learning curve about advocacy for ngā toi (arts, culture and creativity). We have explored issues that make arts practitioners hōhā and what it takes to create conditions for hauora in our sector.

This is a reflection on our journey, including key learning, the direction of our advocacy in 2023 and areas where collective advocacy is required to achieve real change.

### Early days

As a regional arts trust focused on Tāmaki Makaurau, we began our advocacy mahi by talking with people and organisations we knew about advocacy priorities. To widen this conversation, and as sector challenges accelerated with COVID-19, in April 2020 we established the [Ngā Toi Advocacy Network](#), an open online forum to connect, share and strategise.

The general election in 2020 provided the impetus to create a [shared vision for ngā toi advocacy](#) action in Tāmaki Makaurau, in collaboration with the Ngā Toi Advocacy Network. We highlighted what political parties were offering the arts through an online [pre-election forum](#) and collectively developed a pre-election [discussion paper](#), outlining key issues affecting ngā toi and potential responses. In November 2020 we developed a [Briefing for Incoming Ministers](#) on the value of the arts and priorities for action.

In March 2021, we held a [debate](#) as part of the Auckland Arts Festival with our partners Auckland Live. The topic was 'Are the arts essential?', comedically assessing the importance of the role that the arts play in our lives.





Covid lockdowns gave our fledgling Ngā Toi Advocacy Network an impetus to think differently. In 2021 we offered provocations via the network from arts practitioners and change makers including Rosabel Tan, Shona McElroy, Eynon Delamere, Nigel Borell, Ema Tavola, Borni Te Rongopai Tukiwaho, Rose Hiha-Agnew and Huia O’Sullivan. They opened conversations on issues such as decolonising thinking and practice in ngā toi spaces, looking after our creatives and new forms of governance. In 2022 we turned these conversations into a [podcast series](#).

We commissioned Rosabel Tan to explore how we can build a new utopia and reimagine ngā toi in Aotearoa. In partnership with Auckland Council, we mapped the funding ecosystem for ngā toi in Auckland to build understanding about priorities, challenges and potential connections. We co-funded and collaborated on three annual surveys between 2020 and 2022 to track the impact of COVID-19 on the creative sector in Aotearoa, with regional-specific reports for Tāmaki Makaurau, Waikato and Te Whanganui-a-Tara. We helped further develop RANA, the Regional Arts Network Aotearoa, to share regional learning and drive collective arts advocacy.

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## Looking ahead

The implications of proposed Auckland Council budget cuts for the arts in Tāmaki Makaurau are tricky to predict. As we move into 2023, with the ongoing effects of COVID-19, high cost of living, global volatility and another general election, we are seeing that advocacy infuses everything we do. The issues run deep and we will soon share a thinkpiece on the big systemic shifts required, as outlined at the end of our [2021-2022 Annual Report](#). We have learned that deep and wide systems level change is required, from mindsets to policy and resource flows.

At Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi we have made progress in building relationships with people in local and central government and getting people in power to listen. We now need to connect more with the super diversity of artists and enablers of the arts on the ground, to inform our advocacy.

***Artists are enablers of wellness but what are we doing to keep them well?***

***Borni Te Rongopai Tukiwaho***

We know that burn out and capacity issues are deep seated, that people are tired of Zoom and talkfests and wary of any engagement that is not genuine, action focused and mutually beneficial. This is especially the case for Toi Māori and Moana Oceania practitioners. Our advocacy focus needs to be on creating conditions and environments where all of our makers feel included and supported.

Core needs for a supportive environment include a far stronger focus on ngā toi in our schools and accessible pathways into arts and creative careers through our education and employment systems. It will require taking an equity lens to arts infrastructure and support and having considered conversations to manifest this. It means growing the hauora of arts practitioners through our arts infrastructure, so they can do their work of enabling hauora and cohesion in communities.



For many of our artists, cost of living and being able to make a living are their main concern. The social issues that impact artists and potential solutions are where we can collectively mobilise, such as secure housing and a universal basic income. Access issues get in the way of artists and the arts thriving, including equitable access to income and opportunities.

## Looking to ourselves

As a sector we can hold a mirror to ourselves, to ask when we think about creating supportive environments for artists, what does that mean for us? How can we change our own thinking, governance, processes and systems to support the hauora of arts practitioners? We hear from artists that some of their most harmful experiences have been with the very institutions that are meant to support them. Tendering, funding, contracting and reporting processes, for example, are often a source of stress and tension.

How can we do better as a sector to make art accessible? If we want more diverse audiences to engage with the arts we need to interrogate whether we are willing to make some things free, or koha, or sliding scale, what might that look like? What could back office administrative and project management support for artists and artist collectives look like, or fundraising support?

*We need a more cross-cultural understanding of what art is.*

*Lagi-Mama*

We know that our arts policy and infrastructure is still rooted in western colonial ideas and structures. Part of our role is to grow understanding of Toi Māori and the diversity of arts, cultural and creative practice across the many cultures and identities within Aotearoa. As a sector we need more conversations about equity in the arts, about the disparities and about [systemic racism](#), class, gender and identity, and to be more thoughtful and responsive to these issues.

At Te Taumata Toi-a-Iwi we know we have a long way to go in decolonising our own thinking and practice. Addressing these questions has led to a more diverse Board, a [commitment to support the mana motuhake of the Māori arts sector in Tāmaki](#), a focus on enabling Toi Māori through the establishment of [Te Manawa](#), bringing forward the perspectives of the voices less heard in the sector including [Moana Oceania](#) and [Asian arts practitioners](#), and supporting the leadership journeys of [wāhine toa](#) artists.

## Next steps for Te Taumata

We want to take a positive, strengths-based approach to advocacy that emphasises the potential of doing things differently and draws on the immense power and creativity of ngā toi practitioners and supporters. Artists are the ultimate change agents and as they are better supported, their potential to influence positive social change grows.

We will continue to take action around ngā toi advocacy catalysts such as local and central government elections, controversies and challenges. Based on deeper connections on the ground with diverse arts practitioners, we want to grow backbone support for artists, the everyday but vital stuff such as help with a budget, seeking funding, production support and reporting. We also want to grow the collective pie for our makers rather than witness fights over the scraps.



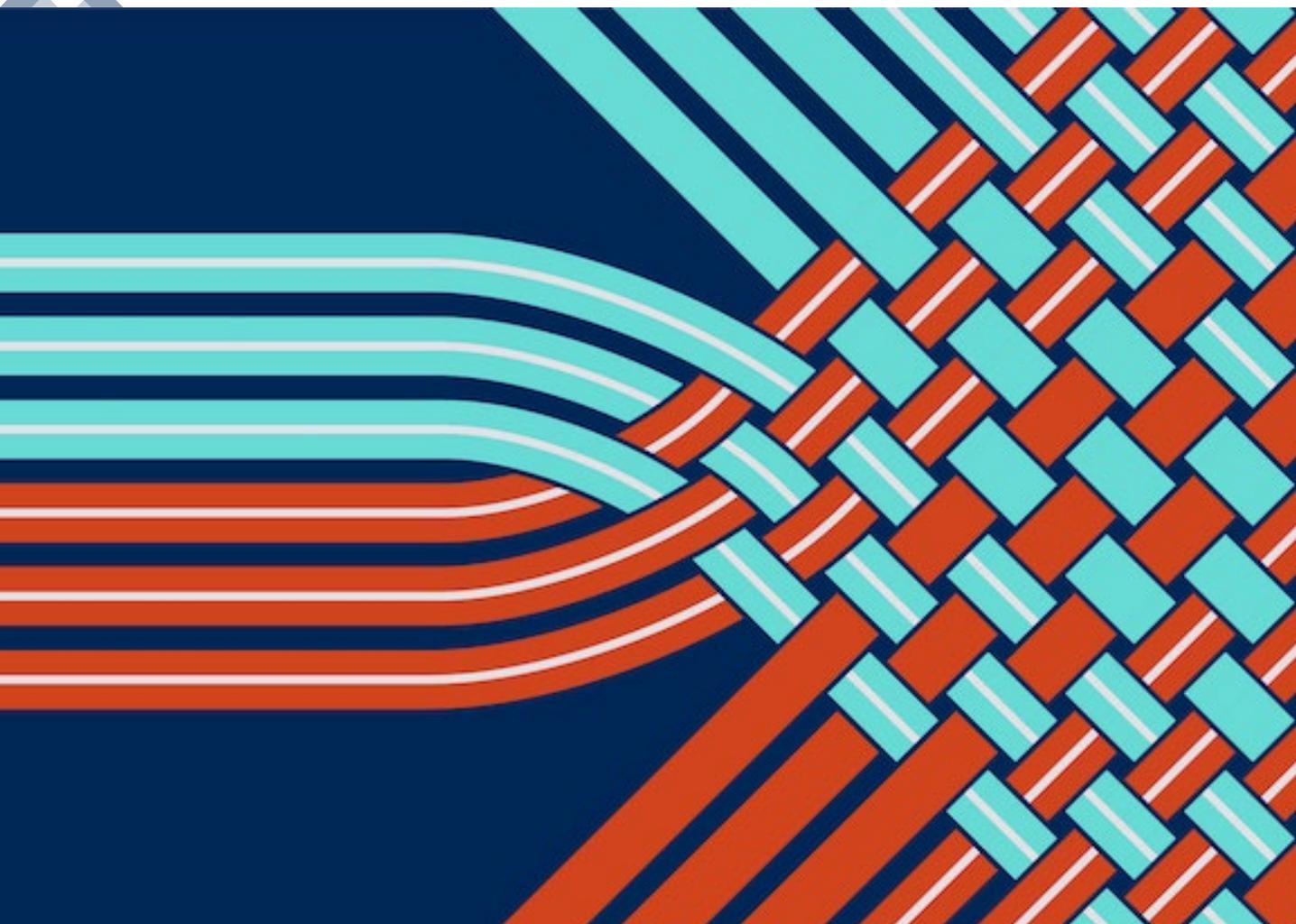
Across our Tāmaki Makaurau arts community, there is interest in exploring issues such as arts education, career paths, ways of making the arts more accessible, growing and diversifying audiences, and addressing practical issues around backbone support.

All of us in the arts, culture and creative world are moving through a hard and revealing time. A silver lining has been realising that things can change quickly where political will and public pressure exist. We can find collaborators in other sectors such as health, sports and technology, to make change together. We will keep researching to support shifts in mindsets and system responses. We will focus on Te Manawa to support tino rangatiratanga. We will bring together people who are interested in shaping the new. We will keep growing change agents. We will keep lifting our gaze to see the amazing things happening all the time across the arts.

Telling stories of hope and inspiration is one of the gifts of ngā toi, and one of the ways we move forward together. As our team member Elyssia Ra'nee Wilson-Heti notes:

*There is light and beauty that is agitating social change in the arts and for the wider community of Aotearoa.*

Let's light the way together.



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