

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki announces new Māori names for gallery spaces



Paul Gauci Te Kawau, Chief of the Ngāti Whātua Tribe, 1842, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1998.

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and Ngāti Whātua o Ōrākei are proud to acknowledge Apihai Te Kawau (late 1700s–1869), who was a paramount chief of the Ngāti Whātua people in Tāmaki Makaurau, through the naming of a gallery space.

The first exhibition in Te Kawau Gallery will be a display of Gottfried Lindauer's portrait paintings of tūpuna Māori from iwi across Aotearoa. Metaphorically, the gallery is likened to the chiefly cloak of Apihai Te Kawau; the portraits on display there will be cared for and protected through his manaakitanga and mana.

The Gallery's Poutikanga Joe Pihema said the choice of name reflects the mana and influence of Apihai Te Kawau in the establishment of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. 'His gift of 3000 acres to Governor Hobson in 1840 was an unrivalled act of nation-building and was essentially the birth of Auckland. That gift of land is now home to the central business district of Aotearoa's largest city.'

Te Kawau Gallery, which is in the historic part of the building currently under restoration, will be unveiled in 2024.

Director Kirsten Lacy said, 'This initiative seeks to recognise the whakapapa of the institution and the gift of the land on which the Gallery was built. Te Kawau was our first and arguably most significant donor and we want to acknowledge his contribution.

'It also recognises the relationship between Apihai Te Kawau and Sir George Grey when the art gallery was being imagined for the city. The Te Kawau Gallery will look down to the Grey Gallery below and vice versa.'

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On 18 September 1840, Crown representatives and Ngāti Whātua gathered at Point Britomart Te Rerenga-ora-iti to formally acknowledge the gift of land, and this date is now commemorated annually. Pihema said, 'It is a day that has important meaning and gives all Aucklanders a greater sense of belonging and identity.'

Two other spaces at the Gallery will also be renamed.

The North Atrium will become Te Ātea, which ties to the concept of Marae Ātea where pōwhiri are held at marae. Te Ātea is currently the location of events, functions, pōwhiri, and mihi whakatau at the Gallery.

The Creative Learning Centre will gain the name Te Aka Matua in reference to the tupuna Tāwhaki, who climbed the great vine (Te Aka Matua) through the various heavens and brought back baskets of knowledge.

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