

**Reuben Paterson’s *Guide Kaiārahi* launches at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki**



**Image credit:**  
**Reuben Paterson *Guide Kaiārahi* 2021.** Commissioned by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, owned and generously supported by the Edmiston Trust.  
 Photography by Hamish Melville.

Reuben Paterson’s *Guide Kaiārahi*, a magnificent 10-metre-high waka made of 595 iridescent crystals, was revealed at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki on Thursday 8 July 2021.

Commissioned by Auckland Art Gallery and Edmiston Trust, the much-anticipated major sculpture rises vertically like a needle out of the Gallery’s forecourt pool and casts a galaxy of stars over the Gallery walls.

Auckland Art Gallery Director Kirsten Lacy says that *Guide Kaiārahi* takes commissions for the forecourt pool to new heights.

‘Part of our role as a public gallery is to push boundaries and use the power of art to take us to new places. This magnificent work creates a spectacular display of refracted light right across the forecourt,’ says Lacy.

Paterson says his inspiration for the crystalline sculpture originated in the well-known legend of a phantom waka that appeared at Lake Tarawera 10 days before the eruption of Mt Tarawera in 1886.

‘In the early hours of 10 June 1886, our ancestral mountains Wāhanga, Ruawāhia and Tarawera split apart, spewing forth millions of tonnes of ash and debris.’

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‘By floating this crystal waka above the Gallery’s pool, he appears magical – an apparition that floats in the sky while having a narrative linked closely to our own history. He guides us as an escort into unknown or unmapped territories, in much same way as the waka of our very descent and the migrational journeys to Aotearoa,’ says Paterson (Ngāti Rangitihī, Ngāi Tūhoe, Tūhourangi).

Hovering above the Gallery’s forecourt pool like a compass needle in vertical orientation, the magnificent waka suggests navigation to worlds beyond our own. It also refers to navigators’ use of stars to traverse the vast Pacific Ocean to Aotearoa.

Combining references to natural and supernatural realms, the sculpture draws upon Māori cosmology and creation narratives. It also has as a personal resonance for Paterson as his Ngāti Rangitihī kaumātua describe their iwi, who descend from Te Arawa waka of the Bay of Plenty, as ‘Te Heketanga-a-rangi’, those who descend from the celestial heavens, in reference to their tūpuna, Ohomairangi.

Lacy says Paterson has created an exceptional new work, surpassing expectations.

‘This ambitious commission, created with the generous support of Edmiston Trust, is the latest development in the artist’s career-long fascination with the scientific, material and metaphysical properties of light,’ she says.

Chair of Edmiston Trust, Dayle, Lady Mace, says the Edmiston Trust is committed to supporting local and international artists to create major sculptural works for the people of Auckland.

‘The Edmiston Trust is delighted to enable a leading New Zealand artist to create a significant new work, and we’re thrilled that Reuben Paterson’s work will greet visitors to Auckland Art Gallery for years to come.’

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**Artwork details**

*Guide Kaiārahi*

**When:**

Ongoing

10am–5pm daily

10am–9pm Fridays

**Where:**

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki  
Cnr Kitchener and Wellesley Streets  
Auckland, New Zealand

**Admission:**

FREE

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**For more information, high-res images and interview requests contact:**

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