Festival of Design Aotearoa

Event Guide

16–25 October 2026
Whanganui & Palmerston North

festivalofdesign.co.nz

Festival of Design Aotearoa

Night Lights Activation

After-dark lighting transforms Pukenamu Queen's Park into an illuminated public design experience connecting architecture, landscape and creative expression.

Pukenamu Queen's Park | 16–25 October
Sunset–11pm

Book at festivalofdesign.co.nz

Welcome

Tēnā koutou katoa. Welcome to the Festival of Design Aotearoa.

This festival brings people together through design, connecting the creative energy of Whanganui and Palmerston North with ideas and voices from across Aotearoa and around the world.

Across 10 days, designers, artists, architects, educators, makers and communities will explore the relationship between people, culture and place, and the ways design shapes how we live, work, gather and experience the world around us.

At its heart, the Festival is about making design visible and accessible, creating opportunities to share ideas, discover new perspectives and experience these places in different ways.

Throughout the programme, I hope you encounter work that surprises you, meet people who inspire you, and see something new in the places around you.

My thanks to everyone who has helped bring this kaupapa to life – enjoy the Festival.

Sam Ryan
Festival Director

Nau mai, haere mai. It is a pleasure to welcome you to Whanganui, New Zealand's only UNESCO City of Design.The title recognises Whanganui as a city that uses design to imagine new futures. People living here tackle challenges with a mix of practicality and creativity not found everywhere. Professional ambition sits comfortably alongside creative freedom.

Throughout the festival, you will meet people who call Whanganui home and are actively shaping what this place is becoming. You'll see design's diversity through our designers, our community of thinkers and doers, and, ultimately, the built landscape as a shared project.

For the festival we're delighted to work in partnership with our neighbours in Palmerston North, a city rich with iconic architecture and community-embedded artistic innovation. Together, we represent a region committed to placing creativity at the heart of our development.

Dr Emma Bugden
UNESCO City of Design Manager

Booking information

How to use this Guide

The Festival of Design Aotearoa programme brings together exhibitions, talks, workshops, tours, performances and more across Whanganui and Palmerston North.

The Festival runs in Whanganui from 16–25 October, and in Palmerston North from 23–25 October.

Events are listed chronologically, with Whanganui first, followed by Palmerston North. City tags and colour coding make it easy to find your way around.

Look out for the tags on each listing:

$

Ticketed event.

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

Advance booking is required. See the event listing or visit the festival website to reserve your place.

FREE

There is no admission charge. Check the listing for any booking requirements.

FAMILY

An event suited to families and younger audiences.

Each listing includes the event details available at the time of publication.

Bookings & Tickets

Events are either free with no booking required, free with booking required, or ticketed. Even when an event is free, booking may be required to ensure a place, as spaces can be limited.

For the latest information, including booking links, ticket availability and any changes to times or locations, visit **festivalofdesign.co.nz** or scan the QR code below.

Ongoing Exhibitions & Events

Free exhibitions and experiences run throughout the Festival – see pages 36 and 37 for a detailed list. Be sure to explore these ongoing activations and experiences. These are a key part of the Festival experience and provide opportunities to engage, explore and be inspired at your own pace.

Venues

Whanganui

Bason Botanic Gardens | 552 Rapanui Road, Westmere

Black Pine Architects | 98 Parsons Street, Springvale

Christ Church | 243 Wicksteed Street

Dalgleish Architects | 66 Guyton Street

Edith Gallery | 14 Taupō Quay

Hive HQ | 120 Victoria Avenue

isite | 31 Taupo Quay

Lockett Gallery | 65A Guyton Street

New Zealand Glassworks – Te Whare Tūhua o Te Ao | 2 Rutland Street

Pukenamu Queen's Park | Pukenamu Drive

Quartz, Museum of Studio Ceramics | 8 Bates Street

Royal Whanganui Opera House | 69 Saint Hill Street

Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery | 4 Pukenamu Drive

Alexander Heritage & Research Library – Te Rerenga Mai o te Kāuru
1 Pukenamu Drive

The Distillery | 17 Drews Avenue

Whanganui Musicians Club | 65 Drews Avenue

Whanganui Regional Museum | Watt Street

Whanganui War Memorial Centre | Watt Street

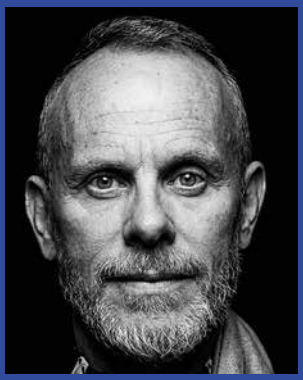
Palmerston North

Palmy Conference + Function Centre | 354 Main Street

Te Marae o Hine – The Square

Te Manawa Museum of Art, Science & Heritage | 326 Main Street

Whanganui



The Designers Institute.

Designing Tomorrow Summit

$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

16–17 October
8.30am–6pm
Whanganui War Memorial Centre

What happens when designers, educators, artists, architects, innovators and creative thinkers come together to imagine what's next?

Designing Tomorrow is the opening two-day programme of the Festival of Design Aotearoa, bringing together leading voices from Aotearoa and around the world to explore how design shapes our cities, communities, cultures, learning environments and everyday lives.

Across inspiring keynote presentations, thought-provoking panel discussions, exhibitions and networking opportunities, the programme explores topics including indigenous design, architecture, placemaking, education, typography, creativity, artificial intelligence, public leadership, material culture and the future of design.

Featuring Professor Tom Eslinger, Ellen Young, Bonnie Fahoome, Dr Johnson Witehira, Kris Sowersby, Mikael Sorknæs, Georgina Clarke, Hothaus, finalists of the 2026 DINZ Best Awards, and other leading designers, educators and creative practitioners from across Aotearoa and around the world.

Created for design professionals, architects, artists, educators, students, business leaders, public sector organisations and anyone passionate about creativity and innovation, Designing Tomorrow is an opportunity to discover new ideas, build meaningful connections and be inspired by the people shaping the future through design.

Your two-day pass includes access to the complete programme, catered morning tea, lunch and afternoon refreshments on both days, plus networking drinks at the conclusion of each day.

Whanganui

Designing Tomorrow Summit
Whanganui War Memorial Centre

Friday 16 October 2026 | Day 1

8am | Mihi Whakatau & Welcome to Day 1 – Opening of Exhibitions

Mihi whakatau followed by the Summit registration from 8.30am.

9.30am | Anthonie Tonnon – Opening Performance: Cinematographer

Anthonie Tonnon opens the Summit with a preview of his show Cinematographer, blending live electronic music, storytelling and visual design.

10.30am–12.30pm | Ellen Young & Bonnie Fahoome – Talk + Q&A

Ellen Young and Bonnie Fahoome share perspectives on designing for resilient communities.

12.30pm–1.30pm | Lunch

Lunch break and informal networking.

1.30pm–2.30pm | Tom Eslinger – Keynote + Q&A

Tom Eslinger delivers a keynote drawing on advertising, technology, creative direction and contemporary design practice.

2.45pm–3.45pm | Georgina Clarke – Keynote + Q&A

Creative Director Georgina Clarke shares perspectives on thoughtful creative leadership and contemporary design practice.

4pm–5pm | Mikael Sorknæs – Keynote + Q&A

Kolding Chief Design Officer Mikael Sorknæs explores public-sector design leadership and city-scale design capability.

5pm–6pm | Networking & Drinks

Networking drinks brings speakers, designers and attendees together to continue conversations and build connections after day one.

Designing Tomorrow Summit
Whanganui War Memorial Centre

Saturday 17 October 2026 | Day 2

8am | Venue Open

9am | Welcome
Welcome and orientation for the second day of Designing Tomorrow.

9.30am–11.30am | Designers Speak®– DINZ Best Design Award Winners
Finalists from the Designers Institute of New Zealand Best Design Awards share leading work, ideas and lessons from practice.

11.30am–1.30pm | Dr Johnson Witehira & Kris Sowersby – Keynote + Q&A
Dr Johnson Witehira and Kris Sowersby speak to their typeface collaboration Matararongo, the creative journey and the research into how letterforms were adapted in Aotearoa by Māori.

1.30pm–2.30pm | Lunch
Lunch break and informal networking.

2.30pm–3.30pm | AI & the Balance Between Culture and Creative Mortality – Panel + Q&A
Dr Arash Tayebi, Dr Johnson Witehira and Victoria Campbell examine AI's impact on culture, creativity and creative mortality. Chaired by Tom Eslinger.

4pm–5pm | Amanda Dziedzic & Laurel Kohut, Hothaus – Keynote + Q&A
Hothaus founders Amanda Dziedzic and Laurel Kohut discuss contemporary glass practice, studio culture and creative entrepreneurship.

5pm–6pm | Closing – Networking & Drinks
Closing remarks, networking and drinks bring the two-day Summit to a relaxed conclusion.

Whanganui Friday 16 October

$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

8.30am–5pm | Designing Tomorrow Summit | Day 1

Whanganui War Memorial Centre

The first day of keynotes, panels and conversations exploring how design can shape better futures across culture, technology and communities. For full details, see page 6.

FREE FAMILY

10am–4pm | WELL-LUG Brick Builders: Architecture that Connects

Main Hall, Whanganui War Memorial Centre

See imaginative LEGO architecture exploring how play and future thinking connect us to the built environment.

Whanganui Friday 16 October

FREE FAMILY

10am–5pm | Fun Palaces: Laboratory of Fun

Forecourt, Whanganui War Memorial Centre

An all-ages laboratory of making, play, music and experimentation where everyone can create, contribute and share their passions.

FREE

5.30pm | Hothaus Exhibition Opening Night – HAUSLYFE; how to make a Haus a Home

New Zealand Glassworks – Te Whare Tūhua o Te Ao

Celebrate Hothaus' exhibition opening, bringing contemporary craft, playful energy and Melbourne glassmaking to New Zealand Glassworks.

$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

7.30pm | Tiri: Te Araroa Woman Far Walking | Auckland Theatre Company

Royal Whanganui Opera House

A bilingual theatrical journey through Aotearoa's history, following 186-year-old Tiri Mahana from Te Tiriti to the present day.

$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

7.30pm–9.30pm | Sound Canvas x Brass Whanganui

Christ Church Anglican

A live fusion of brass, visual art, light and poetry creating an immersive performance inside Christ Church.

Whanganui Saturday 17 October

$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

9am–5pm | Designing Tomorrow Summit | Day 2

Whanganui War Memorial Centre

Day two continues with leading designers, awards finalists and conversations spanning creative culture, typography, AI and contemporary practice. For full details, see page 7.

10am–1pm | Raku with Ahi Whāhine

Whanganui isite

A hands-on raku experience with Ahi Whāhine exploring fire, clay and the unpredictable beauty of this ceramic process.

FREE FAMILY

10am–4pm | WELL-LUG Brick Builders: Architecture that Connects

Main Hall, Whanganui War Memorial Centre

See imaginative LEGO architecture exploring how play and future thinking connect us to the built environment.

FREE

10am–4pm | Te Puawaitana, the Flourishing

Te Ao Hou Marae

Visit Te Ao Hou Marae and discover a cultural hub nurturing Māori whakairo, knowledge, identity and future generations of carvers.

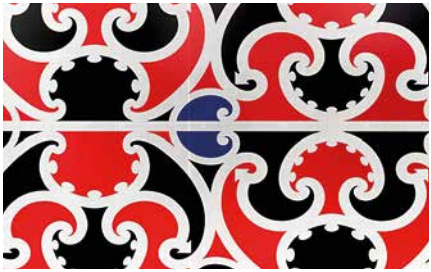
Whanganui Saturday 17 October

FREE FAMILY

10am–5pm | Fun Palaces: Laboratory of Fun

Forecourt, Whanganui War Memorial Centre

An all-ages laboratory of making, play, music and experimentation where everyone can create, contribute and share their passions.



FREE

2pm–3pm | He Ao Āpōpō, He Ao Tea: Māori Futures

Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery

Join this curator-led tour to gain insights into Māori futures, artists and ideas shaping He Ao Āpōpō, He Ao Tea.

$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

7.30pm–9pm | Sound Canvas x Brass Whanganui

Christ Church Anglican

A live fusion of brass, visual art, light and poetry creating an immersive performance inside Christ Church.

Whanganui Sunday 18 October

FREE

9.30am–11am | The Possibility Design: Discussion Panel + Q&A

Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery

Explore how disability, accessibility and design can expand what we imagine possible.

FREE FAMILY

10am–4pm | WELL-LUG Brick Builders: Architecture that Connects

Main Hall, Whanganui War Memorial Centre

See imaginative LEGO architecture exploring how play and future thinking connect us to the built environment.

FREE

10am–4pm | He Puawaitana, the Flourishing

Te Ao Hou Marae

Visit Te Ao Hou Marae and discover a cultural hub nurturing Māori whakairo, knowledge, identity and future generations of carvers.

FREE FAMILY

10am–5pm | Fun Palaces: Laboratory of Fun

Forecourt, Whanganui War Memorial Centre

An all-ages laboratory of making, play, music and experimentation where everyone can create, contribute and share their passions.

FREE

10am–12pm | Black Pine Architects: Open Studios

Black Pine Architects

Step inside the Black Pine studio to consider the true cost of bad design and explore how architecture should work harder for people and communities, commercially and environmentally.

FREE

10am–12pm | Hothaus: Glassblowing Demonstration

New Zealand Glassworks – Te Whare Tūhua o Te Ao

Watch Hothaus artists Amanda Dziedzic and Laurel Kohut make contemporary glass objects and discover the skill behind this age-old material.

Whanganui Sunday 18 October

FREE

11am–12pm | Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery Tour

Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery

Gain insights into the exhibition, gallery history and redevelopment project.

$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

11am–1pm | Preparing for a Better Future: Learning by Design LEGO

Concert Chamber, Whanganui War Memorial Centre

Dr Bo Stjerne Thomsen explores in his talk how designing, testing and improving ideas can transform creativity and innovation.

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL FREE

1pm–2.30pm | Design in Public: Guided Tour on Wheels

Starts at Whanganui War Memorial Centre

Experience the public artworks of Whanganui by bike or scooter, hearing the stories and creative thinking behind familiar streets.

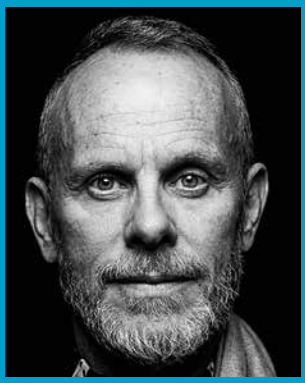
FREE

1pm–4.30pm | Mai i Onamata, He Puawai – Guest Speakers + Q&A

Whanganui Regional Museum

Bringing together Warren Warbrick, Matthew McIntyre Wilson and Purewa Hodge as they explore taonga, mātauranga Māori and contemporary creative practice, sharing their insights into how ancestral knowledge continues to shape design.

Whanganui



Education Programme

$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

20–21 October
8.30am–3.30pm
Whanganui War Memorial Centre

Two inspiring days exploring how design can transform the way we learn, create and respond to the world around us.

The Festival of Design Aotearoa Education Programme brings together students, educators, creative practitioners and industry leaders for two inspiring days exploring how design can transform the way we learn, create and respond to the world around us.

Through keynote presentations, conversations and panel discussions, the programme will examine the future of design education, creativity, technology and learning. International and Aotearoa-based speakers will share perspectives spanning indigenous design, learning through play, artificial intelligence, design thinking and new pathways into the creative industries.

Presenters include education and design leaders Mikael Sorknæs, Khai Seng Hong, Lee Erihāpeti Williams, Jared Forbes, Astrid Visser, Nicola Devine, Stephen Cicala, Lin Yew Cheang and Tom Eslinger.

Designed for secondary and tertiary students, teachers, educators, industry professionals and anyone interested in the future of creative learning. The programme offers an opportunity to discover new ideas, connect across sectors and consider how design can help build more imaginative, inclusive and resilient futures.

Education Programme
Whanganui War Memorial Centre

Tuesday 20 October 2026 | Day 1

8am | Welcome
Opening welcome and orientation for students, educators, speakers and industry participants.

9am | Tom Eslinger – Advertising, Graphic Design, Typography, Music, Stickers & AI-Assisted Creative Practice
Tom Eslinger explores creative practice across advertising, graphic design, typography, music, stickers and AI-assisted design.

10am | Nicola Devine – Creative Direction, Brand, Web & Social Strategy
Nicola Devine explores creative direction across branding, websites and social strategy, connecting ideas with audiences through coherent design.

10.45am | Stephen Cicala – Graphic Design, Branding & Packaging
Stephen Cicala shares perspectives on graphic design, branding and packaging, where visual systems meet products and audiences.

11.30am | Astrid Visser – Design in Secondary Education
Astrid Visser examines design in secondary education and how schools can build creative capability, pathways and future-ready learning.

12.15pm–1pm | Lunch
Lunch break and informal networking.

1pm | Lin Yew Cheang – Digital Media Design, Education & Creative Talent Development
Lin Yew Cheang explores digital media design, education and creative talent development across emerging technologies and contemporary practice.

2pm | Panel Discussion & Q+A
Day 1 speakers join a cross-disciplinary conversation on design, education, technology and creative careers, with audience participation.

3pm | Afternoon Tea & Networking
Afternoon tea and networking with speakers, educators, students and creative-industry participants.

Education Programme
Whanganui War Memorial Centre

Wednesday 21 October 2026 | Day 2

8am–9am | Breakfast Networking

Breakfast networking before Day 2, connecting students, educators, speakers and industry participants.

9am | Jared Forbes – Spatial Media, Immersive Production, Neural Rendering, Volumetric Capture & Design Technology

Jared Forbes explores tools for next-generation design experiences.

10am | Lee Erihāpeti Williams – Costume Design, Textile Practice, Cloth, Whakapapa, Identity & Belonging

Lee Erihāpeti Williams connects identity and belonging through culturally grounded design and filmmaking practices.

11am | Khai Seng Hong – Transdisciplinary Design, Studio Dojo

Khai Seng Hong explores how transdisciplinary design can be used to mitigate the metacrisis.

12pm–12.45pm | Lunch

Lunch break and informal networking.

12.45pm | Mikael Sorknæs – DIY Behavioral Design

Bridging the gap between theory and action, this presentation explores how you as a designer can implement low-cost, high-impact behavioral interventions to address complex human challenges.

1.45pm | Panel Discussion & Q+A

Day 2 speakers come together for a lively discussion on issues raised throughout the day.

3pm | Closing

Closing remarks marking the end of the two-day Education Programme.

Whanganui Tuesday 20 October

$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

8am–3pm | Education Programme – Day 1

Whanganui War Memorial Centre

Students, educators and creative leaders explore design education, industry pathways and new approaches to learning and making.

FREE

9am–12pm | HIVE Workshop Series: Whanganui 2030 – What Happened?

HIVE HQ

A future-focused workshop imagining Whanganui in 2030.

FREE

1pm-3pm | HIVE Workshop Series: AR/VR Creative Technologies

HIVE HQ

Discover AR and VR creative technologies, exploring immersive tools, possibilities and practical applications for designers and makers.

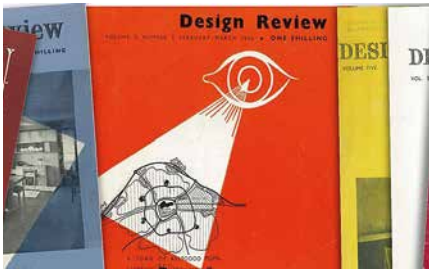
FREE

4pm | UCOL: The City & The City – Exhibition Viewing and Networking

Edith Gallery

Meet UCOL artists and designers while exploring creative responses to public space, urban systems and the city's overlapping realities.

Whanganui Tuesday 20 October



FREE

5pm | Design Review: A Partial Archive – Book Launch & Exhibition Opening

Lockett Gallery, Guyton Street

Small Bore Books launches a selection from the Design Review archives – New Zealand's first design magazine (1947–53) – with an exhibition of its boldest graphic covers 21-24 Oct.

FREE

6pm–7pm | Design Tech Networking Function

HIVE HQ

An informal gathering at HIVE connecting designers, technologists, creatives and festival participants over conversation, ideas for new professional connections.

FREE BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

7.30pm–9pm | Beyond Boundaries: Technology, Design & the Future of Innovation

HIVE HQ

Tom Eslinger and guests discuss how technology and design are reshaping innovation and creative practice.

Whanganui Wednesday 21 October

$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

8am–3pm | Education Programme | Day 2

Whanganui War Memorial Centre

Day two explores the impact of technology, cultural practices and public design leadership on the future of education.

FREE

7pm–9pm | When Place Leads: Māori Design, Mātauranga and Civic Space

Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery

Panelists explore how Māori design, mātauranga, whakapapa and cultural authority can shape civic environments with Jacob Scott, Graham Tipene and Eugene Kara.

Whanganui Thursday 22 October

FREE BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

3.30pm–9pm | Re:Using the City – Reimagining Whanganui's Built Heritage

Whanganui War Memorial Centre

Join architects, heritage specialists, designers and city-makers for an afternoon and evening exploring how Whanganui's existing buildings can shape the city's future, through inspiring case studies, discussion and a keynote presentation from Bill McKay. From 4pm, the Built Heritage Forum featuring Ellen Young, Hadleigh Reid, Frank Stark and guest panelists will open the conversation to local perspectives on adaptive reuse, heritage, city-making and the future possibilities of Whanganui's built environment.

6pm–9pm | Raku with Ahi Whāhine

Whanganui War Memorial Centre

A hands-on raku experience with Ahi Whāhine exploring fire, clay and the unpredictable beauty of this ceramic process.

Whanganui Friday 23 October

FREE BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

10.30am–12pm | Old Buildings, New Uses: Adaptive Reuse Walking Tour
Starts at Whanganui War Memorial Centre

Walk central Whanganui with heritage planner Scott Flutey, exploring successful building upgrades and the opportunities of adaptive reuse.

FREE

12.15pm–1.15pm | Whanganui Mūmū: Curator Talk
Whanganui Regional Museum

Curators explore the design history of Whanganui, from Māori engineering and environmental knowledge to architecture, industry and UNESCO City of Design recognition.

FREE

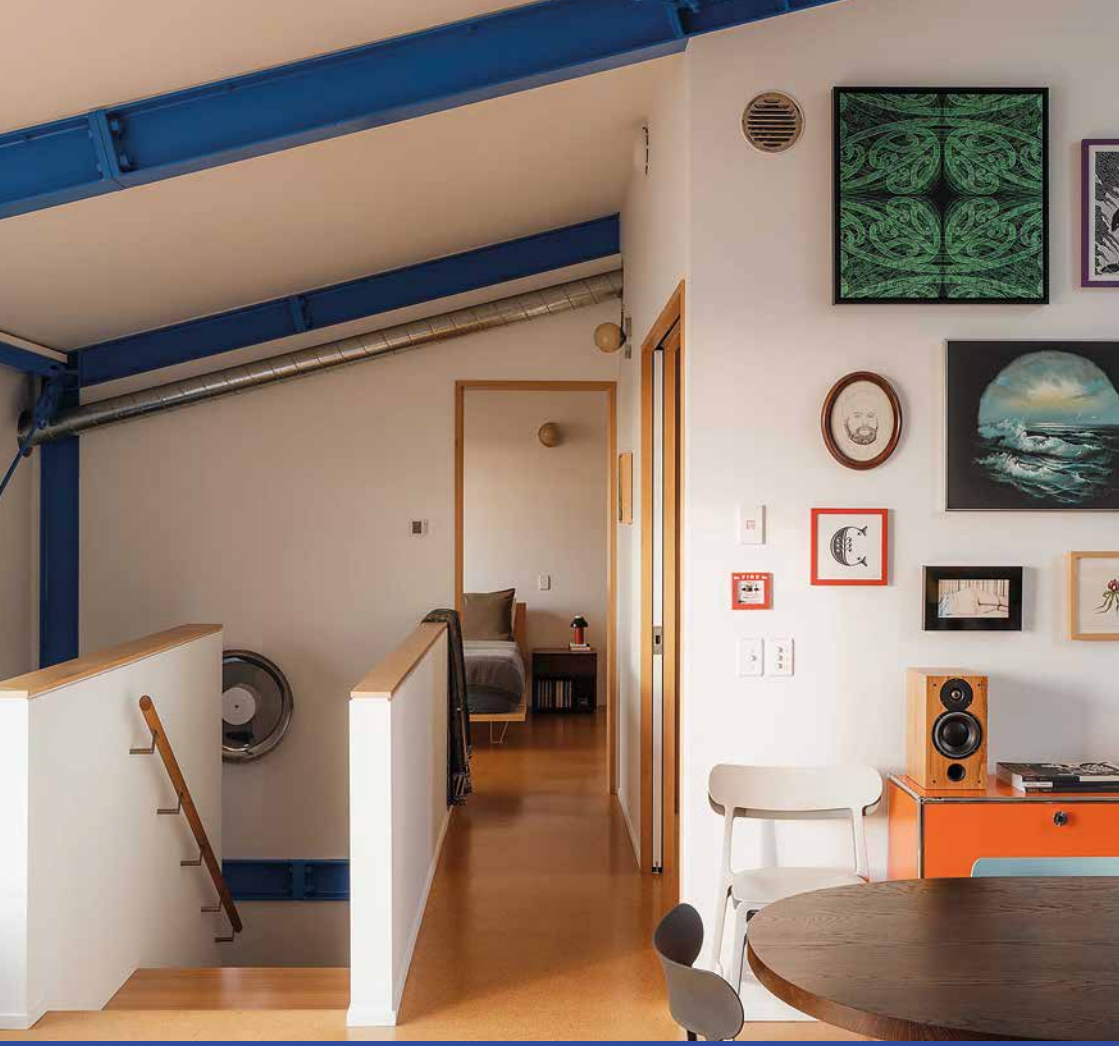
2–3pm | Dalgleish Architects Open Studio
66 Guyton Street

Award-winners Dalgleish Architects invite the design-curious into their working environment to get a glimpse of the design process from concept to completion.

FREE BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

2.30pm–3.30pm | Design in Public: Guided Tour on Foot
Starts at Whanganui War Memorial Centre

Walk Whanganui's arts precinct and discover the stories and creative histories behind ten public artworks.



$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

4pm & 5pm Start | HERE Presents: Open Home Whanganui

HERE and Dulux bring their Open Home series to Whanganui, giving special access to architecturally designed houses usually only seen in magazines.

4pm

Group A: Te Ruamātatoru
Group B: Hatrick House

5pm

Group A: Hatrick House
Group B: Te Ruamātatoru

Whanganui Friday 23 October

$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

8pm–9.30pm | Anthonie Tonnon: Cinematographer

Royal Whanganui Opera House

An immersive live show blending electronic music, cinematic storytelling and visual design as Tonnon moves between singer, DJ and documentarian.

FREE BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

8pm–9pm | Beca Lighting Studio: Designing the Night Guided Tour

Starts at Whanganui War Memorial Centre

A guided night walk revealing how light and darkness shape the experience of Whanganui after sunset.

Whanganui Saturday 24 October

FREE BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

9.30am–12.30pm | Liz Mitchell: Weaving Off Loom Workshop

Whanganui Regional Museum

Liz Mitchell leads a workshop introducing the creative possibilities beyond traditional loom techniques. No experience needed.
In partnership with Bremworth.

FREE

1pm–2pm | Kirsty Lillico, Heavy Falls: Exhibition Curator Tour

Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery

Explore Kirsty Lillico's Heavy Falls exhibition through its materials, weaving, architectural references and sculptural ideas on this guided curator tour.

FREE

5.30pm–7pm | Liz Mitchell MNZM: Beyond the Bale – Creating High-Value Wool Products

Whanganui Regional Museum

Liz Mitchell explores how New Zealand wool can create high-value products using design, craft and stronger material stories.

Whanganui Sunday 25 October

FREE BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

9.30am–12.30pm | Liz Mitchell: Weaving Off Loom Workshop

Whanganui Regional Museum

Liz Mitchell leads a workshop introducing the creative possibilities beyond traditional loom techniques. No experience needed.
In partnership with Bremworth.

FREE BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

1pm–2.30pm | Design in Public: Guided Tour on Wheels

Starts at Whanganui War Memorial Centre

Experience Whanganui's public artworks by bike or scooter, hearing the stories and creative thinking behind familiar streets.

FREE

4pm–5pm | Manda Clarke: Design, Distilled

The Distillery

Branding and packaging designer Manda Clarke distils how strategy, storytelling and visual identity shape memorable brands and products.

Palmerston North Saturday 24 October

$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

10am & 11am Start | HERE Presents: Open Home Palmerston North

Visit Strip Mall, a colourful mixed-use project showing how smart regional density can be practical, playful and architectural.

Group A: 10am–11am

Group B: 11am–12pm

Palmerston North Saturday 24 October

FREE

10.15am–11am | Josh Taylor: Eco Submarine Talk + Q&A

Te Manawa Museum of Art, Science & Heritage

Josh Taylor explores cultural partnership, gameplay and pedagogy through Eco Submarine, a game combining entertainment with meaningful STEM learning.

FREE

11am–11.45am | Victoria Sharp: Designing Wonder – AI, Algorithms and the Future of Children's Content

Te Manawa Museum of Art, Science & Heritage

Victoria Sharp examines children's content in the age of AI, championing thoughtful, human-led creativity over attention-driven automated output.

FREE

12.30pm–1.15pm | Dr Tony Stumbo and Andy Irving: Planting the Seeds for Putaiao

Te Manawa Museum of Art, Science & Heritage

A curator and spatial designer unpack Putaiao Science Centre, shaped through partnerships with iwi, educators and scientists for future learners.

Palmerston North Saturday 24 October

FREE

2.30pm–3.15pm | Hina Nasir: Who Am I? Identity, Belonging and Becoming Across Systems

Palmy Conference + Function Centre

Hina Nasir shares a personal design journey through identity, belonging and systems, asking how more inclusive spaces can be created.

FREE

3.30pm–4.15pm | Alix Abanda: Designing the Night

Palmy Conference + Function Centre

Beca Studio lighting designer Alix Abanda explores contrast, atmosphere and connection, showing how light and darkness can make cities more human.

FREE BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

5.30pm–7.30pm | CAMEO: Ladies' Rest Panel Discussion

Te Marae o Hine – The Square

Artists, historians and architects discuss Ladies' Rest through gendered history, cleanliness, control, heritage and the building's place in local memory.

Palmerston North Saturday 24 October

$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

5.30pm–9.30pm | Te Hīkoi Toi

Starts at Palmy Conference + Function Centre

Join Warren Warbrick (Rangitāne) on a guided bus tour exploring the mahi toi, public artworks and harakeke-inspired design embedded along Te Ahu a Turanga highway.

FREE BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

8pm–9pm | Beca Lighting Studio: Designing the Night Guided Tour

Te Marae o Hine – The Square

A guided night walk reveals how light and darkness shape Palmerston North after sunset.

FREE FAMILY

Sunset–11pm | Palmy Walls Alive: Currents of Conservation Projection

Te Marae o Hine – The Square

Experience original artworks and local stories brought to life after dark through large-scale outdoor projections.

Palmerston North Sunday 25 October

$ BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

9am–1pm | Te Hīkoi Toi

Starts at Palmy Conference + Function Centre

Join Warren Warbrick (Rangitāne) on a guided bus tour exploring the mahi toi, public artworks and harakeke-inspired design embedded along Te Ahu a Turanga highway.

FREE

1pm–1.45pm | LandLAB: Landscape as Operating System, Talk + Q&A

Palmy Conference + Function Centre

LandLAB explores how ecological systems, cultural narratives and urban infrastructure can combine to create resilient and meaningful places.

FREE

1.45pm–2.30pm | Sam Moore: Why Public Plantings Suck (and what to do about it)

Palmy Conference + Function Centre

Sam Moore challenges forgettable public planting and explores how resilient, expressive landscapes can enrich streets while reducing maintenance burdens.

Whanganui

Ongoing Exhibitions & Activations

Designing a Gift: The Story of the Bason Botanic Gardens Exhibition
Explore the design story behind Bason Botanic Gardens and the people, ideas and planning that shaped this celebrated landscape.
Bason Botanic Gardens | 16–25 October, 9am–3pm

UCOL: The City & The City Exhibition
Artists and designers explore how cities are inhabited, remembered and imagined through projection, textiles, painting, installation and digital media.
Edith Gallery | 16–25 October, 10am–3.30pm

He Puna Tohunga | The Well of Master Creatives: Exhibition
A showcase celebrating master creatives and the skill, knowledge and making traditions shaping contemporary design in Aotearoa. Entry by koha.
Whanganui War Memorial Centre | 16–25 October, 10am-4pm

Hothaus Exhibition: HAUSLYFE; how to make a Haus a Home
Hothaus brings playful contemporary glass design to Whanganui, celebrating skilled making, bold objects and the energy of molten glass.
NZ Glassworks – Te Whare Tūhua o Te Ao | 16–25 October, 10am–4.30pm

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Whanganui Mūmū: Whanganui By Design Exhibition
Explore Whanganui's design history, from Māori engineering and environmental knowledge to architecture, industry, craft and UNESCO recognition.
Whanganui Regional Museum | 16–25 October, 10am–4.30pm

Heavy Falls, Kirsty Lillico: Exhibition
Kirsty Lillico combines sculpture, craft, drawing and weaving using everyday materials to explore architecture, form and material transformation.
Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery | 16–25 October, 10am–5pm

He Ao Āpōpō, He Ao Tea: Māori Futures Exhibition
A Māori futures exhibition imagining hopeful new worlds through contemporary art, design, whakapapa and the possibilities of tomorrow.
Te Whare o Rehua Sarjeant Gallery | 16–25 October, 10am–5pm

Night Lights Activation
After-dark lighting transforms Pukenamu Queen's Park into an illuminated public design experience connecting architecture, landscape and creative expression.
Pukenamu Queen's Park | 16–25 October, Sunset–11pm

John Crawford: A Remembered Reflection Exhibition
West Coast potter John Crawford pioneered a strong design aesthetic across both domesticware and larger sculptural works. This survey exhibition show the significant contribution he made to New Zealand ceramic design.
Quartz, Museum of Studio Ceramics | 16-25 October, Tues–Sun, 10.30am–4pm

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Ongoing Exhibitions & All-Day Experiences

Hina Nasir: The Way We Sit With The World, Exhibition
Graphic artworks explore identity, belonging, migration, motherhood and the quiet everyday rituals through which we make home and meaning.
Te Marae o Hine – The Square | 16–25 October, 8am–10pm

Palmy Walls Alive: Currents of Conservation Display
Go behind the scenes of Palmy Walls Alive, which brings original artworks and local stories to life through animation and large-scale outdoor projections.
Palmy Conference + Function Centre | 23–25 October, 10am–5pm

Hononga – Connection: Exhibition
Contemporary lighting, acoustic and furniture designs express relationships between people, whenua and environment through whakapapa and whanaungatanga.
Palmy Conference + Function Centre | 23–25 October, 10am–5pm

LandLAB: Landscape as Operating System, Exhibition
Ten projects show how land, water, ecology and culture can lead design for more resilient, meaningful and adaptive places.
Palmy Conference + Function Centre | 23–25 October, 10am–5pm

Josh Taylor: Eco Submarine, Exhibition
Play a submarine game blending entertainment, real-world science and STEM learning while restoring ocean habitats through interactive gameplay.
Te Manawa Museum of Art, Science & Heritage | 23–25 October, 10am–5pm

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Festival of Design Market
Browse a curated market of designers, makers and creative businesses, discovering original products, ideas and locally connected design.
Palmy Conference + Function Centre | 24–25 October, 10am–5pm

Whanganui UNESCO City of Design

TE KAUNIHERA Ā-ROHE O Whanganui DISTRICT COUNCIL

PALMY PAPAIOEA PALMERSTON NORTH CITY

NEW ZEALAND

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