

Hamilton’s new theatre takes the stage — on canvas

 Mike Mather | WAIKATO TIMES

October 17, 2025 (0) Share



In her painting titled *The Glow*, artist Hong Cumming has presented an elevated view of the Waikato Regional Theatre that includes the original Hamilton Hotel façade and the cube-like structure housing the flying system - all wrapped up in some typical Hamilton weather.

SUPPLIED

A poignant image of the Chateau Tongariro and possibly the first rendition in paint of the Waikato Regional Theatre are among the works to be seen in a new exhibition in Hamilton.

It’s called *Design is Everything*, and will get under way at the Welcome Swallow Gallery in Hamilton East on Friday.

As the name suggests, the 21 paintings and drawings all depict buildings from around the region as well as further afield.

Gallery curator Clive Gilson said since “design is universal to the human experience we wanted our exceptional gallery artists to bring this to life with their own original versions of recognizable local structures, alongside global architecture”.



Chris Greenslade painted this image of the Chateau Tongariro, which has some added symbolism with the

figure of the mountaineer being denied entry.

SUPPLIED

And one of those buildings is the soon-to-be-completed regional theatre, rendered in watercolours by Hong Cumming.

Cumming stripped away the wooden construction panels surrounding the building, envisaging the theatre fully operational on a wet Waikato evening.

“This painting ... is all from my imagination, but it’s how I picture it - glowing on a rainy night, people gathering under the umbrellas, ready for a show,” Cumming wrote in an artist statement.

“I call it *The Glow*, because the theatre will be such a bright spot for Hamilton. A great way to kick off Waikato’s fun nights and bring our community together.”



Sandra Turner-Barlow’s work *Disegno Italiano* features a novel arrangement of the Colosseum, the Milano Duomo, Rome’s Pantheon and the Vatican.

SUPPLIED

Chris Greenslade, who created the artwork featuring the Chateau Tongariro said he was motivated to do so because the iconic building could soon be “lost forever”.

There was plenty of meaning that could be taken from the piece, he said.

“In this painting the mountain [Ruapehu] has been moved to be included in the composition, almost towering over the grand chateau.

“A man is stopped by the smallest element in the painting – a tiny sign, blown by a breeze. The chain and poles that help lead the eye into the painting are also the very thing that keeps us out.

“The painting asks the question ‘How troubled are we when iconic design is questioned?’”



Juliet Roper’s Bauhaus painting is an example of one of the most celebrated Twentieth Century designs meant to represent modern living for the working class.

SUPPLIED

That colourful artwork shows the building known as the Gropius House in Dessau, which was destroyed during the Second World War but rebuilt decades later.

The exhibition will run until December 12.



MIKE MATHER

mike.mather@stuff.co.nz

Mike Mather is a senior journalist for the Waikato Times. He has 30 years of experience in the media industry and specialises in court and arts reporting

Other familiar buildings in the exhibition include the [Harbour View Hotel](#) and the Old Hong Kong Kitchen in Raglan; the “Katherine Mansfield House” – as seen in the Hamilton Gardens; and, further afield, the Len Lye Gallery in New Plymouth, and the Hundertwasser Art Centre in Whangarei.

Gilson said the exhibition included international architecture that “straddle deep history, as seen in Sandra Turner-Barlow’s, Disegno Italiano that features a novel arrangement of the Colosseum, the Milano Duomo, Rome’s Pantheon, and the Vatican”.

“In contrast, Juliet Roper’s Bauhaus painting is a famous example of one of the most celebrated twentieth century designs meant to represent modern living for the working class.”