

THE
Sunday Telegraph

escape



**Bowled
over by
Melbourne's
nightlife**

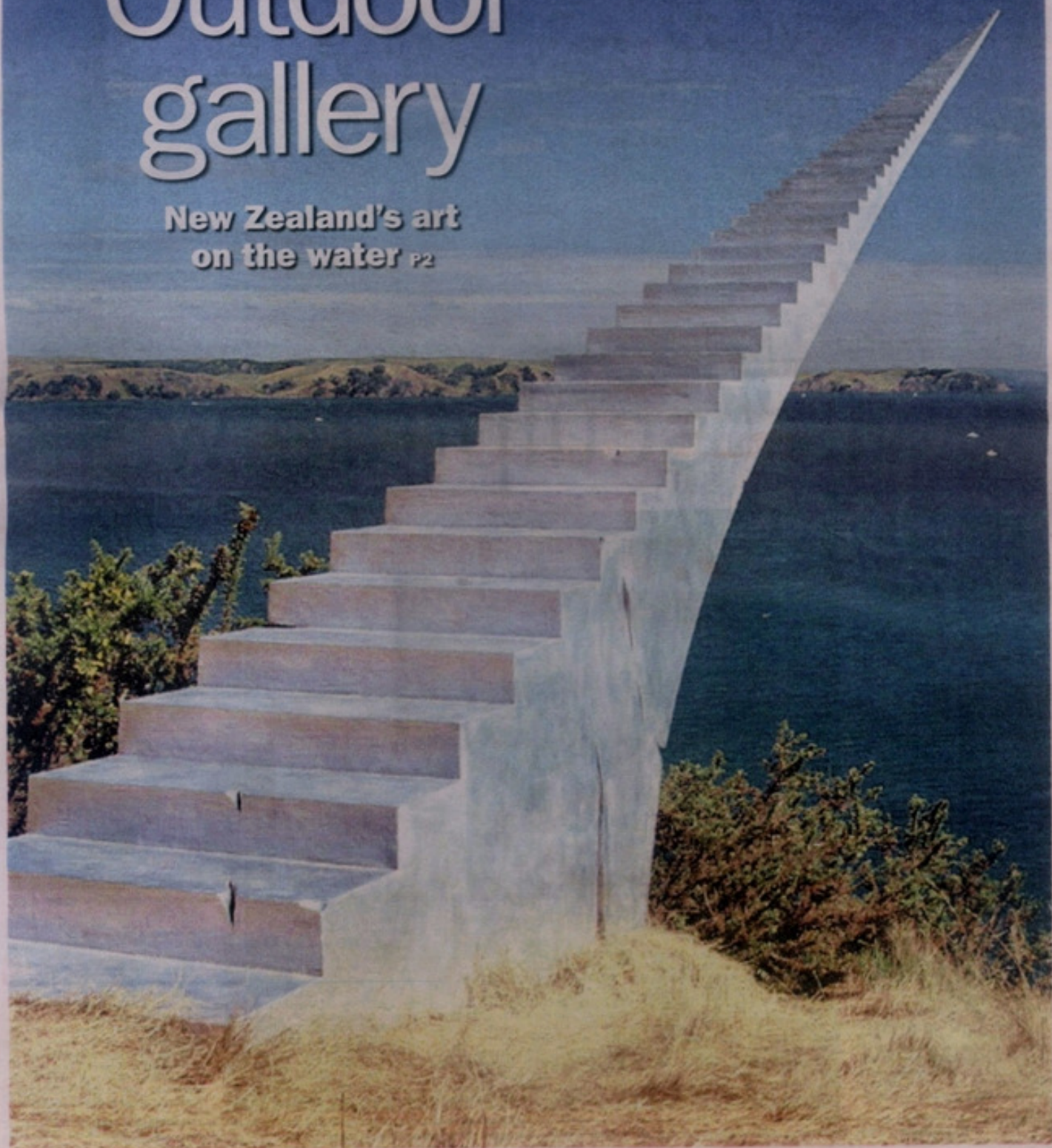
P12

sundaytelegraph.com.au/escape

January 11, 2009

Outdoor gallery

**New Zealand's art
on the water P2**





Ship ahoy: A mock-up of Fletcher Vaughan's Ship of Fools for the exhibition

Kiwis' sculpture walk

An outdoor gallery opens on an Auckland island for three weeks a year, writes **Briar Jensen**.

THE sun on my skin and sea air in my lungs is invigorating as I follow the meandering track across the hillside.

Long grass sways gently in the breeze and waves surge against the rocks below, while around each headland dramatic new vistas await. Huge ruby-blushing pohutukawa trees drip over the shoreline, stands of spindly cabbage trees flap their strappy leaves, and clumps of harakeke, the native flax, thrust sculptural flowers skyward.

Yachts tug at moorings in the horseshoe-shaped bay, while beyond, the blue of Waitemata Harbour is scattered with little green islands — miniature versions of this one.

I'm on Waiheke Island, a 35-minute ferry ride from downtown Auckland, walking the Matiatia track.

Pronounced ma-tee-a-tee-a, it's a stunning coastal walkway at any time of year, but this month the rugged beauty of this 2km track is captured, incorporated and transformed as it becomes an open-air gallery for headland Sculpture on the Gulf.

Similar to Sydney's annual Sculpture by the Sea on the Bondi-Bronte coastal walk, the three-week exhibition includes pieces by 26 leading New Zealand sculptors.

The contemporary works were selected from more than 100 submissions from around the coun-



Volcanic vision: Waiheke island resident Kazu Nakagawa prepares for the exhibition

try to stretch the boundaries of art with humour, sound, light and interaction.

The biennial exhibition is free, and with ferries running all day and into the evening, headland Sculpture on the Gulf makes a fabulous day trip from the City of Sails.

Although it is close to Auckland, Waiheke feels miles from the city with its 1950s beach holiday vibe. Original fibro holiday shacks still dominate, though now there are plenty of luxurious homes, many on acreage.

Most of the 8000 permanent residents live on the western end of the island, leaving the rest to lush green farms, forests and vineyards.

Waiheke attracts a mix of people, from old hippies and ageing activists to young families and wealthy executives, and has always had a thriving arts community.

Currently, 90 practising artists live on the island. The Waiheke Community Art Gallery does a fine job in representing them and is the force behind headland

Sculpture on the Gulf, which began in 2003.

The sculpture walk takes about an hour, though people linger longer, interacting with the artworks or picnicking among them.

During the exhibition, the rustic Tea Tree Cafe en route sells Island Coffee and Waiheke Ginger Beer, and you can reward yourself at the end with a glass of Goldwater Estate wine and nibbles at Oasis Cafe, set up in a vineyard overlooking the sea.

Sculptures are selected for their appropriateness to the site,

their visual and physical connection to the landscape, and their interaction with the environment.

"The 2009 exhibition will include installations that shadow the landscape, float on the ocean, scale trees, crash land, and even ambush the unsuspecting on the walk itself," says Project director Dilys Grant.

Of the 26 artists selected, some have exhibited in Bondi's Sculpture by the Sea, and nine have exhibited previously, including Waiheke artist Kazu Nakagawa.



Past work: Contour from the 2005 exhibition



Martial art: A mock-up of Christian Nicolson's Spitfire for this year's headland Sculpture on the Gulf

Japanese born Nakagawa, who has lived on the island for 20 years, has walked and walked the track.

"I've worked to make something that belongs to the place," he says.

Entitled Showcase, his piece incorporates wood, glass, photographic images and mixed media to create a conceptual sculpture focusing on the vision of Rangitoto, Auckland's volcano-shaped island, which Kazu sees daily.

"It's about labelling the reality of what you're seeing," he says, "not necessarily with your eyes, but ever possible memories."

Other pieces in the up-coming exhibition include Biggie, a life-size replica of a balsa-wood Spitfire (a popular New Zealand toy in the 1970s) by Christian Nicolson, and Ship of Pools, a 25m origami boat made from a folded map of the world, by Fletcher Vaughan.

After the coastal walk, catch the bus to Waiheke Community Art Gallery for an archival show of past Sculpture on the Gulf maquettes (sculptors' models) and their Sealink Small Sculpture competition.

Cool off with a swim at Oneroa Beach, then finish with lunch or dinner at one of the island's many wineries.

Try succulent New Zealand lamb on the lavender-scented terrace of Mudbrick Restaurant with expansive views over Waitemata Harbour or slurp on Te Matuku Bay oysters under 300-year-old pohutukawa trees on the deck of Kennedy Point Wine Bar.



Art of nature: The track overlooks beautiful Matiatia Bay

The writer was a guest of headland Sculpture on the Gulf.

DESTINATION >>



Waiheke, NZ

Getting there: Fly to Auckland, passenger ferry from downtown Auckland to Matiatia Wharf.

Exhibition: The free headland Sculpture On the Gulf runs from January 23 to February 15. www.sculptureonthebay.co.nz

Eat: Kennedy Point Vineyard, 44 Donald Bruce Rd, Waiheke Island, www.kennedypointvineyard.com; Mudbrick Vineyard and Restaurant, Church Bay Rd, Oneroa, www.mudbrick.co.nz; Goldwater Estate, 18 Causeway Rd, Putiki Bay, www.goldwaterwine.com

More: www.waiheke.nz; www.waihekeartgallery.org.nz