

CONTEMPORARY HUM ARTS TRUST ANNUAL REPORT

01 January—31 December 2025



HUM

contemporaryhum.com
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TEAM



Alena Kavka
Managing Director

CORE



Frances Wright
Communications Coordinator

TRUSTEES



Benjamin Work
Trustee



Jude Chambers
Secretary



Heather Galbraith
Chair



Pauline Autet
Trustee



Hiraani Himona
Treasurer



Susan Hitchiner
Trustee

COLLABORATORS

Marie Shannon
Copy Editor

Marc Chesterman
Editor and Mixer for HUM podcast

Hanahiva Rose
Expert Reader

Emma Kaniuk
Graphic Designer for HUM podcast

Sons & Co.
Website Developer and Designer

Genista Jurgens
Communications Director for closing campaign

LEGACY

Launched in December 2016, Contemporary HUM established itself as the first and only platform (online or print) dedicated to documenting Aotearoa New Zealand visual arts projects abroad. Over its nine-year lifespan, HUM fulfilled a critical mission: raising the international awareness, recognition and understanding of visual arts from Aotearoa. This was successfully achieved through a three-pronged approach: generating discourse via the commissioning of critically-engaged content; acting as a centralised resource and archive of international activity; and serving as a connector between Aotearoa arts practitioners and the global art landscape. Through this varied means of engagement, the organisation's activity has fostered invaluable connections, increased visibility of and championed the unique artistic voices of Aotearoa on the international stage.

After almost a decade, Contemporary HUM has generated substantial output. Its achievements include 180+ long-form publications, 1,100+ calendar listings, 9 podcast episodes, 13 partnerships and public events and 31 digital HUMcard mailouts. Team members were also physically present at 8 major art events, providing on-the-ground coverage. The project's vast scope—showcasing 600+ artists working across more than 350 locations and facilitated by 180+ collaborations with writers and contributors—is a testament to the dedication of its globally dispersed community of artists, writers, editors, advisors, curators and cultural workers.

Despite these achievements, 2025 marks the final year of Contemporary HUM's active publishing and development activity. Following a period of focused organisational development initiated in 2022—prompted by a widespread contraction of public funds in the arts sector and a subsequent reduction in resources—the voluntary Board of Trustees and core team has worked tirelessly to secure a sustainable financial model, while expanding into new media and content formats supported through one-off partnerships and funded collaborations. Ultimately, it has proved impossible to uphold HUM's core values of free public access, editorial independence and fair remuneration for contributors without a secure baseline of public funding, and consequently, the difficult decision was made to cease publishing new content at the end of 2025.

While this year sees the project come to a close, the contemporaryhum.com website will remain online as a comprehensive and free-to-access archive.

This rich repository of almost a decade of critical inquiry and documentation stands as the lasting legacy of Contemporary HUM, and will continue to function as an essential resource serving the sector and the public—visual arts practitioners, researchers, cultural workers, as well as art appreciators—across the globe.

2025 HIGHLIGHTS

———— Investigating and developing a **new financial and strategic model**, expanding our offer to partners and collaborators from publishing, podcasts and events, and increasing existing consultancy and brokerage activity

———— Attending the **opening of the 16th Sharjah Biennial**, co-curated by and featuring art practitioners from Aotearoa, documenting their presentations live on social media and publishing six interviews with Aotearoa artists present at the opening, excerpts of which will be republished in the SB16 catalogue

———— Undertaking a **partnership with McCahon House** in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland to produce one podcast episode and one essay responding to Sarah Hudson's participation in the Naoshima Art Residency and Setouchi Triennale

———— Representing Aotearoa New Zealand at VIENNA CONVERSATIONS, a **three-day symposium** hosted by Phileas: Austrian Office for Contemporary Art attended by contemporary art agencies from UK, USA, Japan, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Netherlands, Finland, Korea, France, Norway, Spain and Switzerland



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2

ACTIVITY

PUBLICATIONS



1

Kate Newby in Sharjah Biennial 16: to carry

By Contemporary HUM 09.04.2025

Contemporary HUM speaks to Aotearoa-born, Texas-based artist Kate Newby about *Cold Water* (2025), her new commission for Sharjah Biennial 16: to carry. Newby discusses her process of responding to the sea-side site in Sharjah, and the influence of its elemental characteristics—light and space; sun, water and desert—on the work.



2

Albert L. Refiti in Sharjah Biennial 16: to carry

By Contemporary HUM 09.04.2025

Architectural theorist and academic Albert L. Refiti speaks to Contemporary HUM from Sharjah Biennial 16, where he presents a selection of his drawn “cosmograms.” He discusses the rich theoretical framework behind his work, including his research into the Sāmoan concept of *vā*, and the generative complexities of exhibiting in Sharjah.



3

Ana Iti in Sharjah Biennial 16: to carry

By Contemporary HUM 23.04.2025

Ana Iti reflects on her participation in Sharjah Biennial 16, following her win of the Walters Prize in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2024. She discusses what it's been like taking the winning artwork to Sharjah and presenting it alongside earlier works, as well as the significance of taking part in her first major international presentation.

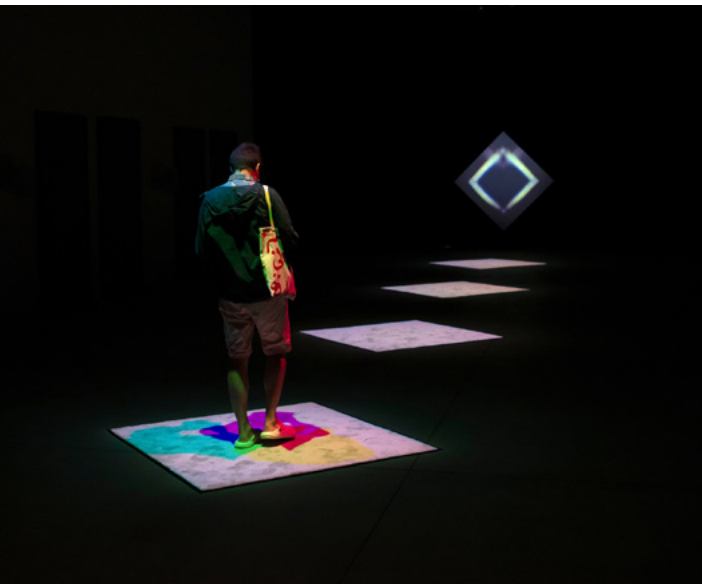


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Fiona Pardington in Sharjah Biennial 16: to carry

By Contemporary HUM 23.04.2025

Fiona Pardington, representative for Aotearoa New Zealand at the upcoming 61st Venice Biennale (2026), talks to Contemporary HUM about her presentation of works from *Āhua: A beautiful hesitation* (2010) at Sharjah Biennial 16: to carry. In the conversation, she discusses the power of ancestral imagery beyond their capture by colonial pseudoscience, while also offering some early insights into her project for Venice.



5

Te Matahiapo Collective in Sharjah Biennial 16: to carry

By Contemporary HUM 07.05.2025

On the occasion of Sharjah Biennial 16: to carry, Contemporary HUM speaks with Kura Puke, Inahaa Te Urutahi Waikerepuru, Stuart Foster and Mike Bridgman of the research initiative Te Matahiapo Collective. They discuss their multi-media installation work, *Ā Ē Ī Ō Ū - Ī Ō Ē Ā Ū: Ko Pari Haruru* (2025), and its various resonances in the Biennial and Sharjah at large as an embodied exploration of mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge systems).



6

Luke Willis Thompson in Sharjah Biennial 16: to carry

By Contemporary HUM 07.05.2025

In February 2025, Contemporary HUM spoke with Luke Willis Thompson from Sharjah Biennial 16 about his commissioned work *Whakamoemoeā*. Set on Waitangi Day in 2040 as a public broadcast, the film imagines constitutional transformation in Aotearoa New Zealand, giving form to an Indigenous-focused dream of the future.

Images: 4. Fiona Pardington, *Portrait of a life cast of Takatahara (painted)*, Aotearoa New Zealand, 2010 (2024 reprint). From 'Āhua: a beautiful hesitation', 2010. Image courtesy of Sharjah Art Foundation. Photo: Ivan Erofeev. 5. Te Matahiapo Collective, *Ā Ē Ī Ō Ū - Ī Ō Ē Ā Ū: Ko Pari Haruru*, 2025. Commissioned by Sharjah Art Foundation with the support of Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa. Photo: Shanavas Jamaluddin. 6. Luke Willis Thompson, *Whakamoemoeā*, 2024. Commissioned by Sharjah Art Foundation and produced by Ordinary Films and Kura Productions. Image courtesy of Sharjah Art Foundation. Photo: Ivan Erofeev.



7

Through Air, Breath and Stone: Correspondences between Two Islands

By Yuka Keino

07.10.2025

Associate Editor Catherine Dale

Travelling to Japan's Seto Inland Sea, curator Yuka Keino responds to artist Sarah Hudson's work *Reconciliation*. Keino explores the role of stone as a medium of memory, linking the distant islands of Moutohorā, Aotearoa, and Megijima, Japan, through material practices and ancestral knowledge, suggesting a site specificity that is transformed into something translocal, relational and ultimately decolonial.

PODCAST

Following the 2024 *Crossing Currents* podcast series, HUM released a standalone episode, extending its signature in-depth critical focus to an audio format, while documenting the significant presence of Aotearoa artists in international events.

This episode was produced in partnership with McCahon House. It is available on all major podcast distribution platforms, and on contemporaryhum.com as an audio file and transcript published with images.

From Moutohorā to Megijima: Sarah Hudson in conversation with Joanne Coates

By Contemporary HUM

20.08.2025

Sarah Hudson (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Pūkeko, Ngāi Tūhoe) speaks to UK artist Joanne Coates on the occasion of her participation in the Naoshima Art Residency and Setouchi Triennale in Japan, and simultaneous exhibition in Whakatāne, Aotearoa. Taking Hudson's series of works "Reconciliation" as a point of departure, Hudson and Coates discuss how histories embedded in land and community can be explored in different lands, among different communities, and the radical act of protecting space for quietness, calmness and reciprocity.



1

CALENDAR

Calendar listings

43

in 2024	180
in 2023	265
in 2022	156

Arts practitioners from
Aotearoa featured

58

in 2024	170
in 2023	286
in 2022	147

Countries covered

19

in 2024	30
in 2023	38
in 2022	32



Images: (this) Black Grace, *Paradise Rumour*, 2023. (next page) 1. Catherine Griffiths, *Light Weight O*, 2018. 2. Abigail Aroha Jensen. 3. Quishile Charan. 4. Yuki Kihara, *Gauguin and Kihara: First Impressions*. 5. Ariana Tikao with taonga pūoro. 6. Yona Lee with *Smart Sculpture*, 2025. 7. Warwick Freeman, *Pendant Cutter*, 2010. 8. Luke Kay, *Pillars and Saplings*, 2025. 9. Shannon Novak, *William*, 2025. 10. Brett Graham, *Ka Wheeke*, 2024. 11. Amit Noy, *Good Luck* (still). Full image credits can be found on contemporaryhum.com



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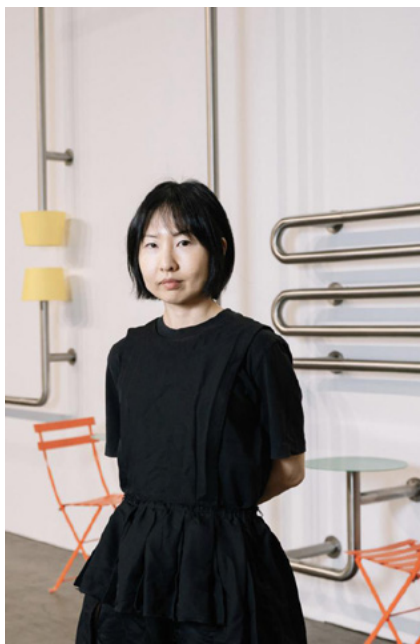
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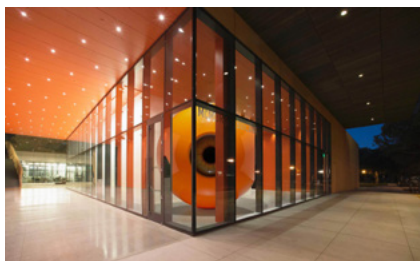
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NETWORK BUILDING

In addition to its publishing activity, Contemporary HUM serves as a crucial point of connection for Aotearoa creatives abroad. Our team fosters networks, encourages knowledge sharing, visits artists' studios, facilitates interactions and provides on-the-ground support, consistently creating new opportunities for arts practitioners.

Although the project as we know it is concluding, HUM's trustees remain committed to this core work of advocacy and community building.



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Images: 1. Luke Willis Thompson and the crew of *Whakamoemoeā*, 2024, at Sharjah Biennial 16: to carry. Photo: Contemporary HUM. 2. Discussion: Visitor Programmes, Eelco van der Lingen, Mondriaan Fonds, Netherlands; Pauline Autet, Contemporary HUM, Aotearoa New Zealand; Aurora Aspen, Office for Contemporary Art (OCA), Norway. Photo: Kunst-Dokumentation.com / Manuel Carreon Lopez. 3. Kereama Taepa (Te Arawa, Te Āti Awa) standing outside Fondation Fimenco in Paris while on residency. Photo: Contemporary HUM. 4. Welcome lunch at Phileas. Photo: Kunst-Dokumentation.com / Manuel Carreon Lopez. 5. Ana Iti at Sharjah Biennial 16: to carry. Photo: Contemporary HUM. 6. Contemporary HUM trustee Benjamin Work in New York for the grand reopening of the Oceania galleries at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, overseen by Curator Maia Nuku. Photo: Raymond Sagapolutele, with the support of Creative New Zealand. 7. Te Matahiapo Collective at Sharjah Biennial 16: to carry. Photo: Contemporary HUM.

CLOSING CAMPAIGN

Contemporary HUM's final month focused on concluding the project responsibly, preserving its decade-long archive, and communicating the closure respectfully to its global community. This campaign was overseen by returning Communications Director Genista Jurgens, with input from departing Managing Director Alena Kavka and support from Frances Wright on communications delivery.

The scope of the campaign included new digital assets (a site-wide closure banner and a dedicated legacy page with a letter from the Board of Trustees); personalised emails to artists, collaborators and donors; a final e-newsletter to HUM's general audience; a phased farewell across social media channels; and distribution of a press release and a short legacy film to key media outlets.

The community's responses to the closure were overwhelmingly supportive; HUM's initial social media announcement post alone recorded almost 9,000 views and 300 likes in 48 hours. A selection of these responses is documented on the following page.

Celebrating almost a decade of discourse, connection and advocacy

24.10.2025

180+ long-form publications	31 digital "HUMcard" mailouts
1,100+ calendar listings	190+ writers, editors & contributors
13 partnerships & public events	600+ arts practitioners
9 podcast episodes	350+ locations
8 major art events covered live	

Incalculable connections

Celebrating almost a decade of discourse, connection and advocacy | Home | Download PDF

A final message from the Board

After nearly ten years of commissioning new writing on Aotearoa artists' work being shown internationally, Contemporary HUM will stop publishing new pieces from October 2025, and the always popular Calendar section will cease to be updated. Our website will become something it has always been: a rich resource, an archive of incredible talent, writing and creative inquiry, but it will be finite, rather than perpetual.

In addition to publishing, the Contemporary HUM crew have been connecting, brokering, advising and supporting artists, curators, writers and collectors; both folk from Aotearoa heading into international realms, and international folk visiting Aotearoa. Much of this mahi is less visible and mostly unpaid.

1



2

Almost a decade championing Aotearoa arts abroad.

180+ long-form publications

1,100+ calendar listings

13 partnerships & public events

9 podcast episodes

8 major art events covered live

31 digital "HUMcard" mailouts

Explore the archive

contemporaryhum.com

8,854

822

17

3

HUM

WRITING | CALENDAR | PROJECTS | ABOUT

Kia ora dear reader,

For almost ten years, Contemporary HUM has been a home for Aotearoa's international art community—a hub for in-depth conversations and critical inquiry. Beyond our publications, podcasts, panel discussions and live coverage, our work has also included countless hours of behind-the-scenes support, connecting artists to international networks, advising on projects and developing opportunities with global partners in order to champion the unique voices of Aotearoa's visual arts community on the global stage.

We are immensely proud of what we have achieved together with our globally dispersed community of artists, curators, writers, editors and cultural workers.

This is why it is difficult to bring you the news that this month, Contemporary HUM will come to a close, ceasing to publish new content.

Of course, this decision was not made lightly. We've been working tirelessly to find a sustainable model for the project while upholding our core values—free access to content, editorial independence, fair remuneration for our contributors and in-depth critical coverage not found elsewhere. But in the current climate, this has become unworkable without a baseline of public funding, and we cannot continue to tread water.

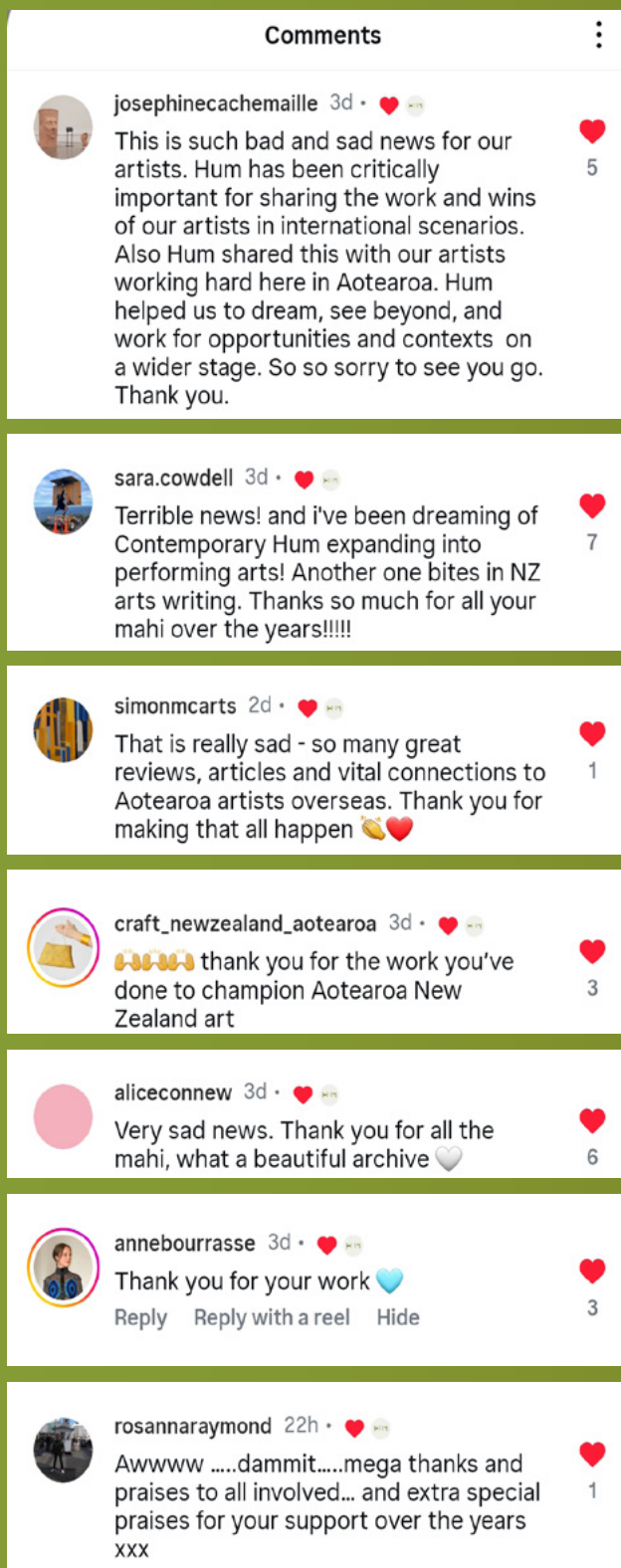
[Read more about our decision here](#)

We also know Contemporary HUM is not alone in this struggle; our thoughts are with our friends, peers and artists, who are also navigating these challenging times.

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Images: 1. Legacy page with Board of Trustees letter and instructions for navigating contemporaryhum.com. 2. Legacy video still featuring Shannon Te Ao's *With the sun aglow, I have my pensive moods* and a compilation of imagery representing almost a decade of Contemporary HUM. 3. Social media farewell. 4. Final e-newsletter sent to HUM's general audience, encouraging archive engagement.

COMMUNITY RESPONSES



"Sad news to an expatriate NZ born Canadian artist... Thank you for your excellent efforts on behalf of Aotearoa artists and cultural communities."

— Bruce Barber, artist

"A vital project like HUM should only come to an end if it has run its course... an essential component of our international programme is now lost."

— John McCormack, editor

"What a shame that CNZ does not recognise your major contribution to New Zealand art... platforms like yours help to garner serious recognition for this and in turn light the way for others."

— Kāryn Taylor, artist

"Ngā mihi nui for all the wonderful mahi you have produced and the ongoing legacy... Our students use the writing constantly and there is immense gratitude for all you have created."

— Janine Randerson, art researcher

"HUM has been so important to me as an artist based outside of Aotearoa—a vital connection to home and to the wider community... The care and integrity you've brought to HUM has had a lasting impact."

— Cat Auburn, artist

"Thank you for your vision and follow through and the amazing impacts you have all had. The platform has been incredible for artists here in Aotearoa."

— Ann Shelton, artist

"Troubling times and an impossible funding landscape. I'm glad the website is still there. It's a fantastic thing."

— David Lillington, writer

"It was always a deep pleasure for me to work with HUM and I will carry only my fondest memories of what was a totally beautiful platform and gathering of minds."

— Amit Noy, artist and writer

"I've really enjoyed your coverage over the years and especially our interactions over Venice. I applaud your important work."

— Brett Graham, artist

AUDIENCE & ENGAGEMENT

The 2025 engagement results reflect a necessary change in strategic focus for Contemporary HUM. Following the suspension of regular publishing due to resource reductions, the organisation made a strategic decision: to shift away from pursuing volume growth and instead concentrate efforts on maximising the discoverability and utility of its existing body of work.

WEBSITE SUMMARY

Annual users (clean) **15,546***

in 2024 27,227

in 2023 36,432

in 2022 38,049

Average monthly users (clean) **1,295****

Average engagement time (with bots) **26**secs

Despite HUM's planned reduction in new content, overall visitor numbers remained stable throughout 2025, reaffirming the site as an essential resource for its global audience.

The 43% decrease in clean average monthly users (1,295, down from 2,269 in 2024) reflects the planned reduction in publications and podcast episodes, while indicating a stable, dedicated core audience base.

HUM's 2025 website stats also saw another decrease: average engagement time was down to 26 seconds from 56 seconds in 2024. This figure is significantly lower due to high-volume bot traffic recorded in October and November 2025.

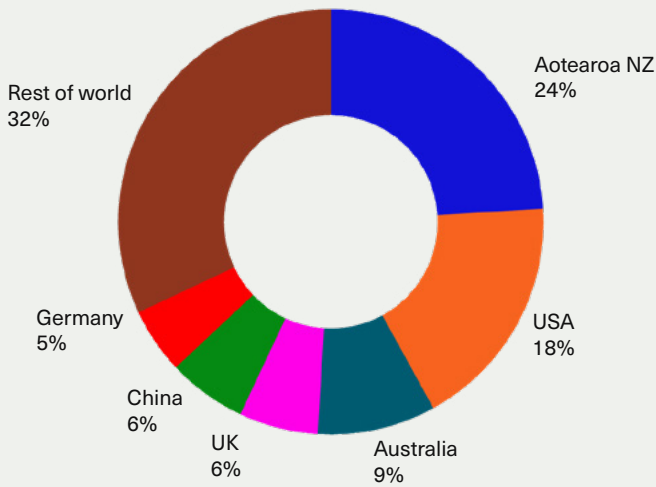
HUM's audience remains strongly international, with the continued dominance of the Homepage and Search page confirming the website's primary function as an efficient navigational tool (see stats on next page).

Engagement with HUM's podcast content included 304 webpage visits and 139 plays through the Acast platform, with listeners broadly dispersed (52% Aotearoa, 12% USA, 6% UK and 4% Japan).

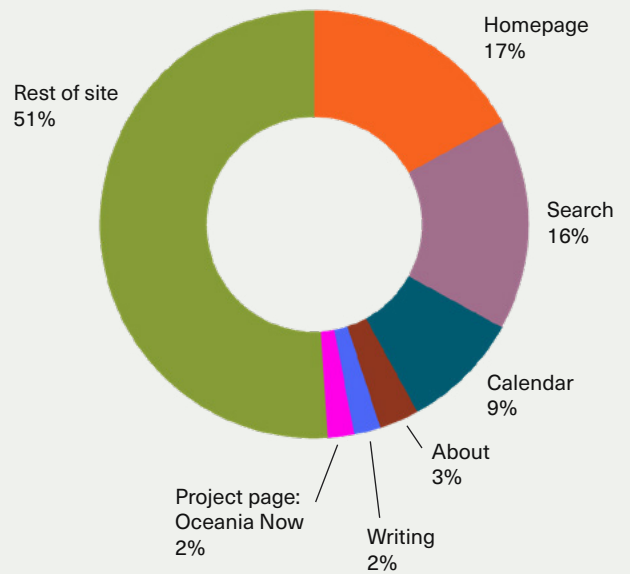
*The total visitor count in 2025 is 32,429, which includes 16,883 automated bots from Singapore and China recorded in October and November.

** This reported average engagement time is artificially lowered by the high volume of bot traffic (16,883 automated visits), which typically last 0-1 second.

Top locations with the most website visitors in 2025



Most-visited website pages in 2025



E-NEWSLETTER SUMMARY

Active subscribers **1,446**

in 2024	1,461
in 2023	1,494
in 2022	1,001

Average open rate **53%**

Industry standard	26%
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Although 2025 saw a sharp decrease in newsletter volume (only 3 sent this year, compared to 15 in 2024) due to the contraction of external communications, Contemporary HUM's audience base demonstrated sustained high-level engagement, confirming the content's quality and relevance.

The Open Rates for HUM's three e-newsletters remained high (February: 54%; August: 55%; October: 50%), and the 2025 average of 53% was more than double the industry standard of 26% for the Arts and Artists category (according to Mailchimp's data), proving excellent list retention and content appeal.

SOCIAL MEDIA SUMMARY

Facebook page visits	706
in 2024	2,286

Facebook page views	29,329
in 2024	237,494

Instagram profile visits	1,945
in 2024	7,133

Instagram profile followers	5,345
in 2024	5,049

Instagram profile views	91,188
in 2024	491,065

In 2025, Contemporary HUM's social media strategy shifted to maximising organic engagement and supporting the platform's utility. This intentional cutback in promotion (only 4 paid ads ran, down from 20 in 2024) did not compromise audience loyalty; instead, the results confirmed the strength of HUM's organic content:

———— HUM's Instagram profile gained 296 new followers (ending at 5,345).

———— The top-performing organic post was announcing HUM's closure in October (9,038 Views, 275 Likes on Instagram). However, the performance of the second most-engaged post—the coverage of Sharjah Biennial 16—reaffirms the audience's strong demand for live international content, a trend consistent with the *HUM live from the 2024 Venice Biennale* page being the most-visited page in the website's history.

GOOGLE ADS SUMMARY

Total impressions	18,441
in 2024	95,321
in 2023	326,000

Total clicks	747
in 2024	9,482
in 2023	16,000

Leveraging its in-kind Google Ads budget (US\$329 per day available to charitable trusts), Contemporary HUM recalibrated its paid advertising strategy.

This meant intentionally moving away from the high-volume promotion of individual publications (characteristic of previous years) to prioritise brand visibility and Homepage discovery.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

CONTEMPORARY HUM ARTS TRUST Simplified Statement of Financial Performance

For the period 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025

	Current Year	2024	2023
Income for the year			
Creative New Zealand grants	\$ 0	\$ 19,999	\$ 0
Fundraising receipts & donations	\$ 14,621	\$ 42,094	\$ 2,887
Receipts from providing goods or services	\$ 9,440	\$ 16,400	\$ 600
Total income	\$ 24,061	\$ 78,492	\$ 3,487
Operating payments			
Payments related to public fundraising	\$ 4,140	\$ 3,103	\$ 1,964
Production costs	\$ 30,110	\$ 40,847	\$ 101,069
Admin & overhead costs	\$ 631	\$ 1,377	\$ 5,449
Website & marketing costs	\$ 1,779	\$ 1,006	\$ 6,504
Total operating payments	\$ 36,660	\$ 46,333	\$ 114,986
Operating surplus or (deficit)			
Carry over sum into the next financial year	\$ (12,600)	\$ 32,160	\$ (111,499)
Purchase of resources	\$ 0	\$ 570	\$ 1,025
Total bank accounts and cash at end of the financial year	\$ 23,417	\$ 36,017	\$ 3,287

Contemporary HUM is a hub for Aotearoa arts abroad. We champion the international projects of New Zealand creative practitioners through publishing, events and partnerships.

