

City opens up living room to artists

By Jessica van der Schaaf

Creative minds are being called on to submit proposals for extraordinary events and inspirational installations to be part of Auckland City Council's 2007 Living Room programme.

The event aims to enliven and animate the public spaces of the central city by transforming the central business district into the city's "living room".

For the past two years pilot Living Room events have successfully injected life into the CBD.

Their success has led the council to further the scope of the event by extending an open invitation to the general public for proposals for the first time.

Jenny Gordon, council arts and funding adviser, says opening proposals up to the public will encourage a broader range of creativity and create more public interest.

"We'll look at individual projects, and also how they will fit together as a programme," she says. "The good thing is that artists can go a bit crazy with their ideas. And it can be in any medium."

Previous years' events have included Poetry on the Pavement, a journey of New Zealand poems stretching the length of Queen St and Musical Bus Stops, which used bus stops as stages and commuters as the audience.

Pitsch Leiser, council city events manager, came up with the idea for Living Room in 2004, when he was invited to join a council panel to drum up ideas to bring life to the CBD.

"The concept was a series of temporary installations, spatial interventions and performances that transform a space from what it usually is into something dif-

ferent; making people look at their day-to-day environment in a different way," he says.

Leiser created installations for the last two events: Hang 'n' Out, a diverse cultural clothesline in upper Vulcan Lane, with AUT spatial design lecturer Fleur Palmer and Living Lamps, an eclectic selection of interior lampshades high above Durham St East.

"The idea has always been to make sure that Living Room as a concept lives on. In order to do this best we have put it into an administrable fund. What that means is that there is a more concerted effort to get wider participation because anyone can apply," says Leiser.

Kingsley Melhuish, jazz musician and composer, organised performance-based musical installations Sound City in 2005 and Musical Bus Stops in 2006, and says he will definitely submit a proposal for the 2007 event.

"I think it's really cool they've opened it up to public proposals because diversity is the spice of life and essential in the arts," says Melhuish.

He says the Living Room events are a unique art event because the element of surprise elicits a more honest response from the audience because they have no expectations.

"Feedback was immediate. People would come up to us and tell us how much they'd enjoyed it. It shows Auckland city as being a vibrant, cosmopolitan city, and a progressive city. It's not just about entertainment it's about art as well," says Melhuish.

Leiser encourages people from all creative disciplines to submit a proposal.

"There are unlimited realms. We've only touched on a tiny area. The sky's the limit. But the



PHOTO: FLEUR PALMER

LOST ART: The Pallet Maze at Britomart, part of the Living Room programme in 2006.

do-ability of the proposal is also important.

"Whatever is being proposed should be creating some kind of dialogue. Whether it is someone reading a poem quietly, or a group of people discussing an installation it doesn't matter. It needs to engage people at some level," says Leiser.

The Living Room programme is part of the council's Into the Future strategy, which aims to further Auckland's CBD "international reputation as a dynamic and vibrant centre of cultural and

business activity".

"The event is funded by targeted rates, paid for by CBD businesses and residents. At the moment it's funded on an annual basis. But there's a lot of support from businesses and residents so it may become an annual event," says Gordon.

Artists have until November 10 to submit a proposal to the council for next year's programme.

A panel will look at the proposals, and a shortlist of applicants will be invited to discuss their

submissions with the panel before the final selection.

Proposed events or installations need to be located in public outdoor spaces in the CBD, with a particular emphasis on Queen St and nearby areas. They must comply with the district plan, or be able to easily obtain resource consent.

Selected events will be allocated between \$5000 to \$10,000 out of a total \$80,000 fund, and will run for between one and eight weeks from mid-March to late May 2007.

Naive investors fall for e-scam

By Helen Twose

Pump and dump may sound like the latest fitness craze but, in reality it is a new spin on the old trick of parting investors from their hard-earned cash.

The fraud scheme uses spam emails to send "hot" stock tips and is one of the latest top "investor traps" according to a recent press release from the North American Securities Administrators Association (NASAA).

NASAA, the organisation responsible for protecting investors in the United States and Canada, describes how the scheme works on its website.

NASAA says unethical broker-dealers "pump" up the value of low-priced shares, send millions of emails extolling the value of a company and then "dump" the stock after naive investors have purchased them at inflated prices. The bubble bursts when the promoters sell their shares and stop hyping the stock, leaving investors with worthless shares.

The New Zealand investments regulator, the Securities Commission, is aware of the "pump and dump" emails but has no way of knowing how many New Zealanders have lost money in these

scams, says spokesperson Catherine Chapman.

Chapman says the commission has received queries from the public about the emails and advises people to ignore them.

"The thing to do with unsolicited emails is just delete them," she says.

Chapman says unsolicited emails are almost always scams and it is unwise to send money in response to a seemingly attractive offer.

"Think why they would be making you the offer."

The Securities Commission says the offers are usually for genuine companies. If people want to invest, they should approach a New Zealand stockbroker for independent advice.

Local stockbrokers are accountable under New Zealand law but can make investments for their clients in overseas markets, says Chapman.

Preyesh Master is a client advisor at stockbroking firm First NZ Capital.

Master says that even though the email source might look reputable, for example "The Small Stock Journal", potential investors should watch for give-away catch phrases in the e-mails first few lines.

He says "watch out, here comes the big one", "the bull is back", and "this is going



PHOTO: HELEN TWOSE

PREYESH MASTER

to explode!!" is not the kind of language used by investment advisors. Even the most "gung-ho" equity analyst will be quite conservative in their advice.

Master says the remainder of the email is usually "plain vanilla", including press releases and share prices which match information on the big financial websites like Yahoo Finance and Google Finance, giving them the feeling of legitimacy.

First NZ Capital does get queries about the emails.

"Not so much from clients. Most are upskilled and financially aware and only accept financial advice from me," says Master. "We do get the odd call from members of the public."

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs mon-

itors the latest financial scams and warns New Zealand consumers via their Scamwatch website.

Ministry spokesperson Sarah Apperley lists a few things that potential investors should look for to determine if the email is a scam deal.

Apperley says that few stock traders would send out unsolicited email and any that claim to have information prior to the market knowing could be prosecuted for insider trading.

She says we should also look for unprofessional spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.

She says most email messages have a pressure around timeframes - "get in now."

"Ask yourself 'why'. You should take time to think about it."

Many of the emails promise guaranteed returns, that they are approved by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs or the Securities Commission, and that the scheme is legal.

Apperley warns people against sending money to anyone they do not know via cash transfer because the money becomes untraceable.

"If the person you are dealing with can't take a cheque or credit card, be very wary," she says.

"At the end of the day, if you start getting suspicious, then you should be very suspicious - go with your gut instinct."

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs is undertaking research over the next 12 months on the amount of money New Zealanders lose to financial scams.

In Australia, it was estimated \$800 million was lost in financial scams between 2001 and 2003, says Apperley.