

# OWAIRAKA HENRIATA NICHOLAS PUBLIC ART CASE STUDY



AUCKLAND  
DESIGN MANUAL

TE PUKA WHAKATAIRANGA I A TĀMAKI MAKAURAU



## OVERVIEW

'Owairaka' is a public art work integrated into the overall structure and design of Mt Albert Rail Station that was commissioned by Auckland Council and Auckland Transport as a joint project to integrate arts and culture into a major upgrade of a transit environment.

## PROJECT SUMMARY

Henriata Nicholas (Te Arawa) and Marc Lenton of Moko-ia Creative House collaborated on 'Owairaka' for the 2013 Mt Albert Rail Station upgrade in the town centre.

'Owairaka' distinctive motif visually unifies the station and greatly enhances the benefits of the station's refurbishment and upgrade.

The artists' design includes a distinctive stylised poutama (stepped) pattern depicting both the palisades of Māori fortifications formerly in the local area and the notion of a stairway to heaven.

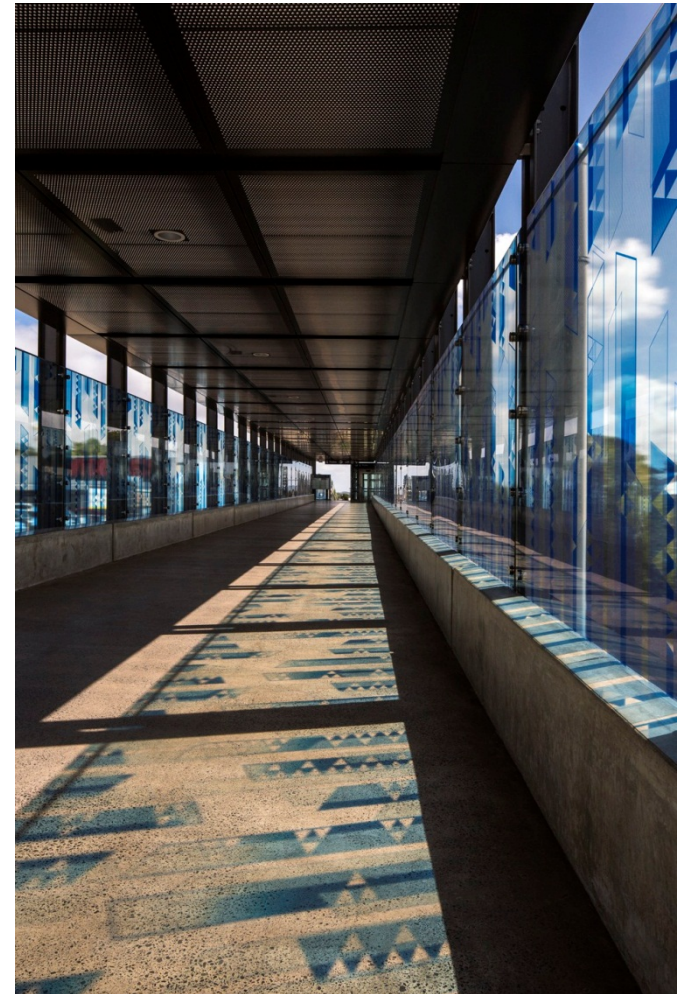
It also references the maunga (mountain) of Owairaka (Mt Albert), from which the artwork takes its name, through a tapatoru (triangle) pattern.

This was applied to the station's glass surfaces and composite cladding with digitally printed optically clear film. Beautifying the station with soft tones and shadows, the design carries throughout the structure and acts as a subtle aid for public navigation.

The project first originated following consultation with representatives of mana whenua including Ngāti Whātua, Ngāti Tamaoho, Te Akitai Waiohua, Te ata Waiohua and Ngāti Paoa. The Tāmaki Collective and the Albert-Eden Local Board participated in artist and concept selection.

Iwi partnership ensured that the project embodies the character of the area and expresses Māori identity as Auckland's point of difference in the world. This has also helped to establish the project as a benchmark for further town centre improvements.

The project was funded by Auckland Transport and Auckland Council's Public Art Regional Fund.



Henriata Nicholas (Te Arawa) and Marc Lenton (Moko-ia Creative House), 'Owairaka', 2013, Mt Albert Rail Station. Photo: Patrick Reynolds

# Key project information

## KEY FEATURES

The artists' design includes a distinctive stylised poutama (stepped) pattern depicting both the palisades of Māori fortifications formerly in the local area and the notion of a stairway to heaven. The art work is inspired by the maunga (mountain) of Owairaka (Mt Albert), from which the artwork takes its name, through a tapatoru (triangle) pattern.

## LOCATION

Mt Albert Rail Station, Mt Albert Town Centre

## ARTISTS

Moko-ia Creative House: Henriata Nicholas (Te Arawa) and Marc Lenton

## ARCHITECT

Opus

## SUPPORTED BY

Artist and final art concept selection involved the Tāmaki Collective and the Albert-Eden Local Board. The work was funded by Auckland Transport and Auckland Council's Public Art Regional Fund.

## MATERIALS

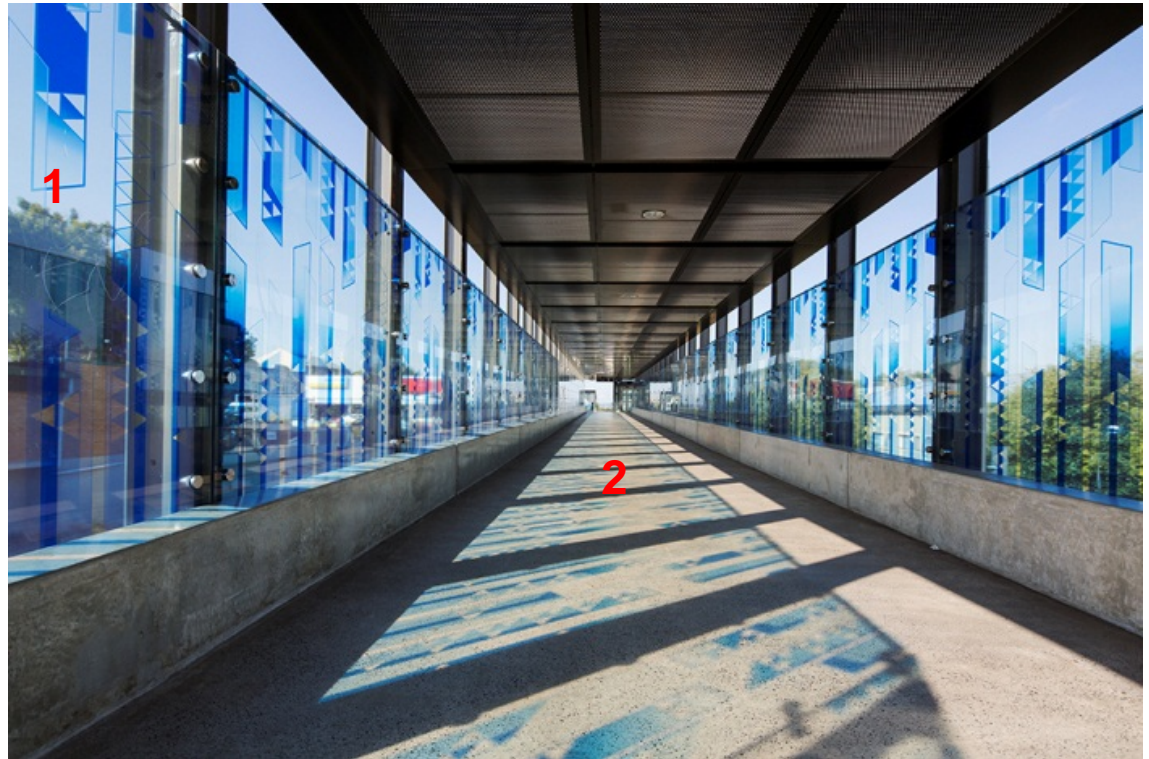
The artists' design was applied to glass surfaces and composite cladding with digitally printed optically clear film

## LESSONS LEARNT

The late involvement of an artist team in the station's upgrade resulted in a very positive outcome, but available options at this stage are often limited to surface embellishments rather than a fully integrated approach that invites a collaboration between the artists and architect.

# UNIQUE AND DISTINCTIVE: RESPONDS TO OUR PLACE

1. The artists' design includes a distinctive stylised poutama (stepped) pattern depicting both the palisades of Māori fortifications formerly in the local area and the notion of a stairway to heaven.
2. The artists' design carries throughout the structure as a subtle aid to navigation, while beautifying and softening the station with the blue tones and shadows.



# CELEBRATES CULTURAL RICHNESS

1. The artwork also makes links to the maunga (mountain) of Owairaka (Mt Albert), from which the artwork takes its name, through a tapatoru (triangle) pattern. The design, and the engagement experiences with mana whenua and the community, have established a benchmark for future town centre development projects.
2. Iwi partnership ensured that the project responded to the character of the local place and enhanced the visibility of Māori identity as Auckland's point of difference in the world.



