

Over the past few weeks there has been significant progress on the construction of building “one” of the Porirua campus redevelopment programme.

A number of concrete tilt slabs have been installed along the west facade of the building as well as concrete central columns. This week marked the start of the concrete floor pours.

The concrete tilt slabs that are being installed have a real connection to Whitireia and Porirua. They contain wonderful carvings that have been completed by Whitireia Whakairo tutor, James Molnar.



During the design phase of building “one” the design team established a series of conceptual narratives to inform the architecture. They were derived from the historical, environmental, cultural and urban contexts surrounding Whitireia. James turned these narratives into succinct highly detailed pieces of art which will surround the building both internally and externally.

James’ contribution to the architecture of building “one” is wonderful and can be seen today on the concrete tilt slabs and columns that have been installed so far.

Behind the carvings of James Molnar

The underpinning concept of what the carvings represent on building “one” is around reinforcing the concept of Korowai – the cloak of knowledge that wraps the new building.

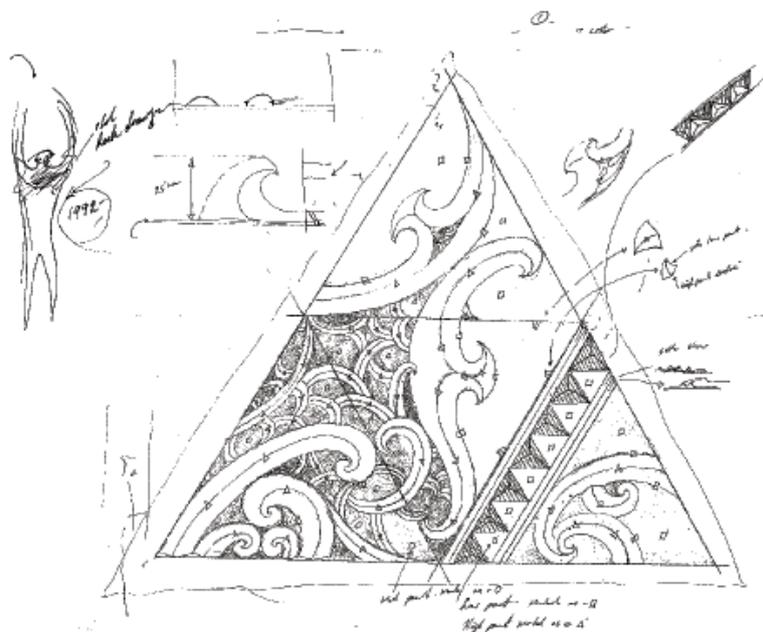


An artist sketch

The band running through the centre is symbolic of taniko (weaving design). The triangles are a direct reference to the prehistoric connection to Whitireia maunga (mountain); mapped up from the landscape that they represent, patterns found within Korowai (Māori cloak) and naturally occurring accreted structures around the Porirua inlet.

As you move higher into the detail, James has taken the triangle and designed within it, a history of Whitireia – past, present and future. A significant part of James' design is the net or web where objects are caught and held in place. It is the consistent background of carving and translates here to a net that captures knowledge. Objects forward of this net are visible and in the future, objects beyond are unseen and in the past.

For example, the image on the top of the triangle represents a student looking up, arms outstretched as they gather knowledge, standing through the net with the past but looking forward to the future.



An original sketch by James – each smaller triangle tells its own story but contributes to the total picture

The carving process

The carvings you see today have gone through an amazing process to end up where they are. It all began with an analogue activity of sketching which was then captured digitally, converted into a vector file, given some depth, texture and represented in cyberspace as a three dimensional object. Then came the real time negative of the object. This part of the work was carried out by a Christchurch company CNC Routing Limited along with James. This process enabled a mould of the carving to be made (as James said “you can liken these to a jelly mould”).



A computer rendering of James' sketch

Once the moulds were completed, they were sent to Emmitt's, a Whanganui company who are making the precast concrete panels and columns with the carvings set into them.

The concrete carvings are by no means finished. There is some manual work that needs to be completed in the form of grinding, painting and finishing. This work will be undertaken by James and Michael Melville, the architect responsible for the look of building “one”.

We hope you enjoy this background on the wonderful artwork that has been completed by James for building “one” - a very talented artist with a real connection to Whitiareia and Porirua.





Photos Top L-R James Molnar, Whitireia, Kelvin Irvine, Whitireia, Michael Melville, cgm+foster architects, Jonathan Moss, Maycroft Construction in front of one of James' concrete carvings.

The panels and the carvings



