

VICTORIA PARK VIADUCT COLUMN PROJECT: ARTIST STATEMENT MIRIAM VAN WEZEL

A T I M E L I N E : T H E C O L O U R S O F O U R H I S T O R Y

I would like to acknowledge the Victoria Park Alliance and the Public Arts team of Auckland City for recognising the possibilities inherent in the columns of the Victoria Park Viaduct. This is a wonderful opportunity to transform a dominant element in the Auckland City Urban Landscape from an unloved object to a prominent artwork that can be experienced by a wide audience: the passing motorist, the cricket player, the skateboarder, the jogger, parents and children strolling along the new pathways through the columns, and the more art conscious viewer looking more closely, noting meaning behind the form, movement and colour of the work.

The Brief requested the design to be sympathetic to and a celebration of the rugged aesthetic of the columns, which reflect the pragmatic history and engineering functionality of the structure. To transform such structure into more than the sum of its parts requires in my opinion an intervention that is simple and clear, but which has the potential for multiple readings, based on a strong underlying concept.

CONCEPT

The concept for the work is driven by a number of site specific issues:

- it is in a public space to be enjoyed by all members of the public
- it needs to be inclusive and 'speak' to members of all the many subcultures of Auckland
- it needs to be read from near and far, at different rates of travel; pedestrian, cyclist, motorist
- the Viaduct is central to the movement of people in and around the park
- it needs to make a bold gesture which stands up to the power of the structure
- it needs to offer an enjoyable experience at the abstract experiential level, and also respond to more detailed interrogation.

This scheme proposes a coloured disc painted on each column, running for 25 columns each side of the Viaduct, 50 columns in total. As they progress along, the discs rotate around the columns, rise and fall slowly, and change colour in a sequence which reflects the historic use of colour in our occupancy of this country. The key points of the concept and its development being;

1 FORM

The discs adjust to suit their 'host' columns: each disc reaches half way around the column, its diameter matching half the circumference of the column. The discs rotate around the columns, shifting in plan 45 degrees from one column to the next, allowing for maximum readability from any given position and as a work as a whole.

The discoid form is a universal symbol of unity, wholeness, connectedness, inclusiveness, and also relates to the sun, moon and stars. Planetary movement is suggested by the rotation and rise and fall of the discs. This might remind us of the cyclical rhythm of the universe and how it can guide us, as it did the early Maori and Pakeha navigators finding their way here.

2 COLOUR

The flow of discs along the columns creates a timeline of the colours of our history based on a colour pallet broadly representative of 8 identified periods. I have tapped into research done by, and advice taken from a number of people, including conservation architect Ian Bowman, Maori advisor Pita Turei, and Resene colour consultant Angela Fell.

The colours I have chosen reflect a sensory interpretation of the academic research, with banks of colours representing the following phases: Maori, Early Colonial, Mid-Victorian, Late-Victorian, Dominion Years, Post War, Pacifica and Contemporary/Multi-Cultural. It suffices to say that with a limited number of columns available I had to select a number of colours which I thought were most representative of each era. The Maori colours being the exception, for rather than representing a specific era or choosing a more generic Maori pallet, the advice was to link the colours more directly to the site itself; red pohutakawa, black earth, blue night sky, white fish bone and green kuta reed.

The historic phases begin on the northern end of the Viaduct, at the seaward end (reflecting the point of arrival for Maori waka and our maritime heritage) and move southwards towards the original coastline, finishing just beyond what will be the Rob Roy Plaza.

For a simple pure form to create the impact that matches the large scale of the Park and become more than the sum of its parts, I chose repetition to establish a rhythm and a journey: experientially, one wherein colour pulls the viewer through the colonnade of the viaduct, and conceptually, offering a pathway through the colours of our history and the possibility of contemplating our place in a context beyond the scale of the Park.